

J.M. Coetzee's Hispanic Worlds

A Southern Vision



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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Hilary 2022

Abstract

My dissertation seeks to bring into critical focus the connections between J.M. Coetzee's work and Hispanophone literature and culture, 1970 to the present day, in order to demonstrate in broad terms how he has used his symbolic capital to open a Hispanic and southern perspective onto Anglophone world literature. In four chapters, I develop different but complementary readings relating to what I call four distinctive Hispanic worlds. Having first established the methodology and the scope of Coetzee's Hispanic involvements in the Introduction, in Chapter 1 I examine the translation, publication and reception of Coetzee's works in the Hispanosphere (1983-2022) with a view to showing the distinctiveness of the circulation of world literature in a non-Anglophone global context with significant southern elements. In Chapter 2, I analyse Coetzee's praxis as a reviewer, critic and scholar of Hispanophone letters (1973-2017), and demonstrate that throughout this period he was influenced by Hispanic literature even as he promoted it in diverse contexts and through varied intellectual praxes. In Chapter 3, I delve into Coetzee's engagement with Borges and discuss how he develops his personal idea of the south in dialogue with the Argentine author, and through his academic, publishing and outreach efforts in the Southern Cone more broadly (2015-19). In Chapter 4, I show how these different *worlds* come together in the narrative landscape of the *Jesus* novels and their crepuscular fictional reality (2013-19) which, I argue, establishes a southern literature of Cervantean origin and allows for a Hispanic reading of Coetzee.

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Acknowledgments

This thesis began life in September 2017, when I relocated from Chile to England to start work as a doctoral researcher at the English Faculty at Oxford, where I was fortunate to be co-supervised by Professor Elleke Boehmer and Dr Michelle Kelly. I am exceedingly grateful for their profound generosity, invariable hard work, kind guidance and intellectual mentoring throughout these years.

My research project studies Coetzee's work across his career, which reflects in its transoceanic approach and the different countries in which the people who helped me are based. In South Africa, I am indebted to Carrol Clarkson, who in 2016 kindly explained to me the field of Coetzee scholarship, to Hermann Wittenberg, Ivan Vladislavić and Iona Gilbert for conversations that helped me understanding the local literary milieu, and to Beth Wyril at the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in Makhanda, who generously went through a section of Coetzee's teaching materials at UCT that had not yet been catalogued.

In England, I am grateful to Derek Attridge and David Attwell, who provided initial orientation before coming to Oxford and kindly answered questions that emerged during my work. Julian Barnes offered valuable details and first-hand experience on the effect of winning the Booker Prize in a writer's career. Jeffrey Myers, Coetzee's publisher at Harvill Secker, gave me significant information about Coetzee's circulation. I am particularly indebted to H.E. David Gallagher, the Ambassador of Chile to the Court of St James's (2018-22), who in 1973 wrote a still unsurpassed study of modern Latin American literature in English, which provided me with a template for presenting the field to Anglophone readers. Ambassador Gallagher also kindly

granted me access to his private correspondence with the late Robert Silvers, Coetzee's publisher at the NYRB. At Oxford's English Faculty, my work benefitted enormously by comments of Graham Riach, Patrick Hayes, Jarad Zimble and Peter McDonald, who suggested a complete change of focus at my Transfer of Status examination that proved to be both accurate and necessary. At the Spanish Sub-Faculty, I gained insight into peninsular narrative through conversations with Xon de Ros and Dominic Moran, who kindly discussed Neruda's influence on Coetzee's poetry with me. My friends Jacob Ridley, John Ritzema, Robert Freeman and Trevor Pomeroy generously proof-read individual chapters.

In Scotland, Zoë Wicomb kindly recalled her participation in the *Literaturas del Sur* Programme. In the Netherlands, I gained insight from Coetzee's publisher, Eva Cossée, and his translator, Peter Bergsma. In Spain, J.M. Guelbenzu, Coetzee's first peninsular publisher, offered valuable details on the inner workings of Alfaguara in the 1980s and Juan Benet's role in publishing Coetzee in Spain. As a fellow Nobel laureate, Mario Vargas Llosa provided me with a unique perspective on the importance of Coetzee on the world stage. In the United States, Joshua and Alicia Broggi convinced me to come to Oxford and gave me their valuable friendship throughout these years. I am particularly grateful to H.E. Jorge Heine, who gave me a full account of the *Escribiendo el Sur Profundo* project he organised while being Ambassador of Chile to South Africa (1994-99). Edwin Frank, Antonio Di Benedetto's publisher at NYRB Classics, provided valuable insight on his circulation in English. In Australia, I am grateful to John Coetzee for granting me interviews and providing the texts of unpublished lectures I attended in South America, his collaboration in the *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello* project and participating in the book launch in Santiago. In Adelaide, I also gained insight from conversations with Dorothy Driver and Nick Jose.

In Argentina I am indebted to Soledad Costantini, Coetzee's publisher, for including me in his activities in Buenos Aires between 2015 and 2018 and explaining to me how their collaboration developed. I am also grateful to Carlos Ruta, former rector of the San Martín National University, and to Anna Kazumi-Stahl, former academic coordinator of the *Literaturas del Sur* Programme. J.L. de Diego clarified for me the Argentine publishing milieu during the 1980s. Carolina Tosi put me in touch with Ana Gei, granddaughter of J.C. Irigoyen, Coetzee's first publisher in Spanish, who gave me details of the family-owned Riesa. Luis Chitarroni contacted me with César Aira, who recommended to Irigoyen publishing Coetzee in 1983, and gave me a thorough recollection of the process. In Chile I am grateful to Loreto Villarroel, who first invited Coetzee to the *La Ciudad y las Palabras* Programme in 2011 and later generously allocated time in his schedule there for our publishing project. I gained further insight into Latin American literature through conversations with my friends Jorge Edwards, Arturo Fontaine and Carlos Franz, who also put me in touch with J.M. Guelbenzu. Finally, I would like to warmly thank Bernadetta for her loving companionship and my parents for all their love and support throughout the years. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Abbreviations

<i>CJ</i>	<i>The Childhood of Jesus</i>
<i>CNE</i>	<i>Coetzee y los niños escritores</i>
<i>DBY</i>	<i>Diary of a Bad Year</i>
<i>DJ</i>	<i>The Death of Jesus</i>
<i>DJE</i>	<i>Los días de Jesús en la escuela</i>
<i>DTP</i>	<i>Doubling the Point</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Elizabeth Costello</i>
<i>He&N</i>	<i>Here & Now</i>
<i>HHM</i>	<i>He and His Man</i>
<i>IHC</i>	<i>In the Heart of the Country</i>
<i>IJ</i>	<i>La infancia de Jesús</i>
<i>IW</i>	<i>Inner Workings</i>
<i>LE</i>	<i>Late Essays</i>
<i>MJ</i>	<i>La muerte de Jesús</i>
<i>SJ</i>	<i>The Schooldays of Jesus</i>
<i>SPL</i>	<i>Scenes from Provincial Life</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Stranger Shores</i>
<i>TGS</i>	<i>The Good Story</i>

Introduction

A Hispanic World-Making¹

An Overlooked Relationship

Upon its publication, *La muerte de Jesús* (2019), the Spanish translation of *The Death of Jesus* (2019), elicited a number of puzzled responses across the Hispanophone world. While the reduced narrative world of the third and last volume of the *Jesús* novels (2013-19) confounded Spanish- and English-speaking reviewers in equal measure, a more specific air of curiosity permeated these pieces, for *Muerte* preceded its supposed original, *Death*. In other words, this was the translation of a book that had not yet been published in English. Perhaps even more surprising was the fact that *Muerte* did not appear first in Barcelona or Madrid, the centres of the Hispanophone publishing world, but in a Southern Hemisphere city. It was first published in Santiago de Chile in early April 2019, in a co-edition between Random House S.A. and El Hilo de Ariadna, an independent Argentine publisher. Indeed, even the first English edition did not appear in the United Kingdom under the Harvill Secker imprint as we might expect, but in an Australian edition published by Text in October 2019, three months before the eventual British publication. Together, these events blur the birthplace of a book and a trilogy in a manner that underlines one of the cycle's main themes, and that this thesis proposes to discuss: the questioning of what constitutes an original and what a translation. During the following four chapters, we will

¹ I understand *world-making* as the building of an 'aesthetic world', according to Eric Hayot: 'the *diegetic totality* constituted by the sum of all aspects of a single work or work-part, constellated into a structure or system that amounts to a whole' (44).

continue to circle around questions of originality and translation, circulation and peripherality, literary influence and the creation of a southern Hispanic world.

When *Muerte* appeared in Spain in late May 2019, *El País* published an article by Laura Fernández titled ‘Coetzee continúa su idilio con el español’ (‘Coetzee continues his love affair with Spanish’). While the title addresses the visible involvement Coetzee had with Spanish during the 2010s, reflected *inter alia* in the publication of *Siete cuentos morales* (a collection of short stories, first published in Argentina in 2017) and indeed of *Muerte*, the phenomenon the article alluded to was in fact only the tip of the iceberg of a long involvement with the Spanish language and different forms of Hispanic literature, one that this thesis will analyse in relation to four aspects of Coetzee’s intellectual praxis beginning as far back as when he was a student in Cape Town, as documented in *Youth* (2002). To do justice to the scope of this relatively uncharted territory, I propose to discuss how these Hispanic elements unfold across Coetzee’s career as a literary writer, academic, reviewer and critic, and to show that though they came prominently to the foreground in the *Jesus* novels, they have existed from the early 1970s and endured into the present-day. Moreover, as I will elaborate below, there is a distinctly southern inflection to Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds.

If Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds emerge through his activities as a writer, academic and reviewer, they are also constituted through the circulation of his work, not only in Spanish translation but in the Southern Hemisphere’s Hispanophone region. This process began in the early 1980s, interestingly in Argentina, and it is crucial to shifting our understanding of Coetzee as an exclusively Anglophone world writer, for after winning the Nobel Prize he also became a world writer circulating in Spanish translation. However, despite evidence pointing to the growing importance of the Hispanic in Coetzee, commentators have not delved into it until now,

perhaps partly because it lies outside of the usual circuits of Anglophone academia and literary journalism.

While there are several studies on the South African period, and the Australian period has equally been covered in different ways by Mike Marais (2009), Patrick Hayes (2010), Elleke Boehmer, Melinda Harvey, Sue Kossew (2011) and David Attwell (2015), there have been no equivalent studies focused on the Hispanic element in Coetzee. A clear example of this phenomenon can be found in Robert Pippin's *Metaphysical Exile: On J.M. Coetzee's Jesus Fictions* (2021). It is the first book-length study to engage wholly with the *Jesus* trilogy, yet it fails to make any significant mention of the crucial Hispanic element within the cycle. Furthermore, all these discussions have unhelpfully only been conducted in English, which fails to do justice to a writer who has questioned both monolingualism in general and the primacy of English as a world language specifically. The aim of this thesis, then, is to offer the first comprehensive survey of this long and far-reaching involvement, and so to show that Anglophone world literature, and Coetzee's contribution to it, takes place not only in English, emanating from a northern centre out to 'peripheral' Anglophone zones, but also in Spanish (and other world languages), with an explicit location in southern contexts, particularly in South America, and certainly outside the Iberian Peninsula.

Significantly, while we are looking at these complex phenomena from the perspective of Coetzee considered as a major world writer, this view did not always hold. If he, together with Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014), brought South Africa to the centre of the world literary stage in the 1980s and 90s, the situation was very different when he began writing in the early 1970s, when, to use the Bourdieusian terms adopted by Pascale Casanova, the region was culturally dominated and part of the literary periphery. Crucially, as Casanova sees it, the visibility was

made possible through a series of strategies, as she explains in *The World Republic of Letters* (French original, 1999):

The creative liberty of writers from peripheral countries is not given to them straight away: they earn it as the result of struggles whose reality is denied in the name of literary universality and the equality of all writers as creative artists, by inventing complex strategies that profoundly alter the universe of literary possibilities (177).

While Coetzee took part in these strategies, he would envisage a version of location that was not anchored in the idea of nation. However, Coetzee's geographical and cultural situation also needs a critical frame that exceeds the vision of Bourdieu adopted by Casanova, for it is located in the south and is partly determined by the dynamics of the Cold War, as Orsini, Srivastava and Zecchini have argued in *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form: Cold War, Decolonization and Third World Print Cultures* (2022):

A Cold War lens on world literature helps focus the relationship between literature and politics in terms that diverge from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the gradual accumulation of literary value translating into autonomous art—terms reprised by Pascale Casanova in her historical paradigm of world literature (40-41).

Crucially, Orsini, Srivastava and Zecchini also stress the importance of translation in the predicament of Cold War literature (43). Overall, in Coetzee's operation in the field of world literature we find an increased use of translation as a vehicle for circulation and an instrument to bring his linguistic concerns to the fore, coupled with a permanent awareness of the provinciality that obscures and largely overrides the idea of the national.

This thesis argues that such provincial awareness has been presented in the last decade as his personal vision of the south, a territorial agglomeration in the Southern Hemisphere that Coetzee defines in his 'own somewhat heterodox view' in one of his lectures at the 'Literatures of the South' seminars he directed in Argentina: 'It is the view of a practising writer who is also a human being who has lived most of his life in two regions of the South – the real South – and is today visiting a third region of the South' (Coetzee 2016a, 5). As can be seen, Coetzee's

personal vision is eminently geographical, and comprises of South Africa, the Australian continent and the Southern Cone. Nonetheless, what Coetzee did not make explicit in his Buenos Aires lectures is that the south is not only Anglophone, but also Hispanophone, and, in addition, that particular forms of Spanish are spoken in the Southern Cone.² In this thesis I aim to show how his geographical conception and these two different linguistic worlds come together in his intellectual vision of the south, which is not an original construction of Coetzee, but one of the many South-South perspectives that exist, as shown in *Worlding the South: Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture and the Southern Settler Colonies* (2021), the recent collection edited by Sarah Comyn and Porscha Fermanis.

Coetzee's embrace of Spanish is at least partly a reaction to what he perceives to be the overwhelming role of English as a world language. Crucially, Coetzee's status as a world writer with northern credentials as expressed in literary awards – he is the only writer to have won the Booker Prize twice *and* the Nobel Prize – grants him a symbolic power and cultural capital that has enabled him to stage this reaction in the form of a 'language switch' and a 'hemisphere switch' backed by the international publishing industry. From this point of view, Coetzee is using Spanish less as the container of an important literary tradition than as an instrument: an-other language, one with which to gain freedom and a certain imaginative leeway that enriches the writing of his fictions in English.

Therefore, if on the one hand in Coetzee there is a sustained interest in Spanish present from a very early stage in his career, on the other hand the language progressively turns into a vehicle to question and distance himself from the worldview of the English language. He declared as much in an interview with Soledad Costantini in Madrid in 2018:

I believe that being enclosed in a single language means being enclosed in a specific worldview. I've throughout my writing career worked in English, but as the years have

² Chilean Spanish and River Plate Spanish, common to Argentina and Uruguay.

gone on, I've become progressively, further – I moved further and further away from the English worldview (Coetzee 2018a).

As can be gathered from Coetzee's response, this intellectual movement entails more of a distancing from English than an exclusive commitment to Spanish, and throughout his career there were indeed other linguistic worldviews which he moved towards, like the Dutch for example: an equally long engagement that manifested in Coetzee's translations, critical work and occasional publication precedence in that language. However, if Dutch is very specifically related to the north, Europe and the Netherlands – though also with an imperial history discernible in the Afrikaans of Coetzee's family background – the location of the Spanish language today is far more complex and diffuse. Moreover, with its strong presence in the south, it is more attuned to Coetzee's recent politics of writing.

Crucially, then, Coetzee's move towards Spanish language and Hispanic literatures must not be understood as the embrace of a single worldview that could potentially be identified with that of a specific country, but rather as a commitment to a series of *Hispanic worlds* without clearly defined frontiers. So, if Coetzee's involvement with Spanish is in the first place a reaction to the global dominance of English, it is also related to his complicated relationship with national identities and his reluctance to be tied to any national worldview. This problem was delineated in an interview with Tony Morphet in 1987, in which Coetzee was asked whether he conceived 'the novel as in any way a task presented' to him 'by history – the history of South Africa specifically'. Coetzee's answer is interesting for the way in which he seemed to suggest there were overarching forces putting him in a box of a certain nationality, in this case South African:

Perhaps that is my fate. On the other hand, I sometimes wonder whether it isn't simply that vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing, and criticism that is forcing on me the fate of being a "South African novelist." (Coetzee 1987a, 460).

Significantly, from the very beginning of his career Coetzee found ways to limit the constraints of the ideological superstructure he referred to. One of them was to keep two separate lines of English publication, an international one based in the north and a local one in South Africa.

These strategies reflected an awareness of a peripherality that was not only South African, but one shared by other former colonies that still experience the cultural dominance of Great Britain and the United States. Eventually, one of Coetzee's most radical moves was relocation to Adelaide in December 2002, which was followed by the acquisition of Australian nationality in 2006. Crucially, the construction of Coetzee's Australian identity during this century also gave rise to and further reinforced southern involvements that preceded his travels to South America, anticipating the reflection of a shared peripherality in the Southern Hemisphere that not only takes place in English, but also in Spanish.

Towards a Southern Idea of Peripherality

While Coetzee's English-speaking Afrikaner South African origin matched his identity as a world writer and public intellectual during his early and mature periods – although in an intricate way – the relationship became more complicated after his retirement and relocation to Australia. Significantly, the move yielded three fictions: *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), novels that have, to some extent, an explicitly Australian setting – as opposed to the *Jesus* novels which, although written in an Australian context, do not. Nonetheless, while Coetzee's acquired Australianness implied a change of nationality that manifested itself in his narrative, the transposition did not involve a 'language switch', which the equally southern, but also Hispanic *Jesus* novels period would indeed entail.

After those three fictions, Coetzee set out to finish his *autre*-biographical trilogy *Scenes from Provincial Life. Summertime* (2009) stages a return to his original meridional location of South

Africa, but also a retrospective gaze towards his youthful fascination with southern Hispanic literature, and particularly so with the work of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904-73). Two years later, in September 2011 – in a fragmentary but regular process that went largely unnoticed in the Anglosphere – Coetzee began to travel to the Southern Cone (usually flying from Australia via Chile to Argentina), and the next year he would commence work on *The Childhood of Jesus*. The yearly trips to a part of the world Coetzee was eventually going to call ‘a third region of the South’ yielded not only the writing of the *Jesus* novels, but also the introductions for his *Biblioteca personal* published in Argentina (2013-17) and as many as ten different lectures (Coetzee 2016a, 5). While five were read in English in Buenos Aires – ‘The Idea of a Personal Library’ (2014) at the Museum of Latin American Art and the other four at the San Martín National University (2015-16) – the other five were read *in Spanish* in Santiago – his speech at the book launch of *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello* (2015) and the four lectures for children at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (2015-18).

Crucially, the combination of these endeavours granted his writing of the period, and especially the *Jesus* cycle, a Spanish language element. The importance of this phenomenon is that the term world writer – which has so liberally and frequently been applied to Coetzee – can only be truly meaningful if our understanding thereof is not limited to the English language. This thesis represents the first effort to bridge this gap in Coetzee studies in particular but also, within the field of contemporary world literature, it situates itself alongside other recent studies which read major Anglophone authors and Hispanophone contexts in hemispheric terms.³ One is *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (2017), by Harris Feinsod, whose analysis of poetic praxis and literary relations across the Americas sets to ‘strategically unsettle major historiographical and aesthetic distinctions’ between the continental axis of the north and

³ I refer to ‘world literature’, following Damrosch, as ‘a mode of a circulation and of reading’ (5).

the south (19). Another significant study is *Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphs, and Khipu* (2020), by Edgar Garcia, who studies ‘how indigenous signs play an integral but unrecognized role in shaping world poetics’, thus laying ‘bare the semiotic and poetic patterns of the indigenous Americas that impact contemporary North American and Latin American poetry’ (4). Instead of disappearing by dint of capitalist modernity, Garcia argues that these signs ‘continue to cast meaning over the landscape of human thought, even dispelling the murky inheritances of colonial historicity in contemporary existence’ (35). These innovative critical approaches are especially useful when considering Coetzee as a southern writer who puts many of the cultural conventions of western modernity into question, such as the dominance of English and the prevalence of the north over the south. By using a methodology combining book historical, close reading and reading in translation approaches, I will explore these different angles which together constitute what I have come to call Coetzee’s *Hispanic worlds*.

To outline the depth and extent of Coetzee’s Hispanophone involvements, I will now summarise these in chronological order before going on to introduce an outline for each of my four chapters. These Hispanic worlds date from the very beginning of Coetzee’s life as a writer and intellectual, beginning in the 1970s. They have included the teaching of Neruda’s poetry (1973) and the short stories of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) and Julio Cortázar (1914-84; 1974), during his tenure at UCT, but also the appearance of Hispanic elements in some of Coetzee’s novels, beginning with *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). Furthermore, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) and Neruda appear as important presences in the published essays of the period. The involvements persisted during the 1980s: there are Hispanic elements in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Foe* (1986), and Cervantes was to come to the foreground as the main figure of the ‘Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech’ (1987). Furthermore, in parallel to Coetzee’s own efforts, the publication of the Spanish translation of *Barbarians* in Argentina (1983) signalled the

beginning of his circulation in the language, one that until the end of the century was very much independent from Anglophone publication and indeed marked by difficulties and discontinuities.

The 1990s also saw Hispanic elements appear in *Age of Iron* (1990) and *Disgrace* (1999), coupled with a more profound engagement with South American intellectuals in Coetzee's critical writings, first marked by the Mario Vargas Llosa (b. 1936) reference in 'Emerging from Censorship' (1993), and eventually by the long review of Borges' *Collected Fictions* (1998), which is arguably the best English-language introduction to the Argentine writer. During the 2000s Coetzee's relationship with Spanish was further intensified, as became clear in the references to *Don Quixote* (1605-15) and South American poets contained in *Youth*, and the publication of 'A House in Spain' (2002). Furthermore, there were Borgesian elements in *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* and *He and His Man* (2003) and a quixotic one in *Slow Man* (2005). This was followed by a long review of Gabriel García Márquez's (1927-2014) *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, which also dwells heavily on Cervantes (2006). And there were references to Borges, García Márquez and Javier Marías (1951-2022) in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) and the forementioned Neruda element in *Summertime* (2009).⁴

Although Coetzee's relationship with Spanish language and Hispanic literatures is both long-standing and complex, his creation of Hispanic worlds was richest and most profound during the 2010s, for during this decade he not only revisited every aspect of his intellectual career in a Hispanic medium, but also delved into at least one uncharted territory: writing for children. Crucially, this varied set of projects was fuelled by Coetzee's frequent travels to the Southern Cone from 2011 to 2018. The Hispanic intellectual stimulus continued to mark his

⁴ Both *Foe* and *Summertime* have important Portuguese elements. In *Summertime*, Adriana uses the language, and an authorial note is included: 'My thanks to Marília Bandeira for assistance with Brazilian Portuguese'. Significantly, both texts take place in the Lusophone south.

work in line with the development delineated above: while ‘The Old Woman and the Cats’ (2013) was set in Spain, *Here & Now: Letters 2008-2011* (2013) contained important references to Borges, and quixotic reflections appeared again in *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy* (2015), which was first published in Spanish translation in Argentina. That year Coetzee not only initiated his academic engagements in the Southern Cone, but also opened a parallel line of publication there, one that tended to diverge from the peninsular one. This included the translation of *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (2015) and his twelve-volume *Biblioteca personal* in Argentina (2013-17), and *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello* (2015) and *Coetzee y los niños escritores* in Chile (2019). Moreover, his regular travels also allowed Coetzee to discover Argentine writer Antonio Di Benedetto (1922-86), and to write an important essay on him (2017).

Even though the initiatives described above were mostly perceptible for Southern Cone readers, Coetzee’s relationship with Spanish came to the fore for Anglophone readers in the *Jesus* novels, which take place in an unnamed Hispanophone territory. As I will argue, the trilogy represents a summa of Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds and the culmination of his long and far-reaching interest in and acquaintance with different aspects of Hispanic cultures. Perhaps the single most important of these is his long-standing relationship with Cervantes. This role becomes most visible in the use of a *Don Quixote* epigraph in *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), which marks the entrance into a Cervantean world and establishes the intertextual relationship with it we find across the cycle. Crucially, as my opening remarks highlight, the trilogy was first available *as a trilogy* in Spanish translation in Chile and then in the English original in Australia. Therefore, Coetzee’s insistence on southern publication allowed books and ideas to travel bilingually in the Southern Hemisphere and independently from the large-scale operation of northern publishing groups.

Significantly, this phenomenon correlated with Coetzee's concerns about the global dominance of English, and his interest in a relatively minor regional language like Afrikaans and a minor imperial language like Dutch, expressed in translations and his unusual choices for first publications. Nonetheless, the main language Coetzee chose to exert this pressure upon English was Spanish, *also* an imperial and global language, a complicated position that I will also address. Analysing these different aspects of Coetzee's engagement with Hispanophone literature, my aim will be to resituate his work within world literature debates, particularly insofar as for a critic like Stefan Helgesson Coetzee has managed to achieve this despite writing 'in the hypercentral language of English' (89). By focusing on Coetzee's career from this innovative perspective, my critical project aims to show that besides the more visible Anglophone thread of world literature – produced globally, but mainly published in the northern centres, whence it circulates to peripheral zones – there is also an important current that is produced in Spanish *and* in the south, and that these strands are also connected, thus widening and enriching the scope of the field. This phenomenon was acknowledged as far back as 1953, when Jorge Luis Borges published his seminal essay 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', in which he expresses his belief that Argentine and South American writers should draw inspiration or materials from the entire Western tradition. This canonical text, which David Damrosch included in *World Literature in Theory*, will be further discussed in Chapter 3 alongside Coetzee's CNA-prize speech of 1981, (published as 'SA Authors Must Learn Modesty') which shows how Coetzee developed his own terminology, transitioning from an affirmation of 'provincialism' in the 1980s to one of the 'south' since the 2010s.

The Anglophone centrality I refer to was already questioned by Casanova in a quotation I will revisit. In *The World Republic of Letters*, Casanova proposed the idea of 'a world that has its own capital', which in her vision was Paris (4). By contrast, in Coetzee's world there are no such

capitals, but rather relatively diffused regions, with an acknowledgment of the overwhelming influence of the north, whence literary works begin their circulation. In a similar vein, according to David Damrosch in *What Is World Literature?* (2003), the discipline is ‘a mode of circulation and of reading’, and ‘a literary work manifests itself differently abroad than it does at home’ (5-6). While this certainly applies to Coetzee’s work as well, the problem is that from his relocation to Australia ideas of ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ have become increasingly blurred and complicated. More recently, while Rebecca Walkowitz pointed out in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (2015) that *Childhood* ‘initially appeared in Dutch’, the fact is that Coetzee kept moving forward in surprising ways in terms of his linguistic decisions concerning not only his southern publishing in Spanish, but also his own – extremely limited – writing in the language (3). This phenomenon can be connected to the fact that Coetzee’s texts indeed coexist in different languages. Another significant study to bear in mind when reading Coetzee is Alexander Beecroft’s *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (2015). Beecroft argues that ‘any given text may be found in more than one literature, as different modes of reading that text may contextualize it very differently’, and this is particularly true of the *Jesus* novels, which read differently in English and Spanish, as Chapter 4 will show (16). Indeed, Beecroft’s study is a good vehicle to complement a Bourdieusian system adapted by Casanova that relies too much on an underlying set of economic metaphors (e.g., ‘cultural capital’), which according to Beecroft ‘tends to simplify our understanding of complex systems in order to make them easier to understand’, whereas ‘ecology is more comfortable accepting that the complexity may be inherent to the system’ (18). It is therefore useful – and correct – to understand Coetzee’s circulation as part of what Beecroft calls ‘global literary ecology’, that is, one without discernible borders (36).

Finally, the work of Francesca Orsini must also be considered in this evolving debate. Her collaborative project ‘Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies: For a Ground-up and Located Approach to World Literature’, in a similar way to Beecroft’s model, strives to move beyond an approach based on the idea of nation – and international relations. Indeed, Laachir, Marzagora, and Orsini propose that

a located and multilingual approach shows that the imperial centre-colonial (or quasi-colonial) periphery axis was only one among the vectors of circulation, that European literature was also co-constituted through this axis rather than being a prior formation, and that language, or rather multilingualism, may indeed be a better starting point than the nation for comparative literature (5).

Therefore, while Orsini and her colleagues aim to replace the Casanova narrative of European centres, they complement and enrich Damrosch’s idea of circulation, thus creating what they call ‘the *texture* of world literature’ (5). Orsini further contributed to the debate in ‘The Locations of (World Literature): Perspectives from Africa and South Asia’, her co-authored introduction – with Laetitia Zecchini – to the special issue she edited for the *Journal of World Literature* in 2019. Reflecting on the strong relationship between perspective (even a global one) and location, they argued:

Building on Damrosch’s point, location for us is not simply a geographical, historical or cultural context but a standpoint, a position, an orientation, a necessarily partial and particular perspective, however complex, ample and multiversal it may be, from which a writer represents and imagines his or her worlds’ (146).

As this thesis will go on to explore, Coetzee’s own perspective has always been distinctively southern: whether he was writing from South Africa, Australia or an imagined Southern Cone, he was always looking at the world from the south.

These recent gambits effectively situate Coetzee in the company of two authors Jarad Zimble analyses in ‘Literary Worlds and Literary Fields’ (2018). Writing about Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) and Stefan Heym (1913-2001), Zimble notes:

Clearly, their careers cannot be understood in terms of single national literary communities or traditions, or even single linguistic regions, and if a sense of ‘transnational space’ and its systemic relations is necessary for understanding the works of any twentieth-century authors, it must be necessary for understanding theirs. (2018, 74).

I argue that even though the case of Coetzee is like the one of Nabokov and Heym, his space is rather ‘transoceanic’, or more precisely ‘southern transoceanic’. It is also worth noting that the creation of this space was made possible by the dynamics of the Cold War, which established connections that were independent from the main west-east antagonism. As Orsini, Srivastava, and Zecchini have argued:

These decades produced curious *world-readers* who regularly sought out literary (and non-literary) writings from other parts of the globe, particularly, though not exclusively, from the world’s hotspots or decolonizing nations (41).

Therefore, Coetzee the world writer was infused by the world reader who had absorbed Borges, Neruda and Cortázar in Cape Town, writers whose visions were also distinctively southern. In addition, the Cold War dynamics in which Coetzee took part also involved a flow of ideas from the south to the north under different guises, as Neelam Srivastava shows in ‘Publishing the Resistance: Third-Worldist Writing in Cold War Italy’ (2022):

Examining the cultural work of publishing and the form of print culture it produced reverses the direction of travel relating to the exchange of ideas between colony and metropole, as it is conventionally understood (197).

The work of publishing houses like Feltrinelli and Einaudi in bringing through translation and publishing a southern, third-worldist vision into view in the north can be seen in parallel to Coetzee’s own efforts to make the south visible, which under different guises have taken place throughout his career. Moreover, it is worth noting that Coetzee’s career is still in train as he moves into his ninth decade, and indeed many important developments happened during the writing of this thesis. A to date overlooked fact is that at the vantage point of 2022, Coetzee has been active almost as many years in the twenty-first century as in the twentieth, and the concerns

that he is bringing forward through his intellectual praxis during his late period are indeed innovative and ground-breaking.

Four Hispanic Worlds

In Chapter 1, ‘A Distinctive Circulation: Coetzee in Spanish Language’, I explore the first of Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds, one that was created not directly by him, but by the different translators and publishers who managed the circulation of his books in Spanish translation. To analyse its at once southern and Hispanophone dimensions, the methodology used is book historical, mapping the circulation of Coetzee’s work in the Hispanosphere. Indeed, we only understand Coetzee’s worldliness wholly when we study his circulation in a language other than English. Significantly, because Spanish has a similar global reach to English, it provides a key example for understanding how Coetzee’s books travelled in translation, and hence amplifies the sense in which he is a world writer, a picture that might be easily expandable to include his circulation in other languages, though this lies beyond the scope of the present study.

While the first Spanish translation appeared in Argentina in 1983, thereafter Coetzee’s books appeared in Spain. However, the success of Coetzee’s career in the Anglosphere did not always have an effect on his Spanish language publication. He found himself for many years without a publisher in the language and only appeared again – and for the first time with commitment and stability – in 2000. Crucially, the fact that the *Jesus* trilogy was first published in Chile brought Coetzee’s publication history in Spanish decisively back to the Southern Cone, where it had started in 1983, suggesting that we have come full circle. Nonetheless, the cycle was completed very differently than it had started, for if Coetzee was a complete unknown in Argentina in 1983, he was a world writer by the time the first edition of his lengthiest narrative project was published in Chile in 2019. Therefore, in addition to documenting the changing

nature of Coetzee's circulation in Spanish over four decades, this analysis also sheds light on the shifting sands of international publishing across this period, offering key insights into the infrastructure that significantly determines the shape of the global literary market – against *and* with which Coetzee works.

In Chapter 2, 'Influence(d): Coetzee's Engagement with Hispanophone Letters', I analyse Coetzee's journalistic, critical and academic work on Hispanic literatures as a component of his South-South affiliations and as forming another of his Hispanic worlds. Although these activities are related, they are also distinct in terms of methodology, diffusion and the specificity of the public they aim to address. Even though for many readers the Hispanophone component of Coetzee's praxis only came to the fore in the 2010s, in this chapter I discuss that in fact this has been a prominent feature throughout his career. To do this, I examine his early advocacy for teaching Hispanic writers at UCT in the early 1970s, when the English Department there was following a narrowly Leavisite and exclusively Anglophone programme of study. By doing this, I shed light on Coetzee's role as a teacher when he returned to South Africa from America, and contrast the archival evidence found in my research with the somewhat distanced, ironic and semi-fictionalized accounts of *Youth* (2002) and *Summertime* (2009).

I also analyse Coetzee's journalistic and critical writing on Hispanic literatures, and particularly how his reviews were substantial pieces not only on well-established Hispanophone writers like García Márquez and Borges, but also on a lesser-known writer like Di Benedetto. In the Colombian's case, Coetzee shows in precise ways how the writers who preceded him – chief among them Cervantes – made his achievement possible. In the Argentine's case, Coetzee sets out to introduce to Anglophone readers a writer who until then was not even widely known in the Spanish-speaking world. Crucially, by performing these operations Coetzee specifically

contributed to expanding the range of what English readers understood to be Hispanophone literature in translation.

In Chapter 3, ‘Peripheral World Writing: Borges, Coetzee, and the South’, I turn my attention to the later phase of Coetzee’s engagement with Hispanic literatures by beginning with an earlier moment in the global dissemination of South American literature through the figure of Borges. In this third Hispanic world, I analyse Coetzee’s engagement with the Argentine writer in two main dimensions. I examine the strong influence Borges exercised on Coetzee’s fiction, particularly in the Australian novels and beyond. Many of the recurrent tropes of Coetzee’s *oeuvre*, such as the double, the library and the constant intertextual treatment of his work, stem in part from Borges. I also argue that when Coetzee won the Nobel Prize in 2003, he chose to look back to and newly engage with the Southern Hemisphere through Borges.

In Coetzee we find a world writer who recalibrates his gaze on his South African origin and, rather than identifying with an originary nation-state, begins to move away from the merely provincial in favour of a territory that he would come to conceptualise broadly as the south. A fuller understanding of what the south has come to mean for Coetzee, and especially his insistence on its Spanish language dimensions, takes us beyond Borges to Coetzee’s more recent South America-based, Hispanophone literary and theoretical gambits. This phenomenon materialized in Coetzee’s work as editor of his own *Biblioteca personal* in Buenos Aires (2013-17), coupled with his pedagogic efforts in the Southern Cone. One was the *Literaturas del Sur* Professorship he held in Argentina (2015-18), which allowed for a development of his idea of the south. The other was his participation in the *La Ciudad y las Palabras* Programme in Chile (2015 to present), which yielded four lectures for children.

Finally, in Chapter 4, ‘A Southern Cervantean Narrative: *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* Novels’, I link these converging concerns of worldliness, translation and South American writing

to show how all of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds come together in the artistic vision of the trilogy. The *Jesus* novels continue the concerns with the provinces, the south, and the hegemony of the Anglophone publishing world that I draw attention to in the first three chapters. Nonetheless, the trilogy also ascribes a renewed intensity to the other three Hispanic worlds, for this lengthiest narrative project of Coetzee's career indeed takes place in a Spanish-speaking territory. Crucially, within this Hispanophone and southern fictional panorama, the touchstone of the whole cycle is Cervantes' *Don Quixote* as the *only* book in the trilogy. In addition, the constant Cervantean references across the cycle also allow us to see it as something like the Bible of this Hispanic and *southern* narrative world.

I explore the many geographical, nomenclative and cultural commonalities between the trilogy's fictional world and the Hispanic world's real features: one emanating from Spain, but located outside of it, and more precisely, in the south. This meridional voyage relates to the idea of translation within the novels, for they were written in English but purportedly take place in Spanish. As a matter of fact, it is not only language that undergoes this operation, but also artistic and literary works, which have been transformed into children's versions while retaining their identity. The transmission of the classics, the presence of *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* and the absence of real libraries, all point to an etiolated or faded version of what we think of as European transplanted into a new land. This operates as a foundation for the southern, Hispanic world of the trilogy, and has implications for the way we understand world literature.

If Coetzee's *Jesus* novels – and indeed his late period generally – reveal anything about Anglophone world literature, this is perhaps counterintuitively executed through their insistence on the reality of their Hispanic worlds. While they cannot bear comparison with Coetzee's Anglophone worlds, which is manifest in the enduring importance of texts like *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *Doubling the Point* (1992), and *Disgrace* (1999), the writer went through the effort

of learning Spanish and becoming acquainted with Hispanic literatures and cultures. Therefore, this elective affinity for the Hispanic is interesting as a key to understanding an important but until now more or less uncharted aspect of Coetzee's *oeuvre*, one that is long-standing and profound, but that only came to the foreground during the last decade. Crucially, the *Jesus* novels justify the scope of this research, for the reality of a trilogy that was first published in Spanish and its several layers of Hispanophone sediment needed an examination of the whole gamut of Coetzee's Hispanic involvements. By engaging with the Hispanic current of world literature, my aim is to think about Coetzee *differently*, particularly as an author who is *not* through and through an Anglophone writer.

Coetzee's relationship with the Hispanic operates at different levels, some of which exceed the scope of one thesis alone. Crucially, one must bear in mind that the *Jesus* novels require us to look at these examples as bearing far-reaching implications when they might previously have seemed isolated. I should note that the argument I am bringing forward about Coetzee's Hispanic worlds, and indeed of the need for a Hispanic dimension to discussions of Coetzee as a world writer, emerges cumulatively through the chapters. While the final chapter deals specifically with the *Jesus* novels, it is intended to be read as a culmination of the thesis as a whole: it places a Hispanic analysis of the *Jesus* novels in particular in the wider context of Coetzee's lifelong and multi-layered interaction and involvement with different aspects of the Spanish language and Hispanic literatures, thus rendering our understanding of world literature – or more precisely Coetzee as a world writer in dialogue with the institution of world literature – both more complex and richer as a consequence.

I will finish by attempting a retrospective summary of Coetzee's intellectual journey towards these Hispanic, southern worlds, seen from the perspective of its seeming continuation.⁵ This is the story of a South African man born in Cape Town in 1940 – a region of the south – whose family had an ambiguous relationship with both Afrikaans and English but whose first language at least for literary expression was the latter. During the 1970s he becomes a writer in that world language, and eventually gains international fame as a 'South African writer'. However, this perceived South African-ness obscures a whole other range of cultural and linguistic attachments – among them with the Hispanic world – and he grows increasingly uncomfortable with a national category he did not choose or felt a member of, and simultaneously becomes more conscious of a geographical peripherality that exceeds the southern tip of Africa. Having established himself as a world writer in English by the end of the last century, he then emigrates to Australia – a second region of the south – and later becomes an Australian citizen. While living there, his peripheral gaze expands further, and he begins visiting the Southern Cone – a third region of the south – and shortly thereafter starts writing the *Jesus* trilogy, the most extensive narrative project of his career, and one also marked by a strong Hispanic element. During this creative and intellectually rich late period, he uses his cultural capital to acquire currency in Spanish, another world language, one that he then exploits to investigate the operations of world literature in the periphery, and particularly so in his elective, personal world of the south.

Finally, a word on my own investment in this thesis. Perhaps unusually for the English Faculty at Oxford, this is the work of a Chilean man who had previously never lived in an Anglophone country, whose mother tongue is Spanish and original academic activity took place

⁵ In August 2022 El Hilo de Ariadna published in Spanish translation Coetzee's novella *El polaco (The Pole)* in Buenos Aires.

in Law, and who slowly progressed towards Literary Studies during the last decade – mainly by working on Coetzee. As I pondered the feasibility of this project, it was perhaps natural to ask oneself whether adding yet another chapter to an already vast and rich critical bibliography on Coetzee was justified. While doing so, I also realised that, because of my background, my perspective was necessarily different, and thus potentially innovative. Crucially, if the worlds described in this thesis are Hispanic, the perspective from which I approach them comes – as Coetzee’s does – from the south. Consequently, I have my own Hispanophone point of view: a lifetime experience that I bring with me to this work. The position from which I am speaking thus allows me an immediate access to a large proportion of the sources. For this reason, the English translation of some Hispanic works are often my own, and always so in the case of private correspondence with writers like J.M. Guelbenzu or César Aira. In short, in writing this thesis in English I engaged in a similar linguistic process to the one that Coetzee became involved in whilst writing the *Jesus* novels, but in the opposite direction: I have examined his Hispanic worlds with a southern Spanish-language worldview and translated them into English. In other words, I attempted to become an Anglophone critic so I could write this thesis.

I refer to ‘periphery’ as a region located far from the literary centres of the north, while ‘province’, following Casanova, is ‘a sort of disinherited country’ in terms of literary geography, which does not coincide with a political world map (95). I refer to ‘the south’ broadly as the Southern Hemisphere, as a literary territory denoting ‘a rural and archaic world prey to magical styles of thought and trapped in the closed life of families and villages’, and as corresponding to Coetzee’s own personal idea of a literary territory comprising elements from the previous categories (337).

1

A Distinctive Circulation: Coetzee in Spanish Language

The words are Spanish but they are tied to universal meanings

J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*

Coetzee's books first became available in Spanish translation as his work was beginning to achieve international fame, a phenomenon that took shape between the late 1970s and early 1980s, and particularly through two events. The first was the publication of *In the Heart of the Country* by Secker & Warburg in 1977, which transformed Coetzee into an international writer transcending the limited South African book market and cultural milieu. Published in French as *Au cœur de ce pays* by Maurice Nadeau in 1981, it marked Coetzee's first translation. The second was that *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) gained critical acclaim when published in America (1982, as the French translation), which prompted a wider and quicker dissemination than Coetzee's previous texts.⁶ Translated into Dutch, Italian, and Spanish in 1983, and German in 1984, it marked his first publications in these languages.

Coetzee's work has thus been available in Spanish for nearly forty years. The importance of a study of Coetzee's Hispanophone translations consists in their contribution to debates about the role of translation in the construction of world literature, the making of a world writer, and to our understanding of Coetzee as one such writer. What follows is a detailed account of Coetzee's publishing history in the Spanish-speaking world, which also provides a cartography of the different Hispanic contexts in which his texts have circulated. This account constitutes

⁶ The back cover reproduced a review quote from *The New York Times Book Review* ('A real literary event') alongside blurbs from Greene and Burgess.

the first of the four Hispanic worlds of this thesis, and it precedes the other three because it is not a world of Coetzee's own making but relates more to the agency of publishers, translators, and writers acting as literary advisors in the Hispanosphere. Therefore, this chapter examines Coetzee texts considering the book supply chain in the Spanish-speaking world, in which the author does not participate.

I argue that Coetzee's circulation in Spanish is *distinctive* because it mostly progressed at a tangent from his international circulation in English. For example, it did not start from a northern publishing centre whence it circulated to peripheral zones, but from a southern one that possessed no irradiation capacity, for the later Spanish publishers only became aware of the initial Argentine publication nearly forty years later *and* through this research. These peculiarities show that world literature circulates differently in Spanish, and the historical circumstances that led to this distinctiveness need to be explained thoroughly. Therefore, this chapter is equally an account of Hispanophone publishing history during the last century, one that was significantly affected by the political, social, and economic upheavals that took place in different Hispanophone regions – and particularly in the three countries where Coetzee has been published: Argentina, Spain and Chile – which partly explains why the main centre of the Hispanic publishing industry kept changing.

I will begin by outlining what I see as four phases in Coetzee's translation into Spanish and the publishing and theoretical context against which we might understand it, before moving on to four case studies: *Barbarians*, *Michael K*, *Disgrace* and *Death*. Because this chapter examines the way Coetzee's books travelled across different regions, I will use a book historical approach and bibliographical methods as developed by Robert Darnton and John B. Thompson to analyse these stages and discuss Coetzee's globalising Hispanophone world. In the following sections I show that Coetzee's literary prestige enables him to create his own circulation and modes of

reading. Crucially, a thorough understanding of Coetzee as a world writer involves reading him in a language other than English, and the global scope of Spanish makes it a useful vehicle to do so.

The Phases of Coetzee's Translation into Spanish

The first publication phase (1983-96) occurred in Argentina and Spain: Coetzee's first translation was *Esperando a los bárbaros* (*Barbarians*), published in 1983 in Buenos Aires by Riesa, a short-lived imprint of an educational publishing house. Eventually Coetzee was published in Spain, where all his translations would appear until 2013. His books were first made available there by Alfaguara: they published *Vida y época de Michael K.* in 1987, *Foe* in 1988 and *Esperando a los bárbaros* in 1989 (in a different translation to the Argentine version). Later Anaya & Mario Muchnik published *El maestro de Petersburgo* (*The Master of Petersburg*) in 1996, the only new translation to appear in the 1990s. Coincidentally, but also due to changes within the ownership structures of major players of Spanish cultural life, both Alfaguara and Anaya & Mario Muchnik were imprints of larger educational publishing groups, Santillana and Anaya. Coetzee had no contact with these publishers and the contracts were handled by his agent, which shows that this is a Hispanic world he did not create himself, but that publishers and translators crafted for him (Coetzee 2019a).

The second, transitional phase (2000-03), took place in Spain. Stronger economic backing and corporate publishing made a safe bet on an internationally known writer possible, involving a curatorial project of several titles in two different imprints. Coetzee appeared in Mondadori, which in 2001 entered a joint venture with Random House. The resulting company published his new books and backlist: *Desgracia* (*Disgrace*) and *Infancia* (*Boyhood*) in 2000, *Las vidas de los animales* (*The Lives of Animals*) in 2001, *Juventud* (*Youth*) and *La edad de hierro* (*Age of Iron*) in 2002, and *En medio de ninguna parte* (*In the Heart of the Country*) in 2003. As Random House was the

parent company of both Secker & Warburg and Mondadori, Coetzee books appeared in imprints belonging to the same multinational corporation both in English and Spanish translation, and this had an impact on their circulation.

In the third phase (2004-14), following the Nobel Prize, Coetzee's work achieved world literature status, as reflected in the translations published after the award and the different approach adopted to promote his books. Mondadori published *Elizabeth Costello* in 2004, *Hombre lento (Slow Man)* in 2005, *Diario de un mal año (Diary of a Bad Year)* in 2007, *Tierras de poniente (Dusklands)* and *Mecanismos internos (Inner Workings)* in 2009, *Verano (Summertime)* in 2010, *Aquí y ahora (Here & Now)* in 2012 (preceding the American and British editions of 2013) and *La infancia de Jesús (Childhood)* in 2013. Simultaneously, Debate (Random House Mondadori's essay imprint) published *Costas extrañas (Stranger Shores)* in 2004 and *Contra la censura (Giving Offense)* in 2007. Also, two independent Spanish publishers made his books available. *Él y su hombre (He and His Man)* was published by Alpha Decay in 2008, and *Paisaje sudafricano (an abridged White Writing)* was put out by Días Contados in 2013.

The fourth phase (2015-22) combines corporate and independent publishing on both sides of the Atlantic. Coetzee books appeared in El Hilo de Ariadna, an independent Argentine publishing house, and Penguin Random House in Spain, the publishing group that resulted from the purchase of Mondadori by Random House in 2012 and the subsequent merger of Bertelsmann (the latter's parent company) and Pearson in 2013. El Hilo de Ariadna published *Cartas de navegación (Doubling the Point)* in 2015 and *Mecanismos internos (Inner Workings)* in 2018 (in a different translation to the previous Spanish version), while Penguin Random House made available *Los días de Jesús en la escuela (School days)* in 2017. The two companies published different editions of *El buen relato (The Good Story)* in 2015 (preceding the American and British editions of 2015 and 2016), *Tres cuentos (Three Stories)* in 2016 in Argentina and 2018 in Spain, and *Las manos*

de los maestros (a two-volume set of essays exclusive to the Hispanic world) in 2016. Eventually, while they jointly published Coetzee's latest works, *Siete cuentos morales* in 2017 and *La muerte de Jesús (Death)* in 2019 (preceding the Australian edition of that year), the recent novella *El polaco* (2022) was published by El Hilo de Ariadna only. Finally, there were editions in Chile: El Faro published *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello* (two short stories) in 2015, and Ediciones UC published *Coetzee y los niños escritores* (four lectures for children) in 2019.

From the vantage point of 2022, all Coetzee books are available in Spanish; *Aquí y ahora*, *El buen relato*, *Siete cuentos morales* and *Muerte* were initially only available in the language, while *Las manos de los maestros*, the two Chilean books, and *El polaco* remain exclusively Hispanophone. These contrasting conditions – the relatively slow translation until 1999, which then accelerated and was subsequently followed by first publication in Spanish – are the consequence of a multiplicity of factors. After the first Argentine book, the initial slowness in Spain was caused by poor sales in a publishing market controlled by large economic groups. As the preceding paragraph sequence showed, between 1983 and 1999 only four different titles were published by as many as three publishers, and two of them closed shortly after the Coetzee books appeared (Riesa and Anaya & Mario Muchnik). Significantly, Coetzee was little known in the Hispanophone world during that period. This is corroborated by the fact that only two articles on him appeared in *El País* at that time: one on his first Booker Prize and the other on the initial Prix Femina Étranger, both for *Michael K* (Gallego-Díaz 1983, AFP 1985).

The later accelerated translation can also be attributed to two reasons. First, Coetzee's visibility changed dramatically with the award of the Booker Prize to *Disgrace* in 1999, which happened in a globalised world and during the age of the internet. Secondly, Coetzee's changeover from a series of struggling imprints controlled by Spanish publishing groups to an enormous corporate publisher that held the rights to both his English originals and Spanish

translations allowed for a consistent reprint, distribution and export scheme and the translation of his backlist. Finally, the recent, apparent priority for publication in Spanish translations vis-à-vis the English originals was sparked by Coetzee's interest in the language coupled with concern about the role of English as a world language and his relationship with Southern Cone publishers.

The Hispanic publication history shows there are many particularities about Coetzee the world writer, a position enriched by different versions of that concept. If from a Eurocentric worldview we encounter a 'peripheral' writer in terms of his origin, Coetzee's circulation took place closer to the 'metropolitan' literary centres by virtue of several factors. He wrote in English, benefiting from its global hegemony and imperial history. Moreover, his books appeared in local and international publishers with a global reach that also shifted over time. Furthermore, he wrote from former colonies (South Africa and Australia) in a period in which postcolonial literature became a celebrated category, especially in London and by the Booker Prize. Crucially, his ascent to literary prominence coincided with global attention to apartheid South Africa, often expressed through literary awards, including the Nobel Prize. Finally, during this time Coetzee was being translated into European languages, and his publication history in Spanish – which is also a global language – provides a key example for understanding how his books travelled.

Significantly, Coetzee's status of world writer was partly achieved through the translation of his books into several languages, and Spanish is among the languages with most Coetzee translations, along with Dutch, French, and German.⁷ The four phases I identified went abreast with significant changes in transnational publication and conglomeration in the Hispanic world,

⁷The *Index Translationum* records thirty-six translations into French and Dutch, thirty-two into German, and twenty-nine into Spanish. However, the last recorded entries are from 2008, and there are important omissions, like the first Spanish, Italian and Dutch translations of *Barbarians* (1983). Source: www.unesco.org (Consulted on 28 July 2022).

sometimes following or diverging from similar developments in the Anglosphere. This chapter, then, analyses these processes, by setting out and examining the four phases and concentrating on four books as case studies. The first is *Barbarians*, the initial Spanish-language translation and the only retranslated novel. The second is *Michael K*, a translation sparked by Coetzee's first Booker Prize and the initial peninsular publication. The third is *Disgrace*, a translation marked by Coetzee's second Booker Prize and coupled with the publication and distribution of his backlist across the Hispanophone world. The fourth is *Death*, which appeared in Chile, and in Spanish before in English.

I will now explain the theoretical context of this chapter and the historical background of the Hispanophone publishing world, which is crucial to understanding the distinctiveness of Coetzee's circulation in Spanish. Darnton defines the purpose of book history as 'to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behaviour of mankind during the last five hundred years' (107). Differingly, Burton and Hofmeyr define 'the core business' of book history as 'to grasp the relationship between the text, the object that conveys the text and the act that grasps it' (266). Drawing these concepts of text, object, and act together, in what follows I will investigate the relationship between Coetzee's work and his Spanish translations, their publication history and their reception. As Boehmer, Kunstmann, Mukhopadhyay and Rogers argue in *The Global Histories of Books: Methods and Practices* (2017), 'the novels of Coetzee, Ishiguro, and Kundera circulate globally in translation with great, if not greater, frequency than their originals', like English newspapers circulated throughout the nineteenth-century British Empire (5).

However, my reading provides an alternative to the previous view, for Coetzee's Hispanophone circulation was distinct for two reasons. Firstly, the Anglophone publishing network is centred in London, whence books begin to circulate to countries that had colonial

ties with Britain, except for America, and this is determined by copyright territories and treaties. This *modus operandi* was different to that recently prevalent in the Hispanosphere, due to several factors. Even though many important books were printed in Madrid and exported to the colonies during the height of Spain's imperial power, including *Don Quixote*, this scheme stopped before London played an equivalent role for the British Empire. There are therefore no Spanish equivalents to colonial editions (in red cloth binding instead of the customary blue) of Henry James novels, for example. Significantly, of the two peninsular publishing centres, Barcelona is more important than Madrid (and the Mediterranean city also concentrates a strong publishing activity in Catalan, both of local literature and in translation, including Coetzee books).

Another difference between the Anglophone and Hispanophone publishing worlds is that while vestigial imperial links play an important role in the former, they do not in the latter, where mentalities tend to be more national, and the only connection is the language. This is due to historical reasons: after the Spanish Empire was obliterated during the Napoleonic Wars, the emerging Hispanic American republics severed political and even cultural ties with Spain, preferring instead to follow French institutions as models for their educational and legal systems. Jaime Salinas explains the phenomenon from a peninsular perspective:

hay problemas de tipo histórico. España ha sido un país que ha vivido aislado no solo de Europa, sino también de Latinoamérica, limitándose a reivindicar su titularidad de madre patria (Salinas 2013, 54).
(there are problems of historical kind. Spain has been a country isolated not only from Europe, but also from Latin America, where it only asserts its entitlement as the mother country [own translation]).

Furthermore, Spanish books were henceforth not printed with a view to export, although some of them crossed the Atlantic. While Hispanic American republics also printed their own texts

independently, the publishing industry only began life during the 1880s in countries like Chile or Argentina.⁸

This lack of a fluid publishing connection between Spain and Latin America persisted well into the twentieth century, and it affected Coetzee's circulation, for his books hardly travelled beyond the borders of the countries in which they were published. Consequently, up to the millennium Spanish translations of Coetzee books were published in either Argentina or Spain without the network to export them to other countries in a systematic way. Significantly, Alfaguara had serious distribution problems *within* Spain, and their catalogue was developed for domestic readers only (Salinas 2020, 377).

The aftermath of these practices was that very few readers outside of Argentina, and probably none in Spain, encountered Riesa's *Barbarians* (1983). *Mutatis mutandis*, only a few bookshops in certain Latin American capitals imported directly from Spain Alfaguara's *Michael K* (1987), *Foe* (1988), *Barbarians* (1989), and Anaya & Mario Muchnik's *Master* (1996). Consequently, Coetzee's circulation in Spanish was initially extremely limited: the books were national publications and their distribution remained domestic, and hence their cultural impact was not perceived in the Hispanosphere during the last century, in another example of the distinctiveness of Coetzee's Hispanophone circulation.

While Coetzee was almost unknown in the Hispanosphere in the 1980s, the situation in the Anglosphere was different. Global concern with apartheid South Africa shaped the impact of books like *Barbarians*, *Michael K*, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* and *July's People* in cities like Sydney, Los Angeles or London – manifested in reviews and seminars and often tied to parallel developments in popular culture, like the Artists United Against Apartheid's *Sun City*

⁸ It was a fast development. While Rubén Darío's *Azul...* was published in Valparaíso in 1888, both Borges and Neruda published their first books in 1923: *Fervor de Buenos Aires* in the Argentine capital and *Crepusculario* in Santiago.

record, amplifying its effect. Significantly, this phenomenon did not take place in Madrid, Buenos Aires or Santiago, capitals of countries then dealing with their own contemporary or recently overcome authoritarian realities. It was therefore only after the millennium and the various mergers and acquisitions in the world publishing industry that the Hispanic network came to resemble the Anglophone one, with a peninsular first publication and exports or Latin American printings. Only then did Coetzee's Spanish translations cease to be landlocked and become one of the many currents informing the trajectories of world literature, demonstrating that those imperial linguistic remnants allow books to travel and some of them to become global.

In what follows, I will shed light on the on-going debate about world literature in translation, first sparked nearly two decades ago with the English translation of Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*. Casanova offered a critical picture of a literary world driven by cultural and institutional forces, and thus relatively independent of economic and political realities. Identifying the capital of that imaginary republic with Paris, she argued that the city operated as the legitimising authority for the 'world writer' category. Her French focus means her analysis requires adaptation when assessing a writer like Coetzee, for whom London rather than Paris was the platform for his world stage elevation, though through the same forces she describes, namely the English language world dominance and the prestige achieved via the Nobel Prize.

However, what Casanova terms *littérisation*, the means of achieving visibility in world letters, remains relevant in Coetzee's case. According to Casanova, writers become visible mainly through translation, and we can argue that Coetzee acquired that position after the translations of *Barbarians* into French (1982), Dutch, Italian, Spanish (1983), and German (1984) began to circulate. But what kind of writer was Coetzee before his *littérisation*? If we answer with Casanova's study in view, the fact that Coetzee wrote in apartheid South Africa would make him what she terms 'a writer on the periphery' (101). However, Coetzee also wrote in what was and

still is the world's dominant language, which in part explains the attention which South African reality (and its literary depiction) received during the 1980s and 1990s, and it was also that people were exercised about apartheid as such.

Significantly, the dominance of English is a consequence of continued British military and economic power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as David Cannadine explains in *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906*:

For a relatively short span of time, two recently united islands situated off the coast of mainland Europe briefly achieved industrial supremacy and imperial pre-eminence, and as a result came to wield for much of the nineteenth century a wholly disproportionate influence over the affairs and the territories of the world (9).

Furthermore, Coetzee wrote in a country that despite its political ostracism was part of the global English publishing network, which was also a consequence of British imperial power. Coetzee's status as an Anglophone southern writer is bound up with this phenomenon, of which he was not oblivious, for the problematic question of imperial languages (Dutch and English) and the way they dominate has been present since *Dusklands*. Moreover, since *Heart* Coetzee appeared in a British publishing house that had its books circulating across the Anglosphere, except for America.

These factors were part of a system that was undergoing a transformation, as Thompson explained: 'by the 1960s the landscape of trade publishing in the United States and Britain, which had been characterized by a plurality of independent firms, had begun to change' (2012, 103). This evidence shows that from the beginning Coetzee, whether unwittingly or not, was on a path that eventually became global and corporate. Nonetheless, it was not the only path he chose, for he continued to be published by Ravan Press in South Africa: their edition of *Heart* was bilingual, as the dialogues appeared in Afrikaans. He chose this double mechanism as a reaction to what he deemed a colonial situation, as he explained in an interview with Stephen Watson in 1978: 'our literary products are flown to the metropolitan centre and re-exported to us from there at a

vastly increased price' (22). Therefore, as Andrew van der Vlies remarked: 'Coetzee wanted local publication for his novels, and used his growing international reputation to secure it' (2007, 137).

Consequently, Coetzee maintained both a dual global/corporate and local/independent outlook from the beginning, which he retained in some form across his career. This side of his publishing approach, the seeming will to address different readers with a book, can be related to the topicality of apartheid, the resistance it engendered as a global issue, and how it was perceived in the world. As Attridge explains: 'the predicament literature found itself in during the struggle against apartheid has implications which extend to writing and reading in less politically fraught contexts' (2004, 2). Similarly, Van der Vlies quotes an interview with Mike Kirkwood, the founding editor of *Staffrider*, in which he explained that in supporting local publishers who often had a radical agenda, Coetzee was 'acting as a committed opponent of the apartheid structure' (2007, 137). Thus, Coetzee addressed apartheid reality through simultaneous publication of a book in different editions for specific markets, reflecting the South African political situation on a global publishing scale.

Yet, though Coetzee's publishing approach has persisted, the locations, languages and motivations have shifted over time. First it took place in South Africa and English for *Dusklands*, *Heart* (also in Afrikaans), *Barbarians* and *Michael K*, the motivation being resistance to apartheid. Then, in the Netherlands and Dutch for *Diary*, *Childhood* and *Schooldays*, the motivation being a courtesy of Coetzee to his publisher, as in a country with a significant English-speaking population readers would probably prefer to read the original than wait for the Dutch translation (Cossée 2016). Later, in the Hispanosphere and Spanish with *Here & Now*, *The Good Story*, *Siete cuentos morales*, *Death* and *El polaco*, there is a redoubled resistance to English predominance as a world language, coupled with the relationship Coetzee forged with local publishers and his Spanish language interest.

In *Born Translated* (2015), Walkowitz attempts to get to grips with this increasingly complex publishing landscape, arguing that today ‘many books do not appear at first only in a single language. Instead, they appear simultaneously or nearly simultaneously in multiple languages’ (1-2). Her analysis shows that the traditional circulation cycle of world publishing – the original followed by translations – is no longer the only operative form today, for some works are ‘born translated’: their language appears to invite translation, and she uses Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) and Coetzee’s recent publication history as key examples. While the Bolaño case is problematic, for the Chilean writer did not write for a world literary market, as Paulo Lemos Horta has shown, Walkowitz’s study makes sense in the case of *Childhood* and *Schooldays*, first published in the Netherlands and born translated in two ways: narratologically, because they pretend to take place in Spanish, and from a book historical perspective, because they appeared first in Dutch (393).⁹

However, *Muerte*, the Spanish ‘translation’ of the ‘original’ *Death* – which was only published several months later – took this phenomenon to another level. While there is nothing specifically Dutch about *De kinderjaren van Jezus* and *De schooldagen van Jezus*, in *Muerte* – and more importantly, in the finished trilogy – there is an identity of non-English textual elements, the first publication language and the language an ‘ideal reader’ should know to fully understand the text, because the Spanish elements of the manuscript remain untranslated in the English ‘original’. Coetzee performed the final stage of this operation by reading five lectures in Spanish in Santiago (2015-18), of which four were eventually collected in *Coetzee y los niños escritores* (2019). These little-known texts are beyond born-translated, as Chapter 3 will explain.

⁹ Drawing on archival evidence, Lemos Horta shows that the ‘received narrative of Bolaño as a writer of and perhaps for the world market’ is not accurate. He questions the convenience of ‘automatically’ looking at Bolaño from New York, noting that his translation into English does not mark ‘his entry into world letters’ (401).

While David Damrosch has defined world literature as ‘a mode of circulation and of reading’, Coetzee’s operation in the field is more complicated (5). In the rest of this chapter, I will show that Coetzee’s circulation in Spanish at first was a world that other agents built for him – mainly publishers, literary advisors, and translators. However, during this century he chooses to actively intervene in this process, and herein lies the distinctiveness of his first Hispanic world. Because of his literary awards, which in Bourdieusian terms translate as a capacity to generate and retain symbolic capital (‘commonly called prestige, reputation, fame etc.’), Coetzee has been able to create his own circulation and reading modes (Bourdieu 230). In doing so he has been no revolutionary, but an innovative, subtle player who, while accepting some of the rules of corporate world publishing, has also negotiated others that apply only to him. In doing so, he has significantly broadened the spectrum of world literature in translation.

In order to understand the story of Coetzee’s first publication in Spanish, I will offer some historical context of Argentina’s economic and political circumstances during the late twentieth-century, for they are crucial to grasp both the earliness of this first translation and its lack of continuity and irradiation to other Hispanophone countries.

From Argentina to Spain (1983-96)

The Buenos Aires publication of *Barbarians* in 1983, Coetzee’s first Spanish language translation, shows that the Argentine capital could then still be considered as one of the Hispanosphere’s major literary centres. However, its exclusive primacy had ended around twenty years earlier. That eminence was due to several factors, chief among them the dire state of the Spanish publishing industry from the start of the Civil War (1936) until around 1955, when it began to recover. As Salinas relates, the Francoist government went to the extreme of forbidding critical activity altogether, and the best promotion publishers could hope for their books was either ‘que

te retiraran un libro o que te lo destrozara la censura' ('that they requisitioned a book or censorship destroyed it', 2013; 91, 101).

Buenos Aires did indeed capitalize on the Spanish situation, as some of the major publications of the period show: almost all of Borges and Neruda, Federico García Lorca's (1898-1936) *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1945, *The House of Bernarda Alba*), Miguel Ángel Asturias' (1899-1974) *Hombres de maíz* (1949, *Men of Maize*), and García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) appeared there. Nevertheless, the key literary asset of Buenos Aires is that Borges, the most important Hispanophone writer after Cervantes, lived and worked there between 1921 and 1985, participating in its cultural life and etching an indelible mark for the city on the map of world letters, in a way that no other southern city has.

However, despite its illustrious past, the political, cultural and economic conditions that had made publishing a flourishing industry in Buenos Aires deteriorated rapidly in the 1970s. V.S. Naipaul (1932-2018) witnessed this new reality in 1972: 'the half-made city is within Borges's memory. Now, already, there is decay' (104). However, Naipaul could not have foreseen how bad a turn the Argentine situation would take during military rule (1976-83), and this is important to understand, for Coetzee was published in Argentina then. During the seven years it lasted, the military perpetrated multiple crimes against civilians, almost managed to start a war against Chile in 1978 (averted by desperate Papal mediation) and initiated the Falklands War in 1982, which had disastrous consequences for Argentine public life and morale.

I will now concentrate on the military's policies on the intellectual field, characterised by a marked hostility towards writers and, more generally, by what José Luis de Diego defined as a 'sistemática agresión contra el mundo de la cultura' ('a systematic attack against the cultural world', 176). This reality resonates with the South African situation during the same period, and therefore explains Coetzee's remark about the peoples of the south: 'we have troubled histories

behind us’ – Argentina had six successful *coups d’état* during the twentieth century alone (2016a, 5).

Rather than persecuting texts, regrettably writers received the worst treatment initially. On 24 March 1976, the insurrection day, Antonio Di Benedetto was taken from his office in Mendoza (he was subdirector of the *Los Andes* newspaper) and imprisoned for eighteen months before escaping to Spain in 1977 (178). On 4 May, Haroldo Conti (1925-1976?) was detained and has been ‘disappeared’ ever since. Apart from these personal tragedies – of which I provided only two examples – more generally De Diego assessed three key studies that analysed Argentine cultural repression. Counterintuitively, the phenomenon started as far back as 1960, as he reveals, citing pioneering work by Andrés Avellaneda (1986). The military implemented, therefore, a variation of degree rather than of nature in this process (174).

Another important dossier was prepared by Ciancaglini, Cardoso and Seoane in 1996, which unveiled the ‘Operación Claridad’ (‘Operation Clarity’). These files originated in an undercover intelligence organization codenamed ‘Recursos Humanos’ (‘Human Resources’), led by the Ministry of Education (176-7). Although documents were marked ‘proceder a su destrucción cuando deje de tener utilidad informativa’ (‘to be destroyed when no longer informatively useful’), reporters found twenty-three extant files revealing

un gigantesco operativo encubierto de identificación, espionaje e información a los grupos operativos militares sobre personas del ámbito educativo y cultural (177).
(a gigantic undercover operation of identification, espionage, and information supply on people from the educational and cultural milieu to the operative military groups [own translation]).

Had the Argentine military not perpetrated atrocities, the text would read like a political jargon parody intertwined with racing terminology, producing a Beckettian comic effect. The operation was

comandado por el coronel retirado Agustín Valladares, compañero de promoción y amigo del general Roberto Viola. Los niveles de peligrosidad se ordenaban en curiosas

“fórmulas”: Cortázar estaba en la “Fórmula 4”, la gente considerada más peligrosa. Borges estaba en la “Fórmula 1”, sin “antecedentes marxistas” pero que convenía “seguir de cerca”. Según la fuente, Ernesto Sabato figuraba como “Fórmula 3” (177).

(led by retired Colonel Agustín Valladares, classmate and friend of General Roberto Viola. The risk levels were classified in odd ‘formulas’: Cortázar was in ‘Formula 4’, the people considered most dangerous. Borges was in ‘Formula 1’, without ‘a Marxist history’ but still worth of ‘close watch’. According to the source, Ernesto Sabato appeared in ‘Formula 3’ [own translation]).

De Diego specifies Valladares held his office until 2 December 1983, one week before the democratic government took over and after generating in excess of 8,000 redundancies in seven years (178).

The third significant study, by Invernizzi and Gociol (2001), revealed the dictatorship’s attack was not only aimed at individuals, but also at books. Furthermore, they demonstrated their approach was

Una estrategia de alcance nacional (...) un proyecto racional, sistemático, con objetivos definidos (181).

(a strategy of national reach (...) a rational, systematic project with specific targets [own translation]).

Significantly, the General Publications Office of the Ministry of the Interior was responsible for censorship: among the prohibited titles were Vargas Llosa’s *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* and Neruda’s *Residence on Earth* (182).

So, if Argentine reality in 1983 was almost dystopian, how was it possible that a book like *Barbarians* got published? According to De Diego, the reason is that

resulta coincidente la opinión de que para 1981 el aparato censor había disminuido su presión sobre editoriales, librerías y escritores (186).

(there is consensus that by 1981 the censorship apparatus had loosened its grip over publishing houses, bookshops and writers [own translation]).

However, the dictatorship’s effect on the publishing industry was nothing short of disastrous. If in 1974 fifty million books with an average print run of 10,100 copies were produced, in 1979 total production barely reached seventeen million with an average print run of 3,800.

Furthermore, a profound currency devaluation in 1975 made it difficult to buy foreign rights (187-8).

The previous factors must be considered when analysing the Argentine publication of *Barbarians*, my first case study. It took place relatively early, when weighed against Coetzee's career, and abreast with translation into other major languages. Although one would assume it was a consequence of Coetzee's ascent after winning the 1981 James Tait Black and Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prizes, the more likely reason was American publication in early 1982.¹⁰ Interestingly, *Barbarians* appeared in an imprint of educational publishing house Kapelusz: Río Inmóvil Ediciones S.A. (Riesa), in April 1983.¹¹

Writer César Aira (b. 1949), who acted as advisor to Riesa, explained in a private email how the project unfolded:

Recuerdo bien cómo fue el proceso de Riesa, en el que participé activamente.

La casa madre era una editorial de textos escolares que usted quizás conoció, Kapelusz, en su rubro la más importante de la lengua durante muchos años. Era una empresa familiar, de los descendientes de Adolfo Kapelusz, el fundador. En los años 80 estaba en decadencia, debido a desintelencias dentro de la familia, ineptia y posiblemente deshonestidad. Años después la compró el grupo colombiano Norma.

Uno de los descendientes de Adolfo K., de apellido Irigoyen, concibió el proyecto de hacer una división literaria de la editorial. Era un soñador, un contemplativo, nacido rico, sin ocupaciones (aunque creo que era abogado). Los miembros del directorio, de mala gana, le dieron luz verde, en parte porque no les costaba nada, en parte porque Irigoyen estaba enfermo de cáncer y habría sido una crueldad no darle el gusto. Se instaló en una oficina del hermoso edificio que tenía la editorial, pergeñó el nombre (tomado del título de una novela de Mallea), y consiguió el presupuesto para hacer traducir y publicar unas cuantas novelas, más como *hobby* personal que como empresa propiamente dicha. Me llamó como asesor, y trabajamos juntos unos meses,

¹⁰ These awards did not have the relevance of the Booker Prize, as Richard Todd explained: 'their significance was not noticed by the majority of the reading public, nor were they promoted as being of interest to consumers of contemporary fiction, whether borrowers or buyers' (55).

¹¹ The image *río inmóvil* ('motionless river') was created by Eduardo Mallea (1903-82) in *La ciudad junto al río inmóvil* in 1936. In 1982 Borges cited it in his poem 'Juan López and John Ward', written in the wake of the Falklands War. The poem entails a critique of nationalisms and the bellicosity they engender by imagining two well-read soldiers from each country: 'López had been born in the city next to the motionless river; Ward, in the outskirts of the city through which Father Brown had walked. He had studied Spanish so as to read the Quixote'. Instead of becoming friends, they kill one another: 'and each one was Cain, and each one, Abel' (Borges 1982). The poem appeared in *Clarín* on 26 July and *The Times* on 18 September.

quizás un año. Cuando murió perdí contacto, no recuerdo si la editorial persistió un tiempo más.

Los libros que mandaba una agencia los leía todos yo. Recuerdo haber leído y recomendado el de Coetzee (Aira 2021).

(I remember well how the Riesa process unfolded, in which I actively participated.

The parent company was a publishing house of educational texts you might have known, Kapelusz, the most important in its field in the language for many years. It was a family company, owned by the descendants of Adolfo Kapelusz, the founder. During the 1980s it was in decline, due to nonsense within the family, ineptitude, and possibly dishonesty as well. Years later it was bought by the Colombian group Norma.

One of Adolfo K.'s descendants, named Irigoyen, came up with the project of a literary division within the publishing house. He was a dreamer, a contemplative soul, born rich, without occupations (although I think he was a lawyer). The members of the board of directors, reluctantly, gave him the green-light, partly because it implied no expense for them, partly because Irigoyen had cancer and it would have been a cruelty not to grant him this. He took an office in the beautiful building the publishing house had, drafted the name (taken from the title of a Mallea novel), and got the budget to have translated and published a few novels, more as a personal hobby than as a proper company.¹² He called me as advisor, and we worked together for a few months, perhaps a year. When he died, I lost contact, I cannot remember if it kept going any longer.

I read all the books sent by an agency. I remember having read and recommended Coetzee's [own translation]).

This quote is indicative of the history of many publishing companies in South America. Often founded by Spanish immigrants, in the 1990s they were absorbed by larger publishing groups: for example, Sudamericana – the publishing house behind *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – was bought by Random House in 1998.

Significantly, Coetzee's first Spanish language publication resulted from the advice of Aira, then a writer and translator like him and one of the foremost avant-garde writers in the world today. In book-historical terms, Aira's recommendation is indicative of a bygone era in publishing, for Coetzee's literary stature was noticed by another writer whose advice was crucial for publishing him, whereas in today's publishing world the decision is often taken by accountants and publicists who prescind from literary advice.

¹² According to the *Argentine Official Gazette*, the imprint was established on 28 December 1982, so the name probably was a homage to Mallea, who had died on 12 November.

Barbarians was translated by Nicolás Heredia and issued as a paperback without flaps, each sheet fully cut and glued at the spine. The cover depicts a forest on fire and three horsemen carrying spears and shields. The copyright page does not specify its territorial extent and does not list as ‘edición original’ the Secker & Warburg first edition of 27 October 1980, but the Penguin first American edition of 29 April 1982. This is possibly because the edition offered to Riesa was the US one, for Latin American rights are usually managed from New York. Furthermore, the American edition (with blurbs by Gordimer, Graham Greene and Anthony Burgess on the covers) for the first time conveyed the idea that a Coetzee book was a literary event and was therefore more attractive for a foreign publisher than the English edition (with the mention ‘From the author of *In the Heart of the Country*’ and blurbs from Tom Paulin, C.J. Driver and André Brink on the covers). *Barbarians* had a print run of 4,000 copies, which is consistent with the then average one in Argentina, which in 1983 had a population of twenty-nine million. Nonetheless, it was large for the first translation of a writer then completely unknown in the Hispanosphere. As a comparison, the *editio princeps* of *Dusklands* had a print run of 4,500 copies, and South Africa in 1974 had a population of twenty-five million – but both author and theme were local (Kannemeyer 245).

Significantly, the printing took place in April 1983, during the military dictatorship, which was only overthrown by the elections of 30 October, resulting in the return of democracy and Raúl Alfonsín’s presidency, which began on 10 December. An original editorial text on the covers describes the novel and Coetzee as ‘una de las figuras más importantes de la literatura sudafricana contemporánea’ (‘one of the most important figures of contemporary South African literature’). Although the circumstances surrounding Riesa in Argentina during the 1980s may recall the ones of Ravan in South Africa during the 1970s, they were in fact quite different. Even if the political context was similar, it seems to be the only connecting point between the two, for

Riesa's catalogue was literary and non-political, favouring untranslated writers like Coetzee or French filmmaker Claude Lelouch (b. 1937), and local writers like Silvina Bullrich (1915-1990).

The impact and trajectory of the Argentine *Barbarians* remain difficult to follow, partly because Riesa closed the year after publication. Furthermore, no copies were exported, so the novel's resonance was restricted to military-ruled Argentina. Under these conditions, Darnton's assessment that 'reading remains the most difficult stage to study in the circuit that books follow' rings true (122). Nonetheless, Johanna Richter's analysis of the publication of Asturias' *Hombres de maíz* in Buenos Aires thirty years earlier is illustrative, for she notes that 'the Spanish publishing history of *Men of Maize* actually shows sustained public interest. There have been thirteen editions by Losada in Buenos Aires' (156).¹³ If we apply her assessment to Coetzee's work, the fact is that it did not elicit an important public attention, for there were no reprints.

What is perhaps more important in the big picture is the pattern that Riesa followed, which was to be repeated in the Hispanic world during the 1980s and 1990s and affected Coetzee's circulation: a relatively independent effort of literary publishing manages to put out a few titles during a couple of years, only to be subsequently dissolved by the parent company or bought by a larger publishing group. Riesa was founded in 1982 and published twenty-one titles before folding in 1984. The parent company, Kapelusz, was sold to the Colombian group Carvajal in 1994, which was subsequently sold in 2016 to the Spanish multinational Prisa (Melgarejo 2005, Tosi 2019). Consequently, the Riesa *Barbarians* can be seen as a remnant of the former unrivalled Argentine primacy in the Hispanic publishing world, but by 1983 its centre had already shifted to Spain.

¹³ Although both Losada and Riesa were independent Buenos Aires publishers, the former was a major business with authors like Neruda in its catalogue and a flagship bookshop with a theatre in Corrientes Street, the equivalent to a combination of London's Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue.

The economic context in which Coetzee was first published in Spanish was difficult. Even though democracy was regained in 1983, Argentina endured for the rest of the decade a major financial crisis. On top of the previously mentioned 1975 currency devaluation, in the following years an unprecedented inflationary process unfolded. In 1983 inflation had been at 434 per cent and reached 688 per cent the following year (Krikorian 534).

These figures show an important difference between the Spanish and Argentine transitions: while the former was coupled with economic growth, the latter was scarred by crisis.

As De Diego explains:

la apertura política y la libertad de expresión y circulación de libros no mitigará una crisis económica que, lejos de ser coyuntural, había llegado para quedarse por muchos años más (188).

(Political openness, free speech and book circulation will not mitigate an economic crisis that, far from being temporary, had come to stay for many years [own translation]).

This may have been a contributing factor for Riesa's demise, as by the time their last books were published local businesses could hardly pay their obligations to foreign creditors in dollars, as the local currency continuously lost its value and, as Aira explained, Kapelusz was also in crisis.

This initial translation had no irradiation beyond Argentina, and it was to be thirty-two years until Coetzee was published in the south again. In the meantime, he was published in Spain, a country in which political and social upheavals also strongly determined the course of its publishing industry during the twentieth century. In order to understand Coetzee's discovery and circulation in Spain, I will offer some historical context of its twentieth-century publishing world, for it further demonstrates the distinctiveness of this first Hispanic world that the agency of publishers, literary advisors, and translators built for him.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) produced a major crisis in the Spanish publishing sector, and one from which it took a long time to recover. However, this was to change when Jaime Salinas joined Seix Barral in 1955. Salinas came from a distinguished literary background:

he was the son of poet and academic Pedro Salinas (1891-1951), a member of the Generation of '27 who lectured in Cambridge and the first Spanish translator of Marcel Proust (1871-1922). With the Bostonian publisher mentality acquired through his New England education, Salinas set out to turn Seix Barral into a modern European publishing house. By 1957 he was convinced that Argentina's period of supremacy in literary publishing was ending, as Enric Bou notes:

La educación en Estados Unidos y una visión del mundo mucho más cosmopolita marcaron la intervención de Jaime en la editorial. Puso orden en una organización un tanto caótica y convenció a Barral de que era posible arrebatar la primacía a Buenos Aires, a base de calidad literaria, en el mercado editorial en español (59).
(The education in the United States and a much more cosmopolitan worldview marked Jaime's intervention in the publishing house. He put order into a rather chaotic organisation and convinced Barral that it was possible to snatch the primacy from Buenos Aires, based on literary quality, in the Hispanophone publishing market [own translation]).

It certainly helped matters that from the 1960s Barcelona had experienced a certain degree of freedom that did not exist in Madrid, a capital so closely associated with the Franco regime that Salinas defined it as 'una ciudad de funcionarios' ('a city of civil servants'; 2013, 166).

Salinas also explained the reasons for Barcelona's publishing dominance: 'allí existía una burguesía, estaba al lado de la frontera francesa y es un puerto de mar' ('there was a bourgeoisie there, it was next to the French border and is a seaport'; 2013, 164). Seix Barral published Vargas Llosa's *The Time of the Hero* there in 1963, the novel that started the Latin American Boom, along with other important Hispanic and European novels – among them *El mercurio* (1968) by J.M. Guelbenzu (b. 1944), who was to be Coetzee's publisher during the 1980s. Barcelona's distinctiveness served as a base to further revitalize the Spanish publishing market when democracy was recovered in 1975 (González E. 2012, 109).

After the new regime's period of consolidation, during the 1980s both Madrid and Barcelona regained force as publishing centres, for by then Spain had a solid democracy and healthy economic growth, and joined the European Economic Community in 1986. Since then,

Spain has been the centre of the Hispanic publishing world: the middle-sized and large publishing houses and agents are based in Madrid or Barcelona, where most of Coetzee's books in Spanish translation are published. Significantly, partly because of Spain's economic success, Coetzee books appeared there during the 1980s and 1990s in imprints of educational publishing groups: first Alfaguara and then Anaya & Mario Muchnik. In the rest of this chapter, I will continue to track Coetzee's rising presence in the Hispanophone worlds of both South America and mainland Spain, against a background of political and economic change.

During the late 1980s, Coetzee was published in Spain by Alfaguara, a Madrid literary publishing house about which I will offer some context, for the project was crucial in repositioning Spain within the standards of European publishing. Alfaguara's *raison d'être* was the excellence of its catalogue, and the collection in which Coetzee was published has acquired mythical status in the Hispanophone literary world. Camilo José Cela (1916-2002), who was to win the Nobel Prize in 1989, and his brothers Juan Carlos and Jorge founded Alfaguara, on commission from builder Jesús Huarte, in October 1964 (Bou 328). Cela soon saw Alfaguara as a vehicle with which to have his contemporaries' and own works published during the last, less culturally diminished years of Francoism.¹⁴ Crucially, in October 1976 Jaime Salinas took over as director and relaunched Alfaguara: his importance for the Spanish publishing business was to be colossal.

Salinas had both financial backing and an approach that prioritised the visual aspect of books: he did not consider the title the most important element on the cover, but the author, who had to be granted agency (Salinas 2013, 61). Salinas had previously worked with Giulio

¹⁴ This was not due to Cela's dissidence with Francoism. On the contrary, he was both an active supporter of the regime and a writer endowed with an incomparable commercial instinct. While he had acquired literary prestige in the 1940s, in Alfaguara he found a splendid opportunity to further promote himself. For a detailed analysis of Cela's publishing endeavours, see Ian Gibson's *Cela, el hombre que quiso ganar*.

Einaudi, from whom he had learned the idea of putting the translator's name on the cover (59). Although many of these ideas were common currency in the European publishing world, they were revolutionary for Spain.

Salinas started Alfaguara's literary collection in 1977. However, there was not a significant demand for fiction in Spain during that period:

Primaba el ensayo y se publicaba poca ficción. Desde el principio me planteé una editorial dirigida a una minoría culta, que existe en toda sociedad y que en el fondo es motor propulsor de la cultura (124).

(Essays were in the fore and little fiction was published. From the very beginning I envisaged a publishing house aimed at a cultured minority, which exists in every society and that in the end is the driving engine of culture [own translation]).¹⁵

The explanation for this phenomenon is to be found in the historical threshold Spanish society was going through after 1975, for there were enormous challenges in the aftermath of Francoism, as Salinas explained:

El régimen franquista, a través de la censura y de la represión, redujo el nivel cultural de este país a cotas inimaginables. Ha sido una de las grandes catástrofes de la historia española (2013, 157).

(The Francoist regime, through censorship and repression, reduced the cultural level of this country to unimaginable levels. It has been one of the great catastrophes of Spanish history [own translation]).

Consequently, the Spanish versions of many long-standing features and institutions of other European countries were only created in the peninsula after 1975, including the newspaper of record, *El País* (1976), teaching in other Iberian languages, and the Constitution (1978).

Furthermore, on 23 February 1981 an attempted *coup d'état* took place, and Juan Benet (1927-93) feared a successful attempt for some time (1982; 96, 171). Under this situation, and in another example of the distinctiveness of the Hispanophone publishing world, it seems comprehensible that at first readers wanted essays that would inform their political

¹⁵ Lemos Horta also notes that 'Civil War history dominated publishing lists across Spain in this transition period' (385).

consciousness and decision-making, rather than literature, and this would affect Coetzee's reception in Spain.

Because Coetzee was included in a collection that renovated literary publishing after the dictatorship, understanding the uniqueness of Alfaguara books is important. Salinas only wanted carefully selected materials: porous opaque cardboards for the covers, high grammage papers and sewn sections. Instead of pictorial covers, Alfaguara opted to emphasize the textual elements in Garamond font: the writer's name in large white Roman characters followed by the medium-sized title and smaller translator's name in colour-matched italics, which were stamped with lead types in size six and then amplified, giving them jagged edges that conveyed the idea of survival of written culture in the age of information, as designer Alberto Corazón recalled (Salinas 2020, 328).

The texts were set against a purple background, which was divided by a narrow grey filigree from a further grey background which extended onto the spine, creating the impression of a double cover. Salinas and designer Enric Satué were aware they were introducing writers who often came from literary traditions unrelated to Spain, and the striking covers made an effect akin to that of artwork cards in an exhibition: the unfamiliar, oversized names came to the fore and persisted in the retinae. This was reinforced by the flaps, which were wide enough to contain long cover texts that continued onto the back cover, aiming to convey enough information to enlighten potential readers.

The inspiration was the classic, minimalistic French style of book design for literary fiction, as Salinas explained:

mis puntos de referencia son ciertas editoriales, como Gallimard, de las que uno ve un libro y sabe que es suyo, hayan pasado quince años o cincuenta (2013, 109).
(my reference points are certain publishing houses, like Gallimard, of whom one sees a book and knows it is theirs, whether fifteen or fifty years have elapsed [own translation]).

Salinas' attention to detail shows that artistic considerations took precedence over commercial ones, and that Alfaguara's prestige gradually transmitted to its lesser-known authors, as would happen with Coetzee the following decade.

There was a strong emphasis on European and Hispanic American authors in Alfaguara's catalogue during Salinas' tenure (1977-82), as can be seen by the publication year of certain writers. Benet, García Márquez, Cortázar, Henry Miller (1891-1980) and Patrick Modiano (b. 1945) were published in 1977, Marías and Günther Grass (1927-2015) in 1978, Luis Goytisolo (b. 1935) and Mario Benedetti (1920-2009) in 1979. However, Alfaguara suffered a major economic crisis and came close to disappearing in 1980, until it was bought in July by the Santillana group at the symbolic price of one peseta per stock (Salinas 2013, 128). Nonetheless, the resulting imprint maintained an independent publishing spirit during Guelbenzu's tenure (1982-88), who was able to publish authors based solely on their artistic merit. But the change of ownership implied other interests at play behind the scenes, which would eventually surface and change this *modus operandi* from 1988 onwards, and this would affect Coetzee's circulation in Spanish.

Significantly, during this first period Alfaguara was not only a publishing house, but also a small group of friends – all male – that formed post Francoist Spain's intellectual elite and gathered publishers, writers, and translators. The pivotal figure was Juan Benet, arguably the most important Spanish novelist after Cervantes and yet 'an underappreciated genius of twentieth-century Spanish letters' (Fraser 1). As a matter of fact, the first novel of the Literatura Alfaguara collection was Benet's *En el estado* (1977).

Having forged a reputation with *Volverás a Región* (1967, *Return to Region*) and *Una meditación* (1970, *A Meditation*), Benet was also a very influential and generous figure for the younger generation of Spanish novelists: he recommended the publication of Marías' first novel,

Los dominios del lobo, in 1971 – when the latter was nineteen years old. Benet and Marías had strong ties with Alfaguara: apart from being its authors, they were also members of its foreign literature reading committee, an initiative Salinas copied from Einaudi.

I bring attention to this narrative because in the wake of Coetzee's Nobel Prize announcement in 2003, *El País* commissioned short opinion pieces. In his text, Marías described as a miracle

lo que sucedió con el surafricano Coetzee al poco de que Alfaguara publicase, aún en los años ochenta, sus primeros libros en español, *Vida y época de Michael K. y Foe* (2003). (What happened with South African Coetzee shortly after Alfaguara published, still during the 1980s, his first books in Spanish, *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Foe* [own translation]).

However, Marías wrongly believed Coetzee was first published in Spain, which shows that lack of transatlantic awareness is part of the distinctiveness of the Hispanophone publishing world. The miracle was that Coetzee had been praised by Benet, who hardly ever expressed admiration for living writers.

Moreover, Guelbenzu has revealed in a private email the crucial role Benet played in introducing Coetzee to Spain:

El primero que me habló de Coetzee fue Juan Benet a propósito de *Esperando a los bárbaros*. Gracias a este aviso me interesé por el autor, de modo que sí puede decirse que fui yo el que lo descubrió para Alfaguara (Guelbenzu 2021). (The first person who spoke to me about Coetzee was Juan Benet in relation to *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Thanks to this notice I became interested in the author, so it can be argued that I was the one who discovered him for Alfaguara [own translation]).

Indeed, there is bibliographical evidence that the first intellectual to notice Coetzee in Spain was Benet. His article 'La novela de los prodigios', written in praise of Eduardo Mendoza's (b. 1943) novel *La ciudad de los prodigios* (1986, *The City of Marvels*) the year before the *Michael K* translation was published in Spain, marked the first critical mention of Coetzee in Spanish (2007, 171).

Therefore, as with Aira in Argentina, Coetzee's introduction in Spain came at the highest literary level, and by a writer considered to be one of the great innovators in the history of the

Spanish language: Benet's obituary in *Time* stated that 'because of his expressive narrative style was often likened to France's Marcel Proust, Ireland's James Joyce and the U.S.'s William Faulkner, whom he greatly admired' (18 January 1993, vol. 141, issue 3). Benet possibly met Coetzee at the PEN Congress in New York in June 1986, and may have read *Barbarians* shortly thereafter, for he wrote 'La novela de los prodigios' late that year (2017, 212). Their meeting was timely, for even if Coetzee was acquiring prestige beyond the Anglosphere – for he had won the Prix Femina Étranger in 1985 – he lacked a Spanish publisher at the time.¹⁶

Coincidentally, Guelbenzu had the intention of publishing African writers in Alfaguara, as he confirmed in an interview: books by Chinua Achebe, Ahmadou Kourouma and Wole Soyinka appeared in 1986 (2013). It was also under Guelbenzu's direction that the Spanish rights to *Heart*, *Barbarians*, *Michael K* and *Foe* were acquired, as he explains in a private email:

Alfaguara era una editorial que hacía política de autor; en consecuencia, cuando decidíamos editar a alguien, se hacía con la intención de situarlo entre los lectores españoles, para lo cual era necesario contratar inicialmente varias obras del autor elegido. Era un riesgo si no se acertaba con el autor, pero la idea de ir picoteando en obras sueltas de autores no nos valía. Y esto lo hacíamos por países o áreas idiomáticas con la intención de abrir el abanico de literatura y no quedarnos en el clásico “sota, caballo y rey” que primaba entonces. En concreto, nos dirigimos a África buscando obras en inglés o francés. Yo encargaba a mis lectores de confianza que peinasen el país concreto y emitieran un informe y, a la vista de los informes y tras comentarlos con ellos, yo elegía al autor que consideraba de mayor interés literario; en el caso de Sudáfrica, me decanté por Coetzee y contratamos de entrada los siguientes títulos: *Esperando a los bárbaros*, *Michael K*, *Foe* e *In the Heart of the Country* (2021).

(Alfaguara was a publishing house that had an authorial policy; consequently, when we chose to publish someone, the decision was made with the intention of positioning him among Spanish readers, and in order to do that it was necessary to acquire the rights of several works of the chosen writer initially. There was a risk involved, in case we turned out not to be right about the author, but the idea of sampling single works of authors was not interesting for us. And this we did by countries or linguistic areas with the intention of widening the gamut of literature and not remaining in the classic clear cut that prevailed back then. Specifically, we focused on Africa looking for works in English or French. I instructed my trustworthy readers to leave no stone unturned in the specific country and to submit a report and, in light of the reports and after discussing them with the readers, I would choose the author I deemed to be of greater literary value; in the case of South Africa, I opted for Coetzee and we got the rights from the get-go for the

¹⁶ Significantly, Coetzee keeps in Adelaide a Benet book given by him (Coetzee 2016e).

following titles: *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Michael K*, *Foe* and *In the Heart of the Country* [own translation]).

Therefore, a Spanish publisher only made an extended bet on Coetzee in 1987, when he had already published five critically acclaimed novels in English, which again shows how uncoupled the Hispanophone publishing world was from the Anglophone one at the time. Alfaguara published *Michael K* that October. There are many interesting details about this publication, which I will now examine as a second case study.

The history I have described shapes the form of *Michael K* as a significant publication carrying the Alfaguara trademarks: the focus on the author and the careful design. While the copyright page does not specify the territorial extent, the publisher's texts show how limited knowledge about Coetzee was at the time in Spain:

Novela de evidentes implicaciones alegóricas, *Vida y época de Michael K*. es una de las más importantes obras del gran escritor sudafricano James Coetzee y un fascinante relato, un viaje extraordinario en las entrañas de un país casi desconocido, cuyas desgarraduras son uno de los signos más inequívocos de la crisis de nuestro tiempo.
(A novel of evident allegorical implications, *Life & Times of Michael K* is one of the most important works of the great South African writer James Coetzee and a fascinating narrative, an extraordinary voyage into the heart of an almost unknown country, its conflicts being one of the most unequivocal signs of the crisis of our time [own translation]).

What the reader is offered is basically a novel about apartheid. In fact, if the wide South African reality was almost unknown for the cultivated Spanish public the translation was aimed at, the first and perhaps only association those readers were expected to make was with the political regime.

While the text does not give a key to an understanding of the conflict, it offers insight into a country that at the time had little cultural ties with the Hispanic world. The publisher's text describes Coetzee thus:

es hoy uno de los principales escritores sudafricanos y la más firme esperanza de las letras inglesas.

(is one of the most important South African writers today and the strongest hope of English letters [own translation]).

The accuracy of this statement thirty-five years later shows how fine-tuned Guelbenzu was and attests to the continued prestige of Alfaguara's catalogue. The text also mentions Coetzee's literary awards: the Booker Prize, the Prix Femina Étranger and the Jerusalem Prize, adding that it had been previously granted to Kundera and García Márquez (an Alfaguara author in Spain and an important revenue source, for he had won the Nobel Prize in 1982). The print run of this book and the next Alfaguara titles was of 3,000 copies (Guelbenzu 2021).

It should come as no surprise that *Michael K* was the first book to be translated in Spain, as the Booker Prize awarded to it brought Coetzee international recognition, as Todd has pointed out (212). However, unlike the English-speaking world, the Booker Prize has no direct consequence on Spanish sales: its effect is merely a guarantee of translation and publication for the winning novel. Although educated readers were familiar with the prize and the winner was normally featured in the cultural pages of newspapers during its heyday (as happened in Coetzee's case), the longlist and shortlist were not reported in the press, and the awarded novels did not have a text publicising the fact on the cover.¹⁷ The prize's resonance was also diminished in the Hispanophone world because readers came across the report of a book they could not yet buy, because the Spanish version would only appear a year later. Thus, the Booker's strongest effect took place within the small community of publishers and agents, rather than with the broader reading public.

For the translations, Guelbenzu always looked for 'traductores de confianza' ('trustworthy translators', 2021). The translation of *Michael K* was by Concha Manella, Professor of English at Madrid's Autonomous University. Her version is rendered in a clear Castilian

¹⁷ Other British literary prizes were not accorded any attention in the Spanish press (for example, the James Tait Black and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prizes, both awarded to *Barbarians*).

Spanish and does not contain footnotes. The page facing the half-title lists Coetzee's other books in English: *Dusklands*, *Heart*, *Barbarians* and *Foe*, with an asterisk after the last three indicating future publication. In the end, Alfaguara published only two more books: *Foe* in October 1988 and a new translation of *Barbarians* in July 1989.¹⁸

This last title had been commissioned by Guelbenzu but was published by his successor, Luis Suñén. The collection's design changed: *Barbarians* was published in glossy pictorial covers, and the decorative elements overtook the textual ones. The order of the main elements, in white Roman characters over a black background, was inverted: the large title appeared on top, while the much smaller author's name came below, making it seem less important. The tiny translator's name featured vertically at the bottom and far removed from the main lettering block, conveying the impression they mattered less than previously. The flaps became narrower and had a large authorial photograph, a short biography and a list of other authors who wrote in the same language. The publisher's text was reduced to a paragraph on the covers, which now also contained a barcode, showing that corporate elements were increasingly gaining importance in an imprint that had turned efficiency-driven: 'La nueva dirección respondió a la máxima de "tanto vendes, tanto vales"' ('The new direction responded to the maxim 'the more you sell, the more you are worth', Guelbenzu 2021). After these changes were implemented Alfaguara books ceased to be instantly recognisable, becoming more of a regular trade collection, and thus made less cultural impact. Years later, Salinas declared that 'en Alfaguara se cometió un grave error al cambiar tan precipitadamente las cubiertas' ('Alfaguara made a big mistake in changing the covers so swiftly'; 2013, 62).

¹⁸ Although Alfaguara had the rights, the translation of *Heart* did not materialise because Guelbenzu left in 1988. It was only published in 2003 by Mondadori, who would also publish *Dusklands* in 2009.

If Alfaguara initially had faith in Coetzee, they were not sure of how to introduce him to Spanish readers. Most of the cover text of *Foe* is a comparison between Coetzee's work and Michel Tournier's (1924-2016) *Friday; or, The Other Island*. Interestingly, assessing Coetzee considering his contemporaries instead of presenting him on his own terms would become a common practice of his Spanish publishers. While it does make sense, as Coetzee was effectively little known in the peninsula then, it also shows they lacked the cultural references to assess his literary project thoroughly. This tendency continued in Alfaguara's *Barbarians*, which shows Coetzee's reputation was still not well established in Spain in 1989. The cover included blurbs by Graham Greene (1904-91), 'un libro importante y original' ('an important and original book') and Gordimer, 'un escritor de brillante maestría, tensión y elegancia' ('a writer of brilliant mastery, tension and elegance').

Alfaguara's *Barbarians* appeared in a different translation to the Riesa one, by Manella and Luis Martínez Victorio, an academic at Madrid's Complutense University. As to why the previous Argentine translation was not used, Guelbenzu confirmed Alfaguara was not aware of it (2021). This ignorance was a normal occurrence in the Hispanic publishing world before the internet and global corporate publishing, showing that the transatlantic connection was not strong at the time, and that as late as 1983 Argentine publishers could still be ahead of peninsular ones in discovering international writers and translating them into Spanish. Furthermore, this is a late reflection of a time in which Spain was not the mainland of Hispanophone publishing, a distinctiveness thereof and of Coetzee's first Hispanic world, which several industry players were building for him at the time.

As *Barbarians* is the only Coetzee novel that has had two different Spanish translations, they can be compared to identify variations and to further show that Coetzee was gaining currency in the different guises of the Spanish language. Sometimes the translator's decisions

merely reveal the difference between Argentine and Iberian Spanish: for example, Colonel Joll's sunglasses are rendered as *anteojos* by Heredia and as *gafas* by Manella-Martínez (Coetzee 1980, 2; 1983b, 10; 1989, 10). By the same token, the 'smelly' inn was rendered in the Spanish version as *maloliente*, common in Spain but rare in the Southern Cone, and in the Argentine one as *bediondo*, which is the opposite (1980, 2; 1983b, 11; 1989, 9).

As Buenos Aires was during most of the twentieth century a city of European immigrants, many Argentine Spanish words have a French or English origin and are not used in Spain. For instance, Heredia rendered the bowl of nuts at the inn as *bol* (a common South American Anglicism), whereas Manella-Martínez chose *cuenco*, the word used in Spain, from the Latin *concha* (1980, 1; 1983b, 7; 1989, 9). Some of Heredia's decisions are questionable: for instance, Colonel Joll's Third Bureau is rendered as *Tercer Buró*, but according to the *Diccionario de la lengua española* the organizational meaning of the word *buró* in Spanish *only* applies to the old Communist political organizations, whereas Manella-Martínez's *Tercer Departamento* has more currency in Spanish (1980, 2; 1983b, 8; 1989, 10).

In general, one detects a freer, more colloquial approach in the Argentine version weighed against greater attention to detail in the Spanish one, which is to be expected in the work of two academics, and Alfaguara assigned great importance to translations. However, beginning with a practice that we will see repeated in Coetzee's Spanish publications, they tended to choose different translators for each book.

The first phase of Coetzee publishing in Spanish translation did not make him a household name in the Hispanic world, as can be corroborated by the small print runs, slow sales and lack of reprints: he was by no means a commercial success. This would have been achievable with Alfaguara, for García Márquez and Grass sold very well. Coetzee's meagre sales

took its toll in an imprint belonging to a multimedia group's publishing arm that after 1988 had a more commercial approach, as Guelbenzu explains in a private email:

se estaba introduciendo a Coetzee, era una labor lenta ya [que] aún no había encontrado su sitio, pero confiábamos plenamente en él. Era sólo cuestión de esperar e ir introduciéndolo en los circuitos más literarios, pero no le tuvieron paciencia ni confianza (2021).

(Coetzee was being introduced, it was a slow labour [for] he still had not found his place, but we trusted him all the way. It was just a matter of waiting and introducing him in the more literary circuits, but they had no patience or trust in him [own translation]).

Lacking both awareness of Coetzee's growing international prestige and foresight, Alfaguara dropped him after *Barbarians* appeared in 1989, as Guelbenzu confirmed in an interview in 2013:

tuve la suerte de publicar sus tres primeras novelas cuando ejercía como editor en Alfaguara, donde luego, con mucha vista (risas), se le dejó ir, con tan mala suerte que poco después ganó el Nobel. Cosas que pasan... (2013).

(I had the fortune of publishing his first three novels when I was the publisher in Alfaguara, whence eventually, with great foresight (*laughs*), they let him go, with such bad luck that not long after that he won the Nobel Prize. These things happen... [own translation])

Because of being dropped by Alfaguara, Coetzee books stopped appearing in Spanish for seven years. In 1996 Madrid's Anaya & Mario Muchnik published the Spanish translation of *Master*, which was to be his only book to be made available in the language during the 1990s.¹⁹

This situation is rather uncoupled from Coetzee's position in other European languages then, and the reason is related to a change in the business model of Spanish publishing houses. Both Alfaguara and Anaya & Mario Muchnik were part of publishing groups that initially had educational-didactic catalogues but eventually began to buy literary publishing houses and turning them into their imprints: Santillana purchased Alfaguara in 1980, while Mario Muchnik became an associated publisher with Anaya in 1990 (Muchnik 176). Nonetheless, eventually it became clear that their parent companies had objectives that were beyond literature and even publishing, for they owned newspapers and radio and television stations: Prisa, Santillana's

¹⁹ The copyright page of this book does not specify its territorial extent.

parent company, went on to become the most important multimedia conglomerate in the Hispanosphere. They became, in Salinas's words, 'enormes grupos de poder' ('gigantic power groups'; 2013, 73).

This phenomenon entailed great problems when it came to publishing literary fiction, which was reflected in Anaya & Mario Muchnik's fate: in October 1997 Muchnik was told that his books were 'estupendos, muy bien hechos, el Grupo está orgulloso de ellos, pero la compañía va mal' ('stupendous, very well made, the Group is proud of them, but the company is in trouble'), and his contract was rescinded (Muchnik 204). Thus, it came as no surprise that the French group Vivendi took over Anaya a few months later, defenestrating the few employees from the imprint that the parent company had kept. The consequence of these movements was that in 1997 Coetzee was left without a publisher in the Spanish-speaking world for the third time: first Riesa closed the year after publishing him, then Alfaguara dropped him, and finally Anaya & Mario Muchnik was dissolved. This catastrophic situation was in stark contrast with his prestige in other European languages, for besides the French Prix Femina Étranger of 1985 he was also awarded the Italian Premio Mondello in 1994. In another example of the distinctiveness of his circulation in Spanish, this shows how uncoupled Coetzee's position in the Hispanosphere was from his growing international status until 1999, for his Anglophone and European literary prestige did not percolate into the Spanish-speaking world.

However, as against this intermittent and complicated first phase of Spanish translation, Coetzee books were offered to the public in good translations (which are still, except for the Argentine *Barbarians*, used by his subsequent publishers). This planted the seeds of his future literary prestige in the language, for he was noticed by seminal writers and a limited number of cultivated readers in the Spanish-speaking world. While that prestige would flower only later, it was to be capitalized on by another type of publishing houses in the next century.

A Transitional Phase (2000-03)

The second, shorter phase of Coetzee's publishing in Spanish unfolded between 2000 and 2003, and from this moment on it will partly dovetail with English publication. This period took place exclusively in Spain, where Barcelona-based Grijalbo Mondadori published his books. Italian publishing house Mondadori entered the Hispanic market in 1989, when they bought Grijalbo, a company with operations in Mexico and Spain: the copyright pages from *Boyhood* (2000) to *The Lives of Animals* (2001) show they are assigned worldwide in Spanish to Grijalbo Mondadori S.A. In 2001 they established a joint venture with the Bertelsmann Group, parent company of Random House: the copyright pages from *Age of Iron* (2002) to *Heart* (2003) show they are assigned worldwide in Spanish to Random House Mondadori S.L. Despite the change of ownership, for commercial reasons Coetzee books came out under the imprint Mondadori for the entire period.

One interesting consequence of this new publication pattern in Spanish translation is that it became more dependent on the original English publication. As Random House was the parent company of both Secker & Warburg and Mondadori, Coetzee in fact began to be published by imprints belonging to the same multinational corporation both in English and Spanish translation, and this was to have future consequences. Under this new regime, Coetzee's reappearance in the Hispanic publishing market was possibly because he was the first author to be awarded the Booker Prize twice and a major contender to win the Nobel Prize. In this light, Mondadori had an interest and the financial backing to publish and distribute as many titles as possible with the certitude of making a reasonable profit, or at least of raising the imprint's literary prestige.

The Literatura Mondadori collection was published in the standard quality for literary fiction in Spain, in wrappers with flaps and sewn sections. It also had a curatorial design by Luz de la Mora that granted it a unifying quality. In this scheme the title was the most important element on the cover, the author's name taking a secondary place over the underlying monochrome pictures, which matched the content of the book. Literatura Mondadori was a very varied collection, and before Coetzee they published not only García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012), and Herta Müller (b. 1953), but also writers like Iain Banks (1954-2013), Jane Mendelsohn (b. 1965), and Arturo Pérez-Reverte (b. 1951), and even books by Quentin Tarantino (b. 1963), Chet Baker (1929-88) and Charles Mingus (1922-79). This commercial approach behind Mondadori's publication scheme differed from Alfaguara's literary publishing policy during the 1970s-80s.

After Coetzee won his second Booker Prize in 1999, Mondadori undertook an ambitious publishing programme for his works. First, they published *Boyhood* and *Disgrace* in 2000, while *The Lives of Animals* appeared in 2001. *Age of Iron* and *Youth* came out in 2002, while *Heart* was made available in 2003. As I hinted above, by the millennium Mondadori probably knew that there was a strong possibility of Coetzee winning the Nobel Prize, and this was reinforced when Vargas Llosa wrote in *El País* that he considered Coetzee to be the best living writer (2002). This phenomenon was partly a consequence of the reception of *Disgrace*, my third case study.

Disgrace clearly reflects the new pattern of peninsular publications discussed. The cover depicts a sepia close-up of the stray dog from the cover of the first English edition. This would become a recurrent practice in the next few years, for the presentation of Coetzee books became unified and his English and Spanish editions less distinguishable. However, the text is not based on the British edition, but on the American one, just as had happened with the Argentine translation of *Barbarians*. On the copyright page it reads 'Traducido de la edición original de

Viking' ('Translated from Viking's first edition'). This is possibly because Coetzee's translation rights agent is in New York, and the contracts require that the phrase 'Published by agreement with Peter Lampack Agency, Inc.' appears on the copyright page.

Mondadori also persisted in quoting other writers' opinions, just as Alfaguara had previously done. The cover text quotes Gordimer (whose name carried more symbolic capital than Coetzee's at the time, as she was then the only South African Nobel laureate), and conveys the second Booker Prize's significance to Spanish readers:

De este escritor «de brillante maestría, tensión y elegancia», en palabras de Nadine Gordimer, nos llega ahora su última novela, *Desgracia*, con la cual ha sido premiado, por segunda vez en su carrera, con el Booker Prize, el premio más importante de la literatura inglesa.

(From this writer 'of brilliant mastery, tension, and elegance', in the words of Nadine Gordimer, we receive now his latest novel, *Disgrace*, for which he has been awarded the Booker Prize for the second time in his career, the most prestigious award in English literature [own translation]).

I should stress that, as with the translation of *Michael K* in 1987, the Booker Prize still had no effect on Hispanic sales in 2000. In fact, the publisher had to describe the prize on the covers of *Disgrace*. However, the Booker Prize remains an asset for a Spanish publisher: buying the rights of a winning book is a safe bet in terms of literary value. Therefore, it is not surprising that both Alfaguara and Mondadori chose to begin their Coetzee publications with *Michael K* and *Disgrace*, the novels that had won it.

Unlike the case of new books, Mondadori produced their own cover art for Coetzee's backlist. This often involved a delayed depiction of the reality of apartheid, which had not been considered by Riesa, Alfaguara or Anaya & Mario Muchnik in their books. For example, the cover of *Age of Iron* bears an image by Iranian photographer Abbas depicting two pairs of black feet in the sand. This was the first visual reference in a Spanish translation that addressed Coetzee's African background, reflecting a new dimension of him as a white writer telling a South African story, as the cover text shows:

Sudáfrica, un escenario escabroso bajo el régimen del apartheid (...). Este es el hilo conductor que sirve a J.M. Coetzee para denunciar la violencia de una sociedad y sus consecuentes miserias humanas.

(South Africa, a scabrous scenario under the apartheid regime (...). This is the common thread that allows J.M. Coetzee to denounce the violence of a society and its aftermath of human misery [own translation]).

In order to publish as many Coetzee books as possible within a short period of time, Mondadori employed various translators. *Boyhood* was translated by Juan Bonilla; *Disgrace*, *Lives*, and *Heart* by Miguel Martínez-Lage, *Age of Iron* by Javier Calvo, and *Youth* by Cruz Rodríguez Juiz.

As Mondadori intended to capitalize on Coetzee's momentum, they scheduled simultaneous publications of *Boyhood* and *Disgrace* for October 2000 (catalogue numbers 138 and 139), and even tried to obtain a personal appearance by the author, as Kannemeyer explains:

He became increasingly averse to long flights to launches of new publications. In August 2000 he was invited to Spain for the launch of the Spanish translations of *Boyhood* and *Youth*. The publisher Grijalbo was prepared to bear all expenses, and the South African embassy in Madrid was planning to make a big event of it. But Coetzee was not interested (481).²⁰

Therefore, almost twenty years after his first publication in Spanish translation, Coetzee still had no direct contact with his Hispanophone publishers, and nor did he want to change this by accepting Mondadori's invitation channelled through his agent, Sandy Blanton.

In another sign of the distinctiveness of this first Hispanic world, Coetzee's personal relationships with Hispanic publishers would only materialize more than a decade later, and in the Southern Cone. Nonetheless, Mondadori's publication programme continued by combining recent books with Coetzee's backlist. *Lives* was scheduled for March 2001 (154), *Age of Iron* and *Youth* for November 2002 (195 and 196) and *Heart* for June 2003 (212). Mondadori seemed to have used whoever was available on their list of translators to achieve this ambitious publication programme, apparently oblivious to the fact that *Boyhood* and *Youth* needed a single translator.

²⁰ *Youth* is incorrect: it was *Disgrace*.

During this second stage of his Spanish publication Coetzee sold relatively well, as can be judged by the number of printings Mondadori had commissioned in October 2003, the month in which the Nobel Prize was announced: a second printing of *Youth*, a third of *Boyhood* and *Heart* and a fourth of *Disgrace* and *Age of Iron*. This was the first period in which Coetzee's Spanish translations were reprinted at all, so this signified an important change. It also shows that the interest of the readers was not in one book but in his whole output, and accounts for the intention of Mondadori of publishing Coetzee's entire backlist, a task in which they were still behind in 2003 (*Heart* only appeared in Spanish translation more than twenty-five years after the original publication, and *Dusklands* was not even scheduled at this point).

Coetzee books were generally well received in the Hispanic press. Like many critics all over the world, Spanish reviewers hailed *Disgrace* as a masterpiece, which sealed Coetzee's reputation in the language within a wider readership context. The review in *El País* is interesting, for the author was Guelbenzu:

Es uno de los más prestigiosos novelistas sudafricanos y pertenece a ese grupo de escritores de habla inglesa que ha venido revitalizando la narrativa del Reino Unido justo cuando ésta parecía decaer al no encontrar sucesores de veteranos como Angus Wilson o Alan Sillitoe. Hindúes, antillanos, australianos, neozelandeses, africanos y surafricanos han venido a representar para la novela inglesa algo semejante a lo que supuso la novela latinoamericana con respecto a la española (Guelbenzu 2000).

(He is one of the most prestigious South African novelists and belongs to that group of English-speaking writers who have revitalised British narrative when it seemed to be declining, as it had not found successors to veterans like Angus Wilson or Alan Sillitoe. Indians, West Indians, Australians, New Zealanders, Africans and South Africans have come to represent for the English novel something similar to what the Latin American novel meant for the Spanish novel [own translation]).

Although the parallel Guelbenzu makes between postcolonial writers in English and Latin American writers in Spanish is interesting, it fails to recognise that the impact both Latin American writers and Coetzee made went further than the national scope of Spain or Britain, as

their work became a global phenomenon, blurring literary frontiers and leaving an indelible mark on the world stage, as González Echevarría has noted.²¹

By the end of the second phase of Coetzee's Spanish language publishing, his literary prestige was solid, and he had also become a household name, as would probably have been the case even without the Nobel Prize. The Booker Prize awarded to *Disgrace* started an ambitious publication scheme: the corporate machinery operating behind Coetzee became visible in the rapid rhythm of publication (sometimes including the simultaneous appearance of two books), numerous reprints and efficient distribution across the Hispanosphere.

Mondadori's marketing strategy was that they were publishing important books by a somewhat mysterious South African writer, which was to change after the Nobel Prize announcement in October 2003. Guelbenzu summed it up thus in a private email:

Afortunadamente, la concesión del Nobel fue decisiva para su divulgación en España y se pasó del interés concreto de los buenos lectores a la loa indiscriminada, como suele suceder en la crítica española, pero le amplió el campo de lectores (2021).
(Fortunately, the award of the Nobel Prize was decisive for his dissemination in Spain, which went from a specific interest of good readers to indiscriminate praise, as it usually happens with the Spanish critics; but his readership was widened [own translation]).

Unlike the Booker Prize case, the Nobel Prize had an immediate sales effect in the Hispanic market, because the awardees are normally already translated, especially if they write in a major European language.

Following the news of the award, bookshops in large cities with significant reading publics like Buenos Aires or Barcelona normally sell all their copies of the awarded writer very rapidly, and publishers arrange reprints quickly in order to meet an important but not necessarily

²¹ 'By the twenty-first century, Latin American prose fiction was in step with the rest of literature in the West, a full participant in the international, indeed global commerce of the arts' (González E. 2012, 83).

enduring demand.²² In the next section, I will explore how the Nobel Prize changed the way Coetzee was marketed by his Hispanophone publishers.

World Literature Status (2004-14)

The third phase of Coetzee's Hispanic publishing took place in Spain, between 2004 and 2014. From *Elizabeth Costello* (2004) to *Childhood* (2013) all the books assign worldwide copyright in Spanish to Random House Mondadori. Clearly, the Nobel Prize changed Mondadori's commercial strategy, as it henceforth centred on Coetzee's figure as the winner of the foremost literary award, which was visible in the way they handled the cover art of his books. Up until then, the Mondadori editions of *Boyhood*, *Disgrace*, *Lives*, *Master*, *Age of Iron*, *Youth* and *Heart* had the titles as main text in large capitals on the covers, and 'J.M. Coetzee' in small capitals. After the Nobel Prize, Mondadori inverted the prominence of textual elements by setting 'J.M. Coetzee' as the main block in large capital letters at the top, underlined with the phrase 'Premio Nobel de Literatura' and followed by the title in small Roman characters. In other words, selling the most recent Nobel laureate became more important than promoting a significant literary work.

Mondadori was suddenly met with the fact that a prestigious but not very profitable writer in their catalogue had won the most important literary award and proceeded to develop a strategy to capitalise on it. Furthermore, the uniform way Coetzee was published and marketed in both the English and the Spanish linguistic worlds was reinforced, as publishing conglomerates sought to offer a homogeneous product. An example of this phenomenon can easily be seen in the relative – but sometimes almost total – visual and textual similarity of the

²² An example: José Saramago's (1922-2010) books in Buenos Aires after the award. 'Están agotadas las obras de Saramago', *La Nación*, 11 October 1998. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/estan-agotadas-las-obras-de-saramago-nid113743/> Consulted on 30 May 2022.

English and Spanish editions of some of Coetzee's books. Crucially, international conglomeration in the publishing industry operates as a one-way street, for it favours Anglophone writers, as Thompson has shown: 'In the international marketplace of books, the flow of translations and bestsellers is skewed heavily in favour of books and authors originating in the English-speaking world' (2012, 13). Therefore, here we see another aspect of the dominance of English and the north Coetzee is trying to resist.

Coetzee's publishing in Spanish would experience further change as a result of continuing consolidation in the publishing industry. In November 2012 Bertelsmann, parent company of Random House, acquired full ownership from previous joint-venture partner Mondadori, putting an end to an association that dated from 2001. Then, in July 2013 Bertelsmann and Pearson merged their book trade publishing divisions to form Penguin Random House in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, South Africa, Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay and Chile. Considering the sheer size of the newly founded company, this meant that henceforth the worldwide book markets in Spanish and English in practice became controlled by a single, gigantic global player.²³ Another consequence was that, at least in one aspect and despite his best intentions, the publishing of Coetzee's books in both languages would inevitably become more corporate and more global. This will have implications for Coetzee's resistance to the hegemony of English as a world language, to which he would refer on various occasions during the 2010s.

However, this new commercial reality did not mean that all the previously discussed publishing practices suddenly disappeared. In that regard, it is significant that while Ceridwen Dovey showed surprise at the fact that 'even Coetzee's publishers once needed to ask his more

²³ <https://global.penguinrandomhouse.com/press-release/random-house-mondadori-is-renamed-penguin-random-house-grupo-editorial/>. Consulted on 6 May 2019.

illustrious peers for jacket blurbs with which to woo readers' (referring to Gordimer's endorsement on the cover of the American edition of *Barbarians*), more than twenty years later Mondadori still persisted in quoting praise by Marías, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa in the translation of *Elizabeth Costello* (2004), as if the award of the Nobel Prize less than a year before was not a solid enough platform (Dovey 31).

Nonetheless, from the publication of *Slow Man* onwards Mondadori seemed to have come up with a standard way of presenting him to the Hispanic reading public: there were no more references to writers like Tournier or the Reino de Redonda Prize awarded by Marías, as Coetzee's literary career spoke for itself.²⁴ In fact, the first editions of *Slow Man* and *Diary* do not have biographical texts, which shows that by that time Coetzee had become a household name who needed no further introductions. To put it in another way, around this period Mondadori finally seemed to have realised that it was unnecessary to stick to the (mistaken) idea that they were promoting a brilliant but somewhat obscure writer who needed constant back-up from his peers, concluding that in Coetzee they had a world writer (that is, a writer whose solid international stature in English was being enhanced by the translations of his works into other languages), and henceforth they acted accordingly. It is here that we see clear evidence for the consolidation of Coetzee's status as a world writer in Spanish, as this thesis will go on to further explore.

Mondadori operated with the world writer they had in hand as an asset in a world book trade in which globalisation and market concentration became visible in Coetzee's books. For instance, the covers of the British and Spanish versions of *Diary*, *Summertime* and *Scenes* were alike to the extent that a reader could have bought copies in London, then boarded a plane to Buenos

²⁴ Marías created the Reino de Redonda Prize in 2001, and the first prize was awarded to Coetzee. Because of Marías' important symbolic capital in Spain, Mondadori promoted this on the cover texts of *Age of Iron*, *Youth* and *Heart*. This was the second time Coetzee was awarded an inaugural prize, after the Prix Femina Étranger in 1984.

Aires and entered a bookshop upon arrival to find the same titles in Spanish translation, in an almost identical presentation. In a similar vein, the Spanish and American versions of *Here & Now* have the same cover design (while the Spanish cover design was adapted from the American one, the Spanish edition was published first, on 8 November 2012; the US edition followed in March 2013 and the UK edition in May).²⁵ In other words, Mondadori was offering a standardised product across the world. While this corporate practice facilitated Coetzee's role and self-image as a world writer, it undermined his intention of diminishing the London and New York dependence by a Southern Hemisphere writer. Therefore, this third phase is the least distinctive of the four that compose the first of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds.

Nonetheless, Mondadori would continue to address the African element on the cover art: the cover picture of *Dusklands* in 2009 was a close-up of an African boy's face by Spanish photographer Jaime Mota. This detail also shows that publishers were still aware of the apartheid topic as a profitable association, especially so in a year that brought the subject back onto the world stage with the success of Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus*. Incidentally, the appearance of *Dusklands* also marked the conclusion of Mondadori's effort at publishing Coetzee's entire novelistic backlist (including the three novels published by Alfaguara in the 1980s, after securing the rights to the original translations). Mondadori also had an interest on this because, as Thompson explains in *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing*, 'While new books are the glamorous side of publishing, the backlist is in many ways the financial side of the business' (103).

During this third phase, Mondadori (and subsequently Penguin Random House) continued with the practice of choosing various translators for the different Coetzee books. For example, *Scenes* had three different translators, for Jordi Fibla translated *Summertime*. This

²⁵ The true first edition of *Here & Now* is the Catalan one of 2 November 2012.

becomes especially problematic if we consider that the cycle is to be seen as a single book with three different parts, which is confirmed by Coetzee's instruction to his agent that the three individual books are no longer to be reprinted (Coetzee 2016d). This attitude towards translations is not a specifically peninsular characteristic, for *Scenes* was rendered into Catalan by a single translator, Dolors Udina.²⁶ However, Mondadori's approach demonstrates that commercial considerations and the availability of a certain translator at a particular time took precedence over a unifying artistic vision, which ideally would have required a single translator for the collected volume.

Childhood was the last book published by Mondadori in Barcelona and distributed across the Hispanosphere in 2013 – the imprint has the longest association with Coetzee: fourteen years. It is possible Coetzee was not entirely convinced with his own situation as a world writer in Spanish translation at this point. While his work for the first time circulated widely, it did not reflect his growing interest in the Southern Cone, which became visible with the travels to the region that began in 2011. Therefore, with his significant symbolic capital he decided to intervene in the Hispanophone publishing world in order to have a second line of publication in the south, a region that would act as a background hum to his writing of the *Jesus* novels, which would begin in 2012.

Back to the Southern Cone (2015-22)

In this fourth phase I will examine how Coetzee's publishing in Spanish went back to the Southern Cone, where it had started in 1983. Unlike in the other three phases, this phenomenon took place through Coetzee's own interventions. While the copyright page of the peninsular

²⁶ Apart from Castilian, which is what Cervantes called what we now refer to as Spanish, Coetzee is published in all the other peninsular languages: except for *Dusklands*, *Heart*, and *Master* all the novels are available in Catalan, while there are four titles translated into Galician and three into Basque.

books from *The Good Story* (2015) to *Death* (2019) assign the copyright to Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, this is no longer for the whole world, for there were parallel Latin American editions. The copyright page of all the Argentine books from *The Good Story* (2015) to *El polaco* (2022) assign the copyright to El Hilo de Ariadna. Therefore, while Coetzee's publication in the north will continue, we are going to see a publishing world of his own making unfolding in the south. Significantly, these interventions were enabled through the personal relations Coetzee had forged with publishers during his visits to Chile and Argentina. I will show that these links with Hispanophone publishing, and particularly Southern Cone publishing, are crucial to our understanding of Coetzee as a world writer. In fact, these links enabled the first publication of *Death*, and of the trilogy in a complete form, in Spanish and in the Southern Hemisphere. My account of this fourth phase of publishing will culminate in an analysis of the events surrounding the publication of *Death*, which as I will go on to show in Chapter 4 represents the culmination of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds.

The fourth phase of Coetzee's Hispanophone publication began in 2015 and is still developing, for *El polaco* appeared in Argentina in 2022. It is also inspired by his ideas of the south, which I will analyse in Chapter 3. The fact is that in 2015 Coetzee began to be published in South America again, sometimes independently of Barcelona and London. Interestingly, this did not occur after negotiations between a South American publisher and his American agent, but rather because of personal encounters Coetzee had in Argentina and Chile over the previous years, which I outlined in the introduction and will return to in Chapter 3. This gave him an alternative to Northern Hemisphere-based publishing conglomerates again, just like he had during the 1970s and 1980s with Ravan in South Africa. As this phenomenon took place at the same time as Coetzee's special associations with Cossée for the Dutch market and Text for the

Australian market, during this period in fact he had three alternatives to corporate publishing: one in Europe, another in Australia and one more in South America.

As can be seen, this situation marks a sharp contrast with his relationship with Mondadori in 2000: while he did not want to travel and participate in events of his northern Hispanic publisher, the Southern Cone collaborations advanced because Coetzee developed friendly relations with independent publishers there *before* there was any formal collaboration. Because of these personal relationships, Coetzee normally negotiated directly with these publishers in Argentina and Chile and had a say in the publication process of each book. Consequently, because Latin American and peninsular rights are arranged independently, in this phase often the same title appeared with different publishers and translators in each geographic area (the copyright page of the peninsular edition of *Las manos de los maestros* states that it is assigned worldwide in Spanish, except in Latin America).

More recently companies on both sides of the Atlantic have come to an agreement and used the same translator, or even co-published the same book. It is also worth noting that Coetzee deliberately chose to have certain titles appear exclusively in the Spanish-speaking world, or in other cases before the English version was published. This *modus operandi* marks a break with the normal practice for a world writer in English and was to be continued by Coetzee in the following years. Finally, it is also noteworthy that Coetzee forsook his royalties in all the independent Southern Cone publications that began in 2015, in both Chile and Argentina, which shows his generosity and commitment to his publishers in these South-South collaborations, and his understanding of the book market away from the centres of the northern publishing world.

The main new player in this fourth stage was an Argentine publishing house, El Hilo de Ariadna, founded by María Soledad Costantini in Buenos Aires in 2010. Costantini was

responsible for the Literature Programme of the MALBA (Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires), which houses one of the world's most important collections of Latin American art, and then slowly made her way into publishing. An eclectic publishing house, El Hilo de Ariadna has eight different collections, and Coetzee is represented in three of them: Literature, Essays and *Biblioteca personal*, which I will analyse in Chapter 3.

The Argentine collaboration is particularly important because it went beyond a mere commercial undertaking and allowed the publication of the Spanish translation of *Doubling the Point* in April 2015, which was tied to the Literatures of the South seminars Coetzee directed in Buenos Aires between 2015 and 2018, analysed in Chapter 3.²⁷ This allowed students to understand Coetzee not only as a writer, but also as a critic with whom they could interact within the context of an extended academic setting. There was also a Chilean publication in September 2015: *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello*, which collected two stories, was published by El Faro in Santiago in a signed limited edition. Because this Chilean initiative has more to do with Coetzee's personal experience in the Southern Cone and his own relation to the Spanish language, it is covered in Chapter 3.

Simultaneously with the translation of *Doubling the Point*, El Hilo de Ariadna published in April 2015 the first edition of *The Good Story*, which appeared in Spanish before in English (September 2015 in America and May 2016 in Britain). Complicatedly, Argentine publication was followed in June 2015 by a different translation and edition by Penguin Random House in Spain. This separate publishing programme was also to be the case of *Las manos de los maestros*, a two-volume set of essays exclusive to the Hispanic world (collected from *White Writing*, *Giving Offense*, *Stranger Shores* and *Inner Workings*, and including pieces that would eventually appear in

²⁷ Because of its complexity and the little time available between the signing of the contract and the first seminar in April 2015, the translation of *Doubling the Point* was commissioned to five different translators. However, this was the consequence of a very tight schedule, and not a standard practice of El Hilo de Ariadna (Costantini 2015).

Late Essays). However, El Hilo de Ariadna and Random House later began to collaborate, for *Three Stories* was published in different editions but in the same translation. Finally, while they co-published *Siete cuentos morales* and *Death, El polaco* was published by El Hilo de Ariadna only. This complicated publication scheme is the consequence of Coetzee's intervention, for he brought Southern Cone publishers into play while retaining his association with Penguin Random House in Spain, and this concurrence and overlap needed negotiating and adjusting.

In general, there is a greater level of freedom in the Argentine versions, in contrast to the Spanish ones, which follow Anglophone publication practices more closely. For example, in the Argentine edition of *Las manos de los maestros*, the authorial name is modified to 'John M. Coetzee' on the half and full-title pages, marking a clean break with what had been Coetzee's usual authorial identity in printed form since the publication of *Dusklands*.²⁸ The variations show these collaborations have taken place apart from New York or London-based publishing practice, in which the use of the authorial name J.M. Coetzee is mandatory, and their persistence over time show Coetzee has not requested a correction.

They also seem to imply a closer collaboration with Coetzee in a personal dimension, rather than with the writer shielded behind the authorial name – what Philippe Lejeune defines as 'une personne qui écrit' ('a person who writes', 23). This impression is reinforced by certain details, like the photograph used for the cover of *Tres cuentos*, a sepia image of a South African homestead that is quite redolent of Voëlfontein, by journalist Ben MacLennan. These details show a closer view of Coetzee in his South American publications in Spanish, compared to his books published in New York or London, an impression that seems reinforced by the numerous

²⁸ This is not unusual for Coetzee's South American collaborations: the Chilean short story competition was called *Concurso de Cuentos John Maxwell Coetzee*, and in his lectures in Chile he was announced as 'John Coetzee'. <http://plandelectura.gob.cl/actividades/concurso-de-cuentos-john-maxwell-coetzee/>
<http://arquitectura.uc.cl/extension/agenda/1095-septiembre-05-jm-coetzee-en-la-ciudad-y-las-palabras.html>.
 Consulted on 1 March 2019.

personal appearances he made in Santiago and Buenos Aires, including live interviews, from which he normally refrained in North America or Europe (but not in Spain, although with his Argentine publisher).

The most remarkable feature of this fourth stage is that often the Spanish translation preceded the English original. *The Good Story*, *Las manos de los maestros*, *Siete cuentos morales*, *Death* and *El polaco* mark a break with the usual practice of translation, namely of following the publication of a book by a translation the following year. Nonetheless, sometimes a book appeared in English first, but following a southern trajectory: for example, *Three Stories* was first published by Text in Australia and then by El Hilo de Ariadna in Argentina, putting into practice Coetzee's ideas of a southern cultural cooperation, analysed in Chapter 3. In yet another variation of the paths that world books follow, the later Random House Spanish edition reproduced the Text cover, marking a rare case in which a feature originated from a southern and independent publishing house was adopted by a northern and corporate one.

Another significant landmark in Coetzee's involvement with the Spanish literary world was the publication of *Siete cuentos morales* in 2018. Indeed, the exclusivity of this edition was highlighted by a wraparound band with an almost cinematic text:

Primicia mundial: Siete nuevas historias protagonizadas por Elizabeth Costello que se publican en lengua española antes que en cualquier otro idioma.
(World premiere: Seven new stories starring Elizabeth Costello published in Spanish before any other language [own translation]).

This collection has not appeared in English, and no forthcoming publication date has been announced – however, it is available in Italian (*Bugie e altri racconti morali*, 2019) and Brazilian Portuguese (*Contos morais*, 2021). Interestingly, the book even elicited a review by Attwell that also appeared only in Argentina and in Spanish (Attwell 2018b). While the world of Coetzee criticism is by and large Anglophone, Attwell's review shows an initial awareness of the southern Hispanic element in Coetzee.

All this evidence shows that Coetzee's links with Spanish, and specifically South American publishing, are crucial in his construction as a world writer, which is a process that takes place primarily through translation. Furthermore, as such a world writer he is able to alter the normal sequence of events in the publication of an original work of literature, and this is also related to his attitude against the prevailing dominance of English as a world language.²⁹ In fact, the publication of *Siete cuentos morales* and Coetzee's relationship with languages and Spanish in particular sparked a special interest in readers, and he addressed the subject in a rare appearance at the Hay Festival in Cartagena de Indias in 2018: 'Ever since childhood I've written in English. As a young man, I had absolutely no doubt that access to the English language had liberated me from the narrow worldview of the Afrikaner' (Coetzee 2018b).

If Coetzee recognises the limitations of being a monolingual Afrikaans speaker, the way to supersede them is to learn a world language like English, which would enable him to broaden his horizons – though his bilingualism was not really his choice, but the position taken by his parents. But then he assesses his command of English in a counterintuitive way, against the received idea that the more one uses a given language, the stronger the proficiency becomes.

I have a good command of English, spoken and written, but more and more it feels to me like the kind of command that a foreigner might have. This may be the reason why the English I write is so easily translatable. I've worked closely with translators of my books into languages that I know, and it seems to me that the versions that my translators produce are in no way inferior to the original (Coetzee 2018b).

While Coetzee implies that English is not really his own language, he does not assign that position to any other language (and certainly not to Afrikaans). Crucially, he does not seem to be writing from *within* English, but from somewhere at the margins of it. This would explain his

²⁹ Another version of this agency is to be found in his collaborations with Cossée for the Netherlandic world, with publication in Dutch preceding the English one.

opinion of translations of his work being not inferior to the original, for he does not deem *his* English superior to that of a translator.

For that reason, besides being ‘born translated’ in the sense of Walkowitz’s study, it is also possible to consider that in Coetzee there is a certain preparation of the translator’s task within the original writing. In fact, Coetzee’s downplaying of his own authorial craft weighed against a valorisation of the translator’s work diffuses the concept of originality, spreading it across his own manuscript and the renderings into other languages. Consequently, not only the order of publication of his books becomes less relevant, but also whether they are published in English at all, as it happens with *Siete cuentos morales*, as Coetzee declared in Cartagena: ‘It does not particularly matter to me that my books should not appear in the English language, because my books are not rooted in the English language’ (Coetzee 2018b). However, this declaration should not be taken at face value, and perhaps we could describe it as rhetorical.³⁰

Crucially, the appearance of Coetzee books in other languages before English is not something that merely *happens*, as he seems to imply, but is rather a consequence of his own authorial decisions: ultimately, he makes that publication order possible. Furthermore, with the sole exception of *Coetzee y los niños escritores* (2019), his books are not rooted in any *other* language than English, in the way that *Molloy* and *Malone meurt* are rooted in French.³¹

In fact, the statement could be read as a justification of a long-standing concern of his that he has drawn attention to more recently as a public intellectual, namely his opinion on the political dimension of English in the world:

I do not like the way in which English is taking over the world. I don’t like the way in which it crushes minor languages that it finds in its path, I don’t like its universalist

³⁰ Unless he was referring to his ‘attempts to avoid identification with any national idiom’, as noted by McDonald (2017b, 197).

³¹ The question of why Beckett stopped writing in English and began writing in French is the informing (if misguided) question of Coetzee’s PhD thesis. While he proposes to offer an answer to the question using stylistics, in the end acknowledges that he has failed to do so (Coetzee 1969).

pretensions, by which I mean its un-interrogated belief that the world is, as it seems to be, a mirror of the English language. I don't like the arrogance that this situation brings to its native speakers. Therefore, I do what little I can to resist the hegemony of the English language (Coetzee 2018b).

If we follow Coetzee's line of argumentation, his resistance to the English language seems to take precedence when weighed against a particular interest in Spanish, which also explains why *Siete cuentos morales* is available in Italian and Brazilian Portuguese, but not in English. In fact, peculiarly, in terms of Florian Coulmas' work Coetzee is not the guardian of *any* language, but a fighter of (global) English (xx). Therefore, Spanish could be seen more as a means for him to counteract the overwhelming influence and power of English than as the vehicle through which he can best express his intellectual concerns – that is, an altogether different motivation to Samuel Beckett's (1906-89) decision to write in French *because*, as he claimed, it allowed him to write without style.

In Coetzee, the resistance to English and the politics of publishing are intimately linked, and long-standing in his career. In fact, his struggle is not dissimilar to the one he campaigned for in a subtle way when he favoured his local South African publications in the 1970s and 1980s, and although it may be less visible, in fact is also very much a political one, with English – the vehicle of what he termed 'new global imperialism' – replacing apartheid South Africa as the reality against which Coetzee struggles both as a writer and a public intellectual (2000, 111). In both cases, multiple translations and parallel editions have proven to be significant strategies of resistance. Nevertheless, it must be stressed once again that – ironically – the post-imperial quality of English is also very much shared by the Spanish language, and that whilst moving towards Spanish Coetzee remained within the publishing conglomerates that are the infrastructure of a hegemonic English.

I will now analyse the events surrounding the publication in Spanish translation of *The Death of Jesus*, my fourth and last case study, which as I will go on to show in Chapter 4 represents

the culmination of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds. In fact, all the developments I have examined until now can be seen as a preparation for the publication of *Death* in Spanish and in Chile in 2019, which also meant that the trilogy was also first available in the language *and* in the Southern Cone, marking yet another aspect of the distinctiveness of this first Hispanic world, for publication precedence shifted from the north to the south and from English to Spanish.

In the rest of this chapter, I will analyse the publication history of the *Jesus* novels in Spanish, and to do that I will delve into the original publication history of the trilogy, which goes beyond the Hispanophone and even the Anglophone world. Significantly, we will see that the common factor is that none of the *Jesus* novels was first published in English, which reinforces my point that the critique of English is fundamental to Coetzee's late politics of writing.

The first two books appeared in the Netherlands, continuing the long-standing relationship between Coetzee and Cossée Uitgeverij. *Childhood* was first published in Dutch as *De kinderjaren van Jezus*, on 1 February 2013. Cossée were also the first publishers of *Schooldays* as *De schooldagen van Jezus*, on 8 August 2016.³² However, it was the Penguin Random House Chilean branch that first published *Death* as *La muerte de Jesús*, in March 2019 (Fernández 2019). Apparently by mistake, it took place two months ahead of the Hispanophone publication date agreed between PRH, El Hilo de Ariadna and Coetzee, which took him by surprise (Coetzee 2019b). This marked a new step in his relationship with Spanish, for it was the first time that a novel initially appeared in that language. This unusual publication history is by no means a new occurrence in Coetzee's bibliography of recent years, but rather a continuation of two phenomena. On the one hand, Coetzee had published world first editions of his novels in Dutch before the *Jesus* trilogy appeared – *Diary* being an example (Walkowitz 51). On the other hand,

³² <https://www.uitgeverijcossee.nl/boek/De-kinderjaren-van-Jezus-T294.php>
<https://www.uitgeverijcossee.nl/boek/De-schooldagen-van-Jezus-T518.php> Consulted on 19 November 2019.

the English publication had also been staggered by having his books appear first in Australia and then in the rest of the Anglophone world, as also happened with *Diary* (266).

This evidence shows that the publication scheme of the *Jesus* novels was part of a larger plan related to Coetzee's concern with the overwhelming power of the English language – and his support for the languages that must bear its dominance, like Dutch or Spanish – and to his preference for southern publication in Australia, Chile or Argentina. The consequence of this complicated publication scheme is that when analysing the *Jesus* trilogy, it is difficult to determine if the origin of the text is the place or language of writing or of first publication, but either way, there is a concerted effort on Coetzee's part to subvert to an extent the hold of London or New York as the home of Anglophone world literature, and indeed to contest the notion of a discrete Anglophone world. Furthermore, even though the *Jesus* novels were written by him, in their first incarnation other actors such as translators also intervened, and all these processes render their nationality as complex as that of the collaborative, collective effort necessary to make a film, which normally involves professionals from diverse nationalities who also work in different countries, rendering the rootedness of the finished product diffuse and hard to ascertain.

In a most unusual way, the same phenomenon of the Spanish translation of *Scenes* was repeated in the translation of the *Jesus* novels, which also have three translators: Miguel Temprano-García for *Childhood*, Javier Calvo for *Schooldays* and Elena Marengo for *Death*. Seen in context, if the diversity of translators initially may have been motivated by commercial reasons, showing a certain opportunism on the part of Mondadori and Random House, the repetition and consistency of this practice leads one to the conclusion that those motivations take precedence over offering readers a unified and cohesive artistic rendering, which would surely have been best conveyed by using a single translator for each of the trilogies.

The circulation of the *Jesus* novels reflects the complexity of their translation and publication. Significantly, after the trilogy was first made available in Chile in March 2019, it began to be studied by Anglophone readers: Derek Attridge used the Spanish version to publish his review of *Muerte* on 25 September, before *Death* appeared in Australia on 1 October. Consequently, the Spanish element continued to be crucial during the initial circulation of the finished trilogy, before it became available in English, and this poses the question of which of the two languages is more appropriate to make sense of Coetzee's publishing operation. Whilst the completed trilogy was made available in the first place for Hispanophone readers who in principle did not need another language to fully understand it, for the trilogy in Spanish is monolingual, the bilingual quality of the English original makes the reading experience more complex. Furthermore, the appearance of the trilogy in a language other than that of writing also raises the question of originality. The copyright page of the first edition of *Muerte* of March 2019 has as original title ('título original') that of a book that at the time had not been published, as the first English edition only appeared in Australia that October.

Crucially, this complicates the founding ideas of world literature, which is presumed to have a departure point from which it travels, as Edward Said argued, which is also a basis of Damrosch's definition.³³ In the *Jesus* novels that point of origin is not only blurred, but also turned into various options or combinations, and the existence of these possibilities destabilises and obliterates our preconceived notions of what is 'original' and what 'translation'. As Damrosch wrote, 'a literary work *manifests* differently abroad than it does at home' (6). Yet what is the 'home' of *Muerte/Death*? Depending on the perspective, the countries of Coetzee's origin

³³ In 'Traveling Theory', Said describes 'a discernible and recurrent pattern' to the way ideas travel: 'First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance transversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence' (Said 226).

(South Africa), residence (Australia) and first publication (Chile) all have a fair claim. So, which of these editions should be considered the ‘true original’? The answer to that question – none of the above – is that in order to find it we would have to go outside of the book supply chain and analyse Coetzee’s manuscript, for the unclear ‘home’ of the *Jesus* novels is the result of a series of inner and paratextual authorial operations. In other words, if we draw on the insights of book history to understand the *Jesus* novels, our preconceived ideas of authorship are rendered more and more complex – a process with which Coetzee is evidently complicit.

I will now analyse the trilogy considering book history and the current dynamics of the world publishing business and will begin by referring to the Bourdieusian concept of symbolic capital. Coetzee’s status as a world writer translates into symbolic capital that can be spent on other activities and priorities, and I will now examine how he invested it in the Hispanophone publishing world I have analysed across this chapter. Even if Coetzee possesses a significant amount of symbolic capital as a world writer, he nonetheless produces a manuscript that he would be unable to distribute without the concurrence of the global publishing industry. It is in fact the actions and evidence of the global publishing industry that allows us to understand Coetzee as a world writer. Many different actors are involved in book production, with publishers being the most important, as it becomes clear when analysing Darnton’s communication circuit, which ‘runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader’ (111).

A more specific version is offered in Thompson’s figure of the book supply chain in *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*, which shows that even if an author is indispensable for its existence (for he creates the manuscript that will eventually turn into a book), he is technically outside of it (for the chain only begins when an agent has a book to sell; 15). Therefore, the main actor in Coetzee’s publishing scheme is Penguin Random House.

Although Darnton's circuit and Thompson's chain are not the only publication schemes as the world publishing business enters the twenty-first century's third decade (especially for the internet, which provides a less mediated rapport between author and reader) it still is a useful rubric for a writer of Coetzee's stature.

In this reality, the operation Coetzee has performed in this fourth phase of his publication history in Spanish is intervening in the book publishing chain to change the first step normally taken by an agent with a book to sell, and this he presumably did by instructing his agent to withhold English publication. In other words, through Coetzee's presumed machination, the world publication chain started with a Dutch or Hispanophone publisher instead. This manoeuvre can also be seen as a preparation for the unusual linguistic treatment readers will find in the texts, as I will show in Chapter 4. The 'born-translated' aspect can be considered a preparation because the publication scheme complications foreshadow the linguistic complexities of the text. There is also a geographical aspect to this phenomenon, for it is worth noting that the original English version of *Death* was published by an independent publisher in Melbourne (Text Publishing).³⁴ As a result, the two first versions of the novel were published in world languages (Spanish and English), but in small markets below the Equator (Chile and Australia), so the first readers of the trilogy in the world were all in the Southern Hemisphere.

At this point, it is worth asking one question: which factors enabled Coetzee to perform this operation within the boundaries and big-business scheme of world publishing? What kind of leverage did he have to orchestrate this *mise-en-scène*? There is Coetzee's immense prestige as a world writer, which translates as symbolic capital for his publishers to take advantage of – as we have seen the author's name literally increase in size on the covers of his books. There is also

³⁴ <https://www.textpublishing.com.au/books/the-death-of-jesus>. Consulted on 20 August 2019.

the fact that both his main English and Spanish publishers (PRH UK/S.A.) are part of the same global publishing group. If we follow Thompson's argument in *Merchants of Culture*, Coetzee is basically expending a very important store of symbolic capital. His sales figures are not significant for a corporation the size of PRH, but as the cultural mediators and arbiters of taste they want to (be perceived to) be, it represents a token of distinction to publish the most decorated living writer in any language.³⁵

From that perspective, a first publication in Spanish translation in Chile and a first English publication in Australia is not a threat to the global publication scheme of PRH: on the contrary, the unusualness of the move may very well increase Coetzee's symbolic capital, for it gives the impression he is acting against the interests of a powerful global publishing shark in a heroic, slightly quixotic way. Though in fact this may not be the case, for if we judge it by the on-going global publication scheme of his books, the relationship between PRH and Coetzee seems as good as ever. Consequently, the quality that a company like PRH wishes to profit from in the case of a writer like Coetzee is not his ability to sell thousands of books, but his symbolic capital, and if such an asset is increased, it provides both parties with a win-win situation.

Crucially, Coetzee is moving in a special territory because of his unique position of twice Booker Prize winner *and* Nobel laureate, and this is fundamental to understand the distinctiveness of his circulation in Spanish. While Walkowitz manifests surprise at the fact that '*Childhood* appeared in translation faster than *Harry Potter* did', it should come as no surprise if we observe the economic factors and the interest of the main players of the book supply chain: transnational corporate publishers (3). Within that framework, a J.K. Rowling translation is a very complex affair involving secrecy, massive publicity campaigns and television tie-ins,

³⁵ A usual first print for Coetzee at PRH is 20,000 copies (Myers 2017). By comparison, García Márquez's *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* had a first print of a million copies in Spanish, as announced in the wrap-around band.

financial and legal advisors, and a great deal of money. All these circumstances do not normally operate in Coetzee's case, which works in his favour.³⁶ In other words, his symbolic power grants Coetzee exceptional leverage to negotiate a tailored-made publication scheme from his global publishers and obtain it, something few other writers would get.

Under this logic, the publication of *Death* in Hispanic America and Australia first seems a gesture of good will from both PRH and Coetzee. However, there are also less circumstantial reasons for this. On the one hand, as Chapter 4 will show, there is a strong Hispanic American element in the cycle, and Coetzee has also maintained an important relationship with his Argentine publisher, El Hilo de Ariadna. On the other hand, Australia is both a relatively small market and the author's adopted country, and Text has also published some of Coetzee's previous novels earlier than in the north. Therefore, both Hispanic America and Australia have good reasons to acquire this publishing primacy. The only difference in both publication arrangements was that PRH and El Hilo de Ariadna co-published in the Hispanosphere, whereas Text published in Australia without any PRH intervention.

Finally, there is yet another factor that should be considered when assessing the reception of literary works nowadays, and one that applies to Coetzee as well. We may have established that an operation like the one he envisaged for the trilogy is only possible in a globalised publishing world, but one should equally take the precaution of distinguishing circulation from actual reading. Even if Walkowitz is correct in noting that 'the translation and circulation of literature today is historically unprecedented once we consider how quickly books enter various

³⁶ Concerning a comparison of writers in terms of literary prestige, Casanova makes an interesting analysis. After delving into Valéry's category of national classics, she asserts that: 'Literary "prestige" also depends on the existence of a more or less extensive professional "milieu", a restricted and cultivated public, and an interested aristocracy or enlightened bourgeoisie; on salons, a specialized press, and sought-after publishers with distinguished lists who compete with one another; on respected judges of talent, whose reputation and authority as discoverers of unknown literary texts may be national or international; and, of course, on celebrated writers wholly devoted to the task of writing' (15). All these attributes seem to matter more to a writer like Coetzee than like Rowling.

national markets', she does not delve into how profoundly and for how long these works remain in these markets or demonstrate how widely they are read (2).

It must be remembered the first edition of *Muerte* consisted of a thousand copies only, and the continuous flow of novelties in bookshops frequently means that new titles remain there for a very limited time. Addressing the dismay established writers feel at seeing that their newer books sell infinitely less than their previous ones, Mariás remarks that these novels

nacen ya muertas, destinadas a ser devueltas a la distribuidora a las pocas semanas de aterrizar en los escaparates (Mariás 2015, 238).
(Are stillborn, destined to be returned to the distributor within a few weeks of having landed on the shelves [own translation]).

Even though with the rise of print-on-demand and internet-based selling we cannot judge the success of a book only by the volume of sales of the initial print run, the point Mariás makes remains valid for a large proportion of literary fiction readers, who still tend to buy their books over the counter. In other words, if Walkowitz was writing about the music industry, she would assess how quickly an album enters the charts, but not for how many weeks it ranks: having the book published in a market is one thing, but the duration in it (motivated not necessarily by large sales, but constant ones coupled with critical assessment) is a different one, and seemingly a quality few writers these days manage to achieve.

Even if Coetzee's latest book may have been modestly published in a small print run in Chile, we cannot forget the underlying structure described by Thompson: that meagre first publication is nevertheless part of a gigantic operation ultimately led by a corporation headquartered in New York – it is also the case that the staggered publication in different markets means that there has been a persistent drip of reviews and attention, that nowadays circulate globally through the internet. Furthermore, what seems more interesting still is that the current situation could not have been foreseen by Thompson, for he wrote that 'we cannot assume that the dynamics of trade publishing in the English language will be the same as they

are in Spanish’, reflecting that ‘publishing fields, like all cultural fields, have linguistic and spatial boundaries’ (2012, 12). To some extent, the first two phases of publication back up Thompson’s point, but the later phases complicate it. Indeed, in the few years since *Merchants of Culture* was published things have changed dramatically, and the linguistic and spatial boundaries he mentioned have in some cases blurred or even disappeared altogether. It may come as a surprise, but it turns out that today, and as a result of the very processes he describes, the English and Spanish publishing fields are in fact very similar and controlled by the same global player.

In that scheme of things, PRH will also obtain a monetary return (even if it is not their primary concern when publishing Coetzee), but only once the book is published and distributed in the English-speaking world, which forms the bulk of their global business model. In other words – and in bold commercial terms – one supplier is selling more or less the same product in different markets and establishing staggered dates for its introduction in each one of them.

While this vision may be at odds with Coetzee’s idea of publishing, his willingness to compromise and navigate corporate waters while trying to prioritise independent southern publishers like El Hilo de Ariadna is part of the distinctiveness of his circulation in Spanish. Consequently, this last phase is perhaps the most distinctive of all, for it dovetailed with other of Coetzee’s interests of his late period, like his crusade against the dominance of English. For these reasons, this phase was marked by the work not only of publishers and translators, for in this late stage Coetzee also actively participated in crafting his first Hispanic world.

Darnton wrote that ‘by its very nature, the history of the books must be international in scale and interdisciplinary in method’ (135). Across this chapter, we have followed Coetzee’s publication history in Spanish by distinguishing the different markets, Latin America and Spain, and considering cultural, literary and commercial dimensions. As we have seen, in his dealings

with the Spanish language, and especially with his publishers, Coetzee has carefully engaged with it as a world language, and in the process made a huge step in securing his reputation as a world writer, a status that requires a certain kind and amount of translation in order to be achieved. Coetzee's case is especially complicated, for if Casanova would probably include South African literature among the 'minor' ones because of its geographic position and relatively recent literary tradition, Coetzee nevertheless writes in *the* major language, and his Nobel and two Booker Prizes arguably make him the world writer with most symbolic power in the world.

We have seen across this chapter that Coetzee's translations into Spanish and personal interactions with the Hispanic publishing world took place in Argentina, Spain and Chile. Interestingly, the three countries share a commonality with South Africa: they all endured authoritarian governments during the second half of the twentieth century, a political reality that sets them apart from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, countries that also have a strong connection with Coetzee's biography and publication history.

However, except for the Argentine translation of *Barbarians*, he was published in these countries in a time of democratic stability, and Coetzee was only privy to the aftermath of political turmoil through his readings, for his work on censorship and his involvement with PEN suggest his familiarity with the pressures acting on writers in Latin American countries. When visiting them, he never got involved in the sort of cultural war he endured in South Africa, in which he took a moderate position – one akin to the one many French writers took during German occupation, as described by Gisèle Sapiro in *The French Writers' War: 1940-1953* – but he must have perceived the commonalities of these Spanish-speaking countries with the aftermath of apartheid South Africa, particularly because in all of them language was manipulated

and used as an instrument of oppression.³⁷ In this respect, his cultural interaction with the Spanish-speaking world has more in common with his native country than with Australia, and that interaction may as well produce a lasting mark.

Although in this chapter we have been able to assess Coetzee's transit in the Spanish language and his emergence as a world writer in the language by analysing the translations, publications and reviews of his works, his real impact in translation will have to be assessed many years from now. Are there any young writers in the Hispanosphere following his footsteps the way García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Benet followed the ones of Faulkner when they began publishing in Colombia and Spain in 1955, 1959 and 1961, or the way in which Salman Rushdie (b. 1947) and Grass later took up the torch of the Colombian novelist in India and Germany?³⁸ While it is difficult to answer that question, what seems more important is that all the previous writers read their forebears in translation, and then went on to become world writers themselves. However, if we consider the completeness of Coetzee's work in Spanish translation, coupled with his enduring literary stature and the significant interaction he had with readers in South America, the possibility does not seem like an entirely unreasonable prospect.

In this chapter I have marshalled evidence to demonstrate Coetzee's increasing status as a world writer within the Hispanophone world and his ability, thereby, to take positions resisting the hegemony of English. This journey was not without complications, for there was a time in which while Coetzee had an important reputation in the Anglosphere, his books were unavailable

³⁷ 'Cultural practices and institutions are generally dealt with in studies of "daily life" or "cultural life" under oppression. This division leads, on the one hand, to an over-politicized and strongly individualized view, one that tends to focus on extreme figures (Céline, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, Lucien Rebatet) at the expense of more moderate examples' (Sapiro 2).

³⁸ Randolph D. Pope notes that, because of the common Faulknerian influence, Benet is best understood when read alongside Latin American writers: 'Readers there will understand his work better if they associate it with the novels of García Márquez, Roa Bastos, Vargas Llosa, or Carpentier, and, especially, with the writing of Borges, instead of with other Spanish writers like Cela, Delibes or Juan Goytisolo' (118). This position brings Benet closer to Coetzee's south.

in the Hispanosphere. Crucially, if Coetzee's circulation in Spanish was for most of his career a Hispanic world not constructed by him, during the last decade the situation changed as he invested his important deal of cultural capital in facilitating publications in the Southern Cone. However, this operation must also be seen as a preparation for the appearance of *Death* in 2019, which marks the culmination of the different Hispanic worlds this thesis aims to examine. All these phenomena testify to the distinctiveness of his circulation in Spanish. After having analysed in this chapter the way in which Coetzee books travelled across the Spanish-speaking world, in the next chapter I will explain how he performed the opposite operation; that is, disseminating Hispanic literature as an academic in South Africa, and later across the world through his work as critic and reviewer.

2

Influence(d): Coetzee's Engagement with Hispanophone Letters

Conozco mejor la literatura latinoamericana
que la de la península Ibérica y, en Latinoamérica,
la poesía mejor que la ficción
(I know Latin American literature better
than the Iberian Peninsula one and, in Latin America,
the poetry better than the fiction [own translation])

J.M. Coetzee, interview with John Carlin
El País, 20 November 2002

This chapter examines Coetzee's journalistic, critical and academic engagement with Hispanophone literature, particularly South American, as a component of the South-South affiliations he formed in a world literary context between 1973 and 2018. I will demonstrate how Coetzee's involvement with Hispanic letters was kickstarted by teaching South American authors at the University of Cape Town at a time when the English Department was following a narrowly Leavisite and exclusively Anglophone programme of study (1973). The result was that while positioning himself in relation to a Spanish-language context – reflected in the inclusion of Neruda, Borges and Cortázar – he was also creating another Hispanic world of South American literature for South African readers, one that would eventually be complemented through his praxis as a reviewer and critic. I will continue by examining his critical essays in Anglophone publications that engage with established Hispanic authors like Vargas Llosa or García Márquez, but also a more obscure figure like Di Benedetto. While Coetzee's engagement with South American literature from the vantage point of UCT was noticed in the South African academic milieu, as a renowned public intellectual his review and essay collections shone light on different

aspects of Hispanophone letters at a global level. Although these two activities are related, they are also distinct in terms of methodology, diffusion, and the specificity of the public they aim to address. Assessing this particular aspect of Coetzee's work will allow us to bring into focus both the local and global contexts that, I suggest, give meaning to his lifelong engagement with Hispanophone literature, which constitutes the second of his four Hispanic worlds.

Unlike the first, this second Hispanic world was crafted almost entirely by Coetzee, and it operates in two dimensions of his intellectual field. On the one hand, in Coetzee we find a voracious reader who from the 1960s absorbs the great currents of world literature, among them the Hispanophone one. Within this current, it is chiefly South American literature that influences Coetzee's work and self-image as a writer and public intellectual. This process of absorption develops while Coetzee lives in England, the United States, South Africa and Australia, and is enhanced by the travels he makes during the 2010s to the Southern Cone, the region of the south where the most significant Hispanophone literature of the twentieth century is created. On the other hand, and in parallel to this absorptive process, we find a reflective one of writing about Hispanophone literature, first in the form of reviews and eventually in the guise of widely translated collected essays. If initially Coetzee shines light on Neruda, Borges and Cortázar in the relatively limited academic milieu of Cape Town, later on, as he moves closer to the centre of world letters, he engages with Hispanic letters critically, using different approaches. While in the case of García Márquez he will establish a dialogue and reveal the literary affiliations of a fellow world writer, he would also bring attention to Di Benedetto, an important writer who had been unfairly forgotten.

It is worth noting that through the inclusion of Hispanic literature in the South African context Coetzee wished to present a wider field than the one covered by the English Department's programme of study at UCT. However, it will become apparent that at this early

stage of his career there were several limitations to this ambition. In Coetzee at this point we find a young academic from the provinces who tries to establish South-South connections with other literatures. Similarly, in a global perspective, it can be argued that whilst the reputations of Borges and García Márquez were already established during the 1970s-80s, Coetzee specifically contributed to expanding the spectrum of what different types of Anglophone readers understood to be Hispanophone literature in translation. This he did not only by presenting Neruda and Cortázar to South Africa in the 1970s, but also by introducing Di Benedetto to the Anglophone world in the 2010s. If initially he was able to accomplish this by virtue of his academic work, eventually the platform was the prominent place he occupied as a writer on the world stage, in this case the platform being *The New York Review of Books*. These areas of action were complementary, and they also fertilized each other.

Coetzee's attention to South American writers can be seen as a counterpart to the processes of rendition into Spanish of his own works – as discussed in Chapter 1. For, while Coetzee's work was very gradually beginning to circulate in translation in the Hispanophone world, he was contributing to the diffusion of Hispanic literature in English translation. However, unlike the processes analysed in the previous chapter, this aspect of Coetzee as a critic was an effort he single-handedly controlled, and one that reached its culmination in the Hispanic narrative world he would eventually create in the *Jesus* novels. The next section turns to providing an outline of Coetzee's intellectual context at UCT during the 1970s, but before that I briefly delve into the periodization of this process, beginning with a succinct survey of Coetzee's discovery of Spanish. While we analyse this second Hispanic world and understand how Coetzee engaged with Hispanophone letters, it will become apparent that during his early period the process of receiving influence will be the dominant one, whereas in his mature period the

unveiling of different aspects of southern Hispanic letters for Anglophone and world readers gains prominence.

If we follow the narrative of *Youth*, it becomes clear Coetzee decided to teach himself Spanish around the time he was living in England, at some point between 1962 and 1965. Crucially, the motivation behind this effort was his wish to read Hispanic poetry in the original:

He picks up Spanish without difficulty. He reads César Vallejo in a dual-language text, reads Nicolás Guillén, reads Pablo Neruda. Spanish is full of barbaric-sounding words whose meaning he cannot even guess at, but that does not matter. At least every letter is pronounced, down to the double rr (*SPL* 206).

The three poets John read have biographical commonalities: they were Hispanic American, from the same generation and heavily involved in leftist politics, particularly so after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, so it made sense to have read them together. Nonetheless, their lives diverged significantly: while the mark they left on Coetzee's own life differs, they are the foundations of his second Hispanic world.

The Peruvian poet César Vallejo (1892-1938) came from humble origins. Born in a remote Andean village, he published with very limited means in Peru before relocating to Paris, where he died in obscurity. According to Octavio Paz (1914-98) in *Los hijos del limo* (1974, *Children of the Mire*), his is a 'poesía de la tierra' ('poetry of the earth', 216). 'The Big People' and 'Masses' were Vallejo's first poems to be translated into English (by James Wright and Robert Bly), and they were published in *Poetry* in 1961. This team, augmented by John Knoepfle, published the first bilingual collection the next year (*Twenty Poems of César Vallejo*), which is probably the one Coetzee read while living in London. The case of Nicolás Guillén (1902-89) is somewhat different. An Afro-Cuban – the only black Hispanophone writer whose work Coetzee would engage with – unlike Vallejo he lived into old age, but for most of his life (half of which coincided with the Cold War) his books only circulated in socialist countries. His first poem to be translated into English (by Lloyd Mallan) was 'Federico', which appeared in *Poetry* in 1943. In that issue the

first Neruda translation was also included ('Fantom of the Freighter', translated by H.R. Hays). Therefore, Coetzee would have been able to read these poets during his English period, as narrated in *Youth*.

Coetzee's work as a critic of Hispanophone literature in the broad sense – that is, considering the academic, reviewing and properly critical aspects of his *oeuvre* – can be divided into two main periods. The first period can be identified with Coetzee's work as an academic at UCT. It started in 1973, with the Selected Modern Poets course Coetzee co-led with Jonathan Crewe, in which he included a section on Neruda, who had won the Nobel Prize in 1971, continued with the appearance of the computer poem 'Hero and Bad Mother in Epic' in 1978 and ended with the publication of the essay 'Emerging from Censorship' in 1993, in which for the first time he engaged academically with a contemporary figure of Hispanophone letters, Vargas Llosa. During this period Coetzee analysed Hispanophone literature as one of the many currents that informed a literary space that lay beyond the provincial reality of apartheid South Africa: the world republic of letters – as demonstrated in Chapter 1. South American writers with an established international reputation began forming part of Coetzee's intellectual world, as demonstrated by two pieces included in his second and third essay collections: the interview of the Beckett section of *Doubling the Point* (1992), in which Attwell interrogates him about Neruda's role when discussing his essay 'Surreal Metaphors and Random Processes' (1979), and 'Emerging from Censorship', which was eventually collected in *Giving Offense* (1996). Of the two parallel movements I have identified as characteristic of this second Hispanic world, at first the receiving of influence predominates over the unveiling, but the latter will gain momentum as Coetzee's literary prestige grows. In this specular dynamic, the figure of Vargas Llosa operates as a hinge, for he occupies a similar position to Coetzee on the world stage, and they have written about one another.

We can identify the second period with Coetzee's literary journalism, which materialized in international reviews and critical essays. This process would begin in 1998, with the publication in the *NYRB* of a long review on Borges' *Collected Fictions* that reveals both a profound reading of the Argentine writer's *oeuvre* and a familiarity with and understanding of the political and social circumstances of his life and times – later edited and collected in *Stranger Shores* (2001). Crucially, in this piece Coetzee reveals for the first time his significant knowledge of Spanish language and Hispanic American culture, which he continued to display in reviews of García Márquez's *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (2006) and Di Benedetto's *Zama* (2017), both also originally published in the *NYRB* and later edited and collected in *Inner Workings* (2007) and *Late Essays* (2017). During this second period, he also edited the poetry anthology *51 poetas: antología íntima* (2015), published in Spanish by El Hilo de Ariadna in Buenos Aires, which included works by four different Hispanophone poets: Neruda, Borges, Rafael Alberti (1902-99) and García Lorca, which Chapter 3 discusses. Remarkably, during the last decade Coetzee felt confident enough to comment on Hispanophone writers in Spanish in the four little lectures he gave to schoolchildren in Santiago between 2015 and 2018, later collected in *Coetzee y los niños escritores* (2019). In this second period, Coetzee's central position in world letters meant that the gesture of highlighting Hispanophone letters for Anglophone and world readers is more significant than its specular movement of absorbing them as an influence.

In the interview he gave to *El País* in 2002, his first to a Spanish newspaper, Coetzee summarised the extent of his knowledge of Hispanic literature. Because it clarifies Coetzee's engagement with it at a crucial moment in his career, I have quoted it as an epigraph.

Conozco mejor la literatura latinoamericana que la de la península Ibérica y, en Latinoamérica, la poesía mejor que la ficción (Carlin 2002).
(I know Latin American literature better than the Iberian Peninsula one and, in Latin America, the poetry better than the fiction [own translation]).

Although Coetzee's assessment was expressed twenty years ago, it is consistent with the critical interests he has pursued since then, and whilst his frequent travels to South America in the 2010s have widened his knowledge of the field, it still seems valid, and has been further consolidated today. The emphasis on Latin American poetry must be understood as a reference to Neruda, whose influence on Coetzee will inform a substantial part of this chapter.

In the first part of this chapter, I assess Coetzee's engagement with Hispanic literature during his early period, which mainly consisted of absorbing its influence through his teaching. In the second part, I examine Coetzee's work as a reviewer and critic during his mature period, and how his writings on Hispanophone letters shone light on them on the global stage. Through these reciprocal movements Coetzee built this second Hispanic world which, as with the others, culminates in the south in the 2010s.

Coetzee as a Teacher of Hispanophone Literature

Significantly, Coetzee's pedagogical praxis is the aspect of his work that has hitherto been least explored by commentators: the only books that substantially refer to it are Kannemeyer's *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing* and Crewe's *In the Middle of Nowhere: J.M. Coetzee in South Africa*, which I will draw upon in this chapter, and there are also important references in book historical chapters by Van der Vlies and Peter McDonald.³⁹ Although they were colleagues at the English Department for only two years (1972-74), Crewe's book is the only direct account of the beginning of Coetzee's academic life at UCT, thus helping to draw a line between the fictional and biographical aspects of this period, which are indistinguishable in the narrative of *Summertime*. By contrast, although Kannemeyer was not witness to this part of Coetzee's life, a

³⁹ In 'Summertime Sadness: Coetzee, Coordinates and the Negation of the Archive', Shaun Irlam analysed the house and neighbourhood in which Coetzee lived in Buffalo but does not delve into his academic praxis (31).

whole chapter of his biography (‘Lecturer in Cape Town, and *Dusklands*’) analyses his teaching notes held at the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in Makhanda. Furthermore, there are two articles that delve into this specific aspect of Coetzee’s praxis. The first is Imraan Coovadia’s ‘Coetzee In and Out of Cape Town’ (2012), which purportedly tries ‘to understand Coetzee’s relationship with the city and university of Cape Town’ (103). However, the information Coovadia delivers on the actual academic work is almost non-existent, and he offers no verifiable sources to justify his assessment of Coetzee having purportedly been a ‘complicated colleague’ in the English Department – an opinion entirely based on what the former was allegedly told of the latter’s character, for they were never colleagues.⁴⁰ The second article is Ian Glenn’s ‘J.M. Coetzee and the English Department at the University of Cape Town’ (2019), which offers a more balanced and thoroughly researched account, and also comes from the perspective of a departmental colleague of Coetzee for almost thirty years (1974-2002). As a result, the extant accounts of Coetzee as a lecturer and academic are all from men and either partial or incomplete, and have also been subject to a distant, ironic fictionalisation on his part in *Summertime*.

This first part brings into focus Coetzee’s pedagogic praxis in a rather specific time-space frame: 1970s South Africa. Interestingly, Kannemeyer notes that prior to that Coetzee led a translation workshop in Buffalo, for which students could submit pieces in Latin, French, German, Dutch, Russian or Spanish, and that in the course introduction he wrote: ‘Note, too, that my Russian and Spanish are weak’ (175). I will primarily base my study on *Summertime*, which

⁴⁰ The following is a typical example of how Coovadia conveys Coetzee’s character as an academic: ‘Coetzee is remembered in the English Department, where I work, for having made everybody depressed, as I was told on the day of my arrival in Rondebosch’ (2012, 106). There was a reply to Coovadia’s article by Ian Glenn, in which the latter wrote that ‘gossipy malice is central to Coovadia’s argument’, to which Coovadia also responded.

covers John Coetzee's life in the period he began lecturing at UCT, and unpublished teaching documents from the Amazwi collections, while other accounts will contextualize the idea of what was deemed a 'provincial cultural backwater' by Crewe, Glenn and Coetzee himself – albeit with a degree of irony in the last-mentioned case. Finally, I must note that a fuller account of Coetzee's praxis as an academic would require a thorough-going engagement with the materials stored at the University of Texas and indeed the UCT archives, a task that is beyond the scope of the present project.

Before I delve into the specific approach Coetzee adopted to teach Hispanic American literature, it is perhaps worth recalling how South African academics of his generation related not only to a specific branch of what we now refer to as 'world literature', but to literary studies in general. Crucially, the historical, political, and cultural South African context was entirely different fifty years ago, and a brief analysis of the academic milieu Coetzee intervened in will provide some background to understand this phenomenon.

While the South African cultural field was divided between the Afrikaans- and English-speaking communities and marked by their worldviews, Coetzee had insight into both. On the one hand, Afrikaner intellectuals and academics like Breyten Breytenbach (b. 1939) and André Brink (1935-2015) had lively continental connections. Because of his background and knowledge base in Afrikaans and close collegial links with Brink, Coetzee would have been acquainted with them and stimulated by their connection. On the other hand, the case of white English-speaking academics Coetzee would encounter at the University of Cape Town was very different. Crewe provides a good description of their prevailing mentality during the early 1970s: 'As so often recorded in Anglophone postcolonial memoirs and works of fiction, both literacy and education meant English literacy and education, with England as the distant object of identification and aspiration' (11). The description evoked in Crewe's memoir paints a decidedly provincial picture,

with England – and more precisely, London – as a remote, somewhat overwhelming metropolis. In the 1970s, this conception was to be challenged by the American innovations in critical theory that Coetzee was fully acquainted with by the time he returned to South Africa from graduate studies in Texas and academic work in Buffalo. The world he returned to, however, was one still shaped by the model envisaged by Cambridge scholar F.R. Leavis and expounded from 1932 in *Scrutiny*, the influential literary review he edited. Leavis described the situation that led to his model in *Education & the University: A Sketch for an 'English School'* (1943). For Leavis, a modern university in the English-speaking world would have to be conceived as a 'focus of the finer life of cultural tradition' (11). This led him to elaborate a proposal for a University English School which would offer a programme of liberal studies designed to bring various disciplines into relation with one another. It was first implemented at Cambridge during the 1930s and subsequently adopted in other British universities after World War II. It was eventually exported through the Commonwealth network – including South Africa, though it formally withdrew from the entity in 1961 – and gained currency in many English-speaking countries.

In time, the long cultural shadow the metropolis cast coupled with the relative difficulty in intercontinental communication during that period, produced a curious phenomenon. Paradoxically, while the Leavisite approach was fading away in Britain – while literary theory gathered momentum at the hands of new figures like Frank Kermode – it remained very much a strong force in South Africa, a phenomenon that Crewe attributes to both 'the intensity of Leavisite conviction' and 'the persistence of Leavisite mentorship in the former Commonwealth after its eclipse in Britain' (21). Kannemeyer also held a similar opinion:

As far as twentieth-century literature was concerned, English departments in general favoured the principles of I.A. Richards and the 'great tradition' as formulated by F.R. Leavis, with particular attention to the novels of D.H. Lawrence (225).

This view is also shared by Glenn, who gives specific details about the situation in the English Department at UCT. It turns out that in 1971 – the year of Coetzee’s arrival – the University had appointed Professor David Gillham to the Arderne Chair, one of the two professorships of English (while the other one, the De Beers Chair, remained vacant), but ‘with overall responsibility for the Department’. As Glenn notes: ‘Gillham’s appointment marked the triumph of what might be called the Stellenbosch-Natal Leavisite school, largely formed by Cambridge, over the Oxford model that had hitherto seemed to predominate at UCT’ (2019, 416). As can be seen, Gillham’s privileged situation granted him significant leverage to implement a thoroughly Leavisite approach at UCT at the time of Coetzee’s arrival.

In view of this situation in the English language and literature academic field at the late 1960s and early 1970s in South Africa, and particularly at UCT, the impression for a young academic who returned to the country after having studied and worked at the vanguard of literary and linguistic research in the United States, as Coetzee did especially at SUNY Buffalo, must have been one of an outdated and provincial milieu. As Glenn explains, upon his arrival Coetzee was ‘seeing old debates re-hashed in a resistant British-oriented system’, a significantly retrogressive situation which may well have been demoralising for him (2019, 415). However, stimulus was to be found in the Afrikaans and Netherlandic Studies Department, and in other foreign language departments as well. This marked cultural contrast at the very beginning of his career must have affected his intellectual views, and it is surprising that whilst the effect Coetzee’s return to South Africa had on his fiction has been analysed from the very beginning of the scholarship on him, the way it influenced his academic praxis, and how the latter shaped his writing, has seldom been considered.⁴¹ Significantly, one of the ways through which Coetzee

⁴¹ A good example of the former can be found in Attwell’s *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*: ‘In hindsight we can see that Coetzee’s return to South Africa at the start of the 1970s had the effect of ensuring that

sought to reject the Leavisite logic of UCT' was by first introducing non-Anglophone literature to the syllabus, and later, through methods in book history.

Coetzee's book historical interest has been documented by McDonald and Van der Vlies. Particularly, McDonald has brought attention to 'The Book in Africa', a course Coetzee taught at UCT in 1980 as a means of reflecting on the intellectual climate in South Africa from the vantage of that year (Van der Vlies 2012, 4; McDonald 2012, 800-3). The introduction notes to the prospectus read thus:

It is not the publishing industry in isolation that must be examined, and certainly not the activity of writing (or texts in isolation), but the total industry that involves the sponsorship of texts (in part by the creation of a climate, in part by educational processes), the dissemination of texts (publishing, distribution, selling and lending), and the criticism of texts (McDonald 2012, 803).

This sort of approach that moves away from the then all-central 'activity of writing' was very much ahead of its time in 1980; so much so that McDonald notes that 'Coetzee's option attracted few takers and it was shelved after the first year'. Nonetheless, if Coetzee's multidisciplinary approach was visionary then, it now has solid currency in literary studies: indeed, a significant amount of the research for this study is based on a 'total industry' focus, which allows me to bring together his four very distinct Hispanic worlds.

A notable exception to the lack of studies on the effect Coetzee's return to South Africa had on his academic life can be found in a recent chapter by Attwell, in which he reflects on his approach to African writers. After examining Coetzee's notes on African literature for a course he taught at SUNY Buffalo in 1969 and 1970, Attwell concludes that he engaged with African writers enthusiastically while in America. However, his interest became noticeably toned down in South Africa. Coetzee explained at the time there were legal reasons behind this: in a February

his fiction would escape the consequences of the "posthistorical" age, that ultimately we would find in his novels a dramatic confluence of postmodern ideas and the history-making exigencies of a society in turmoil' (125).

1969 letter to Mary Ellen McFerran, the immigration expert in the office of Senator Javits, he wrote that ‘No such course could be taught at a South African university, simply because the works of most of the African writers with whom I would deal are banned in South Africa’ (Kannemeyer 189). However, Attwell argues that the reason behind the attenuation, following the clues contained in the voice of Sophie Denoël in *Summertime*, was related to the aftermath of Coetzee’s ‘involvement in the political turmoil of the late 1960s’, which had disastrous consequences for him – chief among them, the impossibility of remaining in America (2018, 279).

I am referring to these events to show that *Summertime* has become the dominant account, and Attwell, Crewe and Glenn are all offering supplementary or expansive accounts built on it. This certainly complicates the narrative of this part of Coetzee’s life, for the semi-fictionalised, ironic account of *Scenes* must be approached with caution, as I have explained elsewhere in this study. What seems certain is that the outdatedness and provinciality I alluded to must have been recognised by Coetzee at the very beginning of his career. The American academic milieu was distinguished by enthusiastic engagement with the emerging French theory, which Coetzee experienced right before having to re-start his academic career at UCT in 1971.⁴² It seems important at this point to contextualize the situation of Coetzee as an intellectual back then, for the available studies on this subject appeared when he already was a pivotal figure in world letters, both as a writer and an academic (Poyner 2006, Mehigan, Moser 2019). In other words, because they were written from the perspective of his later achievement, they fail to reflect the many limitations of South African intellectual life in the early 1970s, a situation which Coetzee

⁴² ‘He was bringing with him an intellectual itinerary and formation far more widely recognized in the world outside than in South Africa at the time, e.g. Buffalo’. (Crewe 4).

had to negotiate daily, and which was also far removed from the one he had experienced in America. It was against this difficult backdrop that he began to build his second Hispanic world.

The most important account of the life of intellectuals at the time is conveyed in Edward Shils' *The Intellectuals and the Powers & Other Essays* (1972). According to Glenn, Coetzee was marked by Shils' 'account of what happens to foreign intellectuals who study in the USA but lose touch with the latest developments in their field when they return home because of distance, heavy teaching loads, and political concerns' (2019, 427). Actually, the account Glenn was alluding to described what Shils deemed to be the common case of a typical Indian university teacher who, after having studied locally or in Britain, had subsequently failed to make any significant progress in his field:

By early middle age he has accomplished practically nothing with his talent or his training. He has failed, as the years passed, to go forward with the line of inquiry he began as a research student, and he has undertaken no new study. If asked what has happened, he tells a melancholy tale. He began his career full of life but after a time his vitality faded. The head of his department was resentful of his qualifications and his intellectual vivacity. He could not get the books or the equipment he needed, or he got them so long after applying for them that he had lost interest (Shils 345).

Although Shils' account made the forementioned reference, it could be extrapolated to that of a South African student who had then worked in the US. In fact, Glenn maintains that 'Coetzee said that Shils' account certainly resonated with him' (2019, 427). This is confirmed by the fact that in the prospectus of 'The Book in Africa' Coetzee not only alluded to 'environmental pressures of all kinds on writers', but also directly cited Shils, suggesting a topic on 'the tension between a metropolitan orientation and a provincial orientation in the cultural life of Cape Town, as revealed in its cultural organs' (McDonald 2012, 800-1). It seems therefore important to take note of how the latter's theories shaped the former's views on intellectuals more generally, and how Coetzee was attempting, later, to build reflection on his intellectual milieu into his teaching.

There is evidence that even almost a decade after his appointment at the English Department, Coetzee was still highly critical of the shortcomings of the South African academic and intellectual reality, especially in English-speaking milieus – despite his best efforts to overcome them: Glenn notes that in a letter from 1980 he laconically described it as ‘Life in the provinces: flogging dead horses’ (2019, 415). Nevertheless, the book history course is a more productive way of reflecting on this situation, and to ask more interesting questions about it. Significantly, from the moment he was appointed Coetzee set out to fight against this situation by approaching the curriculum in two distinct ways. On the one hand, he intended to de-anglicise it by making it more specifically South African, and this he did by including African writers in the syllabus. As Crewe explains: ‘One colonial paradox of South African English Departments was that they scarcely gave the time of day to South African Literature, hewing closely instead to English Literature in its most elevated canonical guise’ (5). On the other hand, Coetzee worked to include writers and literary traditions that were *not* related to the main European strands that informed the culture of South African letters at the time, the English and Netherlandic, although the only space available to do this was through extramural courses taught at night-time. Among these literary traditions was Hispanophone literature, and particularly its Hispanic American branch, which also underwent a boom in this period. In other words, the move away from the English language is another means of rejecting the then existing organisation of South African literary studies.

In respect of the first of the three intellectual practices through which Coetzee approached Hispanophone literature, the academic, the starting point was the continuing education course Coetzee co-led with Crewe at UCT in 1973, which would not have been part of the undergraduate degree course, but optional to interested outsiders. This project is documented in *Summertime* (2009), which contains an account of John Coetzee’s personal and

academic relation to Neruda. This narrative is rendered by Martin, who was for the most part modelled on Crewe.⁴³ True, the reminiscences conveyed by the interviewees in the final book of *Scenes* – by far the one more loosely based on Coetzee’s real-life events – must be approached with caution by scholars following a biographical line of research. In *Summertime*, Vincent mentions that there are no archival records of the courses Coetzee taught at UCT. Nonetheless, he also notes to Martin that ‘among Coetzee’s papers I did come across an advertisement for a course that you and he offered jointly in 1976 to extramural students’, to which he responds that ‘John had the students read Pablo Neruda in translation’, and then the conversation concentrates on the Chilean poet (212). However, because he is featured alone in this passage, the reader gets the impression that Neruda was a major influence on Coetzee during the first years after his return from America to South Africa – which is correct, as he himself has stated – but also that his section of the course was only or mostly about Neruda, which is not accurate.

According to *Scenes*, Coetzee’s interest in Neruda developed out of John’s ‘fondness for lush, expansive poetry’ and his ‘need to believe in the resources of the unconscious, in the creative force of unconscious processes. Hence his inclination towards the more vatic poets’ (444-5). In this regard, it could be argued that in this case, like all historical fictions, the preoccupations of the author at the time of writing are also reflected. From this perspective, it seems plausible to argue that in *Summertime* Coetzee was retrospectively constructing an intellectual life for himself in which Neruda held sway, which is in line with the semi-fictionalised character who marks his building of this second Hispanic world.

The semi-fictionalised authorial account can be read against Crewe’s memoirs. He notes that a first significant point about the course was the unusual way Coetzee approached it: the

⁴³ ‘Where I recognize myself unmistakably in “Martin” is as the pipe-smoking interviewee at the University of Cape Town in 1972, applying for the same job as Coetzee’ (Crewe 19).

writers he chose to discuss came from a wider field than was expected in South Africa at the time, possibly because an extramural course gave him greater freedom. As Crewe explains:

Without by any means highlighting the fact, Coetzee was ushering in Comparative Literature in place of the taken-for-granted English Literature: the poets I mainly recall him discussing were Pablo Neruda and Zbigniew Herbert (22).

This amplifies the account of *Summertime*, for Crewe explains that they ‘read MacDiarmid and Neruda only to launch the course’, revealing that there were other poets too (22). But Crewe’s version is also somewhat fragmentary and limited, as the recollections of a tutor on the course.

The real story is quite different from the previous accounts. Contrary to the *Summertime* narrative, the archival records of the courses Coetzee taught at UCT do indeed exist and are presently stored at the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature in Makhanda. The relevant document reads as follows:

A3/233

SELECTED MODERN POETS
Mr Jonathan Crewe & Dr John Coetzee

This series of ten lectures will be taught by two lecturers in the English Department. It is an “open” course for which no preliminary reading is necessary. Duplicated texts of poems will be made available by the lecturers whenever necessary.

Mr Crewe will deal with: Hymns to Lenin, and other hymns: poetry of Hugh Macdiarmid.

Crowing on the dunghill: poems by Ted Hughes.

The True Confession of George Barker.

Dr Coetzee will deal with: The Heights of Macchu Picchu: Pablo Neruda (Cape paperback).

Selected Poems: Hans M. Enzensberger (Penguin).

Selected Poems: Zbigniew Herbert (Penguin).

Mondays: 8. p.m.

Commencing: 30 July.

Venue: B17 Beattie Bldg., U.C.T.

Fee for course: R7,50.⁴⁴

The correct year of this extramural course – hence the fee and tuition hours – was 1973, not 1976. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that all six poets were alive and working at the start of the course (Neruda died on September 23, the day of the penultimate lecture), which shows that Crewe and Coetzee wanted to innovate and focus on living contemporary writers and move away from poets that students, who may have been largely mature students, would have possibly been familiar with, like T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). However, that is the only similitude between the two selections. Another significant point is that while Crewe selected three British poets, Coetzee did not choose a single Anglophone writer. While Coetzee would have taught English literature as normal to undergraduate students during the day, his choices for the extramural course show he would have liked to deprovincialize and de-anglicise the curriculum at the English Department. Crucially, Coetzee's selection also shows how early and consistently his critical ability and taste developed: the three poets he selected when he was thirty-two would be included forty-two years later in *51 poetas: antología íntima*, the poetry volume he edited for the Argentine publisher El Hilo de Ariadna in 2015. I will return to the anthology in Chapter 3, in the context of Coetzee's later immersion in the south.

Coetzee's cultural position in July 1973 must be analysed under two different angles. While he already was an accomplished academic for his age and in his South African context (for he possessed a PhD from a prestigious American university, a permanent contract at UCT, and had already published three academic articles), his position as an author was far less defined. If Coetzee had already laid the foundations of the solid academic career he was going to pursue for the rest of the century, as a creative writer he was also beginning to see himself solely as a

⁴⁴ *Extra-Mural Classes 1973*, University of Cape Town, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, 21 (Amazwi South African Museum of Literature Archive). I have kept the idiosyncrasies of Crewe's list.

prose writer. Although it is easy to overlook it in view of his many early accomplishments, the truth is that Coetzee had not yet published a book under his own name, for he was nearing completion of *Dusklands* in July 1973. In other words, according to Lejeune, he was not yet an author: ‘Un auteur, ce n’est pas une personne. C’est une personne qui écrit et qui publie’ (‘An author is not a person. It is a person who writes and publishes’). In fact, Lejeune goes one step further to argue that authorship only appears with a second book:

Peut-être n’est-on véritablement auteur qu’à partir d’un second livre, quand le nom propre inscrit en couverture dévient le “facteur commun” d’au moins deux textes différents et donne donc l’idée d’une personne qui n’est réductible à aucun de ses textes en particulier, et qui, susceptible d’en produire d’autres, les dépasse tous (23).
(Perhaps one is not really an author until the second book, when the proper name printed on the cover turns into the ‘common factor’ of at least two different texts and thus conveys the idea of a person who is not reducible to any of his texts in particular and who – because he will likely produce others – overtakes them all [own translation]).

Lejeune’s vision can be connected with the narrative of *Scenes from Provincial Life*, which according to Attwell is ‘organized around the emergence of the writer, ending with the publication of his first novel’ (2015, 154). *Mutatis mutandis*, the biography of a writer becomes meshed with his *oeuvre* from the moment he publishes his first book – and that is why the autobiographical trilogies of both L.N. Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Coetzee conclude before their first books appear. Consequently, Coetzee is giving Neruda a special place in *Summertime* because he is telling the story of his life before he became a writer, for henceforth the story starts to tell itself through the narrative vehicle of his published *oeuvre*. In other words, he is reimagining the influence Neruda had on his career from the position of the writer he eventually became; the beginning of the process is therefore seen from the perspective of its end.

At this point, we can assume that in the case of Neruda, the highest point of absorption of influence by Coetzee – one of his two specular movements of engagement I identified – took place in the 1970s. Indeed, after the academic engagement had finished, there were creative instances of Nerudian influence on Coetzee during the late 1970s. One is to be found in the final

pages of *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), specifically when Magda writes messages with stones on the ground: ‘POEMAS CREPUSCLRS, I announced on the first day, intending CREPUSCULARIAS but running short of stones’ (256). The reference to Neruda’s first book, *Crepusculario* (1923) is indubitable, for the word was coined by the Chilean poet (derived from ‘crepúsculo’, twilight), and when used in Spanish the reference is always direct. Another instance is to be found in the writing of *Barbarians*, for the Coetzee Papers in Texas reveal a reference to ‘The Heights of Macchu Picchu’ in November 1977, as noted by Uhlmann (77). Yet another instance, a related one, is to be encountered in what Zimbler deems ‘the oddest of Coetzee’s mature writings’, the computer programme ‘Hero and Bad Mother in Epic’ (1978), which was produced with the input of a Neruda lexicon (2014, 97). While Zimbler has established the importance of this poem in its ‘distillation of dramatic form’, and it is indeed significant that from all the poets he liked Coetzee chose Neruda’s translated words as the raw materials for his experiment, a critic of Hispanophone literature can hardly find a Nerudian mark in the finished poem. Its importance lies elsewhere, and more precisely – in Zimbler’s interpretation – in how Coetzee makes the poem entirely his own by its message ‘about the resilience of stories’, which relates to his vision in ‘The Novel Today’, to which I return in Chapter 4 (104). Finally, there is also a documented Neruda strain in the writing of *Michael K*. Uhlmann notes that on 7 July 1981 Coetzee wrote: ‘Why shouldn’t K – get to voice the people? Read Neruda’, which shows his awareness of Neruda’s capacity to speak for the oppressed of the world (106).

The above Nerudian instances unfolded when Coetzee was already an established prose writer and can therefore be seen as vestigial aspects of an earlier involvement with the Chilean poet that came to the surface during his mature period. Nonetheless, Neruda’s powerful figure as a model of the southern artist was still present in Coetzee’s world in 1978. In an interview

with Stephen Watson that year, he acknowledged the influence of twentieth-century poetry.

When Watson asked, ‘Anybody in particular?’, Coetzee responded:

Well, quite a lot of people. In the first place Pound, Rilke, Zbigniew [sic], Herbert, Neruda – these are all people that I’ve read with more intensity than I’ve read any novelist, and I can’t believe that it hasn’t left a mark (22).

In a group of novelists, poets and critics from the north, Neruda is the only figure not only from the Hispanic world, but also from the south. The uniqueness reflected in Coetzee’s answer can be connected to the interview with Carlin I quoted in the epigraph: the allusion to Latin American poetry as the area of Hispanic literature he knows best must be understood, first and foremost, to Neruda.

Keeping the above in mind, we can try to delineate Neruda’s influence on Coetzee in the long run, by looking at the whole of his career. From that perspective, it could be argued that in terms of the shaping of Coetzee’s artistic persona, the figure of Neruda probably served as a template of the southern writer he would have liked to resemble as he began his career, for both came from countries located in the cultural periphery of the West and in continents scarred by long, deep colonial wounds in their social tissue. In fact, Martin gives ground to this view: ‘Neruda may have been a model – an unattainable model – of how a poet can respond creatively to injustice and repression’ (*SPL* 445). However, while the model was unattainable for Coetzee if we consider poetry as the vehicle for artistic expression, Neruda’s attitude as a writer fully immersed in the world remained attainable for him. One proof of this may be found in the way Coetzee described his relation to Neruda in the Carlin interview: ‘Cuando era mucho más joven, Pablo Neruda era uno de mis ídolos’ (‘When I was much younger, Pablo Neruda was one of my heroes’, 2002d). He reformulated this in a more nuanced way in an interview with *La Tercera* in 2019:

El ejemplo de Pablo Neruda significó mucho para mí cuando yo era un hombre joven que intentaba convertirme en poeta, antes de pasar de escribir poesía a escribir obras de ficción (Coetzee 2019e).

(Pablo Neruda's example meant a lot to me when I was a young man trying to become a poet, before turning from writing poetry to writing works of fiction [own translation]).

Coetzee's identification with the figure of Neruda must be understood in the context of the Cold War. The dynamics of world politics and its relation to South Africa were completely different at the time, and Neruda played a specific role in an ideologically charged context. According to Crewe, there was a significant awareness of Marxism in South African universities during the mid-1970s, and 'Coetzee's presentation of Neruda was consistent with this renewed interest, Neruda then being an icon of the Left' (23).⁴⁵ Therefore, in Coetzee's early construction of this second Hispanic world, political affinities also played a role.

In the 1973 course, Coetzee read excerpts of Neruda's 'Alturas de Macchu Picchu' ('The Heights of Macchu Picchu') – from *Canto general* (1950) – in the Tarn translation. Fortunately, Crewe recalls precisely the verses Coetzee recited – 'with evident feeling and consciousness of the South African setting'. He began with the five initial verses of the final stanza of the tenth canto:

Ancient America, bride in her veil of sea, your fingers also,
 from the jungle's edges to the rare height of gods,
 under the nuptial banners of light and reverence,
 blending with thunder from the drums and lances,
 your fingers, your fingers also —

And then continued with the sixth to ninth verses of the final stanza of the eleventh canto:

I see the ancient being, the slave, the sleeping one,
 blanket his fields—a body, a thousand
 bodies, a man, a thousand women swept by the sable whirlwind, charred with a rain and
 night,
 stoned with a leaden weight of statuary

⁴⁵ Significantly, Crewe conveys this observation without referring to the Chilean situation, for Allende's Marxist experiment turned world attention into the country during the first third of the 1970s. Neruda died of cancer on 23 September 1973, twelve days after the institutional break. The proximity of the dates reinforced internationally the perception of Neruda as an icon of the Left for the next few years.

Before finishing with the last verse of the poem: 'Rising to birth with me, as my own brother' (23). Although the poem was inspired by the upheaval that the arrival of conquistadors provoked in pre-Columbian peoples, the passages Coetzee chose could have perfectly applied to the African reality as well. Coetzee was aware of this, as Crewe explains:

In choosing Neruda and Herbert, Coetzee was certainly conscious of their political resonance, but it was a resonance belonging more to the larger global politics and political philosophy of the twentieth century (of which Leavisite pedagogy seemed almost wholly oblivious) than to the immediate South African situation (23).

Therefore, for Coetzee the most important goal in including Neruda in the Selected Modern Poets course seems to have been to develop wider literary and comparative interests in conjunction with the rapidly changing and polarising political climate. Even if this was initially done only via the extra-mural curriculum, Coetzee managed to bring a writer whose prestige was also related to world politics into critical debate in a South African academic context. Let us draw our attention to Coetzee's notes for the course, which described Neruda's position as a world writer in 1973:

His influence ~~is~~ was enormous, particularly in the non-English-speaking world, though in the last ten years his influence on younger American poets has been appreciable. Probably the most widely-read poet in the world today (1973, 1).

This shows Coetzee's early awareness of a literary world beyond the Anglosphere, one in which Neruda occupied a central position. Although an academic assessment of Neruda's work would at the time have been entirely normal in France, where he lived at the beginning of the 1970s and was highly regarded, and even in England, where he was the main figure of the Poetry International Festival organised by Ted Hughes (1930-98) in 1967, that was simply not the case in South Africa, where according to Crewe 'few had actually read or even heard of Neruda' (Bate 252, Crewe 24-5).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The first book-length study of Neruda in English, by Frank Riess, appeared in 1972.

This state of affairs seems to have been sustained over time in the English Department at UCT – even well after Neruda had won the Nobel Prize in 1971 – for Glenn notes that ‘in one heated meeting about curriculum reform, Gillham asked if we should remove a great English poet to make way for “Patagonian poetry”’ (2019, 421). When Glenn conveyed this remark to Coetzee, who was temporarily abroad, the latter confirmed in a letter of 15 March 1979 that Gillham was referring to Neruda, ‘on whom I lectured to an extra-mural class in 1973’. In hindsight, although Gillham’s remark does indeed seem dismissive, it was also incorrect, for Neruda was *not* a Patagonian poet. The confusion may have arisen after the publication of *In Patagonia* (1977) by Bruce Chatwin (1940-89) which for the first time situated the region on the world literary stage.⁴⁷

By contrast, it must be remarked that Coetzee’s academic command and knowledge of Neruda’s craft was extraordinary for 1973, as an extract from his fourteen pages of teaching notes attests:

In Neruda, the world precedes the idea, precedes man, precedes language. The world is the ~~tab~~ that out there from which man is tragically severed by the same rational consciousness that enables him to speak. Man, of whom the poet is only the miraculously most articulate representative, has somehow to manage to live both in the world, in which he is a stranger, and in words, which will not feed him. The bulk of Neruda’s poetry is about the divided existence of man, written in either tragic alienation or in Edenic reconciliation. [The poem “The Poet”, which comes from Canto general, is about the poetry of tragic alienation from the world, and condemns it from the perspective of a man old enough to see that he cannot afford it.] [But] the poetry of the 1920’s and 1930’s is full of the wanderer-watcher whose vocation and cross it is to roam through the world naming it out of one state of being into another (1973, 2).

⁴⁷ Neruda was born in 1904 in Parral, a city located 343 kilometres south from Santiago. Founded in 1795 – towards the end of Spanish rule – Parral lies in the central valley, the heartland of Chile. In 1906, shortly after Neruda’s mother died, his father moved 336 kilometres further south to Temuco, which had only been founded in 1881. Located in the Araucanía region, Temuco was not yet firmly integrated to Chilean life by the time of Neruda’s birth. Crucially, Temuco is where Neruda became “vaguely saturated by mist and rain” – that notorious interminable rain of the south of Chile that plays so fundamental a role in Neruda’s poetry’ and the southernmost point of his biography (D.P. Gallagher 41). By contrast, it has traditionally been considered that Chilean Patagonia – a denomination that has never corresponded to any administrative division – begins in the Gulf of Corcovado, 600 kilometres further south. Neruda only visited the Chilean Patagonia twice, which was not accessible by land during his lifetime: his political endeavours led him to Punta Arenas in 1964 and 1969. As Chapter 4 will show, a city with the same name appears in the *Jesus* novels.

Coetzee's analysis reveals an awareness of the change of Neruda's vision, from the confused wanderer of *Residencia en la tierra* (1933, *Residence on Earth*) to the poet of the Americas of *Canto general*. Significantly, Coetzee was working in a field with practically no English bibliography at the time, and it seems he was not acquainted with the monograph by Frank Riess (1972), for he only quoted from the introduction by Luis Monguió to Ben Belitt's translation of *Selected Poems*.⁴⁸ Therefore, his analysis was very much the fruit of his own readings.

In retrospect, Coetzee's decision to include Neruda in the Selected Modern Poets course seems indicative of his intention of broadening the view of his students, albeit in a circumscribed, extracurricular way, from a specifically English-colonial one to a global-multilingual one. As Crewe also remarks, by discussing Neruda, Coetzee could trace his antecedents back to Surrealism, which is also present in Coetzee's notes:

His poetry of the period 1925-35 moves through a landscape of trussed chickens and false teeth and mirrors and umbrellas and navels and weeping underwear much like the dream landscape of Max Ernst and Salvador Dali (...) Surrealism meant that artists were, more or less consciously, liberating the imagination by embracing the irrational. But to liberate the imagination one must have an imagination to liberate. One can argue that, for one reason or another, Spanish poetry was the main beneficiary of Surrealism, and Neruda the greatest of all the Surrealist poets (1973, 3).

The period corresponds to the writing of *Residencia*, which had just been published in English translation by Donald D. Walsh (1973). However, while Surrealism influenced both Spanish and Chilean poetry, Neruda was not a Surrealist poet.⁴⁹ But more important is that here Coetzee

⁴⁸ There would be a future connection with Neruda's translator. In 1996 Coetzee received the Stowe Award and delivered the Ben Belitt lecture at Bennington College (Kannemeyer 511). The occasion would be fictionalized in 'What is Realism?'

⁴⁹ Following C.B. Morris, 'I see surrealism as a specific movement and not as a loose synonym for fantasy or literary eccentricity, I think it is valid to talk of surrealism and Spain, or surrealism in Spain, but that the term 'Spanish surrealism' is as critically incongruous as French *conceptismo* or Welsh *gongorismo*' (8). Surrealist influences are discernible in the Spanish poetry of 1920 to 1936, notably in García Lorca, Alberti, Luis Cernuda (1902-63) and Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984). As Stefan Baciú noted, Chilean Surrealism was the most important in Hispanic America and it developed with delayed effect, from 1938 to 1949 (109). The movement was championed by the Mandrágora group, formed by Enrique Gómez Correa (1915-95), Braulio Arenas (1913-88), Jorge Cáceres (1923-49), and Teófilo Cid (1914-64). Luis Muñoz González has remarked that the Mandrágora poets were remarkably Anti-Nerudian, and even interrupted a homage to the poet at the University of Chile in 1940 (24). It is therefore incorrect to refer to Neruda as a 'Surrealist poet'.

applies the unveiling operation, by showing that southern artists can take part in an avant-garde artistic movement that knew no national boundaries, showing a way forward for young South African writers trying to break away from a provincial mindset.

Through the example of Neruda and within the limits of an extramural course, Coetzee at least tried to set into motion the deprovincialization of South African literature in English, which according to Crewe alongside that of national public discourse became one of his ‘major tasks both as a writer and public intellectual’ (25). The result of this praxis was that while Coetzee was *absorbing* and positioning himself in relation to a Hispanophone element that was a substantial part of world letters, he was also *unveiling* and creating a particular world of Hispanophone literature for his Anglophone students – and eventually also for his readers. This is an example of the double and parallel dynamic that characterises the second of Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds.

Significantly, Coetzee was also constructing this second Hispanic world for himself, as part of his own artistic vision: Neruda also played an important role in his literary biography. Within this field, there is one further consideration of a more private nature, and one related to Coetzee’s attenuation of his teaching of African literature after 1971, as Attwell explains:

The problem had to do with Coetzee’s self-positioning: paradoxically, an Africa that had seemed attainable in an intellectual sense in Buffalo had receded from view in Cape Town. *Summertime’s* self-diagnosis in the voice of Sophie Denoël (the fictionalization is slender here) is that while John was circumspect with his students at UCT and his preparations were never less than professional, privately he held Romantic primitivist ideas that had become old fashioned in the postcolonial situation (2018, 279).

In Attwell’s description one can detect cultural traits akin to the ones that mark David Lurie as an outcast in *Disgrace*, which contribute to his downfall. So, it is also possible that Neruda’s figure operated for Coetzee as a replacement token for the African writers he no longer felt able to fully embrace, as he had done in America, once he returned to South Africa. From this point of

view, the Chilean poet may have represented a fellow figure of struggle against oppression, but one that was also conveniently much farther away from home in every respect.

A final consideration relating to Neruda's influence on Coetzee is that it seemed to dwindle over the years. There appear to be two reasons behind this. On the one hand, Neruda was fundamentally a poet whose prose fiction was very limited, and thus could never attain the status of a model in the sense that both Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and Beckett did – and as Borges, I argue, eventually would. On the other hand, nor was Neruda a critic of poetic praxis – like his contemporaries and fellow Nobel laureates Paz and Eliot. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Dionysian and vatic quality Coetzee admired in Neruda was not matched by analytical insight. In fact, Neruda's approach to his craft was decidedly anti-intellectual on the surface, perhaps due to the early influence of surrealism, but this stance must not be taken at face-value: according to Vargas Llosa, it was partly a pose, for otherwise he would not have 'revolucionado la palabra poética en lengua española como él lo hizo' ('revolutionized the poetic word in the Spanish language as he did'; 2012, 591).

Apart from Selected Modern Poets, recalled by both Crewe in his book and Martin in *Summertime*, there was another extramural course Coetzee and Crewe taught in 1974, this time on short prose, which, to my knowledge, has not previously been critically discussed.

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THE MODERN SHORT STORY

Dr J.M. Coetzee and Mr J. Crewe

A course of ten weekly lectures, 5 given by Dr J.M. Coetzee and 5 by Mr J.V. Crewe. Each week a single story will be discussed, the texts of which will previously have been distributed to members of the class. Works by the following authors will be discussed: Joyce, Borges, Kafka, Robbe-Grillet, Cortázar, Trilling, Faulkner, John Barth, David Barthelme and Gerhard Toonder. Admission to course limited and no preliminary reading is necessary.

Mondays: 8 p. m.

Commencing: Tuesday 16 April and thereafter Mondays.

Venue: Room 27 Beattie Bldg., U.C.T.

Fee for course: R7,50.⁵⁰

Again, this is an extra-mural course, which shows that Coetzee could only expand the syllabus outside the undergraduate programme. Interestingly, the change of focus from poetry to prose went abreast with the phenomenon Coetzee was undergoing as a writer, for *Dusklands* was published two days after the first lecture (Wednesday 18 April 1974). This new authorial self-consciousness is also reflected in the fact that the *nom-de-plume* 'J.M.' is used in favour of the academic 'John'. Furthermore, the list of writers reveals an unusual and early interest in Julio Cortázar, an avant-garde writer of great technical skill and part of the Latin American Boom phenomenon. Cortázar had acquired an important literary reputation with works like *Rayuela* (1963, *Hopscotch*) and *End of the Game and Other Stories* (1967), an English-language compilation which contained the story that inspired Michelangelo Antonioni's (1912-2007) film *Blow-up* (1966), so it makes sense for Coetzee to include him in a course in 1974. Nonetheless, perhaps because his literary world is very much encapsulated in the experimental spirit of the 1960s, Cortázar's literary prestige has diminished during the last few decades, and he does not occupy a prominent place in the second of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds – his teaching notes on Cortázar are lost.

The Borges teaching notes have again been preserved in the Amazwi Museum of Literature archive, revealing something of Coetzee's vision at the time:

The effect of Borges stories seems to me as much as Borges himself has described: to open up terrifying crevices of unreason in the appearance of things, to create a sudden vertigo as the comfortable habits we have created for ourselves as ways of living with the world are revealed as nothing but habits of thinking. In this respect Borges is much like Kafka.

⁵⁰ University of Cape Town, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, *Extra-Mural Classes 1974, Mar-Oct*, 20. Amazwi South African Museum of Literature Archive.

Although in real life Borges wears a mask of disarming naivete [*sic*], though he pretends to be old-fashioned [*sic*] ~~in~~ in his tastes, he in fact belongs with the avant-garde of fiction today, and has been recognized as such by younger writers. Like much of the present generation of fiction-writers, he has abandoned every form of realism, including psychological realism. The task of writing books which will convince people, even if only temporarily, that they are “reality,” that they are “about” “real” people in a “real” world, simply does not interest him. “The composition of vast books is a laborious and impoverishing extravagance. To go on for five hundred pages developing an idea whose perfect oral exposition is possible in a few minutes! A better course is to pretend that these books already exist, and then to offer a resume, a commentary” (1974b, 3).

The story Coetzee selected was ‘Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius’ (1940). The quoted passage, from the Prologue to ‘The Garden of Forking Paths’, in Anthony Kerrigan’s translation of *Ficciones*, offers a key to an understanding of the mysterious, concise world-making that takes place within a single Borgesian story. Crucially, while he taught him, Coetzee was simultaneously absorbing Borges’ *oeuvre* and transferring it into his second Hispanic world: while the Borges notes are less voluminous than the Neruda ones – only three pages – they already foreshadow the profundity of Coetzee’s essay on him twenty-four years later.

More generally, this selection shows how Coetzee’s personal taste was forming, for the immersion in Chilean and Argentine writers in 1973-74 would later have a counterpart in the development of a series of academic, publishing, educational, and literary projects in both Chile and Argentina between 2015 and 2018, as Chapter 3 shows. In other words, the UCT programmes show the consistency of Coetzee’s main interests in Hispanic literature, principally related to the Southern Cone, and more specifically, to twentieth-century Chilean poetry and Argentine prose. This phenomenon demonstrates that the four Hispanic worlds of Coetzee are not to be understood as watertight compartments; on the contrary, they are intimately related and operate as communicating vessels that converge in the narrative world of the *Jesus* novels.

After the extramural courses at UCT there were no further major teaching approaches to Hispanic American literature by Coetzee – that is, other than those a future Professor of General Literature would undertake. An example can be found in the notes he prepared for

prospective students of the course ‘Art and the End of Art: Pound, Faulkner, Stevens, Beckett’ (1974), in which he announced they will look ‘again at Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* and at the stories of Jorge Luis Borges for the growing ambivalence they show about the powers of art’ (Kannemeyer 230). Nonetheless, Coetzee’s teaching approach to Hispanophone literature stopped altogether after he resigned his professorship at the University of Chicago in 2003 – during which he taught Cervantes – giving way to a more profound immersion in both reviewing and criticism. This is probably due to the fact that his only significant academic activity after 2004 was assuming the Coetzee Professorship of the Literatures of the South Programme at the San Martín National University in Buenos Aires, which consisted in a series of seminars on South African and Australian literature taught from 2015 to 2018.⁵¹ Within this context, Coetzee may have felt – with unimpeachable intellectual honesty – that it would have been slightly far-fetched to teach Hispanophone literature to a native Spanish-speaking audience.

Before addressing Coetzee’s reviewing and critical aspects of his engagement with Hispanic literature, there is a final reflection to be made on his teaching in general. There seems to be a recurring pattern of uprootedness in Coetzee when teaching national or regional southern literatures, in the sense that it does not correlate with the place he was living or staying in, and only seems to blossom in contraposition: African literature in Buffalo, South American literature in Cape Town, and South African and Australian literatures in Buenos Aires, which could be related to his complicated idea of provincial life. Despite the specific reasons for each case that I have delineated here, it seems likely that a physical distance to the literary territory in question led to a freer, more balanced reflection when assessing it. Crucially, Coetzee’s teaching choices

⁵¹ After retiring from UCT, Coetzee became Honorary Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Adelaide’s English Department in June 2002. He was later named Distinguished Professor at the University of Chicago in July 2003 (a position he resigned later that year, after having been awarded the Nobel Prize). He was also a Visiting Professor at Stanford University between April and May 2004 (Zimble 2020, xii-lix).

reveal a sense that literature is fundamentally about opening to the world and bringing new languages, locations, and perspectives into view. This will be complemented later in Coetzee's career, when by using the symbolic power acquired through literary prizes, he will try to build bridges between these linguistic and literary territories, as Chapter 3 shows.

From his engagement with Southern Cone literature mainly through extramural teaching in the 1970s, the second part of this chapter moves to Coetzee's later involvement in and promotion of South American literature in the context of global letters. As he moved to a central position on the world stage, Coetzee continued or established dialogues with significant contemporary writers who wrote in Spanish, and thus – through the specular mechanism of engagement, but now with a predominance of unveiling over absorbing – continued to build his second Hispanic world as a reviewer and a critic.

Coetzee as Reviewer and Critic of Hispanophone Literature

The beginning of Coetzee's academic and literary career coincided with an important phenomenon in world literature. During the second half of the twentieth century Latin American literature experienced a substantial change of position within the world republic of letters. As Casanova explains:

If Latin America was an altogether marginal and remote literary space in the 1930s, lacking any international recognition, thirty years later virtually the opposite was true, the continent having in the meantime become one of the best recognized of the dominated spaces, better integrated than most with the center (184-5).⁵²

Indeed, this region became highly regarded by readers all over the globe through the Latin American Boom, a literary and publishing phenomenon that took place during the 1960s and 1970s, when García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, and José Donoso (1924-

⁵² However, the marginality and remoteness were not true of Latin American poetry, as Chapter 3 will go on to show.

96) renovated the novel form in Spanish and came to the fore on an international scale. Significantly, they all descended from Borges, as Coetzee would explain in his essay on him (SS 165-6). Chapter 3 examines this Borgesian influence.

The effect of the Boom on Anglophone writers, and particularly the magic realist strain thereof, came to the fore through the influence it exerted on writers like Salman Rushdie, who according to Christopher Warnes 'has of course read and absorbed both Borges and García Márquez, and both Latin Americans cast a shadow over *The Satanic Verses*' (2014, 98). In addition, the Nobel Prize awarded to García Márquez in 1982 was a very significant landmark, as was his very 'third-worldly' Nobel lecture. Although the Boom phenomenon as such had ended by then, the forementioned novelists kept publishing during the following decades (except for Cortázar), and continued to influence Anglophone writers, including South African. Indeed, at the time when Coetzee was becoming a major writer on the world stage – during the 1980s and 1990s – he was not alone in the field of South African letters in engaging with a broader and non-Anglophone literary world, even if the Anglophone South African academia was slower to catch up. In relation to this, when Gordimer was interviewed by *The Paris Review* in 1979-80, she declared that Latin American literature was the most important literature at the time, and in 1996 she associated *Age of Iron* with 'the incomparable Borges' (1983; 1996, xi). Crucially, magical realism not only influenced Rushdie, but also Afrikaans writers like Brink, as well as Etienne van Heerden (b. 1954), for instance in his novel *Toorberg* (1986), as Christopher Warnes has noted (2009, 79-80). In a similar vein, Breytenbach alludes to a certain Hispanic-South African brotherhood when reminiscing about his encounters with Uys Krige (1910-87) during the 1980s: 'I'm convinced he must be up there in heaven joking with Lorca, Neruda, Cortázar, Borges, Roy Campbell... (for political differences will no longer matter)' (2002, 144). This opening of South

African letters to other traditions was mostly through Afrikaans writers, to whom Coetzee was connected through a common background.

Coetzee not only read and admired these Latin American writers. The development of air travel and institutions like PEN during the late twentieth century allowed an unprecedented interaction between world literature practitioners, and they became – as Elizabeth Costello would have called them – interlocutors. In fact, of the novelists he named when discussing Borges' influence on Latin American letters, he met García Márquez, Fuentes, and Vargas Llosa (SS 165-7). These interactions coupled with his readings meant that Coetzee understood the system of Modern Latin American literature very well by the time he wrote his three substantial pieces on Borges, García Márquez and Di Benedetto. Significantly, these pieces appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, and it is worth examining the nature of its relation to Coetzee. While historically Coetzee's books in English appeared first in England, he addresses the world from America, and specifically, from the world space of the *NYRB*. By the same token, Coetzee is a significant writer for the *NYRB*, for they have published him almost every year since 1985. While the US seems to provide a more congenial cultural milieu for him – of all the countries he has lived in, England is the only one in which Coetzee never pursued academic studies or work – the *NYRB* also allows longer texts than English literary magazines. Of the forty-nine literary reviews Coetzee has published with them, twenty-three are of works in translation, and three in Spanish. This suggests Coetzee used the *NYRB* platform to engage with writers outside the Anglophone mainstream.

For Coetzee, reviewing and critical writing are two closely related activities: the Borges, García Márquez and Di Benedetto texts that originally appeared in the *NYRB* were later revised into literary essays. The collected pieces might be considered as final versions of texts stripped

of their occasional and idiosyncratic elements. For example, the ending of the Di Benedetto essay published in *Late Essays* omits the final paragraph of the review manuscript:

Zama remains the most attractive of Di Benedetto's books, if only because of the crazy energy of Zama himself, which is vividly conveyed in Esther Allen's excellent translation. A selection of Di Benedetto's short fiction (his *Cuentos completos* runs to 700 pages), in translations by Adrian West and Martina Broner, has been announced for 2017 by Archipelago Books. It is to be hoped that some enterprising publisher will soon pick up *El silencio* (Coetzee 2017a).

After minor revisions or cuts like the one above, these texts are accorded the right to enter Coetzee's corpus alongside the works of fiction, with which they also establish a dialogue. The collected publication is also different to a periodical one in the sense that the pieces can be read more easily alongside one another in the context of Coetzee's broader interests, and they may find different readers as well, for the books are translated into several languages. But perhaps most crucially, in these texts Coetzee finds connections that inform the wider reading public about the inner workings of Hispanophone – and particularly South American – literature. Significantly, while it will become apparent that he approached the Borges, García Márquez, and Di Benedetto texts with different objectives in view, it is also true they pertain more to the unveiling than to the absorption movement of this second Hispanic world, for by this point Coetzee's *Bildung* or intellectual worldview was very much formed, and he also had a growing international prestige. But before delving into the individual pieces, I will offer some insight into Coetzee's critical writings in general, for it is important to determine where the Hispanic literature texts fit and what function they have in the Coetzee corpus.

If Coetzee's teaching history has not been properly analysed until now, the panorama looks no richer if one looks for assessments of his literary reviewing praxis. In fact, Coetzee's critical work is also an aspect of his intellectual production that has been hitherto little explored by commentators, and in this respect, it is only second to the pedagogic component I analysed in the first part. From the vantage point of 2022, there are no monographs that delve specifically

into this subject, and only two book chapters that have explored it in depth: Carrol Clarkson's 'Coetzee's Criticism' – included in *A Companion to the Works of J.M. Coetzee*, edited by Tim Mehigan (2011) – and Sue Kossew's 'Criticism and Scholarship' – included in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M. Coetzee*, edited by Jarad Zimbler (2020). Kossew remarks that 'surprisingly little critical commentary focuses on Coetzee as critic' (2020, 139). In more specific terms, Clarkson correctly argues that Coetzee's critical corpus 'constitutes a substantial body of work in its own right, and yet it is not generally considered in this way: the tendency amongst literary scholars is to draw on the essays only insofar as they shed light on the themes of the novels' (2011, 223). In what follows, I will address this phenomenon by assessing the critical work on Hispanophone writers as a significant part of the Coetzee corpus, one that would be of intrinsic value even if he had only been an academic, and not a fiction writer as well. With that purpose in view, I will offer some context for the essays and analyse them in order to show how Coetzee was reading Hispanic writers, assessing them together and understanding the literary world they inhabited.

If Coetzee's critical writings have not been sufficiently explored in general, it seems fair to say that the Hispanophone element thereof has been altogether critically neglected until now. Furthermore, at least quantitatively considered, Hispanophone literature has not been among the foremost preoccupations of Coetzee as a critical thinker. From this point of view, it could be argued that rather than a specific interest in the very long and rich tradition of Hispanic letters, Coetzee's critical Hispanophone leanings may be more related to certain twentieth-century South American writers, whom he often puts in dialogue with other major figures of world literature and his intellectual biography, like Kafka, Faulkner and Beckett. At the same time, the limited presence of Hispanophone writers and themes at the level of titles and main subjects in the essays does not correlate with the undercurrent prevalent within the texts of Cervantes and Borges, whose true stature within the Coetzee corpus has not, to my knowledge, been sufficiently

discussed.⁵³ In fact, both figures have often operated as a stimulus and a touchstone for Coetzee's own critical preoccupations and his fiction writings. Chapter 3 delves further into the importance of Borges' influence, while in Chapter 4 I explore the ways in which Cervantes becomes a touchstone for Coetzee in the *Jesus* novels.

There are two important conclusions to be drawn from the critical aspect of Coetzee's publication history. One is that the preponderance of essays on German and Netherlandic writers could be related to the natural familiarity Coetzee may have had with them given his bilingual education in two closely related languages, English and Afrikaans, as Kossew notes.⁵⁴ *Mutatis mutandis*, Coetzee had no such facility with the Hispanophone world, and the extent and depth of his critical assessment thereof must have implied an important degree of study of a culture that had very little in common with South Africa and was difficult to get to know from there. As Crewe remarked, 'South Africa was as far removed as could be from Spanish or Latin American culture' (25).⁵⁵

In the first part of this chapter, I showed that Coetzee's study of Spanish language and Hispanic literature had begun much earlier than the writing of the Borges, García Márquez, and Di Benedetto essays might suggest. These Hispanophone presences come and go, but still largely subtend the work from the 1970s to the present: one good example is to be found in the essay 'The First Sentence of Yvonne Burgess' *The Strike* (1976), which has a strong Borgesian

⁵³ Fernando Galván's brief essay, 'Borges and Coetzee' (2020), provides a comparison of their two worlds, rather than an assessment of the former's influence on the latter. María J. López's article, 'Miguel de Cervantes and J.M. Coetzee: An Unacknowledged Paternity' (2013) explores this influence, but only until *Childhood*, and a true immersion in the Cervantean in Coetzee demands examining the whole trilogy.

⁵⁴ 'His facility with Dutch and German gives him access to a number of important writers in these languages as well as the ability to reflect on the nature of translations of their works into English' (Kossew 2020, 140).

⁵⁵ This is due to historical reasons, and as a phenomenon it is visible in Coetzee's fiction as early as *Dusklands*. As David Attwell notes, 'the textual traditions which Coetzee assembles in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee', the second part of *Dusklands*, are pan-European, consisting of Portuguese, Dutch, English, German, Swedish and French travel writing, ethnography and linguistics' (Attwell 2015, 17). The Spaniards, by contrast, did not venture towards the Cape. Nonetheless, the Spanish spirit was present in 'Narrative': Alys Moody has quoted letters from Coetzee on 3 December 1971 to prospective publishers, in which he describes 'the psychology of the conquistador' as an element in the novella (156).

component, and which will be analysed in the next chapter. In relation to the three essays on Latin American writers, it is worth remarking that Coetzee's critical writings do not explain the major linguistic shift into a seemingly Hispanic reality of the mind in the *Jesus* novels, discussed in detail in the final chapter. However, even if the output is not particularly significant in quantitative terms, there is a noticeable progression over time in the presence of Hispanophone elements in Coetzee's non-fiction works. In the first period that I have identified, there are mentions of Borges and 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*' in 'The First Sentence of Yvonne Burgess' *The Strike*' (1976), and of Cervantes and *Don Quixote* in 'Achterberg's "Ballade van de gasfitter": The Mystery of I and You' (1977) and 'Triangular Structures of Desire in Advertising' (1980), while they provide the background for around a third of the 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech' (1987). While there is no presence of Hispanophone writers in *White Writing* – not only because of the specificity of the collection, but also due to the previously discussed lack of connection between both linguistic worlds – there is an incipient dialogue with South American writers in both *Doubling the Point* with Neruda and in *Giving Offense* with Vargas Llosa, described by Raymond Leslie Williams as 'one of the major Latin American writers and public intellectuals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries', who is also a Nobel laureate and therefore occupies a similar position in Hispanophone literature as Coetzee does in Anglophone letters (2014, vi).

The relative paucity of Coetzee's pedagogical work on Hispanophone writers after the 1970s – except for the Cervantes course at the University of Chicago in 2003 – is compensated for by a continuation in his reviewing and critical writing during the 1990s. (Even in 1988, he wrote 'They Wanted to Terrify Me', a little-known review of the English translation of *Chile: Death in the South* by Jacobo Timerman [1923-99], published in *The New York Times* on 10 January. A Soviet-born Argentine, Timerman's book analyses life under Pinochet. While Coetzee does not quote writers, the piece shows that his interest in the Southern Cone went beyond the

literary). Nonetheless, this continuation also must be qualified. An analysis of Coetzee's last three essay collections shows the number of texts on Hispanophone writers is surprisingly low: one piece in *Stranger Shores* ('J.L. Borges, *Collected Fictions*'), one in *Inner Workings* ('Gabriel García Márquez, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*') and two in *Late Essays* ('Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Platero and I* and 'Antonio Di Benedetto, *Zama*'). Interestingly, and unlike Borges and García Márquez, both Jiménez and Di Benedetto do not come to the fore when an Anglophone reader thinks of Hispanophone literature – even though the former won the Nobel Prize in 1957. While the Di Benedetto piece shows that by 2017 the extent of Coetzee's knowledge in the field had widened considerably, the Jiménez case is more of a personal rediscovery, which I will analyse in Chapter 3, for it is connected to his Chilean lectures for children.

'Sleeping Beauty', a review of García Márquez's *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, appeared in the *NYRB* on 26 February 2006, and was subsequently edited and collected in *Inner Workings* (2007). Coetzee's piece not only draws material from the whole García Márquez corpus, but also shows he is equally versed in Hispanic culture (for example, when he discusses 'the cults of the virgin that are such a force in Southern Europe and Latin America', *IW* 264). Nonetheless, the essay is complicated, for Coetzee is writing about what in his opinion is a lesser work of one of the great contemporary writers: 'Measured by the highest standards, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* is not a major achievement. Nor is its slightness just a consequence of its brevity' – one can assume that the 'highest standards' are those of a world writer and critic (*IW* 264). Therefore, unlike other Coetzee reviews and because of the crepuscular raw materials he is dealing with, the García Márquez piece does not offer a gateway to his secrets as a prodigious wordsmith: its strength as a critical text lies elsewhere, and more precisely, in the way Coetzee shows how the writers who preceded him made the Colombian writer's achievement possible.

The piece is also unique for the sheer fact that García Márquez's fame exceeded that of any other contemporary literary writer, which explains the non-descriptive title of Coetzee's review and the lack of his customary biographical outline, even if Gerald Martin's biography had not yet been published. Coetzee is also aware of a reception problem caused by *One Hundred Years of Solitude* ('Despite having the tag 'magical realist' attached to him, García Márquez wrote very much in the tradition of psychological realism'), and thus mentions it only once, in passing (IW 263). In fact, although it is the only García Márquez novel that can be ascribed to magical realism, its fame percolates and distorts the true nature of the Marquezian corpus. Coetzee thus strives for a vision of García Márquez that presents him to his readers in his true and richer dimension. In other words, his unveiling operation is akin to scratching off patina from a famous statue.

Partly because of its length, critics tend to analyse *Memories* not as a standalone novella, but alongside previous García Márquez works. While Mark Millington groups it along *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*), *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* (1985, *Love in the Time of Cholera*) and *Del amor y otros demonios* (1994, *Love and Other Demons*) as 'novels of love', Williams analyses it with García Márquez's latter work, *Doce cuentos peregrinos* (1992, *Strange Pilgrims*) and *Noticia de un secuestro* (1996, *News of a Kidnap*) under the less inspired rubric of 'recent writing' (Millington 113; Williams 2010, 129). Critical opinion is divided: while Williams deems it 'another short masterpiece', Coetzee finds it subpar, and his piece turns to the closely related *Love in the Time of Cholera*, which he also deems an 'artistically and morally unsatisfactory story' (IW 258). This assessment puts him in the opposite position in terms of the prevailing view of *Love* in the Hispanic world. For example, at the fourth International Congress of Spanish at Cartagena in 2007, it was voted by eighty-one writers, critics, academics and reviewers as the best novel of the last twenty-five years (Manrique S. 2007). While this is related to the enormous

popularity of García Márquez in the Hispanosphere, in the critical unveiling of his *oeuvre* Coetzee shows there are lights and shadows in it.

The ‘love’ story of a ninety-year-old man and a fourteen-year-old prostitute is so unusual that ‘the asymmetry between the two people involved’ is of the essence, as Millington has noted, but crucially is also at odds with the Catholic, conservative *Weltanschauung* that still prevails in the higher echelons of Latin societies, and it might be rather out of favour today, too, for reasons of sexual politics (116). Therefore, as Williams has remarked, ‘*Memoria* can be read as a subtle challenge to middle- and upper- class social mores of Colombia’, especially considering García Márquez was also a Marxist who strived for ‘the maintenance of a species of pan-Latin American internationalism inspired by the Cuban Revolution in an era of globalisation and neoliberalism’, as Philip Swanson has argued (Williams 2010, 136; Swanson 4). This positioning is in contrast with Coetzee’s nuanced role as a public intellectual and his vision of his craft, which he does not see as a vehicle for social or political modelling.

Another noteworthy aspect that sets García Márquez and Coetzee apart is the former’s lack of interest in critical thinking. Williams touched on this aspect when he compared the position shared by Cortázar, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa with that of García Márquez, who is similar to Neruda in that regard: ‘His thinking is a response to individual and collective reactions to social circumstances, and he conceptualizes these matters anecdotally’ (2010, 158). This characteristic of García Márquez is reproduced in the paucity of criticism on him, for as a writer he ‘has always seemed to be one of the most entertaining and engaging to read, but the least inviting to engage critically, to write about’. Consequently, as a novelist who ‘offers little or no strictly theoretical speculation in his work’, García Márquez may have seemed for Coetzee less appealing as a critical subject – which situates him as a countervailing figure to Borges, the South American father of speculative fiction, as I will show in Chapter 3 (166).

As can be expected, Coetzee's critical acumen is fully displayed in this piece, and particularly so in the connections he establishes with different aspects of the male gaze – and the consequences thereof. Indeed, Coetzee delves into descriptions of desire in García Márquez's literary predecessors, the first of which is the author of *Don Quixote*. The Cervantes connection pertains to the realm of fantasy, for García Márquez's Delgadina has a literary precedent in the Lady Dulcinea of Toboso. Whilst the references to Nabokov and Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972) delve into unlawful depictions of abuse from the perspective of the perpetrator, the F.M. Dostoevsky (1821-81) connection explores the aftermath of psychological turmoil that wanton passion leaves in a child. In that regard, the essay also dovetails with Coetzee's own preoccupation with mature male desire, a recurrent trope of his late fiction (overtly present in *Disgrace*, *Slow Man* and *Diary*, and less prominently in *Elizabeth Costello* and the *Jesus* novels). As Williams has noted of García Márquez's *El general en su laberinto* (1989, *The General in His Labyrinth*), 'This is also one of several novels dealing with ageing bodies; the central focus on this subject appears in the latter part of the writer's career, particularly in *El amor* and *Memoria*' (2010, 93). Therefore, although they are very different writers, the trope of desire projected from an ageing male body to some extent brought García Márquez and Coetzee thematically closer in their late works. In fact, I would argue that there is a discernible mark of García Márquez's treatment of late male desire in David Lurie, Paul Rayment, Señor C and Simón. Consequently, Coetzee's engagement with García Márquez's world is also marked by influence.

Another point to consider is that Coetzee's essay was written many years before he began work on the *Jesus* novels, which have a distinct connection with the first half of the García Márquez corpus. As I will explain in Chapter 4, the imaginary territory of the mind in which the trilogy is set has a Faulknerian matrix but developed – like Juan Benet's *Región* – in a Hispanic world. Yet, in García Márquez and Coetzee this connection is stronger, for the fictional reality

is set in the specific urban locations of Macondo, Novilla and Estrella, rather than in an extended rural territory like Yoknapatawpha or Región. Therefore, what Swanson calls ‘the author’s central creation, the timeless somnolent backwater town of Macondo’ has a parallel with the reduced world of Estrella and Novilla, as the final chapter of this study will show (2).

In terms of his own critical theories, Coetzee situates the García Márquez of *Memories* as a late practitioner of the secular form of confession, which is the main subject of his most important critical essay: ‘Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky’ (1985). Of these three writers, the one whose vision has most resonance with the worldview depicted in *Memories* is Tolstoy, particularly as portrayed in *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), but this resonance operates by contrast. While Tolstoy thought that ‘It is wrong for unmarried people to indulge in sexual intercourse’, in the case of Florentino, Coetzee writes that ‘the confessions of this reborn soul may indeed have been penned, as he says, to ease his conscience, but the message they preach is by no means that we should abjure fleshly desires’ (DTP 255, IW 262). Significantly, Coetzee’s own characters also seem more attuned to García Márquez’s vision than to Tolstoy’s, which he heavily criticised.

Indeed, apart from this piece there is but one further link in the Coetzee corpus between García Márquez and secular confession, a deeply personal one at that:

‘I don’t see (inspiration) as a state of grace’, writes Gabriel García Márquez, ‘nor as a breath from heaven, but as the moment when, by tenacity and control, you are at one with your theme... You spur the theme on and the theme spurs on you on too... All obstacles fade away, all conflict disappears, things you never dreamt of occur to you and, at that moment, there is absolutely nothing in the world better than writing’.

Once or twice in a lifetime I have known the flight of the soul that García Márquez describes. Perhaps such fires do indeed come as a reward for tenacity, though I think steady fire better describes the needed quality. But however we name it, I no longer have it (DBY 192).

The quote is from *El olor de la guayaba* (1982, *The Fragrance of Guava*), which appeared the year after the publication of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, according to Coetzee the last point in García

Márquez's career at which he still was in full control of his powers (*IW* 264). Significantly, it was quoted in *Diary of a Bad Year*, the last Coetzee novel in which a protagonist strongly resembling him tried to make his way into the world. Reading the review of *Memories* and *Diary* – published the year after – together, Coetzee seems to be criticising García Márquez's incapacity to recognise that his 'fire' was gone, and to see the need to write from an altogether different position. Therefore, Coetzee's engagement with García Márquez in this sense is very particular, for while he is unveiling his *oeuvre* by showing its unevenness for readers, he is also learning a lesson from him on the artistic consequences of the lack of self-awareness in a mature world writer.

In Coetzee's own career, this confession of *Diary* can also be seen as a certain closure of writing from that specific position, and to simultaneously herald the arrival of the seemingly more depersonalised voice that was to surge in the *Jesus* novels, for rather than a '(steady) fire', what distinguishes the trilogy's vision is the opposite: a world made of embers where passion has been spent, on which Chapter 4 focusses. However, there is also a late link between García Márquez and Coetzee, as Michael Bell has noted. While during the 1980s and 1990s Coetzee addressed in his fiction several historical episodes within the type of story he identified with 'literature', García Márquez was heavily involved in politics, and as a writer also attempted to take part in the type of discourse Coetzee identified with 'history' in 'The Novel Today'. By the same token, if in García Márquez 'the fictional enclosure also suggests the national and regional condition from which the characters must escape' and 'the literary tension between the utopian and the real', these concerns appeared in Coetzee's late period through the narrative vehicle of Elizabeth Costello (Bell 189-90). In Coetzee, according to Bell:

His works concerning the woman novelist alter ego, Elizabeth Costello, begin to leave the realist frame under the same pressure of concern about the responsibilities of fiction. Hence, although we may properly think of them as generally inhabiting different fictional universes, García Márquez and Coetzee have a deeper commonality. The vital, peculiar and untranslatable mode of meaning known as literature is made richly self-conscious in them both (191).

In other words, what Bell is conveying here – in a vision closely resembling Attridge’s – is that García Márquez and Coetzee arrived at a similar port in the world republic of letters, although through very different routes.

In writing his García Márquez piece, Coetzee engaged with a fellow Nobel laureate: a peer on the literary world stage with a massive global influence. I will now turn my attention to Coetzee’s text on Antonio Di Benedetto, a regional Argentine writer who came to his attention during his stays in Buenos Aires. Therefore, in these two texts Coetzee is wrestling with two different legacies that have currency in his own life: while García Márquez’s case is marked by recognition, in Di Benedetto’s case there is a sense of discovery of a secret writer who was not part of the Latin American Boom and the grand scheme of global corporate publishing. Reading them together reveals Coetzee’s wide and rich engagement with South American literature and culture. Significantly, Coetzee and Di Benedetto also have commonalities: they both come from the provincial south and were strongly marked by Borges. In writing about him, Coetzee gave critical weight to the process of bringing Di Benedetto out from the shadows, in which diverse actors have been involved. In addition, the Di Benedetto piece continues his engagement with the provinces, but this time in his elective territory of the south, which he was forging at the same time through his academic pursuits in the Southern Cone, which I will analyse in Chapter 3, and the writing of the *Jesus* novels, as Chapter 4 will explain.

‘A Great Writer We Should Know’, Coetzee’s review of Di Benedetto’s *Zama*, appeared in the *NYRB* on 19 January 2017 and was subsequently edited and collected in *Late Essays* (2017). This is the last critical text published by Coetzee, and therefore occupies the same place that *The Death of Jesus* has in his novelistic output. The novelty of this piece resides in the fact that Coetzee sets out to introduce to Anglophone readers a writer who until then was not even widely known in the Spanish-speaking world. Coetzee’s review was very timely, as it appeared between the

publication of NYRB Classics' translation of *Zama* in August 2016 and the premiere of Lucrecia Martel's (b. 1966) homonymous film at the Venice Film Festival in September 2017. Crucially, three decades after his death, these three events marked the beginning of an international valorisation of Di Benedetto. In this context, Coetzee's essay gave a significant visibility – due to his global reputation and symbolic power, as I explained in the preceding chapter – to the work of a substantial southern writer of whom only one book had been translated into English in 1996. In other words, Coetzee situated Di Benedetto as a practitioner of 'a southern literature from the South', a category to which he aspired during the seminars he led in Buenos Aires from 2015 to 2018. While there are previous cases of established writers drawing the world's attention into lesser known figures – like Graham Greene's review of *Lolita* in *The Sunday Times* in 1955, which catapulted Nabokov onto the world stage – what makes Coetzee's contribution unique is that the literary connections he establishes with Di Benedetto situate him in a similar current of world literature as himself, for the Argentine writer likewise draws influence from Kafka, Beckett and Borges, as he makes clear (R. Greene 272).

Because of its scope and profound understanding of the writer's *oeuvre*, life and times, the Di Benedetto piece is the most significant of Coetzee's critical writings on Hispanic literature. While the García Márquez text concentrates on his last novella and the Borges piece neglects his substantial body of poetry, it covers the entire Di Benedetto corpus. Remarkably, there was even field work involved: Coetzee's visits to Argentina improved his Spanish, enabling him to read Di Benedetto in the original, as he acknowledged in an interview with the UNSAM magazine:

He leído a varios escritores argentinos del siglo XX y tengo la intención de extender mi lectura adentrándome en el siglo XIX. En este momento, estoy leyendo a Antonio Di Benedetto, que me pareció muy interesante, muy innovador (2016c).
(I have read several twentieth-century Argentine writers and have the intention of extending my reading by delving into the nineteenth century. At the moment, I am reading Antonio Di Benedetto, who seems to me very interesting, very innovative [own translation]).

Although Coetzee's preparatory reading for and writing of the review in 2016 went in parallel with his work on *The Death of Jesus*, Di Benedetto did not particularly influence Coetzee's work, for he was already immersed in the trilogy's world and had written the first two books by then. Nonetheless, Coetzee used his Southern Cone travels to critically assess a Hispanic writer from the south. In an interview in Santiago, he inquired about Roberto Bolaño, and while he read Adolfo Bioy Casares (1914-99) – Borges' most important literary associate – he 'did not get very far with him' (2015c). His nineteenth-century interest materialised in his reading of an English translation of the Argentine national epic poem, *El gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) by José Hernández (1834-86; 2015h).

Crucially, Coetzee's piece opens a strand rather than continuing one, for there were virtually no critical writings on Di Benedetto in English in 2017 – hence the title of Coetzee's review: 'A Great Writer We Should Know'. Under this scheme, by 'great writer' Coetzee points to enduring artistic achievement, which is often uncoupled from literary reputation. In this case, the 'we' transcends the Anglosphere and includes the Spanish-speaking world, for Coetzee knew his piece would contribute to the dissemination of Di Benedetto in the Hispanosphere. Therefore, of the two operations that form the specular dynamic of Coetzee's engagement with South American writers, the unveiling one is the most important.

Di Benedetto's story is a tragic one, for the talent revealed in *Zama* (1956), *The Silentary* (1964), and *Los suicidas* (1969) was never fully developed, partly due to his imprisonment on the day of the Argentine *coup d'état* in 1976, which practically killed him as a writer. His story resonated with Coetzee, who while also living under an authoritarian regime chose a similar moderate path, and yet was spared Di Benedetto's fate, which continued even after his death. Until Adriana Hidalgo began republishing him in 1999, his work had fallen in total oblivion even in Argentina (Néspolo 10). But there are more parallels between the worlds of Coetzee and Di

Benedetto, especially regarding the position they write from. As Attwell noted, ‘Although it is rarely acknowledged, Coetzee is in fact a regional writer *within* South Africa’ (1993, 25). While Coetzee wrote from Cape Town, the country’s second capital, Di Benedetto lived and worked in Mendoza, on the Andes foothills and a thousand kilometres east of Buenos Aires. The provinciality is present across Di Benedetto’s *oeuvre*: as Néspolo wrote in her analysis of the short story ‘El cariño de los tontos’ (1961, ‘The Affection of Dimwits’), it can be perceived

en la detención de la acción, en la pesadez, simplicidad y pacatería de un escenario que se reduce al pueblo y al almacén del que es dueño el marido de Amaya (126).
(In the detention of the action, in the heaviness, simplicity and prudishness of a setting reduced to the village and the store owned by Amaya’s husband [own translation]).

As can be seen, this sort of description of a provincial setting foreshadows the one Coetzee was to create as the narrative space of the *Jesus* novels, a southern Hispanic world which I will examine in Chapter 4.

An important contribution of Coetzee’s piece is establishing Di Benedetto’s literary filiation. He identifies the link with Kafka, ‘the writer who did the most to shape Di Benedetto’s art, both directly and through the mediation of Borges’, whose translation of *The Metamorphosis* (1938) circulated in the intellectual circles of Mendoza (*LE* 140, Néspolo 80). Kafka’s influence can be especially perceived in Di Benedetto’s first book, *Mundo animal* (1953, *Animal World*), which presents a narrative space inhabited by domestic animals who

mantienen una relación más estrecha con el hombre y pueden convertirse en el reservorio de una zona de la subjetividad aún no conocida (Néspolo 51).
(Maintain a closer relation with man and may eventually represent the reservoir of a yet unknown zone of subjectivity [own translation]).

This links to the Coetzeean animal trope, particularly as developed in *The Lives of Animals* and ‘The Old Woman and the Cats’. Interestingly, Coetzee also recognises the translator’s role in bringing Beckett into the foreground: ‘There are pages where, with a nudge from his translator, he sounds like one of Samuel Beckett’s heroes of pure intellect, spinning one far-fetched

hypothesis after another to explain why the world is as it is' (LE 141). By highlighting these common influences, Coetzee is unveiling Di Benedetto for his readers by positioning him beside himself as a fellow provincial novelist who also comes from the south, but from its Hispanic region, and is somehow transferring his prestige to him.

Whilst Coetzee insists on Kafka's influence on Di Benedetto, this is truer of the stories than of the novels: a close reading of *Zama* reveals that a more important influence was William Faulkner (1897-1962), which was also mediated through Borges' translation of *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem [The Wild Palms]* (1940). While in *Zama* Di Benedetto created a Hispanic literary territory with a Faulknerian matrix, like Juan Carlos Onetti (1909-94) did with *Santa María*, the importance of what Néspolo calls the 'territorialidad zamana' ('Zamanian territoriality') for the present study is that its position broadly coincides with the Hispanic region of Coetzee's south. Although the country is never named, the action in *Zama* takes place in present-day Paraguay, but Diego de Zama's vision extends across the region: he has been to Santiago de Chile, and Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Montevideo also appear in the narrative. In this respect, *Zama* differs from *The Time of the Hero* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which recognisably take place in Peru and Colombia. Unlike those novels, *Zama* is set during Spanish rule, when there was a shared Hispanic American mentality in the region that was lost with the advent of republicanism in the nineteenth century.

Zama's coloniality connects it to *Dusklands*; in fact, both novels were based on solid historiographical research. Significantly, the model behind the fictional Diego de Zama was doctor Miguel Gregorio de Zamalloa (1753-1819), whose life circumstances are almost parallel with Zama's, and consequently plays a similar role to the one the real Jacobus Coetsé played for

the creation of Jacobus Coetzee (Néspolo 253-4).⁵⁶ Nonetheless, narrative propulsion in *Zama* is not fuelled by exploration, but by Zama's inner conflicts and machinations to ascend in the bureaucratic machine of imperial Spanish administration, which recalls the world of *Barbarians*. Indeed, part of Zama's tragedy is that he is an officer who naively waits for a promotion that – with strong undertones of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and García Márquez's *No One Writes to the Colonel* – never arrives, for he does not realise he is fighting to ascend in a vanishing world. Within this longing, Néspolo notes the trope of water, which 'circunda a la ciudad en un encierro que es a la vez promesa de partida' ('surrounds the city in an enclosure that is at the same time a promise of departure', 266). Interestingly, this trope is reversed in Coetzee's *Jesus* novels, where the water beyond the port of arrival signifies the path to an old life that is no longer attainable.

Di Benedetto's prose differs from the verbose style prevailing in the Latin American Boom novelists; it has the economy and clarity of Borges' stories, transposed into the large canvas of a novel, as the following passage from *Zama* shows:

Faltaba luz, por las nubes cerradas, que no cuidaban el cielo, sino el suelo, de tan descendidas. Las palmeras acongojaban sus verdes. El azul toleraba, sin batalla, la corrosiva infiltración del gris. Grávida de humedad, posesiva, la atmósfera había suspendido la vida. Surto en aguas iguales, sostenía el barco una quietud sin memoria (2017, 117).

(Light was lacking, for the overcast clouds were so low they did not guard the sky, but the ground. Palms grieved its greens. Blue tolerated, without a battle, the corrosive infiltration of grey. Gravid of humidity, possessive, the atmosphere had suspended life. Spurt on equal waters, the ship sustained a quietude without memory [own translation]).

This often highly poetic style, which Roberto Bolaño described in *Sensini* (1997) as having 'un pulso preciso de neurocirujano' ('the precise pulse of a neurosurgeon'), puts Di Benedetto more in the company of Coetzee than of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa (11).

⁵⁶ Unlike the noun *zamacueca* (a traditional South American dance) and the verb *zamarrear* (when a wolf or dog violently shakes a prey or piece of meat between its teeth) the name 'Zama' does not sound familiar to a native Spanish speaker; the word does not exist. While it can be interpreted as a marker of fictionality, its cut-out nature also forebodes the protagonist's tragic destiny.

Zama is frequently presented as the first part of a trilogy, although this was not Di Benedetto's vision. In *El silenciero* (1964, *The Silentiary*) the Borgesian tropes of 'el hacedor' (the maker) and 'el laberinto' (the labyrinth) are transformed into elements of the Kafkaesque nightmare the protagonist lives in because of noise, which confirms Coetzee's assertion that Kafka's influence on Di Benedetto was modulated through Borges. In *Los suicidas* (1969), a philosophical insight into suicide with strong Camusian undertones, there is a reflection that might have resonated with Coetzee:

Eran otros tiempos: la gente, desdichada, era barata, venía de Europa a comer (2017, 385).

(They were different times: the wretched people were cheap; they came from Europe to eat [own translation]).

This seems to imply that European immigration to the Southern Cone happened out of a state of necessity and not of the people's own will, but also that two or more generations after the passage the cultural component is somewhat diminished or attenuated in the south. Coetzee has commented on this phenomenon when discussing European immigration to South Africa in 'French Diary' (in particular, he deems his forebears' relocation to have been a mistake). Furthermore, during the twenty-first century South Africa and some South American countries, like Venezuela and Colombia, have experienced a certain degree of emigration motivated by crime and economic conditions. I will further explore these phenomena when I discuss the diminished European element of the south in Chapter 3, and how this operates in the *Jesus* novels in Chapter 4.

As the detail and scope of his essay shows, Coetzee must have known that more English translations of Di Benedetto were to follow, and therefore decided to contribute to the dissemination of his work. Remarkably, Coetzee unveiled Di Benedetto's *oeuvre* for Anglophone readers before it is fully available in English: the former's piece will thus spotlight the latter's continuing reception in the language. In fact, *The Silentiary*, the English translation of *El silenciero*,

was published on 1 February 2022 by NYRB Classics, who also own the rights to *Los suicidas*, which will also be translated by Esther Allen (Frank 2021). Nonetheless, Coetzee's achievement with this piece is far greater and goes beyond preparing Di Benedetto's reception in English: he has himself contributed not only to the global understanding of South American writers, but also, and in a substantial way, to the inner dynamic of Hispanic letters criticism and – with the same stroke – the elevation of a southern, provincial writer. Therefore, this text marks the culmination of his second Hispanic world.

In her essay *Zona Saer*, Beatriz Sarlo writes that Juan José Saer (1937-2005) is 'el gran escritor de la segunda mitad del siglo XX argentino' ('the great writer of the Argentine twentieth century's second half'; 2016, 9). A regional writer like Di Benedetto, Saer has an important literary prestige in Argentina, but is little known outside its frontiers – except for France, where he lived for most of his life – including the Hispanic world.⁵⁷ Commenting on this situation, Javier Rodríguez Marcos published a column in *El País* titled 'Juan José Saer espera a su Coetzee' ('Juan José Saer waits for his Coetzee'), in which he wrote:

Por desgracia, Saer no ha tenido todavía un Coetzee que le diga el mundo que antes de morir en 2005 escribió novelas ineludibles (Rodríguez M. 2020).

(Unfortunately, Saer has not had yet a Coetzee who tells the world that before dying in 2005 he wrote unavoidable novels [own translation]).

While the above quotation shows the extent of Coetzee's symbolic power, it also demonstrates that the field of action of his Hispanic worlds is not only the Anglosphere, but that they also have a strong presence in the Hispanosphere. For, as we saw in Chapter 1, the cultural channels between Hispanic countries are not as fluid as their common language might suggest: referring

⁵⁷ A champion of Di Benedetto in Argentina, Saer came up with the idea that *Zama*, *The Silentiary* and *Los suicidas* formed a trilogy in the prologue to the Adriana Hidalgo edition of *El silencio* (1999). Two previous texts on Di Benedetto are collected in Saer's *El concepto de ficción* (1997).

to the publication of Coetzee's Di Benedetto piece for the *NYRB*, Rodríguez Marcos writes 'Hasta en España se enteraron de la buena nueva' ('Even in Spain they heard the good news'). Consequently, this phenomenon materializes Coetzee's wish of 'a southern literature from the South' with a critical approach, for the north – and the world – took notice of the text of an Anglophone southern writer on a Hispanophone southern writer.

In this chapter, I have analysed Coetzee's academic, journalistic and critical work on Hispanic American literature, his second Hispanic world. Coetzee engaged with this world both by absorbing the influence of writers like Neruda and García Márquez, and by promoting their work in the Anglophone world and beyond, first as an academic in South Africa and then as a reviewer and critic whose authority as a world writer and public intellectual expanded towards the end of the twentieth century. Although unlike his first Hispanic world Coetzee built the second one himself, both worlds began forming at the beginning of his career and have been a constant presence in his work. In addition, like the first world, this second Hispanic world is also characterised by an ebb and flow pattern: while it was very rich in the 1970s, the engagement became less visible between the publication of *Barbarians* (1980) and *Doubling the Point* (1992), from which point it slowly gained momentum again, until its full flow and culmination during the 2010s. Crucially, throughout, we see that Coetzee's engagement with Hispanic writers operates in a specular dynamic by *unveiling* different authors for Anglophone and world readers while at the same time *absorbing* their influence. All these writers came from South America, a region in the periphery of the West with a complicated history during the twentieth century and beyond: Coetzee's engagement with them reveals an affinity with his own provincial status, and contributes to an understanding of his idea of the south.

In the late 1990s we see Coetzee engaging with Hispanic American writers in the form of extended reviews. He writes his García Márquez piece after arriving at the centre of world

letters, and while he respects the Colombian writer's achievement, he is highly critical of the work he wrote after being awarded the Nobel Prize – that is, precisely the point in which Coetzee was in his own career in 2006 – and seems to take it as a self-warning. While the García Márquez text is substantial, it is only one of many avenues into his world, both in Spanish and English. By contrast, remarkably, any future study of Di Benedetto in any language, and particularly *in Spanish*, must take Coetzee's piece into consideration for a thorough understanding of his craft. This achievement is all the more outstanding if we consider Coetzee was only days away from his seventy-seventh birthday when it was published, which attests to his impeccable work ethic and enduring intellectual curiosity.

But before he wrote those two pieces, Coetzee also engaged critically with Borges, the writer who most deeply influenced modern Hispanic letters: beginning with his associate Bioy Casares (born in 1914), every major Hispanic American writer included in this thesis was at one point or another under his spell. In the case of Coetzee himself, Borges is indeed so important that the true extent of his influence forces us to recalibrate our ideas of the small group of writers whose work he absorbed the most. Crucially, the Coetzee who engages with Borges is very much looking for ideas, and he does so at a crucial moment in his career: as he was slowly moving towards the centre of the world republic of letters, as we will see in the next chapter.

3

Peripheral World Writing: Borges, Coetzee, and the South

**What will be left will be the real South,
the South of this real world,
where most of us present here today were born
and most of us will die**

**J.M. Coetzee
'Literatures of the South: Introductory Remarks'
Buenos Aires, 12 September 2016**

In Coetzee, the two specular movements of receiving influence and illuminating a writer's work are so important in the case of Borges that they not only need to be studied independently, but also require examining the latter's figure and his role in the global dissemination of South American literature. Indeed, the relationship with Borges marks the later phases of Coetzee's engagement with Hispanic literature, for the way he read the Argentine writer enriched and amplified his own artistic and intellectual vision in numerous ways. Furthermore, Borges provided a solution for the complicated position Coetzee found himself in after arriving at the centre of the literary world twenty years ago, pointing the way for a physical and intellectual exploration of the Southern Cone, which included curating a literary project, directing seminars and even awarding prizes to schoolchildren. These experiences, coupled with his close reading of Borges and other writers who operated from the margins of the West, led to the formulation of a crucial component of Coetzee's late politics of writing: his idea of the south, which marks the culmination of this third Hispanic world.

The figure of Borges is indeed so crucial for Coetzee that it obliges us to reassess the frontline of literary influences previously established by commentators. While Hayes wrote in 2010 that 'Beckett remained his most important literary influence', twelve years later this

assessment may need to be qualified, for in a retrospective view, the Hispanic and southern turn in Coetzee's career over the last two decades has also brought Borges into the fore (2). Borges, according to Robin Fiddian, is an example of a writer 'who is both *of* the West and sits on the periphery, from where s/he makes incursions into non-Western cultures' (28). It is through this positioning between what Fiddian here terms 'the West' and 'the periphery', I suggest, that we might begin to understand the significance of Borges for Coetzee. If the journey from the periphery to the literary centres of Europe, is one shared by both Borges and Coetzee, this occurred under very different conditions. What we find, nonetheless, is that at precisely the point in his career when he seemed to achieve maximum international visibility, Coetzee turned to Borges to navigate the literary map, both formally and geographically.

While Coetzee's sustained engagement with Borges will become clear in my analysis of his nonfiction and fiction from the late 1990s onwards, the influence of Borges on Coetzee's efforts to navigate the literary map geographically is both more literal and more obscure. In Coetzee, I argue, we find a writer who having arrived at the centre of the literary world recalibrates his gaze on his South African origin and, rather than identifying with a foundational nation-state, begins to move away from the merely provincial in favour of a territory that he would come to conceptualise broadly as the south. Writing in Spanish from Buenos Aires, lauded in Europe and of enormous influence regionally, Borges is one of the major figures of this elective cultural terrain of the south. But a fuller understanding of what the south has come to mean for Coetzee, and especially his insistence on a Spanish-speaking dimension to it, will take us in the second half of the chapter beyond Borges to Coetzee's more recent, South America-based, Hispanophone literary and theoretical gambits. Like his second Hispanic world, this third Hispanic world was crafted by him, but interestingly, unlike the previous one, this third world-making effort involved a significant amount of field work on Coetzee's part.

So, what kind of territory is Coetzee's south? In *The World Republic of Letters*, Casanova insists on 'the specific logic of the literary world, which ignores ordinary geography and establishes territories and boundaries along lines quite different from those of nations' (101). If the distinctively literary world that Casanova imagines comes under pressure from forces exerted by national and imperial configurations, her vision of literature's capacity to reveal new lands through textual dissemination and circulation is nonetheless a valuable lens through which to view Coetzee's self-positioning and affiliations on the world stage.

As McDonald has shown in *The Literature Police*, Coetzee's conscious positioning was evident from the earliest stages of his career as he came under sustained pressure locally and internationally to speak and write from the position of the 'South African writer'. Consequently, Coetzee's interest in European or metropolitan literatures was expressed by his intention of 'not building a new national literature, but instead building on to an established provincial literature', as he wrote in 1981 (16). According to McDonald, Coetzee opted in this period to 'position himself on an alternative, necessarily inexact, and specifically literary map and to create space for his own metropolitan 'affiliations'' (306). This attitude will be renewed with a different focus during Coetzee's late period, as I will show in this chapter, as he draws on the perceived shared provinciality of those writing from a particular set of broadly 'southern' locations to invent a new 'alternative, necessarily inexact, and specifically literary map', arguably determined by his own idiosyncratic affiliations. While we might understand this as partaking in what Casanova describes as 'the specific logic of the literary world', it is also vulnerable to its prevailing forces, which largely remain tied to a north-south axis. In this third Hispanic world, we will see Coetzee try to resist the north as much as possible and to enhance the uniqueness of the south in three different regions.

In order to approach this long voyage from the periphery to the literary centre and the subsequent gaze to the southern provinces that culminated in the elaboration of the south, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will focus on the relationship between Coetzee and Borges in three different aspects. What I am going to emphasize first is the way Coetzee read Borges and how he eventually came to identify him as an early example of a writer of the south who had also made the voyage from the periphery to the literary centre, mirroring his own perceived trajectory, which he was forging at the time. Then, I will analyse how Coetzee adopted some of Borges' tropes in his own work, and chief among them the ideas of the double and the library, particularly in the Elizabeth Costello cycle, which crucially is also a vision of the world writer looking again to the provinces and the south after having been recognised by the metropolitan north. Lastly, I will delve into Coetzee's Nobel lecture, *He and His Man* (2003), a short story which was also a homage to his forerunners in the craft of storytelling. While the figure of Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) appeared most prominently in the text, it was also strongly imbued with the spirit of Borges, particularly as reflected in the parable 'Borges and I', showing that when he entered the very centre of the world of letters, Coetzee was looking to the south as represented by his literary antecedent.

In the second part, I will address the problem of how a world writer reacts to and manoeuvres with literary prestige once he has achieved it, in this case redirecting that accumulated capital towards the south. I will first analyse the *Biblioteca personal*, a world literature anthology edited and with introductions by Coetzee, collected in twelve volumes and published by El Hilo de Ariadna in Buenos Aires between 2013 and 2017, which was inspired by Borges' own *Biblioteca personal*, published in the same city three decades earlier. Both collections are therefore to be seen as embodying a southern gaze in the form of a library enabled by the literary prestige acquired in the centre. Then, I will follow these fictional and theoretical developments

in the wake of Coetzee's travels to South America between 2011 and 2018, especially in Argentina and Chile – the home countries of two significant literary influences, Borges and Neruda – and explain how after he reflected on the provincial and the Southern Hemisphere he arrived at his personal idea of the south during the process, which is documented in several texts, most of them unpublished and some originally delivered in Spanish. Finally, I will delve into Coetzee's pedagogic and academic efforts, namely his involvement with the *Literaturas del Sur* Programme at the San Martín National University in Argentina, in which he organised a series of seminars on Australian and South African literature between 2015 and 2018, and the *La Ciudad y las Palabras* Programme at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, where from 2015 to 2019 he directed the *Concurso de Cuentos John Maxwell Coetzee*.

Consequently, using symbolic capital acquired at the centre of the literary world, Coetzee progressed from a reflection on the south to a series of practical initiatives that will be assessed here for the first time.

Borges and Coetzee

The foundations of this third Hispanic world of Coetzee are his readings of Borges, a long-standing and profound intellectual pursuit, as the previous chapter began to show. Indeed, because the Borgesian operation of maintaining an intertextual dialogue with several different traditions has had a counterpart in Coetzee's fiction, it is important to analyse the inner workings of the Argentine writer.

Perhaps the single most intriguing fact that strikes contemporary readers when approaching Borges is his set of intertextual engagements: the reader is effortlessly guided in writings that refer to texts and authors from different eras and traditions, from Icelandic sagas to Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), from Cervantes and Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645) to Paul

Valéry (1871-1945) and Kafka. His knowledge of central and northern European letters is particularly remarkable – historically, River Plate culture had stronger links with southern European culture. Furthermore, the European thematic palette is not a characteristic that readers would normally associate with the more recent Latin American fiction that circulated widely in translation, like that of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa. There are two biographical reasons that explain how Borges' absorption of the central and northern European canon came about. The first was that, like Coetzee, Borges was raised in a bilingual household: his grandmother Frances Ann Haslam had been born in Staffordshire in 1842, and both he and his father (Jorge Guillermo) learned English at the same time as Spanish. Peculiarly, Borges' first reading of *Don Quixote* was in English, and he 'was disappointed when he later discovered the Spanish original' (Rabaté 190). The second reason was the prolonged family stay in Europe, initially in Switzerland (1914-19), where Borges studied in French and taught himself German, and then in Spain (1919-21). Therefore, the Borges who returned to Argentina as a young man in 1921 already had a strong European, plurilingual intellectual base.

While in Spain, Borges became involved with the avant-garde *Ultraístas*, 'a Spanish group of poets who eclectically imbibed practically every -ism current in Europe at the time – Futurism, Cubism and Expressionism in particular' (D.P. Gallagher 10). Crucially, *Ultraísmo* was born from the example of the *Creacionismo* of Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948), who had published two fundamental books in Madrid, *Poemas árticos* (1918, *Arctic Poems*) and *Ecuatorial* (1918, *Equatorial*). As Octavio Paz noted, 'con esos libros comienza la vanguardia en castellano' ('with these books the vanguard in Spanish begins'): Huidobro's is a 'poesía del aire' ('poetry of the air'; Paz 201, 216). Significantly, *Creacionismo* was itself a late variation of *Modernismo*, started by Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916) with his book *Azul...*, published in Valparaíso in 1888. Therefore, the vanguard that Borges absorbed in Madrid was not Spanish, but Hispanic

American. I bring attention to the *Modernismo-Creacionismo* wave because this marks the first of two instances by which in the twentieth century the Hispanic American ‘periphery’ will illuminate the Spanish ‘centre’, so their positions are in fact reversed, and this exerts pressure on Casanova’s system.

Although Borges hardly travelled abroad during the next forty years, the cultural vitality of Buenos Aires at the time matched that of a European metropolis and was enhanced during the Spanish Civil War and World War II by the many immigrants who escaped from those conflicts. It should then come as no surprise that Borges hardly ever complained about the remoteness or backwardness of Buenos Aires in his writings. In fact, although Borges was not European, he was not a provincial writer: while Buenos Aires may have been physically remote from the United States and Europe, during the first half of the twentieth century the city was very much an enclave of the economic north in the Southern Cone. With its bookshop-filled streets and wide tree-lined avenues, the city recalled and could indeed be seen like a transplanted version of post-Hausmann Paris, or a southern New York. The lifestyle of *porteños* certainly matched that which prevailed in those cities: the only branch of Harrod’s department store that has ever existed in the world, a building covering a whole block, was established in Buenos Aires in 1914, and an advertisement for outfitter Burberry’s in 1938 promoted the Haymarket flagship store alongside three branches: Paris, New York and Buenos Aires (*The Sphere*, 28 May 1938; 369). Consequently, and counterintuitively, from a certain point of view, for Borges the passage from Switzerland and Spain to Buenos Aires in 1921 was deprovincializing, rather than the contrary. Furthermore, Borges will set in motion his literary machine in a city that from the start of the Spanish Civil War would be the centre of the Hispanic literary and publishing worlds, as we saw in Chapter 1.

A crucial text Borges produced during these years was 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*' (1939). This text is particularly significant for this thesis, for it shows how early on in his career Coetzee absorbed the influence of Borges. In 1976 Coetzee wrote 'The First Sentence of Yvonne Burgess' *The Strike*'. The essay, which was conceived for a South African readership, was originally published in *English in Africa* 3 and later collected in *Doubling the Point*. As the piece's title makes clear, Coetzee offers different interpretations of the meaning of the novel's initial sentence: 'Finlay closed the book and considered the title appreciatively' (91). He starts by analysing the alternative formulation 'Someone closed a book' ('Who closed what? How is it known?', 92). He then dismisses such analysis as one 'only a schoolman can look forward to', which he exemplifies with a quote from the first sentence of Beckett's *L'Innommable* (1953, *The Unnamable*). Nor is he convinced by the solution of the *nouveau roman*, whose technique he describes as 'to write a work of criticism in the form of a fiction in which the codes of the Novel, the first of them the formulaic opening, will be exhibited and decoded', which in turn he exemplifies with the first sentence of Claude Mauriac's (1914-96) *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures* (1961, *The Marquise Went Out at Five* – note how Coetzee capitalizes 'novel', as if the genre might be exhausted). As can be seen, until this point Coetzee has restricted his analysis to European writers.

But then he addresses a modality which originated in America: 'to get behind (*aufbeben*) fiction by incorporating into fiction a critical consciousness of the procedures of fiction is only to climb another spiral of illusionistic Realism', which he finds exemplified in the work of John Barth (b. 1930) and his quest for solace 'in Nietzschean gaiety'. And then, even further away from Europe, Coetzee finally considers the Borgesian factor: 'Or one may be embarking on the heroic project of Jorge Luis Borges' Pierre Menard, composing *Don Quixote* at the beginning of the twentieth century'. It must be noted that Coetzee is not referring to Borges, but to Menard,

whose project is heroic because it epitomises Roland Barthes' (1915-80) radical claim in *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953, *Writing Degree Zero*) that language is never innocent: 'Writing still remains full of the recollection of previous usage, for language is never innocent: words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new meanings' (16). In fact, Coetzee seems to have had Barthes in mind in his commentary ('In language there are no stable and positive elements. Elements achieve definition only through their reciprocal differences, and all shift their boundaries continually with the passing of time', 92). This is also evident in Coetzee's use of capitalization (e.g., 'Novel'), which is Barthes' practice in *Writing Degree Zero*. Indeed, another text this essay brings to mind is W.B. Yeats' (1865-1939) poem 'Among School Children' (1928), and particularly the last verse: 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' (184). This can be related to the importance of dance and its symbolism, which will also have an important role in Coetzee's *Jesus* novels. It also relates to Eliot's reflections in *Four Quartets* (1943) about temporality, art, and moving centres: while any dance is an eternal pattern, for the pattern to be realised it must be danced in time. In other words, in Borges' Pierre Menard the fiction is attempting to do what the dance – or the dancer's legwork – can do.

Despite its brevity, this essay is important for various reasons. As we have seen, here Coetzee is distancing himself from antirealism in its many European guises. In fact, 'The First Sentence of Yvonne Burgess' *The Strike*' should be read as evidence that we should not overplay Beckett's influence on Coetzee, for already in 1976, the latter had strong reservations about anti-illusionism, as expressed in this text. Contrary to the view of Patrick Hayes, here Coetzee does not consider Beckett as a permanently fixed benchmark, for that position is occupied by Borges and his Pierre Menard. The essay also shows that in Coetzee the critic and the academic are vital for his craft and self-image as a creative writer. Indeed, Coetzee seems to be asking himself in this essay: 'What kind of writer am I at this point?', and the evidence shows that the Borgesian

component must have played a significant part in his self-assessment. Nonetheless, what seems most crucial is how early in Coetzee's career this vital manifesto of Borgesian influence took place, for this essay was published before *In the Heart of the Country* (1977).

Another crucial Borges text that influenced Coetzee was 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' (1953). In his essay on Di Benedetto (2017) Coetzee wrote that in this canonical piece Borges 'poured scorn on literary nationalism', an argumentative line he has also shared for many decades (137). In other words, the Borges essay stands as a significant precursor for Coetzee's own sustained argument against this kind of thinking, which began with his CNA-prize speech in 1981. In order to elucidate whether Borges provided Coetzee with a guide in this regard, it is useful to analyse the context in which 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' came into being. On 11 November 1951, Juan Domingo Perón had been re-elected President of Argentina for a second consecutive term. Shortly thereafter, on 19 December, Borges read 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' at the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores in Buenos Aires, which at the time was an anti-Peronist stronghold. It was first published in *Cursos y conferencias* (the Colegio's magazine) in 1953, and then collected in the second edition (1957) of *Discusión*, originally published in 1932. Therefore, even though the published text has become widely known as an appeal for Argentine writers to embrace universal themes, the import of the original reading was more specifically political, for Borges was trying to denounce a certain nationalistic strain described by Edwin Williamson as 'the central aim of Peronist cultural policy—the fostering of a supposedly authentic national culture that would have the gaucho as its archetype and *Martín Fierro* as its folk epic' (316). Nonetheless, for Borges there was a personal interest at play as well.

Crucially, in 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' Borges is highly critical of his own past writings ('For many years, in books now happily forgotten, I tried to copy down the flavour, the essence of the outlying quarters of Buenos Aires'), and the reasons for this were not merely

artistic, for by the 1950s the exaltation of local colour in literature had become an attribute championed by Peronist intellectuals (215). By the same token, Coetzee also had a public and a personal interest invested in his CNA-prize speech. While he questioned the premises of the prize itself (which rested on the ‘limited conception of a unified, bilingual nation’, as McDonald has noted) and called South African writers to embrace provincialism as ‘a fate one can embrace without ignominy’, he also had a personal interest; namely, the aforementioned need of ‘space for metropolitan ‘affiliations’” noted by McDonald (Coetzee 1981, 16; Mc Donald 2009, 305-6). Nonetheless, the nature of the appeal Borges and Coetzee make to their fellow Argentine and South African writers is radically different. While Borges champions the distinctiveness of Argentina and the right of his fellow nationals not only to ‘all of Western Culture’, but also ‘a greater right than that which the inhabitants of one Western nation or another may have’, Coetzee urges South African writers to be modest and ‘to accept that his historical destiny, and the destiny of his society, are in no way special’ (Borges 1953, 218; Coetzee 1981, 16).

However, the basic continuity between the Borges and Coetzee essays is evident, for they both identify the exotic inclinations in Argentine and South African literatures as a European or metropolitan trait that as such is to be avoided. While for Borges ‘The Argentine cult of local color is a recent European cult that nationalists should reject as a foreign import’, for Coetzee the metropolitan pressure for an ‘authentically South African’ art comes ‘out of a naïve, idle and typically metropolitan yearning for the exotic, a yearning we should recognise as of no importance’ (215; 16). In conclusion, it can be argued that while the conceptions that Borges and Coetzee had of the places that Argentine and South African literatures occupied in the world literary landscape were different, they were both convinced that these literatures should not deliberately strive for local colour. Crucially, if Coetzee’s opposition to literary nationalism has been constant throughout his *oeuvre*, it is quite possible that in this respect Borges also acted as

an enduring guide, as the reference to ‘The Argentine Writer and Tradition’ in the Di Benedetto essay goes to show.

‘The Argentine Writer and Tradition’ also shows that, unlike Coetzee, Borges did not have a complicated national identity, as he remarked in 1977: ‘No one feels himself to be Latin American: we feel ourselves to be Argentines or Chileans’ (1984, 570). If he certainly felt an Argentine, he was doubtful about a subcontinental shared mentality, as Fiddian has pointed out: ‘Dubious about a shared “Latin American” identity, Borges opted consistently for “South American” as a group label for the people and countries of that subcontinent’ (160). What is true is that in the Southern Cone countries people were imbued with Old World culture, as the cases of Jules Supervielle (1884-1960), Huidobro and Borges show. It is this parallel location in South America, immersion in European culture and Eastern interests that leads Fiddian to refer to Borges as an author who is ‘both *of* the West and sits on the periphery, from where s/he makes incursions into non-Western cultures’ (28). Consequently, as a writer positioned both on the edge and the main street of world literature, Borges realised that coming from the margins endowed him with a special perspective, building up a tension that runs through his *oeuvre* and defined by Sarlo as ‘a game on the edge of various cultures, which touch on the borders, in a space that Borges would call *las orillas*. In this way, a writer emerges who has two sides, who is at once cosmopolitan and national’ (1993, 4).

Nonetheless, this emergence is also complicated, for the southern notion Coetzee would later develop is inflected by two questions that, according to Sarlo, Borges formulated. The first was, ‘How was it possible to write literature in Argentina, a marginal country with an immigrant population, living in a port city, Buenos Aires?’ (1993, 4). The second was, how do you assume

la nostalgia por una literatura europea que un latinoamericano nunca vive del todo como naturaleza original (2007, 6).

(the nostalgia for a European literature that a Latin American can never wholly experience as if it were original to him [own translation]).

Although there are differences with Coetzee's own case – most of the South African population were not European immigrants and his relationship with the European tradition is more imbued by complicated recognition than nostalgia – he faced similar questions when he wrote from Cape Town in the last century.

Borges' significant position 'on the edge' between the central and the peripheral shapes Coetzee's engagement with him and his work, and in turn acts as a means through which Coetzee himself understands the periphery and his engagement with it. Significantly, Coetzee's reading of Borges has commonalities with the way Joyce absorbed Ibsen, according to Casanova:

His avowed fascination with Ibsen was therefore a way of affirming his own aesthetic and political positions, and he was often to compare his distant attitude toward political nationalism with that of the Norwegian dramatist (249-50).

There is, then, a certain reading of literary works of which only writers on the periphery are capable; certain homologies and similarities that they alone, as a result of their outlying position, are able to discern. What is more, the interpretation by writers in literarily remote lands of works produced by authors elsewhere on the periphery is apt to be more realistic (that is, more historically grounded) than the dehistoricized reading of critics of the center (250).

Casanova's view that peripheral writers can read one another differently is correct, as the examples of both Joyce and Coetzee demonstrate, for the 'realistic' interpretation she alludes to is based on the shared reality of the periphery, one also marked by economic and cultural dependency on the metropolis.

While there is a certain parallel between Joyce's reading of Ibsen in Dublin in 1901 and Coetzee's reading of Borges in Cape Town in 1997, the dualities of Norway/Ireland and Argentina/South Africa considered as literary territories are also very different (Joyce 51). If for Joyce and Ibsen there was a slight sense of not being at the centre of the literary world, they were still quite physically close both to it and between one another: even more importantly, they were in Europe. By contrast, Borges and Coetzee were exceedingly distant *both* from the centre and from one another in the peripheral south of the world. Nonetheless, despite their different

degrees of peripherality, Joyce and Coetzee had an advantage over Ibsen and Borges, because they wrote in English. Although in the 1920s the position of English was less unique than it is today, and Joyce certainly did not feel privileged by using it, both benefitted from the uncontested dominance English acquired as a world language later in the twentieth century, playing a role in the dissemination of their work and – particularly in Coetzee’s case – in institutional recognition via literary prizes, which also explains why Joyce and Coetzee eventually overshadowed Ibsen and Borges in terms of global literary prestige. Crucially, from the privileged position he occupied because of that recognition, Coetzee would further develop Casanova’s assertion of a different reading in his radical discovery of peripherality as one of the founding elements of his personal notion of the south, which he will elaborate later in this third Hispanic world.

‘Borges’s Dark Mirror’, Coetzee’s review of Borges’ *Collected Fictions*, appeared in the *NYRB* on 22 October 1998, and was subsequently edited and collected in *Stranger Shores* (2001). It is in my opinion among the best introductions to Borges in English, mainly for the succinct and clear way Coetzee unveils the Borgesian technical innovations, as conveyed in his piece’s title, which reflects a perpetual question that reading Borges brings forward, one related to the trope of the double: ‘Which Borges is real, which is the other in the mirror, remains dark’ (*SS* 172).⁵⁸ But equally, in this first published critical assessment of a Hispanic writer, Coetzee crucially demonstrates how Borges provided Latin American *prose* writers for the first time with a model from *their* literary region, which until then was a backwater on the world republic of

⁵⁸ It is also significant that Coetzee knew that at the time of publication of his piece the best edition to work with when studying Borges was not the Spanish or English one, but the La Pléiade French edition, for at the time it was the only one that contained a scholarly apparatus (*SS* 167). This goes to show how vast Coetzee’s knowledge of the Borgesian bibliography was – coupled with his deep understanding of world literature, which allowed him to work his way through it in a criss-cross pattern.

letters map (I emphasize this is only true of prose writing: we have seen that the situation was different in poetry):

His influence on Latin American letters – where writers have traditionally turned to Europe for their models – has been extensive. He, more than anyone, renovated the language of fiction and thus opened the way to a remarkable generation of Spanish-American novelists. Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso and Mario Vargas Llosa have all acknowledged a debt to him (SS 165-6).

Therefore, Coetzee shows that García Márquez and Vargas Llosa could not have emerged as world writers had Borges not previously broken through – even if he was not a novelist.

In analysing Borges' move from the periphery to the centre of world literature, Coetzee assigns great importance to the role of the Prix International de Littérature he was awarded with Beckett in 1961, stating that it 'catapulted Borges on to the world stage' (SS 164).⁵⁹ Nonetheless, this opinion is possibly based on the importance literary prizes had in Coetzee's own career, which differed from Borges' in that respect. In fact, the propulsion towards the centre the prize facilitated is truer in Beckett's case than in Borges': because the former wrote in French *and* in English – like Joyce and Coetzee himself – the scope of his projection as a world writer was far wider than in the case of Borges, for whom the main effect was bringing him to the wider attention of the Anglosphere, and thus more limited.⁶⁰ Although Coetzee notes Borges initially acquired literary prestige in France, he had also been published in Germany and Italy before 1961 and noticed by continental academics and critics. Consequently, Borges' global visibility surged as an organic phenomenon: the gradual recognition granted by European intellectuals and cultural institutions. Perhaps surprisingly, in a process that De Diego defined as 'consagración diferida' ('deferred consecration'), Borges's global prestige granted him belated

⁵⁹ Coetzee refers to the Prix Formentor, but in fact the same jury awarded two different prizes: the Prix Formentor for an unpublished novel and the Prix International de Littérature for a renowned writer whose work had not been duly recognised. (Salinas 2013, 259-60).

⁶⁰ Borges' first publication in English was the story 'The Garden of Forking Paths', which appeared in *Ellery Queen* in 1948.

recognition in Argentina only in the late 1960s, which goes to show the extent to which southern writers depend on literary prestige granted by the north, a phenomenon that is also important to understanding Coetzee's idea of the south, the culmination of this third Hispanic world (117).

At this point, an important distinction must be made between how Borges and Coetzee moved from the periphery to the centre. As Coetzee wrote in his essay, the initial step for Borges was the reputation he acquired in France – more precisely in Paris – during the 1950s, a process Casanova defined as *littérisation*:

Paris is not only the capital of the literary world. It is also, as a result, the gateway to the 'world market of intellectual goods', as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) put it; the chief place of consecration in the world of literature (127).

Although the phenomenon was true for Borges and Milan Kundera (b. 1929) in the 1960s, it was not the case for Coetzee in the 1980s, for by then the centre of the world literary map had shifted from Paris to London and New York. In other words, although Borges and Coetzee both acceded to that centre, the global networks that brought them there were different.

Significantly, Coetzee's reading of Borges' career shows he is very conscious of the dynamics of literary prizes and of how misleading they can be, as we will see in our analysis of *Elizabeth Costello*. In fact, it is a 'magnífica ironía' – a 'splendid irony', as Borges wrote in the 'Poem of the Gifts' – that the only major awards he ever received were shared, the Prix International with Beckett and the Cervantes Prize with Gerardo Diego (1896-1987; Borges 1972, 128-9). Nonetheless, despite this relative under-recognition of his literary stature by the Swedish and Spanish Academies, Borges' influence on Hispanic American writers was colossal; its full scope was summarised by Vargas Llosa in a way that draws a parallel with Coetzee's own situation in South Africa:

For the Latin American writer, Borges heralded the end of a kind of inferiority complex that inhibited us all unwittingly from broaching certain subjects and that kept us imprisoned in a provincial outlook. Before Borges it seemed a piece of foolhardiness or

self-delusion for one of us to pursue universal culture as a European or North American might (1991, 4).

Therefore, Borges was a liberator who allowed these writers a release from a provincial horizon and an embrace of the literary world without inherited fears, and this is a crucial aspect to consider when understanding how García Márquez and Vargas Llosa eventually became main actors on the world stage.

Outside South America, Borges' long shadow even reached French avant-garde philosophy: his appearance at the opening of Michel Foucault's (1926-84) *Les mots et les choses* (1970, *The Order of Things*) still seems a remarkable achievement: 'This book first arose out of a passage in Borges' (2002, xv). Sarlo provides the keys to what made Borges' work so congenial to European intellectuals, and crucially her first sentence conveys strong Coetzeean resonances:

Herein lies Borges's originality: as a writer-critic, a short-story writer-philosopher, he obliquely discusses in his texts the major topics of contemporary literary theory. This has turned him into a cult writer for literary critics who discover in him the Platonic forms of their concerns: the theory of intertextuality, the limits of the referential illusion, the relationship between knowledge and language, the dilemmas of representation and of narration. The Borges literary machine fictionalizes these questions, producing a *mise en forme* of theoretical and philosophical problems without ever allowing the development of the tale to lose completely the brilliance of ironic distance or the careful and anti-authoritarian position of agnosticism (1993, 5).

As Sarlo explains, Borges put into literary action many of the critical theories that French thinkers had been analysing at the time – which is also a Borgesian paradox, for 'his own reading seemed to stop around 1920', as Coetzee remarked (*SS* 167). Furthermore, the intellectual density of Borges' texts is probably one of the reasons why he decided to stick to the *ars brevis* forms of the short story and the essay, for he seemed more interested in registering intertextual connections than in producing a large canvas of his own vision.

Crucially, the Borgesian literary artefact is woven in a textual layering that provokes a perpetual interplay of different readings, as explained by Sylvia Molloy:

Literature, as conceived and put into practice by Borges, does not differ from that game of plural faces and plural masks. Superimposed texts taint the narratives in which they are inserted; simple words, revitalized in new sequences, seem to question each other. Like those faces and masks, they both harmonize and diverge, in a deliberate, fecund juxtaposition (6).

In the operation that Molloy describes, it is noteworthy that Borgesian themes are not aligned with a single line of thought or a systematic approach to philosophical thinking; but superimposed and freely combined. In fact, often the same subject is seen divergently within the same book, as happens in *Fictions*, the collection Coetzee most often quoted. This Borgesian operation of continuous combination leads to a thematic blurring and contamination, producing a textual net:

Borges's "web of theories" on fiction is unpredictable, contradictory, permanently shifting. The terms of his argument are less important than their blurring, less important than the reciprocal contamination to which he subjects them. Far from setting up rigid categories, his statements create doubt, hesitation; they work against fixed definitions (9).

As Molloy has noted, if Borges did not produce a theory of his own, he did combine different theories for the shaping of his fiction. The way Borges operated is akin to the workings of Roland Barthes, another writer-thinker who deeply influenced Coetzee, particularly in terms of privileging the flow of ideas over theory, as explained in *Doubling the Point* (105). Crucially, these ideas also superseded the textual realm and percolated into other artistic forms, like cinema.

But what is even more important for the present study is that if Borges had negotiated his way to this central position through European cultural mechanisms, from there he reoriented global literary attention to *las orillas*, the edges of the West. This navigational ability was to be crucial in Coetzee's reading of Borges and the building of his third Hispanic world, for this multi-layered engagement with him – which had started in 1974, as Chapter 2 showed – gave him self-knowledge and ways of mapping the south.

Even though it became more visible with the 1998 piece, Borges was influential in Coetzee's writing from the beginning, as remarked by Zimble, and increasingly so since his

relocation to Australia in 2002.⁶¹ I will show how Borges provided Coetzee with both significant tropes and technical innovations he would return to assiduously in his critical writings during this period. The Borges-Coetzee connection may strike one as odd, not only for the lack of linguistic connection, but also because Borges was not a novelist like Beckett, or an academic like Barthes.

Significantly, the fact that Borges did not produce a theory or systematic line of thought would prove beneficial for Coetzee. In fact, the following observation by Clarkson about Coetzee's intellectual response to other writers seems particularly illustrative of the way he absorbed Borges' influence:

throughout his work, Coetzee is responsive to other writers and to practitioners and philosophers of different branches of the linguistic disciplines, but in ways that enable him to develop a refined literary-critical discourse of his own, and to conduct experiments in prose fiction himself with a heightened degree of consciousness about that process (2009, 8).

As can be deduced from Clarkson's observation, Borges' long shadow proved to be very significant for Coetzee, for – unlike Neruda – he provided him with a wide array of critical ideas, paradoxes and reflections on the nature of storytelling he could further develop.

A substantial amount of Coetzee's critical pieces of the last three decades contain Borgesian references. In 'Blowing Hot and Cold' (1997), he discusses Cees Nooteboom's (b. 1933) somewhat forced relation to Borges (SS 66-8). Furthermore, in 'Heir of a Dark History' (2002), Coetzee shows not only how W.G. Sebald (1944-2001) references Borges' 'idealist paradoxes', but also identifies Sir Thomas Browne's (1605-82) influence on Sebald through Borges, demonstrating he was not only familiar with his writings, but also his vast readings (*IW*

⁶¹ At least two South African critics, Crewe and Lionel Abrahams, associated the double narration of Klawer's death in *Dusklands* with Borges (Zimbley 2014, 42). Tony Morphet's review in *Bolt*, December 1974, also noticed the Borgesian connection, as did Stephen Watson in a 1990 essay (Kannemeyer 252-56). More recently, Ian Glenn also mentioned Borges as a literary influence (24, 1994).

148). Yet another example exists in ‘What Philip Knew’ (2004), in which Coetzee argues that the spirit of Borges ‘reigns rather distantly’ in the last part of Philip Roth’s (1933-2018) *The Plot Against America* (2004), with the reservation that the former ‘would have made better use of the layer of solid historical research on which Roth has built his book’ – a rather peculiar remark, for Borges never attempted to write a novel in the first place (*IW* 243). More recently, in ‘The Quest for the Girl from Bendigo Street’ (2012), Coetzee surveys Gerald Murnane’s (b. 1939) short fiction, ‘some showing the imprint of Jorge Luis Borges’ (*LE* 264). Finally, there is ‘A Great Writer We Should Know’ (2017), in which Coetzee noted – I repeat – the relevance of Kafka as ‘the writer who did the most to shape Di Benedetto’s art, both directly and through the mediation of Borges’ (*LE* 142). If one considers all these references together, the overlying arc shows that one of Coetzee’s critical accomplishments – and one unremarked until now – was identifying Borgesian patterns in several different writers that shaped world literature during the last seventy years: although he was not the first critic to identify the influence of Borges on, for example, Murnane or Sebald, Coetzee’s interest in Borges leads him to identifying his influence on other writers. More specifically, the interest of Coetzee in Borges also operates as a touchstone, for it shapes and guides his reading of other South American writers, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Aside from Coetzee’s critical writings, there is also a profound Borgesian reflection in *Here & Now*, a non-fiction book lacking critical focus, and therefore a rarity in the Coetzeean corpus. In retrospect, many of the themes discussed by Auster and Coetzee seem rather idiosyncratic and condensed in the narrow correspondence period. One example was the 2007-08 financial crisis: on his letter of 29 March 2010, Coetzee recalls an earlier one in which he explained that, rather ‘like a real crisis’, it resembled

a textbook example of people sitting in Plato's cave, staring at shadows (on their computer monitors), which they mistook for reality. I suggested that if we simply reset the numbers, the "crisis" would be over (*He&N* 134-5).

Here Coetzee introduces a speculative thinking of the Borgesian kind. After perorating about radical-idealist solutions to the financial crisis and improving our future, he puts the Argentine writer into the equation:

To me (to skip several steps in the argument) the question boils down to how seriously we should take Jorge Luis Borges. Borges posits the interruption into our history (that is, into the body of historical memory that we broadly share) of an encyclopedia that, when completed, will have the potential to supplant the old past with a new past and thus a new present—that will, potentially, remake us. Is Borges's fable to be enjoyed as a philosophical *jeu d'esprit* but not taken seriously, or is he floating an idea with real philosophical depth? I would like to think the latter.

Applied to the financial crisis, the Borgesian proposal seems to me at least feasible, in theory (135).

The encyclopedia Coetzee refers to appears in Borges' essay 'The Analytical Language of John Wilkins' (1952). Interestingly, Coetzee's question is answered in Foucault's engagement with it in the first paragraph of *The Order of Things* and his twofold response: while he acknowledges he laughed; he is also intellectually stimulated to write a seminal philosophical book (2002, xv). In delving into this Borgesian paradox Coetzee identifies one of the Argentine's foremost concerns: 'to reveal the gap that separates our intellectual aspirations from our intellectual limitations', as D.P. Gallagher argues, and Foucault also notes in the first paragraph of *The Order of Things* (95).

In another of the volume's generally unconnected letters, Coetzee returns to the Argentine from a different perspective to discuss the quintessential Borgesian space, the library. Coetzee writes that he had recently read an article on a new university library, in which – despite its state-of-the-art technology – there were seemingly no books. Coetzee ascribes this to the mentality of young librarians and their dream 'of a paperless library', before reflecting:

What do such people have against books? Why don't they share my vision of the library as acre upon acre of dimly lit stacks holding row upon row of tightly packed books stretching to infinity in every direction?

The argument against the Borgesian library is almost too tedious to rehearse—too tedious and too clinching, in an age in which economics has been elevated to queen of sciences. It is that books take up too much space (*HeN* 179).

Significantly, Coetzee's idea is less a coincidence than an appropriation of Borges': an almost verbatim transposition of the opening of the latter's short story 'The Library of Babel' (1941): 'The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air shafts between, surrounded by very low railings' (78). The idea of the library first appeared in 'What is Realism?', which was read as a lecture at the Stichting Literaire Activiteiten in Amsterdam, in December 1995, and will reappear in Coetzee's *oeuvre*, albeit in a material guise, when El Hilo de Ariadna publishes the *Biblioteca personal* (2013-17), which I will discuss later (Kannemeyer 469).

In a clear sign of how important Borges is for the building of this third of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds, I may note that the novels Coetzee has published this century are Borgesian both in their use of narrative devices, like the double, and in their shared thematic interests, like the library. *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) – arguably the most Borgesian of all Coetzee fictions – combines both these features, for Coetzee adapts a device envisioned by the Argentine. Describing the touchstone of Borges' narrative workings in 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' (1940) and 'The Library of Babel' (1941), Coetzee explains that:

The technical innovation on which these fictions rest, and which allows them their swift pace – the reader is outflanked and overwhelmed by his opponent before he knows where he is – is that they use as model the anatomy or critical essay, rather than the tale: with narrative exposition reduced to a bare minimum, the action can be condensed to an exploration of the implications of a hypothetical situation (an infinite library, for instance). (*SS* 169).

If the model for Borges is the essay, Coetzee adapts his innovation with a significant twist. This operation can be seen in *Elizabeth Costello*, which – similarly to 1930s-40s Borgesian stories – has recourse to a metaliterary textual structure. This novel, which bears the subtitle *Eight Lessons*, is also crucial to understanding Coetzee's relation to both Cervantes and Borges.

Nonetheless, instead of taking as a model the anatomy or critical essay, Coetzee borrowed the idea of the lesson – the *Lehrstück*, as elaborated by Bertolt Brecht – as a template. This procedure was revealed in an interview Coetzee gave to *Semana* in 2013. When asked if he found it difficult to combine stories and ideas in his texts, Coetzee answered:

Este comentario se aplica menos a mi trabajo más temprano que al más reciente, el cual ha estado caracterizado por la mezcla de géneros que usted menciona. Por ejemplo, *Elizabeth Costello* tiene el subtítulo *Ocho lecciones*, y a primera vista no es claro si se deben leer como historias o como ensayos. Uso la palabra lección en el mismo sentido que Bertolt Brecht usa la palabra *Lehrstück*, esto es, una acción dramatizada con un propósito didáctico implícito (2013a).

(This remark is less pertinent to my earlier fiction than to my more recent one, which has been characterized by the mixing of genres you have pointed out. For example, *Elizabeth Costello* has the subtitle *Eight Lessons*, and at first glance it is not clear if they are to be read as stories or as essays. I use the word lesson in the same sense that Bertolt Brecht uses the word *Lehrstück*; that is, a dramatized action with an implicit didactic purpose [own translation]).

Significantly, rather than acknowledging a Brechtian influence, Coetzee was identifying a common element between the narrative procedures he envisaged for the Costello stories and Brecht's dramatic technique, for Brecht and theatre are not among his main critical interests. In fact, I argue that an important influence in the creation of Elizabeth Costello is Borges, for the way she appears in Coetzee's fictions has an antecedent in the way the Argentine writer operated with the 'persona whom Borges had already begun to call 'Borges'.' (*SS* 172).

Crucially, Coetzee gave a full account of the cycle's genesis at the book launch of *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello* in Santiago in 2015, which appears here for the first time:

Let me say a few words about the history of Elizabeth Costello and the place of these two stories in that history.

In 1998 I was invited by the Centre for the Study of Human Values at Princeton University to give two lectures in their annual series.⁶²

Because I thought it was important to say something about the assumption implicit in the notion of human values – namely that it excluded the animal – I accepted the invitation. However, I have always detested the academic lecture as a literary genre. Therefore I decided to offer to Princeton a work of fiction about a writer who travels to

⁶² The lectures were on 15 and 16 October 1997.

a North American university and gives two lectures on the presence (or the absence) of the animal in human values.

This was the beginning of a series of didactic fictions that used the ageing writer Elizabeth Costello as their vehicle. These fictions were eventually collected in a volume called *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons*. By using the word *Lessons* I wished to emphasize their didactic intent.

However, the invented character Elizabeth Costello refused to retire into the shadows. She emerged again in the novel *Slow Man*, and in two further fictions, “As A Woman Grows Older” and “The Old Woman and the Cats,” which have appeared in print but have never before been collected in a volume.

It is this volume which Cristóbal Pérez Barra has created, and which I have great pleasure in presenting to you tonight (2015d).

So, the Princeton fictions were a device to bypass the constraints of the academic lecture. However, the fact that Costello voiced an opinion Coetzee himself held, as confirmed above, does not automatically make her an alter ego. Even assuming *all* her opinions coincided with Coetzee’s, she remains an expressive vehicle – like one of Borges’ characters.

Here we see the Borgesian dark mirrors Coetzee alluded to in the title of his *NYRB* piece at play. For, just as it is unclear if the lessons are to be read as stories or essays, as Coetzee noted, their addressee remains equally ambiguous, as Attridge has commented:

We must not miss the irony in the collection’s subtitle, *Eight Lessons*: it is Elizabeth Costello as much as the reader who is undergoing these lessons, and what either has learned by the end remains a matter for debate (2004, 197-8).

Therefore, rather than the traditional learning scheme, the mechanism at play in *Elizabeth Costello* consists of a series of conjectures about specific subjects (much in the manner of Poe and Borges, Coetzee’s forefathers in speculative fiction), but without a solution or visible self-knowledge acquisition. Lucy Graham remarked on Borges’ influence in building the Costello character:

the relationship between Costello and her son could also be read in terms of a Borgesian splitting of authorial identity, between the author, figured by Costello (Costello is a near anagram for Coetzee), and the man, John. In this reading, John, the man, could be refusing what J. M. Coetzee, the author and public figure, has made of him. Such a fracturing would complicate any attempt to trace origin back to the “one” who writes (Graham 219-20).

Here we see another Borgesian trope at play: the blurring of authorship and the complication of originality, which will appear throughout Coetzee's output in the twenty-first century and is one of the central themes of the *Jesus* trilogy. Because this trope first came to the fore in *Elizabeth Costello*, I will now show the Borgesian workings of the cycle through a close reading of the text.

In 'Realism', the first lesson, Costello travels to Altona College to receive an award created for 'a major world writer' and collect 'a purse of \$50,000, funded by a bequest from the Stowe estate, and a gold medal' (*EC* 2). These details entail a recognition of the politics of world literary culture, described by James English as 'a conscious strategy aimed at honouring writers of *world literature* who could nonetheless and simultaneously be identified with *local* roots or sites of production' (303). Costello begins her reading by remembering her London days, when she received an advance copy of her first book. She recalls that while superficially she felt a thrill, underneath there was a rather sombre feeling:

But something was nagging at me. I got on the telephone to my publishers. "Have the deposit copies gone out?" I asked. And I would not rest until I had their assurance that the deposit copies would be mailed the same afternoon, to Scotland and the Bodleian and so forth, but above all to the British Museum. That was my great ambition: to have my place on the shelves of the British Museum, rubbing shoulders with the other Cs, the great ones: Carlyle and Chaucer and Coleridge and Conrad (*EC* 16).

The interest in the Bodleian and the British Museum and the writers whom Costello wishes to be with seem indicative of a southern author's aspiration for recognition in the metropolitan north, something Coetzee will also point out in his Buenos Aires seminars ('How do they think of us in London or Madrid?'; 2015a, 3).

Significantly, these are not writers one would associate with Coetzee (she omits Cervantes), but rather with Borges, for he wrote essays on Conrad, Carlyle and Coleridge, and quoted Chaucer – all were in his father's library: they are northern writers celebrated in the British Empire. This is connected to the idea of literary immortality when Costello then reflects on her sudden need to telephone:

What lay behind my concern about deposit copies was the wish that, even if I myself should be knocked over by a bus the next day, this first-born of mine would have a home where it could snooze, if fate so decreed, for the next hundred years, and no one would come poking with a stick to see if it was still alive.

‘That was one side of my telephone call: if I, this mortal shell, am going to die, let me at least live on through my creations.’ (EC 17).

Interestingly, Graham links this maternal image with ‘the imaginary in *Foe* and *Age of Iron*, evoking the ‘sense of the writer as a dead “shell” and the text as a child’, connecting the immortal quality based on the conception of the text as ‘offspring’ with humanist doctrine (Graham 222-3).

As she returns to the present, Costello looks back on her former attitude towards the canon as mere ingenuousness, whilst also noting there was something serious behind it, and further back ‘something pathetic that is less easy to acknowledge’ (EC 17). Reflecting on the fate of printed books, she thinks most copies of any given book will inevitably perish for different reasons. However, the legal deposit allows at least one copy to survive in posterity or perpetuity: ‘we must be able to feel there is at least one copy that will not only be read but be taken care of, given a home, given a place on the shelves that will be its own in perpetuity’. In other words, in a world in which the culture of letters still exists, the deposit would provide the book with a solace against oblivion. This also happens to be the vision of Borges, the librarian world writer.

Crucially, the idea of conservation – the touchstone of the Borgesian conception of the library – is followed by an image of destruction, and this is where Coetzee departs from Borges and develops his own vision of books, libraries and written culture in general. As it turns out, for Costello the conservation of books is illusory, for the library will likewise fall prey to the deleterious effect of time:

‘But of course the British Museum or (now) the British Library is not going to last for ever. It too will crumble and decay, and the books on its shelves turn to powder. And anyhow, long before that day, as the acid gnaws away at the paper, as the demand for space grows, the ugly and unread and unwanted will be carted off to some facility or other and tossed into a furnace, and all trace of them will be liquidated from the master catalogue. After which it will be as if they had never existed (EC 17).

The contrast with Borges' vision, which George Steiner described in *After Babel* as 'a beehive out of Piranesi but also, as the title indicates, an interior view of the Tower', could not be stronger (69). I will now analyse Coetzee's exceedingly dark vision of the library in light of the Borges original, which will show that he is building this third Hispanic world by taking a theme of the Argentine writer and making it his own with a variation: a vision in which books no longer endure, but storytelling does – as we saw in Chapter 2 with 'Hero and Bad Mother in Epic', a point which the *Jesus* novels develop.

The vision of 'The Library of Babel' is constructed by layering different textual possibilities. Thus, the existence of the library is based on three principles: that the library exists *ab aeterno*, that the number of orthographic signs is twenty-five and that there are not two identical books in it. In contrast to the vision of annihilation that we find in 'What is Realism?', these characteristics of Borges' story bring a librarian to conclude that the library is total. Towards the end of the story, the narrator reflects:

Perhaps my old age and fearfulness deceive me, but I suspect that the human species – the unique species – is about to be extinguished, but the Library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret (1941, 85).

The Spanish alphabet has twenty-seven letters, the English alphabet has twenty-six. While a twenty-five-letter alphabet could be interpreted as a negative image of Spanish – again: the dark mirror trope – it also falls short of the ISO basic Latin alphabet, suggesting incompleteness, and more precisely, illegibility. The combination of an incomplete alphabet with secrecy (related to the archive, which I will discuss later) could mean that the library will remain unread.

If Borges' narrator has little faith in the future of mankind – for it must be remembered the story was written when it seemed Germany would win World War II – he is nevertheless certain of the survival of written culture embodied in books and libraries. The Elizabeth Costello vision represents, by contrast, the destruction of that world and by implication also a more

pessimistic vision of the future of literature. As Arthur Rose has remarked, her rationale is an inversion of Borges' vision:

She inverts the conceptual infinity of Borges's Library of Babel – a library where, like Pascal's sphere, the circumference is infinite and its centre everywhere – by having the over-stocked library eliminate, even from memory, books which actually did exist (41).

This Coetzeean inversion has an important consequence. The idea of the southern writer with European affiliations operating on the world stage that lies behind *Elizabeth Costello* was embodied by Borges, Neruda and Gordimer before Coetzee, whose works purportedly will transcend their lives by being preserved in libraries. Although the touchstone for this operation is the Borgesian library, Coetzee deforms it to acknowledge the fact that in the twenty-first century one cannot embrace the literary tradition with the faith with which Borges approached it in the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, if Borges best articulated this belief in the preservation of textual culture, that belief was shared by his contemporaries. Let us examine the beginning of the third stanza of T.S. Eliot's *The Dry Salvages*, published in the same year as 'The Library of Babel' and therefore imbued with an equal sense of pathos:

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—
Among other things—or one way of putting the same thing:
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.
And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back (11-2).

Although Eliot's vision is gloomy, he takes for granted both the conservation of memory enabled by the book and the survival of the book itself, which dovetails with the vision of 'The Library of Babel' in 1941, on which Borges was to elaborate for the rest of his life. On 24 May 1978 Borges stated in a Buenos Aires lecture that 'de los diversos instrumentos del hombre, el más asombroso es, sin duda, el libro' ('of the many instruments of man, the most wonderous is, undoubtedly, the book?'). Nonetheless, in Coetzee there is a sense that we have entered an age in

which books are no longer valued as ‘an extension of memory and imagination’ and in which bookless libraries no longer seem depositories of collective memory, and the Costello cycle is a reflection on that phenomenon (Borges 1979, 5).

I return here to my earlier point about the centrality of Borgesian ideas in the building of this third of Coetzee’s Hispanic worlds. Crucially, the role of Borges at this point of Coetzee’s career, when he is navigating his global stature, is also to provide a reflection on his own situation: namely, that Borgesian, library-preserved immortality is no longer possible for southern writers like him today. This is partly because the literary event is no longer a reflection of the grand sweep of life, as in the era of Eliot and Borges – which also explains Coetzee’s enthusiasm for Argentina, where he found a vestigial reading public which had disappeared elsewhere. Coetzee’s vision implies that the fate of books is to crumble and decay, their memory obliterated. Consequently, because of ‘the transience of fame’, literary prizes can only provide at best passing renown (*EC* 17). However, the obliteration will be incomplete, for the textual remnants will be preserved in the attenuated or etiolated form reflected in the survival of the classics in the *Jesus* novels, as Chapter 4 shows.

I will now turn my attention to the idea of the lesson, which does not come from Borges, but was originally developed by Brecht and then further developed by Coetzee in his Australian novels, and which interacts with the Borgesian tropes I analyse in this chapter. In *Slow Man* (2005), the appearance of Costello has a pedagogical purpose: teaching Paul Rayment a lesson on erotic love, as Baarspul and Franssen noted:

Elizabeth Costello, rather than an evil spirit, is in fact a sort of moral teacher who tries to guide Paul Rayment in the ways of love. As a substitute for the author, she teaches him lessons, not merely by preaching to him, but by making him experience the consequences of his choices (2018).

Significantly, Elizabeth Costello’s irruption is unnecessary to the diegetic process of the novel: it does not bring the narrative forward. In fact, her appearance seems odd – she has no way of

knowing what she knows about Paul's life before she 'teaches' him – and a sense of disbelief is a common effect on the reader. The only plausible reason for her appearance is situated outside the novel's otherwise realistic logic: that she gets to teach Rayment a lesson about passion, for she is annoyed at his 'desire to be a simple soul, unaffected by the dynamic of repression and duplicity', as Patrick Hayes remarked. Although finally Paul 'refuses to go along with the novelist's vision of how things should be', the implicit didactic purpose Coetzee alluded to is also at play in *Slow Man*, and it is by dint of the Borgesian, mirrored nature of Elizabeth Costello (Hayes 2010, 258-9).

While the lesson is prominent in *Slow Man*, this trope is also present in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). Here Coetzee complicates things further by separating two personality traits previously associated with Elizabeth Costello. If her role as a strongly opinionated author is taken by Señor C, her pedagogic role is assigned to Anya. Hired mainly because of her looks by Señor C, the latter's *Weltanschauung* nevertheless begins to be shaped by her: 'What has begun to change since I moved into the orbit of Anya is not my opinions themselves so much as my opinion of my opinions' (DBY 136). Consequently, her lesson relates to openness to otherness, and especially to a vision of femininity that eluded Señor C before she confronted him. Nonetheless, as Hayes notes, this is complicated by the fact that Señor C's renunciation of his *Kulturkritik* is motivated by Anya's humiliation and his desire to win her back (2010, 245). In other words, Coetzee uses the lesson as a starting point but later departs from it: while the 'Strong Opinions' seem a defence mechanism against the demands placed on world writers, the ramifications of the erotic problem recall the world of David Lurie in *Disgrace*.

In a different way than in *Diary*, the idea of the lesson is also present in the *Jesus* novels (2013-19), in which one of the overarching ideas is that of learning through the dialogic ethics that bind Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, which are mirrored in Simón and David. When they

discuss Dmitri's craziness in *Schooldays*, David points out that Don Quixote also went mad, to which Simón responds:

‘That is true. But Don Quixote and Dmitri are very different kinds of people. Don Quixote was a good person, so his craziness led him to do good deeds like saving maidens from dragons. Don Quixote is a good model to follow in your life (*SJ* 227).

Here we can see the line of descent from Cervantes to Borges and Coetzee. The Cervantean model was developed by Borges in ‘Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*’ (1939), in which the protagonist sets out to ‘produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes’ (66). In this story, Borges mediates Cervantes by putting Menard, a fictional minor contemporary of Paul Valéry, through ‘the task of total translation or, one might more rigorously say, transubstantiation’, as described by Steiner in *After Babel* (71). However, Menard brings the project so far that he forgets his personal identity in the process:

To be, in some way, Cervantes and reach the *Quixote* seemed less arduous to him – and, consequently, less interesting – than to go on being Pierre Menard and reach the *Quixote* through the experiences of Pierre Menard (66).

As Coetzee wrote in his review, Borges’ achievement in ‘Pierre Menard’ ‘is to invent a vehicle (imperfect in this case, but rapidly perfected in the stories that follow) in which the paradoxes of philosophical scepticism can be elegantly staged and followed to their vertiginous conclusions’ (*SS* 169). This is the Borgesian procedure Coetzee would adapt for his own work in his twenty-first-century fictions, one linked to the basic narrative of his late politics of writing – of learning and the difficulty of communication – and located at the foundations of his third Hispanic world.

In the *Jesus* novels we also see the influence of Borges, albeit in a different way. In particular, it underlies David’s numerological and linguistic problem, a theme that was foreshadowed in *Diary*:

Jorge Luis Borges wrote a poker-faced philosophical fable, 'Funes the Memorious', about a man to whom the counting rule, and indeed the even more fundamental rules that allow us to encompass the world in language, are simply alien (94).

Reading the trilogy with a Borgesian focus shows that Funes' linguistic incapacity prefigures David's limitations – at least to Señor Robles, an engineer – which equally concern counting and language:

I suspect young David may be suffering from what they call a cognitive deficit. This means that he is deficient in a certain basic mental capacity, in this case the capacity to classify objects on the basis of similarity. This capacity comes so naturally to us as human beings, ordinary human beings, that we are barely aware we have it. It is the ability to see objects as members of classes that makes language possible (*SJ* 30).

The parallel of Funes and David is not one-dimensional, for what Borges' narrator or Señor Robles deem a mental shortcoming could also be interpreted as an ability. Indeed, both characters are gifted, yet in Borges and Coetzee this is complicated, for the counterpoint to their gift is a curse. The twofold nature of the characters recalls the sanity-insanity dichotomy of Don Quixote, which is only resolved by Alonso Quixana on his deathbed at the novel's ending. Here we see how a Cervantean theme is modelled by Borges and then taken up by Coetzee. But more generally, we also understand how Borges stands behind many Coetzeean textual operations during this century, as it happens with Defoe and *He and His Man*, in which Coetzee continues to forge his third Hispanic world through the figure of Borges.

The Borgesian tropes we have seen come to the fore in Coetzee's Nobel lecture. Untypically for the occasion but continuing a practice started at Princeton in 1997, Coetzee presented *He and His Man* as a story that, unlike the Costello lessons, was not didactic, but rather a device to both pay homage by allusion to literary tradition and bypass the academic lecture genre, which as noted he 'detests'. Nonetheless, *He and His Man* is also 'a closely related text' to the Costello cycle, as Attridge remarked (2004, 197). While it has been noted that the story

involves an intertextual treatment of Defoe, I will show how Borges also features in the inner workings of Coetzee's Nobel lecture.

Critics have noted the Borgesian element in *He and His Man*. Gareth Cornwell wrote that 'Coetzee may well have had in mind Borges' adumbration of this existential schism in 'Borges and I' (112). Similarly, Attwell later commented that behind *He and His Man* 'lies Jorge Luis Borges's 'Borges and I', a story about a man's relationship with his authorial name' (2015, 125). But how does Borges condense that very complicated critical problem in a page-long parable? Sylvia Molloy has explained the logic behind Borges' literary machine, which influenced Coetzee's writing in *He and His Man*:

Borges's fiction tends to level all narrative elements, and character is particularly affected by the process. Questioning it as a mimetic unity, Borges fragments character to the point of anonymity, reducing it to a letter, a sign, one more element in the text. Characters are rarely *persons*, they are narrative functions (40).

This character deconstruction – Beckettian *avant-la-lettre* – within a short, dense narrative was unprecedented in modern literature, and must be considered one of Borges' foremost innovations:

Conceived in this way, the character in Borges is little more than a prop, a deconstructed support. Diminished in its functions, it is "reduced to a mere *trompe-l'oeil*, it is a surviving, incidental support." *Trompe-l'oeil* indeed characterizes all of Borges's work, not only his fiction; or rather, to borrow a felicitous phrase, it would be more apt in his case to speak of *trompe-raison* (57).

This *trompe-raison* element Molloy identifies explains the twofold reaction of Foucault we saw earlier. Therefore, this dissolution of the traditional conception of character allowed Coetzee to stage its mirroring with the author in *He and His Man*, as Attridge commented:

The piece does indeed play with the reversal of author and character, so that Defoe the novelist becomes a fictional creation of Crusoe's (as Elizabeth Costello the novelist is a fiction of Coetzee's), and, in view of Defoe's own highly successful enterprise of creating fictional narrators who were read as actual authors, the stratagem is an appropriate one (2004, 199).

If the idea could be connected to the postmodern vein of playfulness, in the manner of Nabokov's *Pnin* or indeed Borges' parables, Attridge reveals the presence of an ethical dimension in *He and His Man*, penetrating perhaps the very core of storytelling:

However, to locate Coetzee in the tradition of postmodern playfulness, teasing the reader with fictional truths and truthful fictions, is to overlook the much more important engagement in his work with the demands and responsibilities of writing and reading, an engagement that runs through these pieces as it does through the novels and memoirs. What 'He and His Man' explores is the strange process of fictional writing: the self-division it necessitates, the uncertain origins of the words that one finds oneself writing, the haunting illusion – captured in that image at the end of the piece – that there is an unbridgeable distance between the person who lives in the world and the person, or impersonal force, that produces the words (199-200).

Therefore, Attridge connects Coetzee's Nobel lecture – read when he was at the very centre of the literary world and most visible as a writer – with Levinasian responsibility and his lifelong interest in the ethical dimension of writing.

Nonetheless, in terms of influence, while Attridge emphasises the link to Defoe, a careful reading of *He and His Man* suggests that Borges was an equally significant model in the story's conception and inner mechanisms. The most visible Borgesian element in *He and His Man* appears near the ending, when the narrator asks: 'Does he, the other one, that man of his, find the writing business easier?', for the syntagma *el otro* is the crucial piece in 'Borges and I', appearing five times in the single-page parable (*HHM* 18). Coetzee was possibly alluding to how the author takes over the person whilst on the world stage both at the beginning ('The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to') and the ending ('Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him') of the Borgesian story. Crucially, *He and His Man* is also a reflection on the inevitable personal toll that global literary recognition entails, and this can be connected to Coetzee's managing of his own prestige after 2003, as the second part of this chapter shows (Borges 1960, 282-3).

Although Coetzee's story implied a humane homage to storytelling and Defoe, Borges' influence is also manifested in the tropes of the double and the paradox. For example, while Coetzee recommends Evelyn Fishburn's and Psiche Hughes' *A Dictionary of Borges* in his essay, he also notes that it 'fails to rise to the challenge of providing an entry for J.L. Borges, a character – fictional? real? – who appears in the story 'Borges and I' and numerous other pieces', which can be associated with the John Coetzee of *Scenes* (SS 166). By the same token, Steiner connected 'Borges and I' with the mirror and its linguistic form, translation:

When the translator, negator of time and rebuildler at Babel, comes near succeeding, he passes into that state of mirrors which is described in 'Borges and I'. The translator too 'must live on in Borges'—or in any other author he chooses—'not in myself—if indeed I am anyone—though I recognize myself less in his books than in many others, or than in the laborious strumming of a guitar.' A true translator knows that his labour belongs 'to oblivion' (inevitably, each generation retranslates), or 'to the other one', his occasion, begetter, and precedent shadow. He does *not* know 'which of us two is writing this page'. (72-3).

While Steiner's view of a state of mirrors can be connected to Coetzee's treatment of Borges in *He and His Man*, it also brings to the fore other themes that figure prominently in Coetzee's late period, and particularly in the *Jesus* novels: the trope of oblivion, the shadows of memories, and the idea that the act of translation also entails a loss. Significantly, Coetzee referred to Borges' *dark* mirror, which suggests that a translation is not only a pale reflection, but also that the original itself becomes blurred in the process, as Chapter 4 brings into view.

While the title *He and His Man* echoes 'Borges and I', its resonance is also complicated. When Coetzee stood behind the lectern at the Konserthuset, he announced: 'Before I begin to read to you the lecture proper, the piece called *He and His Man* or *His Man and He*, I cannot remember which comes first, *He* or *His Man*' (2003c). This apparent confusion is reflected in the two printed versions: *He and His Man*, a trade edition by Penguin (2004) and *His Man and He*, a signed limited edition by Rees & O'Neill (2004). However, as most Coetzeean remarks, it should be taken with caution, as Attridge noted: 'As so often with Coetzee's accounts of his own fiction,

this explanation camouflages as much as it clarifies' (2004, 199). If one considers Coetzee's painstaking approach to publishing matters, as detailed by Kannemeyer, mere forgetfulness seems a difficult explanation to believe. It is more likely that the Borgesian double title existed from an early stage, and the second publication may have allowed an extension in print. Together, both titles offer converging perspectives of a crucial moment in Coetzee's career: when he arrived at the very centre of the literary world in Stockholm, he chose to pay an intertextual homage to Borges as his forerunner as world writer from the Southern Hemisphere, an event that marked the redirection of his gaze from the centre into the south. Therefore, Borges gave him leverage, and a platform, to perform this crucial operation of his third Hispanic world.

In the second part of this chapter, I will analyse a writer's response to the acquisition of literary prestige, and more specifically, how Coetzee's reaction to it involved a turning away from the literary centres of the north towards more peripheral locations in the Southern Hemisphere. In winning the Nobel Prize Coetzee surpassed Borges in this respect, and in so doing he arrived at a complicated position. I will henceforth examine the strategies he deployed to navigate world literature as a writer and public intellectual from that point. Crucially, his reaction to the award involved engaging in minor politics of resistance to an increasingly globalized, Anglocentric literary world, and this he did from Australia, a second region of the south, where he relocated in 2002. Not only did he arrange for the first publication of some of his books in Dutch, as we saw, but he also generously got involved with Australian colleagues and institutions, and in the 2010s he accepted invitations and began a relationship with publishers and universities in Chile and Argentina. Eventually, he began to create an imaginative framework for these later activities under the rubric of the south. Interestingly, this process took him to build his third Hispanic world in Borges' territory and the Hispanophone region of the south. Crucially, that operation

went in parallel with the writing of the *Jesus* novels, the fourth of his Hispanic worlds and their culmination, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

On the Problem of Spending Literary Prestige

Several major events took place in Coetzee's life after the millennium: the retirement from UCT in 2001 was followed by relocation to Australia; the award of the Nobel Prize in 2003 by his resignation from the University of Chicago. The unfolding of the last two events coincided with his engagement with the figure of Borges in *He and His Man*. As the decade went on, not only did Coetzee draw on Borges in his work, but also seemed to shift in his orientation to other meridional locations, which eventually manifested imaginatively in the south. This developing southern notion was also pinpointed by Coetzee's travels: he went to Brazil in 2007 and to Chile and Argentina for the first time in 2011. In time, collaboration became more formal in the latter countries, materialising in two forms. The first was Spanish translations that appeared between 2015 and 2019, which sometimes preceded the English 'originals' or were exclusive to Latin America, as in Chapter 1. The second was the academic and outreach initiatives he led in Chile and Argentina between 2015 and 2018. But before that we will see Coetzee working as an anthologist of world literature in Buenos Aires, the city that Borges had single-handedly situated on the map of world literature. Crucially, in curating the *Biblioteca personal* Coetzee was consciously situating himself as successor of Borges in the role of world writer from the south.

When Coetzee first visited Argentina in 2011, he met Soledad Costantini, publisher of El Hilo de Ariadna in Buenos Aires. They remained in contact, and eventually Costantini invited Coetzee to curate the project of a personal library modelled after Borges. Coetzee's *Biblioteca personal* (2013-17) was his first South American initiative, which consisted in a reformulation of Borges' own *Biblioteca personal* (1985-86), which I will also analyse. It must be stressed that Borges'

prominence as a southern man of letters was made possible by the exceptional literary quality of Buenos Aires, one that persists despite the economic crises that periodically affect Argentina: in 2014 it was recognised as the city with most bookshops in the world (Silveyra 2015). Coetzee chose to take part in the cultural history of this city of the south by following the footsteps of one of his literary forefathers, and in doing so he was also building his own canon. As Ankhi Mukherjee wrote in *What Is a Classic?*, Coetzee as an outsider is ‘interested in constructing tradition, since his own relation to it has to be constructed, not assumed’ (44). Crucially, although he is indeed an outsider to Hispanic literature, in agreeing to curate a *Biblioteca personal* he used his symbolic capital to continue Borges’ project, and at the same time constructed his own tradition as an Anglophone writer who inhabits different regions of the south, including a Hispanophone one.

The *Biblioteca personal* marked the reappearance of the Borgesian library in a material guise. Consisting of twelve volumes, eleven featured prose works, each from one writer, while the twelfth was the *Antología íntima* of fifty-one poets. Coetzee’s *Biblioteca personal* marks an important step in situating himself as successor of Borges as a southern world writer and reader, materializing in the Borgesian library the ideas discussed in *Elizabeth Costello* and *Here & Now*. I will now show how Coetzee was inspired by Borges’ role as an anthologist and librarian to produce a personal version of the world library, informed by European tradition but created from a southern perspective. Although Coetzee did not write a general prologue, his unpublished lecture ‘The Idea of a Personal Library’ serves this purpose. Let me begin by quoting the first paragraph of this lecture, which Coetzee read in 2014 in Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Bogotá.

During his lifetime Jorge Luis Borges created two libraries for publishers, the first under the Italian title *La Biblioteca di Babele*, the second under the title *Biblioteca personal*. When I say he created these libraries, I mean that from all the books in the world he selected a list for republication, gave that list the stamp of his authority, and provided introductions or prologues to the individual volumes (2014a, 1).

Crucially, this is a South African writer speaking in South America, showing the extent to which Coetzee was imbued by the Borgesian spirit in 2014, while also foreshadowing his Southern Cone efforts of the next years.

In his lecture, Coetzee recognises that ‘Borges’ *Biblioteca personal* was the inspiration for the present publishing venture’ (2014a, 1). Borges’ Argentine collection began publishing in May 1985 by Hyspamérica in Buenos Aires; it was cut short by his death in June 1986. For Coetzee’s *Biblioteca personal*, El Hilo de Ariadna’s role was crucial: they committed to a unique collection published over several years, conveying his critical vision of the canon. Consequently, Coetzee’s *Biblioteca personal*, alongside his archive at the University of Texas and his teaching materials in Makhanda, will allow for substantial research possibilities in the future.

In order to understand the literary story Coetzee chose to continue, I will delve into the origins of Borges’ collection. Although he lacked a university education, Borges was a writer-librarian – much as Philip Larkin (1922-85) later would be. During the time he worked at the Miguel Cané Library in Buenos Aires (1938-46), Borges often lacked enough tasks to fill his working hours, so he read voraciously: therefore, ‘his biography is largely the story of the evolution of his reading and intellectual development’ (Ward 72). Although Borges was later dismissed by General Perón, eventually he was appointed Director of the National Library (1955-73), then located in an old building in Mexico Street that embodied the universal library for him. This experience relates to Borges’ representation of ‘The Library of Babel’ and its counterpoint by Coetzee in *Elizabeth Costello*.

In ‘The Idea of a Personal Library’, Coetzee interprets the vision of Borges and his publishers, listing ‘some of the things that a *biblioteca personal* is not’ (2). Interestingly, as a first step towards his immersion in Spanish as a public speaker, he began using the language. He specified it is not ‘a *biblioteca íntima*, the books that have been closest to your heart, including

books from your childhood, books you have shared with people you have loved, books written by dear friends'. Nor is it 'a *biblioteca de los clásicos*', or 'a library of the best hundred books in the world, or the hundred foundational books of our civilization; nor is it even the hundred best or most foundational books in the opinion of the compiler'. Finally, nor is it 'a *biblioteca privada*, a collection of books that you have assembled over the course of many years, often with great difficulty or at great cost because of their rarity'. So, what is Coetzee's idea of a personal library?

He describes it as a conditional invitation from the writer-compiler:

I think the term *biblioteca personal* makes a different proposal to us. If you have read and enjoyed the books I the compiler have written, it says, then here are a hundred books from other sources that you may enjoy too. In this proposal the notion of *taste* lies implicit: if my writings are to your taste, then these books may be to your taste too. The title *biblioteca personal* thus gestures in two directions: toward the compiler; and toward the authors whom he introduces as friends of his heart (2).

If the taste of a writer is the central element, Coetzee's has been throughout consistent. Even though he edited this collection in his late period, we will see that the writers he chose for it have been present in his world from the beginning of his career.

I will now return to the *biblioteca privada*, for the present study also focuses on book history and the materiality of texts. Interestingly, both Borges and Coetzee chose to possess only a small number of books. Alberto Manguel (b. 1948) described thus his impression on visiting Borges' flat in Buenos Aires:

Por tratarse de un hombre que consideraba el universo como una biblioteca y que confesaba haber imaginado el Paraíso "bajo la forma de una biblioteca", el tamaño de su propia biblioteca era toda una decepción, tal vez porque él sabía, como dijo en cierto poema, que el lenguaje únicamente puede "simular la sabiduría" (2003, 30).
(For a man who considered the universe to be a library and who confessed having imagined Paradise 'as a kind of library', the size of his own library was a complete disappointment, perhaps because he knew, as he said in a certain poem, that language can only 'simulate wisdom' [own translation]).

Manguel recalled that Borges, to whom he read, 'kept only a few hundred books, and even these he used to give away as gifts to visitors' (2018, 48). Furthermore, he kept none of his own books,

an eccentricity in character with his wish to become an anonymous writer, as he remarked citing

Valéry:

La historia de la literatura no debería ser la de los autores y de los accidentes de su carrera o de la carrera de sus obras, sino la Historia del Espíritu como productor o consumidor de literatura. Esa historia podría llevarse a término sin mencionar un solo escritor (1952, 17).

(The history of literature should not be the authors' and their career's accidents or their work's career, but rather the History of the Spirit as producer or consumer of literature. That history could be concluded without mentioning a single author [own translation]).

This blurring of authorship connects Borges with the world of the *Jesus* novels, its forgotten authors and its reduced libraries. Interestingly, Coetzee's private library in Adelaide seems no less Spartan than Borges'. After winning the Nobel Prize, he described it thus to a French journalist:

My study is on the second floor, facing west, overlooking a stony creek overshadowed by tall pine trees. I write at a table facing a blank wall. Behind me are bookshelves. To my right is the desk I used when I was at school; in its drawers I keep stationery (Kannemeyer 568-9).

Although photographs of Coetzee's home library have not surfaced, Dorothy Driver described it as governed by a simple principle: 'if a new book comes in, one has to go out in order to make space for it', remarking that, unlike in Borges' case, his own books are not excluded (Driver 2016). Both Borges and Coetzee compensated for their small home libraries with extensive use of public ones: the Miguel Cané and National Library for Borges and university libraries in Coetzee's case, who can still be seen consulting books at the Barr Smith Library in Adelaide.

While Coetzee stated that the links of his *Biblioteca personal* to Borges 'do not run deep', that may be true in terms of the result, but not symbolically: he was invited to curate a *Biblioteca personal* because the Borgesian model existed, and in accepting an identically titled project in the same city he was consciously choosing to occupy his predecessor's position (2014a, 3).

Borges' *Biblioteca personal* was published when he was nearly eighty-six years old, terminally ill with pancreatic cancer and soon to embark on his final voyage to Italy, on 28

November 1985. He never returned to Argentina, and when he died in Geneva on 14 June the following year only sixty-eight of the projected hundred volumes had appeared; the collection was thus left incomplete. The books were sold in Buenos Aires newsstands, just like the newspapers containing the stories that had made Borges' reputation.⁶³ Borges' *Biblioteca personal* was not restricted to literary works; its collecting principle was summarised thus:

A lo largo del tiempo, nuestra memoria va formando una biblioteca dispar, hecha de libros, o de páginas, cuya lectura fue una dicha para nosotros y que nos gustaría compartir (Borges 1988, 5).
(Throughout time, our memory builds up a disparate library, made from books or from pages, making up a reading that was a bliss for us and that we would like to share [own translation]).

Dispar in Spanish also means *desigual*, uneven. Borges does not aspire to establish a canon of literary excellence, as Coetzee does, and herein lies the distinctiveness of his collection. In its general prologue, Borges described it as a *biblioteca íntima*, an adjective Coetzee will use only for his poetry anthology, not his own *Biblioteca personal*. Borges' collection is indeed quite varied, as the list in the Appendix shows.

Noting that readers would not necessarily be familiar with some of the writers Borges admired, Sarlo commented: 'These authors do not all belong to the great canon of a universal tradition. They are often not well known, yet they were important in the cultural field that Borges participated in from the 1920s on' (1993, 2). Coetzee is also critical of Borges' selections, identifying 'a failure to appreciate when there is true creative intelligence at work and when there is not' (2014a, 3). In fact, this heterodox view of literature is not uncommon in Anglophile Hispanic writers, like Borges' friend and collaborator Bioy Casares or indeed Javier Marías: Coetzee once expressed surprise at the latter's – whom he values highly as a writer – interest in Arthur Machen (1863-1947), whom he deemed a perfectly forgettable author (2017b).

⁶³ 'The fact that many of these pieces, with their vast erudition in a range of languages, first appeared in newspapers says much for the upper reaches of the Buenos Aires press' (SS 171).

The most important volume of Coetzee's *Biblioteca personal* is the poetic anthology, which contains an introduction and extensive footnotes. Furthermore, according to Coetzee's own definition, this volume represents his *biblioteca íntima*. He explained his selection thus:

Esta antología es personal en dos sentidos. Primero, está formada por poemas que significan y significaron mucho para mí. Segundo, está formada por poemas que responden a mi estándar personal de excelencia poética (2014b, 20).

(This anthology is personal in two senses. Firstly, it is composed of poems that mean and meant much to me. Secondly, it is composed of poems that respond to my personal standard of poetic excellence [own translation]).

The anthology's scope covers the whole history of poetry in the West and its cultural dominions, and the poetry of South Africa, Australia and South America is well represented. This volume also represents a late reflection of the Neruda-influenced, southern poetic world Coetzee inhabited during the 1970s, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Borges' *Biblioteca personal* is the unfinished work of a prodigious reader and a testament to his role as the curator of the archive, related to the biblical Noah's ark, allowing other writers to follow his path. As González Echevarría has noted, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Melquíades 'stands for Borges, the librarian and keeper of the Archive' (1998, 23). While Coetzee's effort is more modest in its scope, it is not in its artistic standard: his introductions provide critical foundations that illuminate both his collection and his literary taste. Consequently, both Borges and Coetzee produced with their personal libraries an archive for southern writers. However, while there are southern writers in Borges' collection, Coetzee's *Biblioteca personal* has a complicated relation to the north and the south conceived of as literary territories. While this collection was aimed at a southern readership, the canon it establishes is exceedingly northern, which seems to contradict the southern orientation of Coetzee's late period herein discussed. In fact, the prose writers are as far from the south as it could be, and even London-born Patrick White had a complicated relationship with his Australianness. The answer might be that Coetzee had possibly not yet elaborated the concept of the south: while he accepted the *Biblioteca personal*

invitation in 2012, the *Literaturas del Sur* Chair proposal from the San Martín National University, in which he was to develop the idea, only came two years later.

I now turn to concentrate on Coetzee's idea of the south, which has a Borgesian element. The 'on the edge' position from which Borges wrote, as defined by Beatriz Sarlo, was shared by Coetzee, as McDonald notes: 'It could be argued that Coetzee emerges as a hero of the margins, as, say, a Kafkaesque hunger artist working in the tradition of a minor literature, always against the odds' (2006, 56). However, there is one important distinction to be made: probably too aware of the ethics of difference, Coetzee – unlike Borges' and Paz's explorations of Buddhism and Indian traditions – did not openly trespass beyond that edge. Specifically, Coetzee's operation was rather stitching fragments of the edge together: realising that the literary landscapes of the Southern Cone, the Australian continent and the tip of Africa were all on the edge and in the Southern Hemisphere, he strived to build imaginary transoceanic bridges between these territories, both as a world writer and public intellectual.

Coetzee's southern interests in the context of the move to Australia have been well documented by Elleke Boehmer, who notes the change in the fiction's referential aspect. Instead of working at a remove from local references, the relocation to Australia sparked in Coetzee an appropriation of the reality of this new country:

The difference is that in Australia, a country that he has acquired by conscious adoption rather than through the accidents of birth, he has been more noticeably concerned not only to establish the country fictionally as a space, but also to *realize* or embody it as an actual, recognizable location (2011, 3).

If there was a conscious, complex, embrace of Coetzee's Australianness, reflected both in *Elizabeth Costello*, *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* and the acquisition of Australian citizenship in 2006, the 'make up' of Australia which Boehmer pinpoints was followed shortly thereafter by a more public display of his sustained interest in Spanish language and Hispanic culture, which

as we saw far precedes the Australian one. Eventually, this interest will point to the east, but within the south.

In fact, Australia and South America have featured prominently in the expansion of the literary landscape of Coetzee's late period, which encompasses the geographical south on three different continents. This mapping procedure has a precedent in R.L. Stevenson (1850-94), who inhabited 'an imprecise area of no known map, where Scotland adjoins Polynesia', therefore living out Defoe's fantasies (Bold 30). Similarly, Coetzee's relocation from South Africa to Australia followed by his Southern Cone travels would eventually imply changing the backdrop of his southern, regional vision from a static to a moving, panoptic one in the 2010s, connecting the margins and establishing inter-peripheral relations between the three literary territories. Crucially, with the power endowed by his literary prizes – awarded by the north – and his central place in world letters, Coetzee was able to follow the footsteps of Borges, Neruda and Gordimer as a southern world writer who would be welcomed everywhere. This third Hispanic world of Coetzee thus involved substantial travelling, and creating personal relations in the Southern Cone to build these bridges of the mind.

Coetzee's South African identity coupled with his acquired Australianness and subsequent immersion in Hispanic literary culture sparked his idea of the south, developed in the Buenos Aires seminars. But what kind of 'south' was he referring to? The categories 'south' and 'Global South' are relatively new in the critical debate and have been developed during this century in two important studies. One is *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (2007), by Raewyn Connell, which from an Australian perspective aims to 'emphasize relations—authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnership, sponsorship, appropriation—between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole and those in the world periphery' (viii-ix). Therefore, Connell's study encompasses different areas of the latter category

(Africa, Iran, Latin America, India) that do not necessarily belong to the geographical south, but that nonetheless share a common history of political or economic dependence from the northern powers. The other study is *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (2011), by Jean and John L. Comaroff, which analyses the south under two basic premises. The first is that modernity in the south has long been considered a derivation of its northern version, whereas the authors stress the necessity for it ‘to be apprehended and addressed in its own right’ (7). The second is that the south plays a far more important role in the historical shaping of modernity than has been traditionally acknowledged:

given the unpredictable, under-determined dialectic of capitalism-and-modernity in the here and now, it is the south that often is the first to feel the effects of world-historical forces, the south in which radically new assemblages of capital and labor are taking shape, thus to prefigure the future of the global north (12).

Therefore, the Comaroffs grant the south in general, and Africa in particular, a role in the grand sweep of history that has seldom been considered. However, they also acknowledge that the south ‘cannot be defined, *a priori*, in substantive terms’, for it ‘bespeaks a relation, not a thing in or for itself’, one they describe as ‘a window on the world at large’ (47).

I will now return to Casanova and consider these other categories to gloss Coetzee’s highly personal conception. The categories ‘Deep South’ and ‘Global South’ are examples of what she calls ‘lands of literature’, one of the components of ‘literary space’:

In this broader perspective, then, literary frontiers come into view that are independent of political boundaries, dividing up a world that is secret and yet perceptible by all (especially its most dispossessed members); territories whose sole value and sole resource is literature, ordered by power relations that nonetheless govern the form of the texts that are written in and that circulate throughout these lands; a world that has its own capital, its own provinces and borders, in which languages become instruments of power (4).

Significantly, one way in which these lands of literature take shape is through the kind of dialogue built by the way peripheral writers like Joyce and Ibsen read one another, as we saw earlier. While this dialogue in the case of Coetzee and Borges is both extended and rich, it is also exceedingly

complex in terms of the ulterior elaboration Coetzee was later to produce, which was also bound to exert significant pressure on Casanova's constructions.

Casanova refers to a literary *Weltanschauung* which, although independent in its formulation, is also modelled after a political and geographical map of the world: as such, it contains not only capitals and frontiers, but also cardinal points. Consequently, in the world republic of letters there is a south, one which partially coincides with the region where Coetzee's gaze was directed after having progressed from the periphery to the centre. Nonetheless, Casanova's south has an ephemeral quality demonstrated in the fact that she mentions it only once, parenthetically, when discussing Benet's reading of Faulkner:

The Spanish writer Juan Benet was indisputably one of the first to have understood this; but after him all writers from the South, in the broad sense of the term, from the West Indies to Portugal and from South America to Africa, recognized that Faulkner had revealed to them a way of attaining the Greenwich meridian without in the least denying their cultural heritage (338).

Peculiarly, Casanova's idea of the south comprises countries from the geographic and economic north (Spain and Portugal) with continents from the south in both senses (South America and Africa). *Mutatis mutandis*, the north would be Anglo-Saxon North America and Europe without the Iberian Peninsula. Crucially, although the south does exist in Casanova's conception, its relevance in the global panorama is merely as a point of departure: in fact, according to her writers become relevant *because* they leave it behind when navigating towards the centre. Therefore, for Casanova the south is a frontier, not a territory. But her vision also contains a misconception about Hispanic literature as a north-driven affair, which – because of the value of her book – affects its perception on a global scale and is also precisely the mentality Coetzee resists through his southern endeavours, for his crusade is not only for the south, but equally very much against the north.

By mapping the south as a frontier beyond which she cannot see, Casanova misses the importance of Buenos Aires as a literary centre and of Neruda and Borges as substantial innovators from the south. Moreover, Casanova's assertion about Benet is in fact a serious mistake originating in her Eurocentric – specifically Francocentric – vision, one which distorts the reality of Hispanophone literature *and* Coetzee's involvement with it.

Benet carried a great deal of symbolic capital in late twentieth-century Paris, for he was the only translated author in the catalogue of Éditions de Minuit. In fact, Jérôme Lindon – who also was Beckett's publisher – created the Espagne collection only to publish him (Andreu 2010).⁶⁴ Benet's literary *distinction* was further enhanced when Bourdieu, Casanova's doctoral supervisor and intellectual mentor, suggested that she interview him, which she did in October 1987 and July 1991 (Casanova 2017; Benet 1997, 326). However, by uncritically assuming that Benet's position in world letters was an extension of his Parisian prestige, Casanova overlooked Faulknerian reception in the Hispanic world, which is completely different. Her mistake was noted by Nora Catelli:

¿«Uno de los primeros en haberlo comprendido»? ¿«Tras él»? *Nunca llegarás a nada* es de 1961; casi treinta años antes Borges había reseñado en Buenos Aires *Absalom, Absalom!* (en 1937), *The Unvanquished* (en 1938) y *The Wild Palms* (en 1939), que un año más tarde apareció en su traducción; en 1955 Juan Rulfo había publicado *Pedro Páramo*; en 1950 Juan Carlos Onetti –cuya primera novela es de 1938– había dado a conocer *La vida breve*, donde inauguró el ciclo de Santa María. Y en 1962, en la revista *Marcha* de Montevideo, había aparecido el *Réquiem por Faulkner* del propio Onetti, después reunido en libro con otros ensayos (37).

'One of the first to have understood this'? 'After him'? *You'll Never Get Anywhere* is from 1961. Almost thirty years earlier Borges had reviewed in Buenos Aires *Absalom, Absalom!* (in 1937), *The Unvanquished* (in 1938) and *The Wild Palms* (in 1939), which a year later appeared in his translation. In 1955 Juan Rulfo had published *Pedro Páramo*; in 1950 Juan Carlos Onetti – whose first novel is from 1938 – had given to the public *A Brief Life*, in which he inaugurated the Santa María cycle. And in 1962, in Montevideo's *Marcha* magazine, Onetti's own 'Requiem for Faulkner' had been published, which would be later collected with other essays in a book (own translation).

⁶⁴ Lindon had published one book before in translation, Gottfried Benn's *Double vie* in 1954. Benet remains the only author in the Espagne collection to this day.

Catelli shows that the reception of the American vanguard in Spanish took place first in the Americas and then in Spain. Tellingly, Casanova's piece was titled 'Comment Juan Benet découvre l'Amérique' (1993), which translates as 'How Juan Benet discovered America'. However, while because of her northern vision Casanova positioned Benet as a diffusor of Faulkner in Spanish, the bibliographic evidence that Catelli draws on shows that he was one of the last Hispanophone writers to be influenced by Faulkner, for writers from Argentina, Uruguay and Mexico had preceded him.

Therefore, Benet and Casanova provide a perfect example of the myopic northern vision Coetzee strongly criticises, for it obscures the south. Interestingly, Catelli also corrects Casanova using the latter's own terms, for Benet in fact

Pertenecía al centro exacto de la literatura castellana, pero España era una metrópolis sin irradiación exterior: las extensas periferias del español habían invertido, al menos por dos veces –con el modernismo y con la nueva narrativa hispanoamericana de los sesenta– la centralidad pasada (39).
 Belonged to the exact centre of Spanish literature, but Spain was a metropolis without external irradiation: the extensive peripheries of the Spanish language had inverted, at least twice – with *Modernismo* and the new Hispanic-American narrative of the 1960s – the former centrality (own translation).

I have quoted Catelli to make one crucial point. This is a world literature thesis, a recent academic category that has Casanova's book as one of its founding texts. However, Catelli's critique calls into question the duality of peripherality and centre in Casanova, for while the last peninsular Spanish text that achieved global resonance was *Don Quixote*, during the twentieth century the Hispanic American 'periphery' upstaged Spain in two waves, first through *Modernismo-Creacionismo* in the 1900s-10s and then with the Latin American Boom in the 1950s-60s, and thus became the real literary 'centre' of the language.

Consequently, in his elective affinities for Southern Cone writers Coetzee was not delving into the *literary* peripheries of the Hispanosphere, for while these countries were geographically peripheral, in terms of symbolic capital they became the 'centres', for Neruda

from Chile and Borges from Argentina renovated poetry and prose not only in Spanish, but on a global scale – as Coetzee’s own work clearly shows. More generally, Casanova’s text also shows that a significant amount of world literature criticism originates in the north and is subject to northern categories and perspectives, which produces a distorted and partial understanding of the south, which dovetails with Coetzee’s own vision of the problem. Indeed, his elective territory of the south is partly a reaction to this misconception in the field of world literature. For, if there is a need for a ‘southern literature of the South’, as Coetzee declared in Buenos Aires in 2016, this literature also demands its own *southern* criticism – to which this thesis aims to contribute.

By contrast to Casanova, Coetzee’s gaze from the literary centre was directed southwards in a different way, to the shared culture or experience of the south as one of many possible literary lands refracted through the force fields of the literary world, but conceived as a *real* territory one inhabits, not as a frontier. Nonetheless, Coetzee’s idea is more complicated than it might seem at first glance. Significantly, as Coetzee’s conception of the south emerged through his collaborations in South America in the 2010s, it also becomes increasingly clear that this literary territory might be one that *only* exists by virtue of his own personal force field granted by his significant amount of symbolic power. While Casanova referred to the south only once in *The World Republic of Letters*, Coetzee has never published a critical text conveying his idea of the south, which he only made public in lectures to the small audiences of the Buenos Aires seminars. Therefore, while Casanova obscures the south, rather than making it visible, Coetzee’s conception of the south as a territory lacks critical weight and is hard to grasp and ephemeral.

However, Coetzee was in fact not the first in trying to conceptualise the south. In 1998, the year before the French original of *La république mondiale des lettres* appeared, there was a significant but almost unknown initiative from the Southern Hemisphere that tried to define the

south, one that has never been critically assessed until now and one also crucial to understanding Coetzee's southern endeavours as a possible loose continuation, and not as an original conception. Certainly, the idea of the 'Deep South' that it promoted acts as a direct antecedent of Coetzee's southern pursuits. The initiative was very much marked by the regained democracies of Chile and South Africa, and the cultural dialogue established between them and with Australia.

In 1997 the Chilean Ambassador to South Africa, the academic Jorge Heine, co-organised a seminar at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) on the Mercosur countries, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, about

las cosas en común que podrían tener y como ello podría traducirse en relaciones más estrechas entre ellos (Heine 2021).
(the things in common they might have and how that might be translated into closer relations between them [own translation]).

The seminar's organisation coincided with Ariel Dorfman's (b. 1942) visit to South Africa, whose *Death and the Maiden* 'era considerada "la" obra de la transición sudafricana' ('was considered *the* play of South African transition'). During this visit, Heine and Dorfman met with Gordimer in Johannesburg and with Brink and Coetzee in Cape Town.

From the conjunction of these two events arose the idea of an encounter in Chile, to be called *Escribiendo el Sur Profundo* (*Writing the Deep South*), to explore the literary side of the SAIIA seminar. When invited by Heine, Gordimer accepted on the condition of having an anthology of translated short stories by the participating writers ready before the event: accordingly, 5,000 copies were printed and freely distributed (Navarro 2014). As Heine explains,

La idea era explorar el grado al cual el tipo de sociedad que se conforma en el Sur del mundo moldea de alguna manera también la imaginación literaria, y si se daban elementos comunes entre estos tres países y sus respectivas literaturas (Heine 2021).
(The aim was to explore the degree to which the kind of society that is formed in the south moulds in a certain way literary imagination as well, and if there were common elements between these three countries and their respective literatures [own translation]).

Significantly, in the anthology's prologue Heine offers a critically argued conception that very much coincides with the idea of the south Coetzee was to elaborate in Buenos Aires during the 2010s. Heine identifies 'un Nuevo Sur' ('a New South') as encompassing different areas, one of them being 'el Sur Profundo' ('the Deep South'):

Una parte significativa de este Nuevo Sur es el Sur Profundo, integrado por los países ubicados al Sur del Trópico de Capricornio; esto es, Australia, Nueva Zelandia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay y Sudáfrica (1998, 10)

(A significant part of this New South is the Deep South, formed by the countries located to the south of the Tropic of Capricorn; that is, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa [own translation]).

Eventually Peter Carey (b. 1943), Helen Garner (b. 1942), Roberta Sykes (1943-2010), Brink, Gordimer, Zakes Mda (b. 1948) and Mongane Wally Serote (b. 1944) travelled to Chile and joined Dorfman and Antonio Skármeta (b. 1940) there. The *Escribiendo el Sur Profundo* encounter took place on 2 and 3 November 1998 at the Santiago Book Fair, followed by further panels at the Austral University in Valdivia and the Catholic University of Valparaíso. There was also a literary consequence, for Gordimer shortly thereafter wrote 'Loot', a short story inspired by her visit, first published in *The New Yorker* on 22 March 1999 and later collected in *Loot and Other Stories* in 2003. In retrospect, the mechanics behind the event belong to another era: it was fully funded by the Chilean government, which would be unthinkable today.

The name chosen by Heine to refer to Chile, South Africa and Australia collectively is problematic, and so would be for Coetzee later. 'Sur Profundo' is the Spanish translation of 'Deep South', which in English designates 'the southernmost part of the United States, especially those states adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico' (*OED*). However, in a piece in which he criticised the frequent errors that translators of English into Spanish make, Marías explained the reason behind the meaning of *Deep South* as the way in which

se llamaba en América a los parajes *más recónditos* (pues eso significaba ahí *deep*) del antiguo territorio confederado (Marías 2003, 92).

(the *more unexplored* locations (for that was what deep meant there) of the old Confederate territory were called in America [own translation]).

Although according to Mariás the translation of ‘Deep South’ into Spanish as ‘Sur profundo’ is incorrect, for Hispanophone speakers it still conveys that American region, and not the south. Therefore, the title of Heine’s seminar overlapped with the previous, and still prevailing meaning of ‘Sur profundo’ in Spanish.

Aside from nomenclative problems, this event contradicted the idea that southern literatures were disconnected, as in Chapter 1 we saw Crewe had remarked. In fact, putting together the Chilean event (1998), with the Paraty Literary Festival in Brazil (2007, where Coetzee and Gordimer coincided) and Coetzee’s seminars in Argentina (2015-18), it turns out that South African literature has occupied a special role in the ABC countries: the only national literature which had two Nobel laureates visiting all nations in a professional capacity, for Gordimer was in Buenos Aires in 1997. Consequently, while the axis of the literatures of the south has the Southern Cone and Australia at the extremes, the operative centre is in South Africa, for Coetzee and Gordimer were unquestionably the leading figures of each wave: although other writers cooperated, nobody in Australia, Chile or Argentina had a comparable symbolic power.

I have surveyed the *Sur Profundo* project to show Coetzee was not navigating uncharted waters when, as he was building the third of his Hispanic worlds, he began reflecting about the south in the 2010s. His slowly developed vision was enriched by his Southern Cone travels, as Coetzee explained during a live interview in Buenos Aires in 2015:

My relations with South America, principally with Argentina, date from late in my life and came as a considerable surprise to me. I encountered from my first visit here to Argentina a reading public that really took books seriously and read books intelligently, that didn’t, in my case, put me on the box called ‘author of *Disgrace*’ [pause]. I’m trying to answer your question, why Argentina [pause]; it’s a country that’s been extremely welcoming to me and that I very much enjoy visiting... (Coetzee 2015e).

Significantly, this interest in the literary event made Coetzee eager to take part in events in Argentina – in contrast to the case of Spain in 2000, as we saw in Chapter 1. He also seemed more relaxed than he appeared when visiting northern cities, as some colleagues privately remarked, and more prone to speak of his own work in lectures and interviews, as this very thesis shows.

Furthermore, because of his Borgesian readings, Coetzee was aware of the Buenos Aires location of the southern library before he first visited in 2011. When asked how discovering this exceedingly literary capital felt, Coetzee responded: '[*reflection*] I was prepared' (Coetzee 2015f). The preparation had started a long time ago, as a quote from David Attwell from the Coetzee Papers referring to the abandoned 'The Burning of the Books' (1973) project demonstrates: 'He imagines a 'great liberation to be achieved by inventing a place – a galaxy, or a Buenos Aires I confess I have never seen' (Attwell 2015, 59). In addition, he studied Borges in preparation for his 1974 extra-mural course, as we saw in Chapter 2. The importance of books in Argentina can be related to the conception Eliot and Borges shared: that books persist and are the depositories of collective memory, and this somewhat vestigial significance of the literary event in Buenos Aires may have made Coetzee feel particularly attracted to it. As a matter of fact, when asked if he would have relocated to Argentina had he visited before emigrating to Australia, he answered: '[*reflection*] Very possibly' (Coetzee 2015f).

Buenos Aires was to be crucial in Coetzee's conception of the south because, despite being in the southern New World, the deep layers of specifically literary sediment the city contains by dint of Borges' long and far-reaching shadow are comparable to that of a European metropolis. Remarkably, Neruda never did this for Santiago, where he never felt at home.⁶⁵ This

⁶⁵ Neruda was from southern Chile, as we saw in Chapter 2. Although he had a house in Santiago, when he relocated to central Chile he chose to live mostly by the sea, in his Valparaíso and Isla Negra houses. Octavio Paz correctly describes Neruda's *oeuvre* as 'poesía del agua' ('poetry of the water', 206).

quality of Buenos Aires certainly exerts pressure on Casanova's theory as exposed in *The World Republic of Letters*, which presents a world literary system converging into a European centre. Nonetheless, her insistence on the central role of Paris or London shows the limitations of her account and the reservations one should have when approaching her vision of 'the logic of the literary world'. By contrast, as I have explained, for Coetzee the purported centre was only a steppingstone, not a destination: his personal notion of the south tries to create a specific literary territory that circumvents the European centre that anchors Casanova's account. However, Coetzee's notion is also complicated, for while it conveys a certain invitation to cultural emancipation for southern countries, it is also highly idiosyncratic and has little critical density. Basically, Coetzee's south is an exploration based on his personal history and traveling across the Southern Hemisphere, a close reading of Borges and the recognition of intersecting points with him, and crucially a reflection on his own position, marking a late development in his career as a world writer and public intellectual. Conveniently, in the Buenos Aires seminars Coetzee found an academic platform on which to develop this conception.

The *Cátedra Coetzee: Literatura del Sur* Programme in Buenos Aires materialised after Coetzee was invited by Carlos Ruta, Rector of the UNSAM, 'to help with the birth of a new programme in comparative literature' in 2014 (2015a, 1). When Coetzee started convening writers, some were surprised at the invitation, as Zoë Wicomb (b. 1948) recalled in a private email: 'I knew nothing of Coetzee's Argentinian project so, yes, it came as a surprise. I was very keen to go to Buenos Aires and started reading about theories of the South' (Wicomb 2021). Significantly, the project did not imply Coetzee's academic return, as he explained in a private email: 'I'll be teaching (more accurately, participating in a series of seminars), at Universidad San Martín' (Coetzee 2015g).

The actual teaching fell on writers: Nicholas Jose (b. 1952), Gail Jones (b. 1955), Delia Falconer (b. 1966), Wicomb, Ivan Vladislavić (b. 1957), Antjie Krog (b. 1952) and Mia Couto (b. 1955). As Coetzee explained in an interview to UNSAM magazine:

Enseñar es una profesión importante, pero nunca fui un buen maestro y no tengo planeado dar clases de nuevo. He elegido profesores que ven el diálogo Sur-Sur más o menos desde el mismo punto de vista que yo (Coetzee 2016c).

(Teaching is an important profession, but I was never a good teacher and have no plans to teach again. I have chosen academics who see the South-South dialogue from more or less the same point of view as I do [own translation]).

Coetzee's participation consisted in attending sessions that did not deal with his work – normally sitting at the back, trying not to draw attention – and giving his inaugural lectures. Significantly, while Coetzee delved into the idea of the south in his lectures, the other writers analysed South African and Australian literatures, as Wicomb confirms:

I was expecting to teach a course on South African writing and in that respect the visit met my expectations, although that was probably about our hosts' admiration for Coetzee. Part of my agreement with John was working closely with Ivan Vladislavić which was a happy and fruitful experience. But I do not recall much theoretical discussion of South-South exchanges (Wicomb 2021).

Therefore, Coetzee's idea of the Buenos Aires seminars provided a field for the academic unveiling and projection of these two different visions, but his own interest lay on the latter.

Coetzee summarised his aim in the same interview:

El curso está destinado a facilitar los intercambios directos entre los países del sur. Sin embargo, tales intercambios no son fáciles de lograr, dado que nadan contra la corriente, que fluye desde el norte hacia el sur. Esto es lo que descubrirán aquellos estudiantes que quieran ampliar sus conocimientos sobre otras culturas del sur (Coetzee 2016c).

(The course's aim is facilitating direct exchanges between the countries of the south. However, these exchanges are not easy to arrive at, for they swim against the current, which flows from the north to the south. This is what students who would like to expand their knowledge about other southern cultures will discover [own translation]).

Interestingly, Coetzee's idea of the south evolved in tandem with the seminars, which took place in the southern early autumn and late winter. In the first two inaugural lectures (7 April, 14 September 2015) Coetzee spoke of the 'Literature of the South' and offered mostly literary

references, like Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-49) 'The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym' and Les Murray's (1938-2019) 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle'. By contrast, in the second two lectures (11 April, 12 September 2016) Coetzee referred to the '*Literatures of the South*' and an elaborated theoretical reference frame.

Surprisingly, Coetzee initially engaged with economic and sociological texts to approach the globalisation phenomenon, which shows that he tried to give critical traction to this third Hispanic world. However, this proved problematic, for theorists tend to analyse nationally, regionally or globally, but not a discontinuous territory like the south as conceived by Coetzee. He first noted that 'During the 1980s, the term 'globalization' began to creep into the discourse of business journalists and management theorists' (2016a, 2). He quoted economist Mauro Guillén, who argued that instead of bringing countries and organisations towards increased homogenisation, 'the mutual awareness that globalization entails invites them to be different, namely, to use their unique economic, political, and social advantages as leverage in the global economy' (M. Guillén 3).

Nonetheless, according to Coetzee, most sociologists 'replaced the idea of globalization as business or economic strategy with the idea of globalization as *a new form of society*, globalized society' (2016a, 2). He cited Martin Albrow, who argued that 'The real break, rupture with the modern, shift to a new epoch, comes not with the victory of the irrational over the rational, but when the social takes on a meaning outside the frame of reference set by the nation-state' (58).

He then quoted Zygmunt Bauman:

Being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation. The discomforts of localized existence are compounded by the fact that with public spaces removed beyond the reaches of localized life, localities are losing their meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacity and are increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control – so much for the communitarianist dreams/consolations of the globalized intellectuals (2-3).

Coetzee may have associated this perceived lack of control of local communities noted by Bauman with the ‘new global imperialism’ he denounced in 2000, as seen in Chapter 1. He then quoted Michael Hardt’s and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*:

it is no longer possible to demarcate large geographical zones as center and periphery, North and South. In geographical regions such as the Southern Cone of Latin America or Southeast Asia, all levels of production can exist simultaneously and side by side (...). In the metropolises, too, labor spans the continuum from the heights to the depths of capitalist production (335).

This quote of Hardt’s and Negri’s post-Marxist critique of globalization is at odds with Coetzee’s vision, for their emphasis on the effect of capitalist production challenges the reality of geography, thereby obscuring the south.

More generally, these numerous quotes suggest Coetzee was trying to grapple with the idea of the south himself in these lectures, rather than offering a consistent personal view. After delineating the globalization phenomenon, Coetzee delved into its theoretical consequences, namely the various binary nomenclative options proposed by academics:

There is a range of terminology, some in fashion, some going out of fashion, that is used to describe the way the globalized world divides up (or is divided up): developed versus underdeveloped or developing; First World versus Third World; centre versus periphery; North versus South. Though these divisions do not produce identical maps of the world, there is a great deal of overlap. All of them, however, describe a pattern of inequality in power, wealth and cultural influence that grew historically out of first European and then later North American imperialism (2016a, 3).

All these distinctions are subsumable into the north/south paradigm, and one of the unifying features of the south is the lingering effects of various empires, but this is complicated by the fact that Coetzee’s gaze is not historical, as his concern with the term ‘Global South’ shows:

There are thus many reasons why the more critical social scientists have been careful in their use of North-South terminology. One of these is of particular relevance to our program here at UNSAM: that *the global South* can all too easily be identified with *the post-colonial* – since most of the global South has a colonial past – and therefore that North-

South studies can all too easily simply recapitulate post-colonial studies under a new name (2016a, 4).⁶⁶

This shows Coetzee was reluctant to engage in the nomenclative debate he had described, for he will not define the south according to theory or history. Significantly, Coetzee identifies a problem with the retrospective focus of a postcolonial approach: ‘Its critical gaze has been trained not on the present but on the past – on histories of imperialism and colonialism, and the aftermath of those histories’ (4).

But when Coetzee speaks of the south, which of these modes conveys his idea? I will suggest an answer – none of the above – by noting that Coetzee’s reference points are not the nation-state, but geography, not an historical aftermath, but the present. Consequently, the south is *real*, as Coetzee concluded:

What is left is the real South, the South of this real world, where most of those present in this room were born and most of us will die. It is a unique world – there is only one South – with its unique skies and its unique heavenly constellations. In this South the wind blows in a certain way and the leaves fall in a certain way and the sun beats down in a certain way that is instantly recognizable from one part of the South to another. In the South, as in the North, there are cities, but the cities of the South all have a somewhat phantasmatic quality. The peoples of the South are all, in one way or another, rough and a bit lazy. We have troubled histories behind us, which sometimes haunt us. It is nothing like this in the North.

I can go on endlessly with my list. And the literatures of the South do indeed go on endlessly as they try to pin down in words their intuitions of what a life in the South consists in (5).

As can be seen in this passage, Coetzee changed the technical register of the text he used when referring to globalisation for a slightly poetic one when describing the south, and the inflection with which he read it in Buenos Aires emphasized this transition. I used a slightly different version of the first sentence – in future tense, which he used in his last lecture – as the epigraph

⁶⁶ Although ‘post-colonial’ was used in literary studies during the 1990s (see Kossew’s 1996 book), it is now customary to use ‘postcolonial’ only. However, Coetzee sticks to the old variant.

of this chapter because it condenses Coetzee's basic idea of the south conceived as a territory, not a frontier.

It is possible now to venture a definition of the south according to Coetzee, working through Borges: the south is a world formed by people inhabiting a transoceanic regional concatenation, south of the Tropic of Capricorn. It has distinctive characteristics: it is *regional*, for the strongest common factor is their physical location. It is *anti-global*, although if globalisation is perceived by Coetzee as a northern construct and thus to be resisted, it also enables a pan-southern awareness. It is *marginal*: for in these territories there is an uneasy coexistence of Europeanness and nativity. It is *plurilingual*: there is no pre-eminence of English, Afrikaans, Spanish or indigenous languages.

However, the crucial, defining feature of the south is that it is a highly personal vision composed of territories in which Coetzee has lived or travelled, and he knows their languages and literatures. He recognised this in Buenos Aires:

It is the view not of a social scientist nor of a historian nor of a literary theorist. It is the view of a practising writer who is also a human being who has lived most of his life in two regions of the South – the real South – and is today visiting a third region of the South (5).

Consequently, Coetzee's vision is like the one of Heine and Gordimer, but by working later than them and to some extent building on contacts they had made and texts they had written, he had both deeper existential experience of the south (by South African birth, Australian nationality and Southern Cone travelling) and time to reflect on it through an academic, institutional base. In other words, enabled by the symbolic power acquired as a world writer, it was possible for Coetzee to continue where Heine had stopped. The one significant difference with Heine's vision is Coetzee's emphasis on regions, rather than on countries.

The writers who took part in the Buenos Aires seminars, where the idea of the south was exposed by Coetzee, were translated – in most cases for the first time into Spanish – and

published by UNSAM press, and the continued interaction with them was a unique opportunity for South American students. Therefore, this third of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds has an important outreach component, and this is one of its key points: the south is something Coetzee tried to bring into being, even briefly, using his personal cultural capital. However, there was no interest in Australia and South Africa to continue the Argentine initiative. When asked whether this was possible, Coetzee responded:

Me gustaría decir que sí, pero las universidades en África y en Australia aún no se han mostrado tan iluminadas como la UNSAM con respecto a este tema. Su interés fundamental, cuando miran más allá de sus propias fronteras, es crear vínculos con las prestigiosas instituciones educativas del norte (2016c)
(I would like to say yes, but universities in Africa and Australia have not yet shown to be as enlightened as the UNSAM about this subject. Their main interest, when they look beyond their own borders, is to establish links with the prestigious educational institutions from the north [own translation]).

Protesting the Argentine government's measures at UNSAM, which included transferring part of the campus land for a real estate business, Coetzee resigned his professorship in 2018. The fact that the project has not been picked up since then shows that Coetzee's south remains a rather idiosyncratic initiative tied to his presence in South America. Nonetheless, there are signs that the south might be gaining currency in academia. For example, Elleke Boehmer organised the international workshop *Southern Lives* at Oxford in 2021, which in part responded to Coetzee's vision while also expanding on her own concept of 'southern imagining'.⁶⁷ It remains to be seen whether there will be a convergence between these different creative and academic projects.

I have shown that Coetzee's projects in Argentina had an important social aspect, for the silent way in which he sat among students in the seminars made him seem very approachable. Significantly, he would interact with the students afterwards, sometimes in Spanish, and on one

⁶⁷ At the workshop I offered a version of this chapter as a paper.

occasion he even ate with them at a pizza restaurant near the Buenos Aires obelisk. While this sort of interaction is part of academic life, the social aspect of Coetzee's Chilean interventions put him in institutionalised and literary contact with children and adolescents, and this would have two important consequences. On the one hand, he wrote texts specifically addressed to them, marking the beginning of a new genre in Coetzee's long publishing career – and one also practised by writers he admired, like Graham Greene and Ted Hughes. On the other hand, the reflection on the point of view of a child in these Chilean interventions evolved abreast with his fictional development thereof in the *Jesus* novels, which he was also writing at the time, and it is plausible to argue that the collections fertilised each other.

The *La Ciudad y las Palabras* Programme at the Architecture Faculty of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile is the longest Coetzee association in South America: it started in 2011 and continued until 2019. The collaboration became more formal in 2015, when several initiatives implied a closer involvement for Coetzee in both Chile and Argentina. One such initiative was a signed limited edition, which Coetzee had previously only rarely agreed to, and only once in translation.⁶⁸ Coetzee arranged publication of *Dos lecciones de Elizabeth Costello*, published by El Faro in Santiago, and gave a short lecture on 9 September, marking the first occasion in which he publicly read in Spanish, as he explained in a private email to me, his publisher and translator:

I feel that at the book launch I ought to say a few words in Spanish, unless my accent and the slowness of my speech proves embarrassing to everyone.

I have written a short piece, which I attach together with a translation. The translation has been done by a computer program but I have revised it.

May I ask you to do me the favour of looking over the Spanish and correcting it? (2015f).

⁶⁸ These were *His Man and He*, the first chapters of *Michael K*, *Disgrace* and *Dusklands*, and *Vor dem Tor* (a German translation of 'At the Gate' coupled with Kafka's 'Vor dem Gesetz').

As Coetzee declared, this volume contained “As A Woman Grows Older’ and ‘The Old Woman and the Cats’, which have appeared in print but have never before been collected in a volume’ (2015d).⁶⁹ Significantly, Coetzee’s relation with me was forged through his previous visits, diverging from the usual agent-led interaction. This publication dovetails with Coetzee’s preoccupations: although he continued to be published by Penguin Random House in the Hispanic world, from 2015 he was also published independently in Chile and Argentina, maintaining the two separate lines analysed in Chapter 1.

Two days later, on 11 September, Coetzee began collaborating in the *Concurso de Cuentos John Maxwell Coetzee*, an initiative of Loreto Villarroel, creator of the *La Ciudad y las Palabras* Programme. The Coetzee short story competition was the only one in the world in which children wrote under the aegis of a Nobel laureate, who also awarded the first prize in person. The first version (2015) invited submissions of schoolchildren from one Santiago borough, the second (2016) involved two, the third and fourth (2017-18) from the whole Metropolitan Region, and the fifth (2019) from the entire country. The programme involved workshops on urban heritage and the creation of reading and writing opportunities for children, in which the Chilean Libraries System and Ministries of Education and Cultures, Arts, and Heritage also collaborated.

The project has now been documented in *Coetzee y los niños escritores*, which Coetzee defined as a ‘recently published collection of prize-winning stories by high-school students, together with the four little lectures I gave between 2015 and 2018’ (Coetzee 2020a). These little lectures, which Coetzee read in Spanish, have a unifying thread – just like the Costello stories – even though he only read one per year. Significantly, these lectures mark a departure from the ‘born translated’ text, for both the printed versions Coetzee read and the ones he later sent in

⁶⁹ In Chapter 2, I mentioned a further connection with Sergio Larraín (1931-2012), the photographer of the picture of Trafalgar Square used on the cover of *Youth*: the book launch took place at the house in which Larraín grew up, surrounded by works of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), and Alberto Giacometti (1901-66).

for publication were in Spanish. Consequently, for the first time there was no translator on the copyright page of a Coetzee book published in a language other than English. These lectures thus cross the realm of ‘born-translated’ texts: they are ‘conceived translated’ and subsequently ‘born in Spanish’. While Coetzee’s written Spanish is mostly correct, it is also highly idiosyncratic: a textual equivalent of a foreign speaker’s speech who is fluent but has noticeable accent and makes the occasional slip. Interestingly, unlike the *Jesus* novels, in which Anglophone publication was merely belated in relation to the Hispanophone one, the public has no foreseeable way to read these texts in English – I have translated them in order to quote from them. As I have explained, these little lectures are also significant by being addressed to children and adolescents, marking the start of a new genre in Coetzee’s career.

The collected lectures are a survey of Coetzee’s personal story of literary prizes across his life. In the first lecture (2015), Coetzee recalled when aged seven he participated in a short story competition organised by Children’s Corner, a radio programme on the South African Broadcasting Corporation. His name was announced on the airwaves and later he received a book called *The Little Train*, which Coetzee kept throughout his life and eventually deposited with his papers at the Harry Ransom Center. However, for sixty-four years Coetzee did not know *The Little Train* was a Graham Greene book, for it belongs more to the first than the second distinction of the two territories he identified when describing a *biblioteca privada* in ‘The Idea of a Personal Library’: ‘The *biblioteca privada* falls sometimes into the territory of the bibliophile, sometimes into the territory of the scholar. It is not the territory of the general educated reader’ (2014a, 2).

Interestingly, Greene wrote *The Little Train* (1946) during the Blitz to accompany the drawings of Dorothy Craigie (1901-71), an illustrator and children’s author who was also his mistress, and this was the first of five books in which they would collaborate: it was followed by

The Little Fire Engine (1950), *The Little Horse Bus* (1952), *The Little Steamroller* (1953), and *Victorian Detective Fiction* (1966). Coetzee had no way of connecting *The Little Train* with Greene, because in the first edition of 1946 – the one he won the following year – his name was omitted, making it one of his rarest books.⁷⁰ He confirmed this in a personal email: ‘I did not know Greene was the author. Yet somehow I knew that it was a story of superior quality, even though intended for small children’ (2021). The book certainly was part of his *biblioteca íntima*, as the text of this first little lecture shows: ‘Lo he mantenido conmigo en todas mis andanzas en el mundo’ (‘I have kept it with me in all my adventures in the world’ [CNE 19]).

Another significant aspect of this collaboration is the pedagogic spirit of Coetzee in the lectures, and how he situates himself in the mental and emotional position of his audience, offering encouragement and motivation:

Llegamos al mundo y no sabemos quiénes somos. Pronto debemos aceptar que no podemos ser buenos en todo. Hay otros niños que son más fuertes que nosotros, o pueden hacer sumas más rápido en su cabeza. Eso no importa. Lo que importa es que tenemos que ser buenos en algo, aunque sea solo una cosa. Cuando descubrimos aquello en lo que estamos bien, podemos descansar. Tenemos una nueva confianza interna; tenemos un lugar en el mundo.

Espero que los ganadores de los premios se irán a la casa con la misma confianza que aquí se ven. Ellos son escritores, y escritores tienen un lugar en el mundo (CNE 19-20).

(We come into the world, and we do not know who we are. Soon we must accept that we cannot be good at everything. There are other children who are stronger than us, or who can make additions faster in their heads. But that does not matter. What matters is that we must be good at something, even if it is only one thing. When we discover what we are good at, we can rest. We have a new inner confidence; we have a place in the world.

I hope that the award winners will return home with the same confidence that they show here. They are writers, and writers have a place in the world [own translation]).

⁷⁰ ‘Greene was a director of Eyre & Spottiswoode in 1946 (...). It is generally assumed that having written the text, Greene kept his name off the first edition to avoid compromising his status as a serious novelist, or to protect his relationship with Craigie’ (Wise and Hill, 24). The text on the front wing of *The Little Fire Engine* first edition (‘IT CAN NOW BE REVEALED’) informed the reader that ‘The first, *The Little Train*, was published under the name of its illustrator, Dorothy Craigie; the second you now hold in your hand’.

Interestingly, the pedagogic style of this address is redolent of the way Simón speaks to David in the *Jesus* novels, which were being simultaneously written. Coetzee continued this narrative in the second lecture (2016), this time recalling his second prize, a copy of Juan Ramón Jiménez's *Platero y yo* (1914, *Platero and I*). Coetzee had already written an introduction for a Mexican edition of *Platero and I* in 2007, which he subsequently edited and included in *Late Essays*, but in Santiago he referred to Jiménez's book from a personal perspective. Significantly, there is a clear connection with *The Schooldays of Jesus*, particularly in how Coetzee conveys Jiménez's vision:

Es la historia de un hombre que mantiene un burro a quien ama mucho, pero que muere, porque los burros no viven tanto tiempo como nosotros, los seres humanos.

Esta historia me pareció inexpresablemente triste (CNE 22).

(It is the story of a man who keeps a donkey whom he loves very much, but who ultimately dies, because donkeys do not live as long as us, human beings

This story seemed inexpressibly sad to me [own translation]).

This vision coincides with the one Simón exhibits in order to enlighten David about the shorter lifespan of animals compared to humans, in what is perhaps the only comical passage in a very sombre trilogy. 'Yes, he is going to die. Dogs die. They are mortal, like us. If you want to have a pet that lives longer than you, you will have to get yourself an elephant or a whale' (SJ 34).

Crucially, while Coetzee remembers in the lecture the sadness he felt as a child when reading the story, he reimagines it from the perspective of Simón, not David, which could be interpreted as his older self addressing his younger one. Indeed, for didactic purposes he tied his childhood memories with the narrative of prizes:

Más tarde descubrí que *Platero and I* fue una traducción del libro *Platero y yo*, por un famoso escritor español, Juan Ramón Jiménez, que había ganado el Premio Nobel de Literatura (CNE 22).

(Later on, I discovered that *Platero and I* was a translation of the book *Platero y yo*, by a famous Spanish writer, Juan Ramón Jiménez, who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature [own translation]).

As can be seen, Coetzee performed a delicate, generous operation with his young audience: in his generally correct but cautious Spanish, he connected these small prizes he received as a child

like any in the room, with the foremost literary award, thus offering his own example as motivation and evidence of the feasibility of transit from child writers like them to a world writer like himself. In other words, he enacted what he perceived was one of the foremost virtues of *Platero and I*: “These impressions are recorded with the delicacy and restraint that is proper when side by side with the adult reader is an audience of children” (*LE* 130).

Continuing with the narrative of prizes, in the third lecture (2017) he recalled his meeting in Stockholm with King Carl Gustaf of Sweden, who when informed Coetzee was South African told him he had once killed a lion:

Lo que no sabía el rey, fue que yo no veo por qué los leones deben ser fusilados, y generalmente que no me gusta la gente que dispara a los leones solo por diversión.

Lo que mi encuentro con el rey de Suecia me enseñó fue que si tu trabajo es darle un premio a alguien, deberías interesarte de algún modo por esa persona (*CNE* 24).

(What the King did not know is that I do not see why lions should be shot, and generally that I do not like people who shoot lions for fun.

What my encounter with the King of Sweden taught me was that if your work is awarding someone a prize, you should be somehow interested in that person [own translation]).

This point reinforces the didactic purpose I have emphasized, for Coetzee told his young audience that despite being awarded the Nobel Prize, he also learned a lesson in Stockholm, thus conveying the message that one never stops learning in life. He brought the lecture to an end by announcing he would henceforth follow the winners’ literary careers and offered words of consolation to the children who were not awarded a prize.

The fourth and final lecture (2018) is, I believe, a little jewel in the genre of literary lectures for the young. Sticking to the narrative of prizes, Coetzee referred to Chile’s two Nobel laureates, Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda, emphasizing that both chose pseudonyms and became schoolteachers to leave poverty behind and progress in life. He explained his choice thus:

He venido desde Australia para hablarles sobre dos de los mejores escritores chilenos, pero ¿por qué? Las historias de vida de Gabriela Mistral y Pablo Neruda son familiares para ustedes, estoy seguro.

Les hablo sobre estos dos escritores para enfatizar un solo punto. Ambos provienen de familias humildes en las provincias. Ninguno de ellos tenía un ambiente hogareño donde se sintieran amados y seguros. Ninguno de ellos tuvo una educación costosa. Ambos nacieron con grandes dones, pero ninguno tuvo padres que los animaran a desarrollar esos dones. En su adolescencia ambos debieron pasar por momentos en los que se sentían aislados y poco valorados, en los que el futuro les debió parecer oscuro. Pero ambos tenían una fe inquebrantable en su potencia creativa y –lo que es más importante– una convicción de que estaban destinados a ser poetas (*CNE* 28-9).

(I have come all the way from Australia to tell you about two of the best Chilean writers, but why? I am sure the life stories of Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda are familiar to you.

I am telling you about these two writers to emphasize only one point. They both came from humble families in the provinces. Neither of them had a home environment in which they felt loved and safe. Neither of them had an expensive education. They were both born with great gifts, but none of them had parents who encouraged them to develop those gifts. During their adolescence they must have gone through moments in which they felt isolated and undervalued, in which the future must have seemed dark to them. But both had an unbreakable faith in their creative powers, and – what is more important – a conviction that they were destined to be poets [own translation]).

As can be seen, here Coetzee connected the narrative of prizes with his own example of the previous lecture, conveying to his audience the message that the Nobel laureate in front of them won the same prize as his two *Chilean* predecessors, who once were children like themselves, thus bringing the achievement even closer to them. It is also worth noting how Coetzee highlights the fact that Mistral and Neruda came from the provinces, in stark contrast to Borges' worldly and metropolitan affiliations, which shows his awareness of the different social contexts from which writers from the south came from.

Coetzee then proceeded to recite Neruda's poetry again, but instead of reading in English translation, as he had at UCT in 1973, forty-five years later – and after the long intellectual voyage I have surveyed across this work – he read in the Spanish original an extract from 'La poesía' ('The Poetry'), from *Memorial de Isla Negra* (1964, *Isla Negra: A Notebook*), in which Neruda recalls the birth of his artistic vocation. Then he read Mistral in public for the first time, who despite being the first woman from the south to have won a Nobel Prize and the only Hispanic woman

to have won the Prize in Literature, unlike Neruda is not well-known in the English-speaking world. Significantly, and just like Di Benedetto, Mistral is a recent interest of Coetzee, for he confessed his lack of acquaintance ('I know nothing of her') two years earlier in Buenos Aires (2016f).

Coetzee read in Santiago what he deemed 'quizás el más conocido de todos sus poemas' ('perhaps the best-known of all her poems'), a text that also appears in her English *Wikipedia* entry as 'Su nombre es hoy' ('His Name is Today').

[c] Somos culpables de muchos errores y
muchas faltas,
pero nuestro peor crimen es abandonar
a los niños,
olvidando la fuente de vida.

[a] Muchas de las cosas que necesitamos
pueden esperar.
Los Niños no.

Justo ahora es el momento en que sus
huesos se están formando,
su sangre se está elaborando
y sus sentidos siendo desarrollados.
A él no podemos responder "Mañana".
Su nombre es "Hoy" (CNE 31).

[[c] We are guilty of many mistakes and
many misdemeanours,
but our worst felony is abandoning
children,
forgetting the source of life.

[a] Many of the things we need
can wait,
Children cannot.
Precisely now is the moment that their
bones are taking shape,
their blood is being made
and their senses being developed.
To him we cannot answer "Tomorrow".
His name is "Today" [own translation]).

However, the text is most likely not by Mistral: while the ideas are hers, the words are almost certainly not. In fact, the piece Coetzee read is not a poem, but a fragment – transcribed with numerous errors, missing a sentence and rearranged in the wrong order – from her article

‘Llamado por el niño’, originally written in 1948 (possibly in Santa Barbara, California, where Mistral was living at the time):

[a] Muchas de las cosas que hemos menester tienen espera: el Niño, no. Él está haciendo ahora mismo sus huesos, criando su sangre y ensayando sus sentidos. A él no se le puede responder: “Mañana”. Él se llama “AHORA” [b], “EN SEGUIDA”. Pasados los siete años lo que se haga será enmendar a tercias y corregir sin curar.

[c] Estamos enfermos de muchos errores y de otras tantas culpas; pero nuestro peor delito se llama Abandono de la infancia, Descuido de la fuente. (Mistral 1948).

[[a] Many of the things we need can wait; the Child cannot. He is making his bones right now, raising his blood and trying his senses. To him one cannot respond: ‘Tomorrow’. His name is ‘NOW’ [b], “RIGHT AWAY”. After the age of seven, what may be done will be a third of a mending and correcting without curing.

[c] We are ill because of various mistakes and many other guilts; but our worst crime is called Abandonment of childhood, Oversight of the source [own translation]).

The title of the article refers to the United Nations Appeal for Children, ‘launched in 1948 by resolution of the General Assembly’ to support the UN’s International Children’s Emergency Fund (Watt and Roosevelt 1948).

While the Fund had the financial backing of the forty-five signatory countries and more than thirty territories, the Appeal was conceived to allow its peoples to participate, which explains why the text is about children but addressed to adults. Mistral had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1945, and she channels her prestige to ask for donations. Because of its disseminating intent, ‘Llamado por el niño’ appeared in several periodical publications in 1948 and was translated into several languages that year, but it was never established during Mistral’s lifetime (it was only collected in 1979, long after her death). While the unestablished original text circulated widely, the English translation was probably retranslated into Spanish at some point, and then that version – the one Coetzee quoted – was also retranslated into English.

Coetzee probably remained unaware of these details, but he seemed to share Mistral’s humane vision: ‘Ella dice, mejor que yo, por qué estoy aquí hoy y por qué hablo con tanta sinceridad’ (‘She says, better than me, why I am here today and why I speak with so much honesty’, *CNE* 31). While this statement is very much in line with Coetzee’s lifelong and varied

ethical concerns, at this stage of his career he was also specially attuned to the world and the needs of children, for he had just finished writing the *Jesus* novels at this point, which can also be seen as an artistic appeal on behalf of children to adults: an invitation to see the world through their eyes. In other words, this third of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds is also one partially built for Spanish-speaking young people from the south: the Argentine students and the Chilean schoolchildren.

Despite their immense value for all the participants in both Chile and Argentina, there was a somewhat poignant ending to Coetzee's collaborations in the Southern Cone. While in late 2018 he resigned the Coetzee Professorship in Argentina, his participation in the Coetzee Competition in Chile was interrupted for reasons beyond his control: 'I would have visited again in 2019, but was prevented by the unrest in the streets' (2020a). Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020, making the globetrotting life enjoyed by J.L. Borges, J.M. Coetzee and Elizabeth Costello temporarily impossible.

In this chapter we have seen the process that led to the construction of Coetzee's third Hispanic world. Significantly, at this point we can observe the connections between the three Hispanic worlds I have surveyed so far, and indeed how they work as a system that moves towards and supports the *Jesus* novels. After nearly three decades of exclusively peninsular publication, Coetzee books in Spanish translation began appearing again in the Southern Cone in 2015, as we saw in Chapter 1, and this activity was tied to his academic and outreach programmes in Chile and Argentina. By the same token, in Chapter 2 we saw how Coetzee absorbed the work of Borges in South Africa during the 1970s (as 'The First Sentence of Yvonne Burgess' *The Strike* clearly shows), that his continued reading of the Argentine writer is located at the foundations of this third Hispanic world, and that it later informed a reflection also shaped by his visits to

the Southern Cone in the 2010s, which would eventually lead to producing his idea of the south. These three Hispanic worlds will converge in the fourth, for the writing of the *Jesus* novels took place at the same time as his Southern Cone publishing and was enriched by Coetzee's field work there.

All these developments are important to bear in mind as I have shown the extent of Coetzee's engagement with South America at the time of writing the trilogy, and part of its significance is the experience of being in a non-Anglophone context coupled with the process of learning, for Coetzee was learning Spanish in the same way that Simón and David do in the *Jesus* novels. Nonetheless, the experience and the process are also complicated by a certain ghostly or etiolated character of language and works of literature and art across the cycle. In other words, it seems that the radiations emerging from the European classics are too dim to illuminate the south.

Although it might seem new, the fact is that this trope has been present in Coetzee's imagination for a long time. Let us analyse a passage from the 'French Diary' of 1994:

In these villages the matrix still survives out of which my own great-grandparents emerged (though they came from Pomerania, not Burgundy). Kitchen gardens with tidy beds of spinach, beans, tomatoes, potatoes; a working day that runs from dawn till after dusk; money hidden under the mattress – it is a way of life I know, as it were, in the blood. These villagers could be the kinfolk my great-grandparents bade farewell to when they set off for Africa; they could be my own lost tenth and twelfth cousins, the cautious ones who stayed behind, lacking the enterprise to strike out for a new life in the colonies. Yet now, in retrospect, they are the ones who are proved right, while my great-grandparents, chasing after plentiful land and an end to feudal servility, are the ones who turn out to have made the wrong move. For what have my ancestors bequeathed to the future? Not a brood of sturdy colonial landowners but a last pale ghost, myself, wandering among the old sites of Europe (56).

As can be seen, the fictional world Coetzee was eventually going to represent in the *Jesus* novels appears prefigured here in a nutshell. The simple vegetable-based diet, the prevalence of physical over intellectual work and the precarious relation to money are coupled with an uncertain voyage

to another continent and the recognition of the inevitable sense of loss that the act of migration entails.

Crucially, this sense of loss runs across generations until that 'last pale ghost', the artist as an old man of the south, directs his gaze at the old cradle of Europe as he moves to the centre of the literary world, which he also recognizes as the remote fountain of his spiritual world. However, because the matrix that survives in European villages undergoes a degradation as it sails across the oceans, the fountain can only be experienced in a diluted form: hence the 'phantasmatic quality' of the cities of the south. Poignantly, imbued with lateness, the south is situated in a historical dead end: there seems to be no future in it. If owning land and exploiting indigenous workers is no longer legally possible or morally right, nor can the European classics be experienced to their full extent by these 'last pale ghosts'. This phenomenon can be related to the somewhat sombre vision that overarches the *Jesus* novels.

4

A Southern Cervantean Narrative:

Don Quixote and the *Jesus* Novels

Don Quixote is a good model to follow in your life

J.M. Coetzee, *The Schooldays of Jesus*

The Schooldays of Jesus begins with an epigraph from Cervantes: ‘Algunos dicen, segundas partes nunca fueron buenas. *Don Quixote* II.4’ (‘Some say that second parts were never good’), making explicit the fact that we are delving into a Cervantean narrative world, which is also conveyed in Spanish, as the untranslated epigraph shows. This Cervantean world is not conveyed through Cervantes’ original book, but by a children’s version: like many other artworks in the trilogy, this is an attenuated classic. By the same token, Cervantes is never mentioned in the novels, and the same applies to all the other artists: their names seem to be forgotten. Moreover, in the trilogy there is a constant textual instability of Cervantean kind that is reinforced in the act of translation, and particularly in Spanish. The textual instability is mirrored in the Cervantean fictional panorama, for Simón tries to convey the story through the eyes of David, but the latter’s perception of reality – like the Don’s – is altered. This complicated linguistic reality is built across the novels through a dialogue about David’s copy of *Don Quixote* and later through his own storytelling, which keeps Cervantes’ story going. The crucial point in this operation is to be found in the gap between *Schooldays* and *Childhood*, which mirrors the one that exists between the two parts of *Don Quixote*.

In order to understand the Cervantean epigraph Coetzee chose for *Schooldays*, we need to examine the publication history of *Don Quixote*. In Cervantes’ novel the phrase is uttered by

the bachelor Sansón Carrasco when characters discuss the existence of the second part of the novel the reader is being offered (1615). This passage is one of the many devices deployed by Cervantes in order to enter history as the true author of *Don Quixote*. While the first part appeared in 1605, the authorial position of Cervantes had been threatened by the apocryphal *Quixote de Avellaneda* (1614), which prompted him to finish the second part quickly and publish it a year later. This operation is crucial to understand *Don Quixote's* stature: as Foucault noted in *The Order of Things*,

Between the first and second parts of the novel, in the narrow gap between these two volumes, and by their power alone, Don Quixote has achieved his reality – a reality he owes to language alone, and which resides entirely inside the words (54).

The suggestion here is that the true stature of *Don Quixote* as the fundamental text of the European novelistic tradition was achieved in Cervantes' act of continuation: his will to keep the story going beyond a book that in 1605 seemed complete. In using the 'second parts' phrase as an epigraph Coetzee is making explicit the fact that *Schooldays* follows *Childhood* in the same way that the second part of *Don Quixote* follows the first.

Crucially, the Foucault quotation above shows that the creation of a southern narrative space in the trilogy *also* takes place 'in the narrow gap between' the texts of *Childhood* and *Schooldays*, precisely where Coetzee placed the Cervantean epigraph. It is also significant that the reference is given without author and by book and chapter, in the way of biblical scholarship. This conveys the idea we are entering 'a different kind of discourse', as Coetzee described the novel in 'The Novel Today', which has *Don Quixote* as its own Bible or (European) founding text. Interestingly, Cervantes is absent not only in the epigraph, but also in the fictions themselves, for he is never mentioned as the author of *Don Quixote*. This treatment dovetails with the attenuated world of the classics in the *Jesus* fictions, which will allow Coetzee to enter the inner logic of *Don Quixote* through the Borgesian procedures I examined in the previous

chapter. These elements, coupled with the fact that there is no translation for the epigraph, suggest that we are crossing one of Gérard Genette's (1930-2018) *seuils* or thresholds and entering a Hispanic world, making the immersion in this new Cervantean novel more explicit than in *Childhood*, for it is both paratextual and authorially sanctioned.⁷¹

In this chapter, I will show how the *Jesus* novels are modelled and supported by *Don Quixote* narratively, historically and critically across the trilogy. The phenomenon is clearly visible in each volume: while *Childhood* is marked by the discovery of the Spanish language and David's *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote*, *Schooldays* is modulated by the background hum of *Don Quixote*, and *Death* is characterised by the tales David tells that have Don Quixote as a protagonist but are not in Cervantes' book, or in any other book. I will therefore analyse the *Jesus* novels as a celebration of storytelling seen through the eyes of a child and underpinned by a Hispanic element which is brought forward by *Don Quixote*, thus marking both the last of Coetzee's Hispanic worlds that I analyse in this thesis and their culmination, in a world that also receives the classic in an etiolated or ghostly way and situated in the south.

The *Jesus* novels continue the concerns with the provincial, the south, and the hegemony of the Anglophone publishing world that I have drawn attention to in previous chapters. As I note at the outset of the thesis, *Death* was first published in Spanish in Chile, and therefore the first complete appearance of the trilogy took place in Hispanophone South America. In this and more, the trilogy brings a renewed intensity to Coetzee's Hispanic worlds. To begin with, we are invited to believe the fictional world we inhabit across all three novels is a Spanish-speaking one – a conceit that has significant implications for how we read the trilogy, whether in English or Spanish. Moreover, this is a Hispanophone world that is emphatically not Spain, and therefore

⁷¹ 'a *threshold*, or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back' (2).

points to a location in the south. Added to this, I will argue that the Spanish classic *Don Quixote* provides the *Jesus* novels with a unifying intertextual dialogue with the founding European novel. Coetzee has on numerous occasions acknowledged the influence and enduring power of *Don Quixote*, not least in his Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech, in which he refers to ‘the first of all novelists, Miguel Cervantes, on whose giant shoulders we pigmy writers of a later age stand’ (DTP 98). Moreover, the presence of *Don Quixote* across the *Jesus* novels, never identified with the author Cervantes and emerging in increasingly attenuated forms, speaks directly to the translated and displaced Hispanic world of the trilogy. While critics like Jan Wilm (2016) and Robert Pippin (2017, 2021) have illuminated the philosophical and religious investments of the novels, and their staging of the contemporary migration crisis around the globe, I argue that their construction in a Hispanic world – linguistic, geographic, literary and historical – is fundamental to Coetzee’s fictional project. Indeed, if Coetzee’s late novels reveal anything about Anglophone world literature, it is perhaps counterintuitively through their insistence on the reality of their Hispanic worlds.

This chapter addresses the concerns set out above by analysing how *Don Quixote* influenced the *Jesus* novels. In the first part, I will discuss the relationship between *Don Quixote* and the trilogy by considering Cervantes’ novel as the touchstone of Coetzee’s cycle. I will then explain how Coetzee builds the Hispanic world of the trilogy by analysing the Hispanic geographical, nomenclative and cultural commonalities and the Spanish language elements in the trilogy, before moving on to examine the central role translation plays in *Don Quixote* and how the same process takes place in the *Jesus* novels. I will then reflect on the implications of these phenomena for Coetzee’s vision of Cervantes, and particularly how the former considers *Don Quixote* within the historical literary system of the novel, showing that the Hispanic world-making Coetzee undertakes in the trilogy is a Cervantean enterprise. In the second part of the chapter, I

will momentarily step away from Coetzee in order to look at the reception history of *Don Quixote*, which will allow me to show that the novel Coetzee inherited was a highly mediated one. I will link the centrality of *Don Quixote* and the insights gathered from its reception history to the question of cultural transmission, originality and continuity in the trilogy. This will show that the transmission of the classics, the presence of *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* and the absence of real libraries all point to an etiolated or ghostly version of the West transplanted into a new land, which operates as a foundation for the southern Hispanic world of the trilogy. Significantly, while the trilogy's title makes us think of the Bible, I argue that in the narrative world of the *Jesus* novels the true Bible is *Don Quixote*. In this mysterious fictional panorama, the conscious derivativeness and belatedness of the *Jesus* novels is enhanced by *Don Quixote* without the name of Cervantes.

Don Quixote and the Jesus Novels

In the first part of this chapter, I will analyse the relationship between *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* novels by examining the range of echoes that bind both texts. Particularly, I will examine how the central role translation plays in *Don Quixote*, in its reception and in the conceit that it was translated from Arabic, is echoed in the *Jesus* novels, that we should believe Coetzee's English-language novel describes a Spanish-speaking world. Consequently, the Hispanic world-making that Coetzee undertakes in the *Jesus* novels is a recognisably Cervantean enterprise.

A first significant parallel between Cervantes' book and Coetzee's trilogy is that what we call today 'the first part of *Don Quixote*', *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*), was at the time of publication 'un libro cabal y completo' ('a complete and ample book') that made no reference to a second part, as Francisco Rico notes (11). Similarly, when *Childhood* was published in 2013 there was no reference to a

continuation either. As I pointed out, Coetzee's epigraph to *Schooldays* therefore makes a direct reference to the staggered publication history of *Don Quixote*. While it is by dint of the apocryphal *Don Quijote de Avellaneda* that we have the second part of *Don Quixote* – for the publication of the former in 1614 motivated Cervantes to finish his work, which appeared only five months before his death in 1616, as Martín de Riquer has shown – the lack of access to archival sources currently prevents us from knowing whether Coetzee envisaged the *Jesus* project as a trilogy from the beginning or not (225).⁷² The epigraph, and the history it invokes, however, leave us in no doubt that across *Childhood*, *Schooldays* and *Death* we are in a Cervantean world.

The epigraph coupled with the constant intertextual engagement with *Don Quixote* make the Cervantean references more explicit than the important but less visible allusions to Beckett or Kafka in some of Coetzee's previous fictions. In *Don Quixote* the main narrative vehicle is the dialogue between the idealist Knight and the realist Sancho Panza, and a similar process takes place in the *Jesus* novels through the dialogue between David and Simón, who share the initial letters of their names with the duo of Cervantes' novel. Significantly, Sancho and Simón provide Don Quixote and David with a sense of reality, but also with fundamental links to society in the form of friendship and family. While the Don and David were alone at the beginning of both narratives, Sancho gives Don Quixote companionship and is also a family man who longs to go back home to his wife and children, and Simón likewise forms an unconventional family with Inés for the benefit of David (Cervantes 231). Even more crucially, in both *Don Quixote* and the trilogy, the dialogue that the main characters undertake fuels the learning process and the conflict and reciprocal overlapping between the ideal and the real. This phenomenon can be seen in

⁷² It is possible that both Cervantes and Coetzee did not know whether they had ended their stories after finishing the first part of *Don Quixote* and *Childhood*. As Maurice Blanchot suggests in *L'Espace littéraire*, there is often an unconscious element behind these authorial decisions: 'L'écrivain ne sait jamais si l'œuvre est faite. Ce qu'il a terminé en un livre, il le recommence ou le détruit en un autre' ('The writer never knows if the work is done. What he has finished in a book, he resumes or destroys into another', 11).

operation in many of *Don Quixote's* most famous episodes, like 'The Adventure of the Windmills' and 'The Cave of Montesinos', which are driven by the Don's altered perception of reality in the same way that David's peculiar ideas of numbers in the sky and holes between the pages of a book reveal an unusual grasp of the world. However, in both *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* trilogy these unusual visions are transferred to Sancho and Simón: while at the ending of *Don Quixote* Sancho begins to see the world through the Don's eyes, in the final part of the trilogy Simón is also imbued with David's vision, thus underlying the blurring of originality that runs across it. Significantly, there is a verb in Spanish for this process: while Sancho is the first *quijotizado* ('quixoticised') character in the history of literature, Simón is the most recent.

Nonetheless, there are important details in the trilogy that invert Cervantes' template, which recalls Coetzee's inversion of the Borgesian library trope we saw in Chapter 3. In the first paragraph of the novel, Don Quixote's age is close to fifty, but in a society in which life expectancy was around thirty, as Francisco Rico notes, he was in fact a very old man (Cervantes 28, *n.*18). Consequently, in imagining David as a child, Coetzee inverted the embodiment of the quixotic archetype, and this has several implications. While Don Quixote went mad because 'del poco dormir y del mucho leer, se le secó el cerebro de manera que vino a perder el juicio' ('from so little sleeping and so much reading his brain dried up, so he lost his mind'), David only learns to read in the *Jesus* novels through his copy of a children's version of *Don Quixote*, but then refuses to read anything else (Cervantes 29-30).

Therefore, while Don Quixote suffers from a harmless madness – hence the qualification of 'extraña locura' ('strange madness') – in a society in which the printing press was still a novelty and the category of 'fiction' was not yet established, in the trilogy David is sane, but his vision of the world is intuitive and preliterate, a characteristic that is shared by adult characters, for no one reads serious books in Novilla and Estrella; in fact, the word 'novel' never appears in the

trilogy (Cervantes 257, 321, 503). An example of this phenomenon is to be found in the second volume: when Simón meets Arroyo's sister-in-law in *Schooldays*, she tells him Arroyo wrote 'a book on his philosophy of music', which she assures him is still available in bookshops (201). However, when Simón looks for it, he finds out 'None of the booksellers have heard of it' (204-5). What applies to books also happens with records: by the same token, in *Death* we discover Arroyo's compositions 'have no title; the record, pressed in the back room of a shop in the city, has no label' (7). These examples bring to the fore the blurring of what we understand to be an original, as was noted, which is also connected to the omission of Cervantes' name as the author of *Don Quixote* in the trilogy.

Another important detail is that Don Quixote and David portray themselves as conveyors of the truth: but while the Don merely maintains he is truthful ('lo que yo digo es verdad', 'what I say is true'), David sees himself as the truth's embodiment ('Yo soy la verdad', 'I am the truth'), and this is related to the different approach to the literary event that prevailed during Cervantes' time (Cervantes 79, *CJ* 225). As Francisco Rico notes, in the seventeenth century the modern category of 'fiction', a kind of discourse with its own rules and somewhat located between a 'truth' and a 'lie', was not yet solidly established (Cervantes 325, *n.27*). Therefore, when Don Quixote claims to be truthful he performs a necessary deed within his own narrative for both Sancho and the reader to believe him. By contrast, while David's assertion in the *Jesus* novels recalls John 14:6, it is noteworthy that he is speaking in a narrative context where according to Robert Pippin 'there is no evidence at all of religion' (2021; 69, 7). Nonetheless, Pippin's observation needs to be qualified, for Simón at first thinks Ana was a nun, so there is evidence, but a very diluted one (*CJ* 28). Therefore, if David refers to the Bible, he does so unknowingly and as a literary text, rather than as a religious book. Nonetheless, the distant echo of the Bible can be perceived by the reader. In other words, in the trilogy the idea

of *Don Quixote* as the first European novel also contains within it – in a Chinese box structure – a reference to the Bible as a textual reservoir of civilization, which relates it to the permanence of the classic I will explore later. This also connects with Coetzee’s reference to *Don Quixote* as ‘the most important novel of all time’, which is reflected in its place as the only book in the trilogy (Coetzee 2002d).

The creation of a fictitious literary land is not uncharted territory for Coetzee: there is at least one previous example of an imagined narrative space in his work, namely in *Barbarians*. David Attwell was the first to notice this connection, explaining that *Childhood*, ‘like *Waiting for the Barbarians*, is set in a wholly invented milieu’ (2015, 222). While there is certainly not a single country (or modern nation-state) that could be identified as a clear base for the setting of the *Jesus* novels, I depart to some extent from the idea that it is a ‘wholly invented milieu’, or Jan Wilm’s claim that ‘One cannot pin down this world in time and place’ (2016, 207). Rather, in this chapter I argue that there is a certain Hispanic, southern territory operating as a base and a specific timeframe, but complicated and woven out from other Western cultural and political features. Significantly, the influence of Cervantes enables Coetzee to create a plausible world that is at the same time a translated one.

After *Childhood* was published, there were several critical attempts at decoding its narrative landscape. Robert Pippin offered various possibilities: that the setting was ‘some sort of benevolent socialist country’, or an Orwellian vision of ‘some post-apocalyptic world, and that for some reason Novilla and perhaps a few other places are the only regions safe to inhabit’, or ‘our dystopian future, or perhaps our utopian future’, or that ‘the characters are dead and in the underworld or heaven or some transitional state’ (2017; 10, 25). Other commentators propose a territory mirrored in a country belonging to (the cultural idea of) the West, but outside of Europe: Jennifer Rutherford suggests Australia, while Lynda Ng and Paul Sheehan propose

South America, and specifically Argentina, and Elleke Boehmer suggests Patagonia as envisaged by Chatwin (Rutherford 67; Ng and Sheehan 86, 92; Boehmer 2022). Although these interpretations are plausible, I argue that the novels belong in a world where an original template has been transplanted into a new land in a Cervantean world-making endeavour.

Even if they were evidently written in English, the action in the *Jesus* novels takes place in an imaginary Spanish-speaking territory, with Spanish-sounding placenames that have commonalities with several aspects of real Hispanophone territories. The text does not identify the territory where Novilla and Estrella are located, which does not seem to be on any continent. It is described as a ‘new land’, the Americas in western cultures – also the term used in *Don Quixote* – and a ‘country’, but no further details are offered (*CJ* 27-9). One might call it a literary land, though this is complicated by the fact that, unlike villages and cities, the territory is never given a name in the narrative. The transience of the characters’ lives, their sheer lack of sediment, is thus reflected in the unnamed quality of the territory they have left and the one they have come to inhabit. So notably, in the *Jesus* novels there is no equivalent to la Mancha, the very real Spanish region named at the beginning of *Don Quixote*, where the action begins.

In the trilogy there is a reference to la Mancha, indicating we are in a territory of the mind that derives from *Don Quixote*, but differs from it. Nonetheless, while the *Jesus* novels preclude the possibility of matching the narrative territory with a single real country, some lines can be drawn. Spain is the only European country mentioned in the trilogy, and several European cultural elements are rendered in a Hispanicised way, like Johann Sebastian Bach/Juan Sebastián Arroyo. However, Spain is *not* the narrative location, for in *Childhood* it is described as a different territory to the one in which the action takes place: ‘La Mancha is in Spain, where the Spanish language originally came from’ (*CJ* 152). Therefore, the trilogy’s territory is *Hispanic* rather than Spanish: an irradiation of the Iberian spirit outside the peninsula, and specifically to the south of

it. Crucially, this territory is also configured, geographically and linguistically, as a translation of the world of *Don Quixote*, the backbone behind the trilogy, and one which also goes beyond the peninsula, as Foucault noted about the Knight in *Les mots et les choses* (1966, *The Order of Things*): ‘His adventures will be a deciphering of the world: a diligent search over the entire surface of the earth for the forms that will prove that what the books say is true’ (52).

However, it is difficult to determine where in the real world this southern, Hispanic territory would be – assuming that such a place exists. If Coetzee’s most relevant predecessors in the craft of imagining narrative territories, Faulkner and Benet, included maps of Yoknapatawpha County and Región in their books, the *Jesus* novels’ space not only has fewer landmarks and features, but characters must do with ‘incomplete maps’, as noted by Charlotta Elmgren (133). The single fact the reader knows for certain about the trilogy’s literary territory is of a linguistic nature, namely that people in it speak Spanish. However, there also exists a frame of reference that is strongly rooted in a southern Hispanic cultural base, and by southern I mean south of Spain, for the postcolonial legacy of imperial Spain is reflected in the fact that Spanish has official status in four continents: besides the visible cases of Spain in Europe and twenty countries in the Americas, it is also spoken in Easter Island in Oceania, while in or close to Africa it is the official language of Equatorial Guinea and three Spanish territories: the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla. As I will show, the narrative land of the trilogy liberally takes elements of many of these very different territories, thus showcasing the tension between the original and translation of Cervantean world-making.

The most noticeable feature of the frame of reference is related to the novels’ placenames. Firstly, there are toponymical commonalities: the name Novilla corresponds to the Spanish noun *novilla*, ‘heifer’. There is a significant correlation with *Don Quixote*, for in ‘The Wedding of Camacho’ episode Cervantes describes a *novillo* – although it is possible it was in fact

a *novilla*, for there are twelve piglets in its dilated stomach (699-700). But Novilla also sounds like Melilla, the name of the Spanish enclave on Africa's northwest coast. Like Novilla, Melilla is a non-European Hispanophone city that attracts African immigrants looking for a better future in Europe. This brings us to the most remarkable commonality between both cities, as Melilla has a Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes, conceived by the Spanish government as a first point of shelter for migrants, providing them with food and lodging allowances for a limited period.⁷³ Melilla's Centre for Immigrants – operative since 1999 – recalls the *Centro de Reubicación Novilla*, where Simón and David stay at the beginning of *Childhood*, and this kind of de-territorialised immigration centre also shares something with the Australian set-up remarked by Boehmer (*CJ 2*; Boehmer 2022). But Novilla also conveys the notion of something new, (*nuevo/nueva*, irregular superlative *novísimo/novísima* in Spanish, from Latin *novo/nova*), and could be a contraction of 'Nueva Melilla', or a Latinate neologism signifying 'new town'. Significantly, conquistadors frequently named New World cities as their 'new' home, as did colonial settlers world-wide. The most prominent example is 'Nueva España' (New Spain), mentioned in *Don Quixote*, but this usage is also featured in *Childhood* as 'Nueva Esperanza' (New Hope), in the road between Novilla and Estrellita del Norte (Cervantes 445, *CJ* 268). The name choice is ironic, for there will be no new life for Simón, Inés and David in Estrellita del Norte.

Another significant detail is how *Don Quixote's* narrative projects the known world of 1605-15: this may offer connections with the Hispanic territory of the mind where the narrative of the *Jesus* novels takes place, which I argue is partly based in the Southern Cone. In *Don Quixote* 'America' is mentioned once as such, and another time as 'Nuevo Mundo' ('New World'; 495, 605). Nonetheless, there are references to specific places of what during Cervantes' time and

⁷³ Source: <https://diccionario.cear-euskadi.org/centro-de-estancia-temporal-de-inmigrantes-ceti/>
 Consulted on 6 January 2020.

beyond was the most powerful world empire: *Pirú* (Peru) and the Potosí silver mines located there (443, 850, 1084). Furthermore, Alonso de Ercilla's (1533-94) epic poem *La Araucana* (1569-89), which narrates episodes of the conquest of Chile, is also mentioned in *Don Quixote* (68). In addition, Cervantes' novel also travelled beyond the Hispanic world in its own time, and this will be an important factor in Coetzee's own reading, as will become apparent.⁷⁴

Yet another important parallel between *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* novels can be found in the instability of proper names across both. Citing the example of Mambrino's helmet, a proper helmet for Don Quixote but a barber's basin for Sancho, and that 'to other men could appear as other things as well', Claudio Guillén delves into 'the instability in *Don Quixote* of proper names, of certain common words, and of popular etymologies or styles, in each instance through a functional connection with the individuality of the speaker' (C. Guillén 350-1). The instability of proper names in the *Jesus* novels is echoed by the narrator, for the David of *Childhood* and *Death* is called David in *Schooldays*, while the Estrellita del Norte and Punto Arenas of the first novel are called Estrella and Punta Arenas in the other two.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, because the *Jesus* novels are conveyed through the perspective of Simón, this phenomenon might reveal a tendency to forget or mental instability, but also a certain lack of rootedness in the novels' setting.

In *Schooldays* the action moves to Estrellita del Norte (Little Northern Star), now named Estrella (Star), a village in *Schooldays* (but a city in *Death*), that relates to Novilla as the only two permanent settlements in the trilogy in a similar way that Melilla relates to Ceuta, the other Spanish city on Morocco's Mediterranean coast (*DJ* 29). There are several parallels between the two pairs of cities. Firstly, we find a phonetic resonance – 'Ceuta y Melilla' sounds something

⁷⁴ As many other features of the Hispanic world did during the seventeenth century. For example, the Potosí mines are also mentioned in Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia* (1658, 145).

⁷⁵ The instability continues in translation, for there is no Punto Arenas or David in the Spanish versions.

like ‘Estrella y Novilla’ – but also geographical connections. Ceuta is 385 kilometres north of Melilla, and if one adds the stretches travelled by Simón, Inés and David – also to the north – in *Childhood*, the distance from Novilla to Estrella is a similar one.⁷⁶ There is also a botanical commonality: in *Schooldays* there is a farm that produces olive oil and ‘cedar trees that grow high in the mountains’, matching the Atlas cedar’s (*Cedrus atlantica*) habitat in the Middle and High Atlas rising behind Ceuta and Melilla (*SJ* 31, 45). Furthermore, there is a climatic similarity: while Simón favourably compares the water supply of Estrella with the nearby desert, the Spanish cities are not far from the Sahara, which begins beyond the Atlas (51). Moreover, the climate of Melilla and Ceuta is Mediterranean, which also seems to be the case for Novilla and Estrella: they are temperate, close to the sea and have a winter rainfall pattern (65). There are also geopolitical parallels: in *Schooldays* we discover Estrella also has a Relocation Office, which recalls Ceuta’s Temporary Immigrant Stay Centre opened in 2000 (57).⁷⁷ Crucially, both enclaves also form the only European Union land borders with Africa, thus drawing numerous immigrants. However, if Ceuta and Melilla are a model for Novilla and Estrella, the immigrants did not sail from Europe, for in *Schooldays* Simón explains that all characters ‘crossed the ocean’ (17). From that perspective, a possible interpretation of the *Jesus* cycle could be a case of return of New World people to a cradle of Western civilization – the Mediterranean basin – they are no longer able to recognise, for one of the main themes of the trilogy is that the originals are perceived in an etiolated or faded way, much in the same way that *Don Quixote* is presented in a children’s version.

⁷⁶ From Novilla they ride an unspecified amount of time until they reach Laguna Verde (261). Then they ride fifty kilometres before they reach the unnamed next town, five kilometres outside of which there are the *cabañas* in which they decide to sleep. Then we learn that Estrellita del Norte is 475 kilometres away from the *cabañas*, which makes a total of little more than 530 kilometres (264).

⁷⁷ Source: <https://diccionario.cear-euskadi.org/centro-de-estancia-temporal-de-inmigrantes-ceti/>
 Consulted on 2 February 2020.

There are also significant geographic commonalities between the *Jesus* novels and the Southern Cone, showing that this Cervantean world-making I am expounding is also composed by elements taken from the New World. A clear example is Laguna Verde (Green Lagoon), which Elena, Simón and David encounter at the end of *Childhood*: ‘They strike a town named Laguna Verde (why? – there is no lagoon), where they fill the tank’ (CJ 260). Interestingly, Laguna Verde is a Chilean town south of Valparaíso, formerly a centre of British immigration, which also lacks a lagoon. There is also Punto/Punta Arenas, which shares the name of Chile’s southernmost city, formerly also an immigration centre (and hence called Sandy Point by the British) motivated by the Tierra del Fuego gold rush (1883-1906) and Patagonian sheep-farming boom (1880-1940), the aftermath of which was described by Chatwin in *In Patagonia* (142-8). There is also Nueva Esperanza (New Hope), of which there are several in the Americas, the most significant in Paraguay and populated by European migrants who came through Brazil. As can be seen, if most settlements in the novels are marked by a Hispanic American element, their dispersion displaces and subverts the centrality of Europe and the United States – collectively considered as ‘the north’ – replacing it with a diffused location somewhere in the Hispanic region of the south.

There are also nomenclative commonalities between the *Jesus* novels and the Hispanic world, which also convey the idea of a Cervantean world-making. If most names are Spanish (Álvaro, Ana, David, Diego, Elena, Eugenio, Fidel, Inés and Simón), some resonate with Hispanic American politics.⁷⁸ Señora Piñera shares the name of twice Chilean President Sebastián Piñera (b. 1949), in office when *Childhood* was being written (2012-13). Similarly, Fidel shares his name with Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro (1926-2016), leading Pippin to argue

⁷⁸ Significantly, the Spanish naming of characters started with Señor C in *Diary*, for Alan ‘calls him “Juan” to his face’ (Lear 67).

‘this new land might be Cuba’ (2021, 40). Furthermore, Simón and Bolívar share their names with Venezuelan leader Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), whose name has been associated with more recent events, for an important Latin American political movement has been inspired by his figure.⁷⁹

These elements suggest a certain kind of utopian political order as an underlying base for the *Jesus* novels’ world, and we may explore which elements triumphant revolutionary movements – like the French or the Soviet – had in common. Historically, new political orders have been established not only through state violence and repression, but also with ideological elements like cult of personality and the obliteration of the *ancien régime* from the collective memory. For example, French Revolutionary authorities sought to collectively impose oblivion by attacking not only *ancien régime* institutions, but also the sheer idea of time to show there was no way back. In fact, they not only replaced the Gregorian Calendar with the Revolutionary Calendar, but also attempted to replace sexagesimal time with decimal time, as noted by Bergeron, Furet and Koselleck (308).

Similarly, during the July Revolution of 1830, ‘it so happened that the dials on clocktowers were being fired at simultaneously and independently from several locations in Paris’, as analysed by Walter Benjamin (1882-1940) in ‘Über den Begriff der Geschichte’ (1940, ‘On the Concept of History’), in another case of chronoclasm and revolt against time to impose oblivion (395). This phenomenon can be connected to an oblivion imposed from above that Simón alludes to in *Schooldays*:

⁷⁹ ‘Bolivarismo’ is linked to the figure of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez (1954-2013), and is, along with socialism, one of the bases of ‘chavismo’. Chávez had a constitution approved in 1999 to prepare the ‘revolución bolivariana’, which led Venezuela into twenty-first-century socialism. This political process has been criticised: Vargas Llosa wrote that ‘Lo que ha hecho con Venezuela el socialismo del siglo XXI es uno de los peores cataclismos de la historia’ (‘what twenty-first-century socialism has done to Venezuela is one of the worst cataclysms of history’; Vargas Llosa 2019).

When you travel across the ocean on a boat, all your memories are washed away and you start a completely new life. That is how it is. There is no before. There is no history. The boat docks at the harbour and we climb down the gangplank and we are plunged into the here and now. Time begins. The clock starts running (*SJ* 17).

Significantly, there are additional elements related to oblivion in the trilogy. In *Childhood* there is a liquor called *Oblivedo*, a Latinate neologism that seems to imply ‘seeing through oblivion’, and Inés ‘glances at her wrist, on which there is no wristwatch’ (73-5). Similarly, in *Schooldays* we discover Juan Sebastián had left his clock-repair business because ‘he had no future’ (200-1). By the same token, in *Death* we find out Inés and Simón gave David a watch, but he refuses to wear it ‘because (he says) it fixes the numbers in a circular order’ (8). As can be seen, the kind of oblivion characters endure in the trilogy is not contested or understood; it is simply the way things are in this new land. In other words, in the translation from the old world into the new world something was lost or forgotten, and this will have implications for the way in which the classic will be received in the trilogy.

While oblivion seems imposed on characters in the trilogy, more important is its relationship with Spanish. In *Childhood*, Simón asks Elena if the way he speaks alienates people. Although she answers, ‘Your Spanish is not perfect, but it improves every day’, he presses on thus: ‘I am beginning to think there is something in my speech that marks me as a man stuck in the old ways, a man who has not forgotten’, to which she responds: ‘Forgetting takes time’. ‘Once you have properly forgotten, your sense of insecurity will recede and everything will become much easier’ (*CJ* 142-3). Elena is suggesting that the more Simón forgets, the better his Spanish will become. If she implies a language, this is a model of linguistic acquisition in which learning a new language requires forgetting an old one. The implication is counterintuitive, for usually linguistic knowledge evolves through several superimposed layers accumulating in an inverted cone shape through associative memory, from rudimentary phrases to increasingly

complex structures.⁸⁰ Elena's suggestion would only make sense in an allegorical interpretation of the trilogy as an-other world removed from our earthly domain, with Spanish being more of a certain spiritual path than a language, for the novels seem to imply acquiring a language has a moralising effect. Although I would not wish to deny any interpretation of the *Jesus* novels, perhaps it would be a little too far-fetched to suggest that in the 'heaven' envisaged by Coetzee people only speak in celestial Spanish? A more plausible connection with the religious world would be that if in the trilogy *Don Quixote* is the Bible, then Spanish is its language.

Crucially, the learning process for characters is twofold, for their progressive command of Spanish facilitates self-knowledge. Furthermore, Spanish acts as a device through which Coetzee questions our general approach to languages, and specifically the 'un-interrogated belief that the world is, as it seems to be, in the mirror of the English language' (2018b). This phenomenon is to be seen abreast with Coetzee's publishing activism and his will to counteract the hegemony of English as a world language – as analysed in Chapter 1. Significantly, the *Jesus* novels remind us that there was a time when English was not dominant, and its speakers had to study other languages in order to learn a trade or emigrate. In other words, Coetzee displaces and subverts English's centrality both within the novels and in their publication history, and the instrument is Spanish. Similarly, the metropolitan, northern, dominating Anglophone vision is replaced in the trilogy by a provincial worldview characteristic of the Hispanic region of the south, which has also been crafted from a Cervantean template.

There are also cultural commonalities between Hispanic America and the *Jesus* novels. The trilogy's currency is the 'real', also the name of two distinct silver coins that circulated throughout the Spanish Empire from the time of Cervantes until the nineteenth century.

⁸⁰ I have adopted the inverted cone shape model from Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) representation of memory, as explained by Heike Scharm (85).

Therefore, the ‘real’ is featured in *Don Quixote*, *Zama* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and is also the name of Brazil’s present currency. The word ‘real’ applied to a currency may seem odd to English readers: the Spanish adjective ‘real’ stems from Latin and has two meanings. One derives from *realis* and is equivalent to English ‘real’: ‘that something or somebody has objective existence’. The other stems from *regalis*, ‘belonging or related to the king or royalty’, from where the currency meaning originated, for it designated a coin minted by a king. For Anglophone readers, the word ‘real’ applied to a currency – in a work of fiction – puts into question the symbolic value of money, as happens in *Childhood*: ‘What young woman trying to earn a few reals on the side wants such a responsibility thrust upon her?’ (140). Moreover, there is a belief element underpinning the circulation of money, a symbolic value that translates into the ‘real’ because of public faith in it. The ‘real’ also suggests a legitimate currency, and that there might be a parallel one circulating in Novilla as well – as has been the case in Argentina.

Finally, there is a further complication with the word when later in *Childhood* it is applied to David’s misunderstanding of numbers, as Simón explains:

Most of the time, Eugenio, I think the child simply doesn’t understand numbers, the way a cat or a dog doesn’t understand them. But now and then I have to ask myself: Is there anyone on earth to whom numbers are more real? (248).

As can be seen, ‘real’ is not only applied to currency, but also to denote David’s different grasp of what characters understand for ‘reality’, one of the cycle’s key questions, and this applies to both the English and Spanish ‘real’, which are phonetically different. Across the trilogy the reader’s suspension of judgment is constantly short-circuited by actions that are not ‘real’ in the sense that they defy rationality. For example, when Simón and David mistake German for English, which is further and differently complicated depending on whether the fictions are read in English or Spanish. Significantly, this process is also related to *Don Quixote*, in which the Don’s

perception of the world also leads the reader to alternatively engage and withdraw from the narrative.

As we have seen, in the *Jesus* fictions there are strong geographic, nomenclative and cultural commonalities with a southern Hispanic world, which are related to the idea of a new beginning: since America's 'discovery' by Europe, its history has been seen as a transplanted European civilization. Nonetheless, this vision of American history is problematic. Coetzee is by no means oblivious to this phenomenon, as his interview with Attwell shortly before the Nobel Prize ceremony shows:

I am a late representative of the vast movement of European expansion that took place from the sixteenth century to the mid-twentieth century of the Christian era, a movement that more or less achieved its purpose of conquest and settlement in the Americas and Australasia, but failed totally in Asia and almost totally in Africa (Attwell 2011, 9).

The above quote relates in an interesting way to the one from 'French Diary' that I cited in Chapter 3: the 'last pale ghost' of 1994 is the 'late representative' of 2003. This shows a high degree of historical consciousness from Coetzee, one that also has a correlation with the evolution of the medium of the European novel.

Notably, the European expansion started during the time of Cervantes, who unsuccessfully tried to emigrate to America, and ended during Coetzee's lifetime. Therefore, it coincides with the development of the medium of the European novel, with *Don Quixote* at the beginning and the *Jesus* fictions at the ending. Significantly, in Hispanic America this transplantation mainly took place through the implanted Spanish language. However, the situation Coetzee described in 2003 is different to the one prevalent at the time of writing, the northern autumn of 2022. In fact, during the twenty-first century, economic crises and political upheavals have turned Latin America into a land of emigration, in a similar way that sixteenth-century Spain was (for, despite being a powerful empire, the vast majority of the population was

very poor). Interestingly, the complications and ramifications of this phenomenon are also reflected in the *Jesus* novels.

But perhaps the most significant commonality between *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* novels is related to the role of translation, for what Cervantes first developed in his novel was continued by Coetzee in the trilogy. In fact, one of the most strikingly modern aspects of *Don Quixote* and one of the reasons for its enduring appeal, is the conceit that the book Cervantes presented his readers with is, in fact, a translation. While Cervantes discusses the phenomenon, his characters do not need to learn a new language, for there is an unnamed but very important character who translates for them. Crucially, this also shows the modernity of *Don Quixote*, for this is not a European element, as Claudio Guillén has shown.⁸¹ The touchstone of this operation is Cide Hamete Benengeli's appearance (also called Mahamete, reflecting the instability I alluded to above; 141).

In *Don Quixote* I.9, the Don goes to Toledo to find a notebook of old papers written in Arabic, and with the help of an unnamed moor he finds that the manuscript he holds is titled *Historia de don Quijote de la Mancha, escrita por Cide Hamete Benengeli, historiador árabe* (*The Story of Don Quixote de la Mancha, written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, Arabian historian*). Crucially, Cervantes proceeds to negotiate a deal with the moor to translate the story into Castilian. Therefore, as Martín de Riquer explains:

A partir de este momento el *Quijote* se ofrecerá a los lectores como la traducción de este fingido texto árabe al que de cuando en cuando Cervantes hará ver que se permite hacer algún comentario. El hecho de que desde ahora en la redacción del *Quijote* intervengan tres personas (Cide Hamete Benengeli, el morisco que lo traduce al castellano y Cervantes) constituye una acertada ficción literaria que permite a nuestro novelista diferentes enfoques y le da la posibilidad de irse comentando a sí mismo (144). (From this moment on *Don Quixote* will be presented to readers as the translation of this fictional Arabian text on which occasionally Cervantes will allow himself to comment.

⁸¹ 'The imposition of Christian unity on the Iberian Peninsula represents, for good or ill, the final Europeanization of Spain and Portugal, while making possible at the same time, through the creations of Cervantes and other Spanish artists, the injection of Semitic-Oriental elements into the bloodstream of European civilization' (473).

The fact that from now on three people (Cide Hamete Benengeli, the moor who translates into Castilian and Cervantes) intervene in the writing of *Don Quixote* is an accurate literary fiction that allows our novelist different perspectives and gives him the possibility to comment on his own story [own translation]).

Consequently, in 1605 and through this device, Cervantes pretended that *Don Quixote* was conceived translated, and this will have a parallel in Coetzee's fictions 400 years later. The narrator of the *Jesus* novels recognises this Cervantean device in Chapter 18 of *Childhood*, when David encounters a copy of *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* in the East Blocks community centre, which recalls the Don's discovery of the Arabian papers.

Crucially, when David asks, 'Who wrote the book?' and Simón responds 'A man named Benengeli', a curious phenomenon ensues (*CJ* 154). While Simón is wrong in obliterating Cervantes' name as the author in literary historical terms, his assertion is correct – contrary to what Elmgren argues (143). Within the inner logic of *Don Quixote*, the book's true author is Benengeli. This fact is conveyed explicitly by Sancho in *Don Quixote* II.2: 'el autor de la historia se llama Cide Hamete Berenjena' ('The author of the story is called Cide Hamete Berenjena'; 565).⁸² This has two important consequences: one is that *Don Quixote* is indeed conceived as a translation in a process that takes place narratologically within the novel. The other is more complex, for in naming Benengeli as the true author of the story of *Don Quixote*, Coetzee is entering the inner logic of Cervantes' text, and the implication thereof would be that the *Jesus* novels are closer to the narrative core of *Don Quixote* than they may have seemed earlier.

While the Arabic elements appear in the background of *Don Quixote*, the Spanish comes to the fore in the *Jesus* novels, and it does by narrating in English a story that originally takes place in Spanish. I will now consider the Spanish textual features of the trilogy, which are closely related to the idea of learning, and the process of self-knowledge acquisition David and Simón

⁸² Note the further variation of the name, Benengeli for Berenjena (the Spanish for 'aubergine').

undergo, which mirrors that of Don Quixote and Sancho before them and is facilitated by their progressive command of Spanish. This is conveyed through Simón's perspective and the free indirect style that represents his utterances and thoughts. If at the beginning of *Childhood* Simón knows little Spanish and words must be deciphered, later his growing command enables him to read and translate simultaneously ('when she wants to tease him, she uses the word *descongelar*, thaw'; 61). As his proficiency expands, he can think in Spanish ('He, el *viejo*, the silent watcher, is simply ignored') and observes that the young are not prone to spend time with the old (93). In other words, what was alien for him epistemologically at the beginning of the novel becomes intelligible as his level of Spanish progresses. Therefore, in the *Jesus* novels the pedagogic element is related to translation, and this is visible in the operation Simón is performing, but also in the 'lost' Spanish original or *Urtex*t that purportedly exists but we never get to read in full.

Another linguistic problem is related to Simón's assessment of his Spanish proficiency: 'What do you think I am doing in this country where I know no one, where I cannot express my heart's feelings because all human relations have to be conducted in beginner's Spanish?' (*CJ* 106). However, the text conveys a fragment of Coetzee's literary style which is not downplayed for the sake of verisimilitude: it is not 'beginner's Spanish'. Consequently, and contrary to Simón's description of his linguistic abilities, there is no significant difference between the narrative voice in free indirect speech – crafted by a writer whose, arguably, most praised characteristic is precisely his style – and the characters' dialogue in terms of language command, which is certainly not basic Spanish, but, we imagine, a highly literary one. This is in stark contrast to *Don Quixote*, which has a variety of registers – none of them Arabic. Because of these contradictory signals, determining the language characters are really speaking to one another is a far more complicated matter than what Coetzee suggested before a UCT reading in 2013, on a rare occasion of self-explanation: 'The book is in English but it is to be understood as taking

place in a Spanish-speaking country and all the exchanges are to be understood as having been translated from Spanish' (transcript in Kossew 2017, 157). The contradiction originates because the percolation is from an *Urtext* purportedly 'in beginner's Spanish' but conveyed in Coetzee's literary English.

The complicated interaction between different languages is also reinforced by Simón when he goes to the Institute, later in *Childhood*. After seeing on the noticeboard that there are several courses on Spanish, he realises that there are 'no other language courses. No Portuguese. No Catalan. No Galician. No Basque', the other four languages of the Iberian Peninsula (*CJ* 121). Significantly, these languages had already become dominated by Castilian at the time *Don Quixote* was published, as J.H. Elliott explains in *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716*:

One of the secrets of Castilian domination of the Spanish Monarchy in the sixteenth century was to be found in the triumph of its language and culture over that of other parts of the peninsula and empire (177-8).

In other words, Coetzee is aware that Spanish, just as English, also obscured other languages over the centuries, which were phagocytised by the overwhelming power of what Cervantes called Castilian (in *Don Quixote* the locution *lengua española* is never used, for it was foreign to the mentality of Cervantes and his contemporaries in much the same way as if we spoke of 'British language' today).

This reflects the problem Coetzee addressed in Cartagena about English, namely 'the way in which it crushes minor languages that it finds in its path', but in fact Spanish behaved in the same way (2018b). Similarly, the next paragraph ('No Esperanto. No Volapük') suggests that in the *Jesus* novels the only languages that theoretically could be learned are Iberian ones and two constructed languages, which were invented in late nineteenth-century Europe and must be learned as a second language (for no one acquires Esperanto or Volapük as a mother tongue). This emphasizes the linguistic learning process that Simón and David undergo across the novels,

which is mirrored in the reader's mind, for he is also presented with a text in English that is supposedly translated from Spanish.

Significantly, there is a marked contrast between the regional nature of Iberian languages and the universal aspirations of Esperanto and Volapük, for their invention represented cross-national intellectual efforts in much the same way as they were means for speakers of different languages to understand one another. However, that these languages had to be learned voluntarily in the way that one learns Mathematics proved to be somewhat utopian, and ultimately impractical. Crucially, this is also connected with the idea that learning through Bergsonian intuition – in the way that David reads his children's version of *Don Quixote* – is more important than theory and rationality (the word 'university' does not appear once in the trilogy).

The Spanish treatment coupled with the learning trope provides the trilogy with a diegetic effect operating on various specific levels. Let us analyse Simón's response to Elena's reassurance about his Spanish:

It's sweet of you to say so, but the fact is I don't have a good ear. Often I can't make out what people are saying, and have to resort to guessing. The woman at the club, for instance: I thought she was saying she wanted to marry me to one of the girls working there; but maybe I misheard her. I told her I wasn't looking for a bride, and she looked at me as if I were crazy (*CJ* 142-3).

While Simón refers to a conversation in Spanish ('Often I can't make out what people are saying'), in the alluded to dialogue the woman at the club spoke in English: 'No problem with the actual application itself that I can see. The delay seems to be in marrying you to the right therapist' (*CJ* 140). Therefore, the discourse undergoes a language shift to convey in English a narration that in its imagined *Urtext* takes place in Spanish, marking another way in which the novels are 'born translated'. This operation can be associated with Simón's claim to David that the author of *Don Quixote* was a man named Cide Hamete Benengeli, as is also stated in Cervantes' book. Therefore, the submerged Spanish *Urtext* is the *Jesus* novels' equivalent to the

buried Arabic *Urtext* of *Don Quixote* (*Historia de don Quijote de la Mancha, escrita por Cide Hamete Benengeli, historiador árabe*), with Coetzee's English and Cervantes' Spanish as the relevant target languages. While both *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* novels operate with an imaginary subterranean translation, the difference is that in Coetzee's text the focus is on learning Spanish and the difficulty the process entails, therefore bringing forward the inherent tension of the phenomenon of translation: that while something is conveyed, something is also lost.

The *Jesus* novels have an unreadable original, one related to the narratological key to the novels' linguistic complexity: the question of what language(s) Simón and David spoke *before* they began learning Spanish. Instead of contradictory signals, for this question there seemingly are no clues at all and no leads to follow.⁸³ If *Don Quixote* is a Spanish text with an invisible Arabian *Urtext*, then the *Jesus* trilogy is an English text with a partly visible Spanish *Urtext* and an unknown native language behind. Therefore, it is possible the trilogy stages translation without an original language, but only with a target language. This seems reinforced by the fact that there are two phonetic elements lacking in the way characters speak Spanish in the trilogy: there is no mention of an accent or a slowness in their speech, precisely the two aspects Coetzee was worried about before reading in Spanish in public for the first time, as we saw in Chapter 3. But the lack of an original language also has an effect on English.

The operation Coetzee performed, described by him at UCT, further restricts the field of action of English within the fictions, which seems reduced to its written form. Such is the disavowal of English in the fictional world that the characters do not even recognize its existence, to the point that they mistake it for another Germanic and imperial language. Although one would think, in a globalised world, that English would be recognisable to any person, the trilogy

⁸³ Pippin proposes German, for David remembers 'In diesem Wetter'. However, it is possible to learn whole Wagner operas without speaking German, as *Heldentenor* Ramón Vinay did (2021, 96-7).

puts a question mark around these preconceptions at different conceptual levels. Here another parallel with *Don Quixote* can be drawn, for the Don is only able to comprehend the Arabic original of the story with the help of a translator. Therefore, more than an uncritical, wholehearted embrace of the language, Spanish in the trilogy is rather a vehicle to put forward important linguistic and philosophical questions, particularly about the role of English as the dominant language of our time – but equally about Spanish as an imperial language, which originated its global scope today. While there is a certain embrace of Spanish, it is complicated by several details. Some of them involve a presence of Iberian names that are not Castilian. For example, the name Otxoa is written in the Basque form, which for a Hispanophone reader is distinctly uncommon, unlike the Castilian form Ochoa. By the same token, the name Ribeiro is Portuguese, and although it can be found in Galicia, it is very rare elsewhere in the Hispanosphere.

The relationships of characters in the *Jesus* novels are also mediated linguistically, and in a way that bears strong resonances with Cervantes' novel. In *Don Quixote*, the Don and Sancho speak very different forms of Spanish, and an important humoristic trope of the novel is their uneasy linguistic understanding, because they come from different social classes and Sancho is illiterate, as he acknowledges: 'yo no sé leer ni escribir' ('I do not know how to read or write', 831). In the *Jesus* novels, by contrast, while Simón and David both initially have trouble with Spanish, the dialogue between them is not marred by misunderstandings: they speak the same language, even if David struggles with language as any child would. This linguistic phenomenon suggests a deeper link between Simón and David than their chance encounter on the boat seems to imply, especially if we consider the Levinasian response Simón gives on the first page of the trilogy when he is asked whether David is his grandson: 'Not my grandson, not my son, but I am responsible for him' (*CJ* 1).

In the trilogy, characters are only able to function if they speak Spanish, which in Steinerian terms suggests a return to Babel, while Novilla can be seen as a phantasmatic version of it. Simón and David must learn Spanish just as English readers should in order to make full sense of the novels, but also as all world readers would have to learn Esperanto or Volapük if they had to understand a text written in them or were forced to emigrate to a country in which a language they did not know was spoken. Significantly, in the *Jesus* novels all the recent immigrants must learn Spanish, as a passage in *Death* shows, when Simón tells David ‘the full story of Don Quixote’: ‘He used it to practise his Spanish reading, because, like all of us, he had to master his Spanish ABC’, which seems to imply learning an additional language (*DJ* 73). But this is complicated by the fact that we never discover which language(s) Simón and David spoke in their previous lives: it is indeed possible they spoke different languages, which might explain why they do not slip into this language, which they might if they shared another language than Spanish.

This connects with the trope of the tension between original and translation and the attenuated or etiolated way in which the classics are received in the trilogy – and particularly *Don Quixote*. In the trilogy there is a Hispanic world revealed in different geographic and cultural references that point to numerous real features of Hispanophone territories. The fact that these commonalities are presented in a text written in English but relying on various acts of (fictional) translation and non-translation prompt us to explore how they operate when read in Spanish, and whether the effect is a nearness to this imagined Hispanic world or not – especially considering the Spanish *Urtex*t working behind the English original. In the rest of this first part, I will delve into the Spanish versions of the trilogy in order to show how Coetzee’s Hispanic world-making develops and how the spirit of Don Quixote and its relation to translation is crucial in this process.

Because the *Jesus* cycle first appeared *as a trilogy* in Spanish translation, not only is the fictional world of the novels a Hispanic one, but there exists the possibility of a kind of ‘original’ text being available in Spanish. It is therefore important and worthwhile to analyse the Hispanophone translations of the *Jesus* novels. Furthermore, the different readings that English and Spanish readers can make are related to the book historical argument I developed earlier, which can also be seen considering a close reading of the novels informed by their publishing history, as assessed in Chapter 1. This is also directly relevant here and illuminates the reading of a Spanish translation which further complicates the idea of an original, considering both what is transmitted and what is lost.

A crucial point for understanding the trilogy is that the English and Spanish versions operate differently on readers. Narratologically, the *Jesus* novels address at least three implied readers, defined by Gerald Prince as ‘the audience presupposed by a text; a real reader’s second self (shaped in accordance with the implied author’s values and cultural norms)’ (43). The first implied reader would be an Anglophone reader of the original who – to fully understand the novels – knows some Spanish: if not, the incomprehension mirrors the experience of the characters who are grappling with a new language. The second implied reader would also be an Anglophone reader of the original but lacking Spanish knowledge, and therefore bound to incompletely understand the novels – presuming this might be part of his experience as imagined by the implied author. Finally, the third implied reader would be an Hispanophone reader of the translation, regardless of whether he knows English or not, for the Spanish text is monolingual (except for the two German ‘songs’ in *Childhood* and *Death*). We can observe how the different implied readers operate by an example from the beginning of *Childhood*: ‘They hurry. *Centro de Reubicación Novilla*, says the sign. *Reubicación*: what does that mean? Not a word he has learned’ (1). Simón’s puzzlement is mirrored in the English reader, who will possibly look *Reubicación* up,

as the italicization is not complemented by a footnote. The fiction of the Spanish *Urtex* is cultivated using untranslated Spanish words, reproducing for the reader Simón's incomprehension, and further cultivated through the various acts of translation staged in the novel, as well as the explicit discussion of Spanish language and linguistic learning. Nonetheless, while these gaps in language recall the gaps David sees in numbers and thus may be integral to the experience of the novels, they could potentially be filled by knowing the Spanish words, and this will operate differently according to the experience of the different implied readers of the trilogy.

Let us now analyse the same passage in Spanish translation: 'Se apresuran. «*Centro de Reubicación Novilla*»,* dice el letrero. «*Reubicación*», ¿qué significará eso? No es una de las palabras que ha aprendido' (IJ 9). In this case, the asterisk indicates a footnote: 'Todas las palabras en cursiva aparecen en español en el original' ('All the italicized words appear in Spanish in the original'). As can be seen, Spanish readers may relate the question to linguistics or philosophy, but not to translation, for they know what *Reubicación* means. This is because the Spanish elements in the English original mix with the translated text, and this is complicated by the fact that even if Simón is learning Spanish, the monolingual quality of the Spanish version does not convey the idea he is mentally translating, unlike the English original. Consequently, in the Spanish translation Simón does not seem to be learning the language, but rather acquiring literacy, as retranslating the passage into English shows: 'They hurry. *Novilla Relocation Centre*, says the sign. *Relocation*: what does that mean? Not a word he has learned'. A consequence of this phenomenon is that the bovine quality of the characters noted by Robert Pippin is reinforced in the Spanish version, for the difficulties of learning Spanish in the English original seem to be about learning to read and write in the Spanish translations (2017, 11). Therefore, the English original enacts a Cervantean world-making that is not conveyed in the Spanish translations,

which individually lack the linguistic and technical skill of the original and collectively also lack coherence, for they are three independent renderings by different translators.

Although Wilm (2016) and Honold (2018) have written about the effect of reading *Childhood* in German, there have been no English readings of the whole cycle in Spanish, which is the only translation that *should* shed light on the trilogy's Hispanic worlds. However, as I implied earlier, this is complicated by problems in the translations. An example: until the middle of *Childhood*, English readers get the impression that Simón's and David's knowledge of Spanish as a foreign language is limited, mainly because the lack of proficiency is made explicit by Simón as narrator.

'Una tontería: what's that?'
 'Nonsense. Rubbish' (*CJ* 32-3).
 –Una tontería: ¿qué significa?
 –Una bobada. Una majadería (*IJ* 41).

However, in *La infancia de Jesús* Spanish readers are led to believe that Simón's and David's vocabulary is limited even though they can conduct complex dialogues (*bobada* and *majadería* are rarer words than *tontería*), which seems contradictory.

This example shows that the Spanish world-making Coetzee attempted with *Don Quixote* as template is distorted when one reads the trilogy in Spanish translation, for certain linguistic complexities of the *Jesus* novels are specifically untranslatable *into Spanish*, and therefore are related to the inevitable loss that the act of translation entails, as we find several times across this chapter. Let us look at an example from *Schooldays* and its Spanish translation, *Los días de Jesús en la escuela*:

'What is an edifice?' says the boy.
 'An edifice is a building. (*SJ* 29).
 –¿Qué es una edificación? –dice el niño.
 Una edificación es un edificio. (*DJE* 35).

As can be seen, in Spanish Simón's answer is so tautological it becomes comical in a Beckettian way, thus showing that if in English the novels 'destabilize the reader's sense of recognition', as Elmgren has noted, the phenomenon continues and mutates in the expansive waves of translation (129). In other words, as Stefan Helgesson remarked about the 'Adriana' chapter of *Summertime*, here 'the instability not just of translation but of the literary text itself becomes apparent' (96).

This is reinforced by the lack of italicization in *Los días de Jesús en la escuela* and *La muerte de Jesús*, the Spanish translation of *Death*, which makes the reader less aware of the learning process and its diegetic effect across the whole cycle. However, the absurdity of translational dialogues is complicated by the convergence of a Hispanic world and an uninflected Spanish translation, which gives the impression that the last volumes are not in fact translations from an English original, for there are no constant specific markers (*italics*) pointing readers to that conclusion. In fact, if they are unacquainted with Coetzee's work, Hispanophone readers will only realise they are reading a translation when consulting the copyright page or indeed the cover, for the text itself does not provide any more clues in that direction. Therefore, the 'born-translated' element Walkowitz described for the Spanish translation of *Childhood* appears reinforced in those of *Schooldays* and *Death* to the highest level: because the books seem 'original', their translational birth is obscured and invisible.

There are more complications: because of the way the *Jesus* novels are written, the Anglophone element should disappear in translation: there is no reason for the appearance of English place names and common names. However, the Spanish textual elements in the English original become merged in the case of Spanish translations, thus making them the only monolingual versions of the trilogy. Therefore, when certain English words are left untranslated in *Infancia* an unnecessary reverse language shift occurs, as can be seen in the following examples:

Los de azul son los Docklands y los de rojo los North Hills (*IJ* 33).
 El East Village se considera por lo general más deseable que el West Village (58).
 Y aquí es donde vivimos, justo a las afueras de la ciudad, en el East Village (81).
 Está en New Street, cerca del cruce (120).

While these common names have precise Spanish equivalents, what makes the translator's choice even more problematic is that some of them trigger specific associations: when reading 'East Village' a Spanish language reader will think of New York City.

By the same token, although there are Spanish equivalents for the English words 'walkie-talkie' in *Días* and 'short', 'sandwich' and 'sketches' in *Muerte*, the fact that they are left untranslated momentarily takes the reader away from the Hispanic world (*DJE* 221; *MJ* 24, 124, 159, 178). These translative decisions contaminate a text that in an ideal rendering should not include words in English. For, there is no linguistic Englishness to the *Jesus* novels that warrants surviving a translation – the only exceptions are when Simón chooses the name *Star* for a newspaper while writing an exercise at the institute, and 'Mickey Mouse', the cartoon character normally called *El Ratón Mickey* in Spanish (*SJ* 177-8, *DJE* 176, *CJ* 18, *IJ* 181).⁸⁴ Therefore, this phenomenon complicates the texts for the third implied reader I identified earlier. Unlike the decidedly Castilian world Cervantes envisaged for *Don Quixote*, these examples show how the Hispanic world of the trilogy does not result in chemically pure Spanish when reading it in translation, for there is always an element that complicates monolingualism.

As can be seen, the *Jesus* novels have a number of Hispanic elements inserted in the texts, which are counterintuitively undermined by the Spanish translation. Some of these phenomena are inevitable and inherent to Coetzee's text, for there are features of the novels that are untranslatable into Spanish: for example, the passages when Simón and David are learning Spanish in the original. In other cases, the translators make questionable decisions that weaken

⁸⁴ *Star* could be a reference to the homonymous counter-culture magazine published in Barcelona between 1974 and 1980.

the Hispanic elements, mainly by leaving English words untranslated, which unnecessarily anglicize the Spanish versions: for instance, when they choose to leave ‘New Street’ or ‘East Village’ untranslated.

I will now step away from the Spanish translations of the trilogy in order to focus on the figure of Cervantes again, for the Spaniard was the crucial figure in the world-making endeavour Coetzee attempted in the *Jesus* novels. The specificity of Cervantes’s influence was revealed by Coetzee in interviews granted to Hispanic publications, particularly when discussing literary influences. In the interview Coetzee gave to *El País* in 2002, he was asked which writers had influenced him and whether he had read Hispanophone authors. Coetzee answered:

He leído *Don Quijote*, la novela más importante de todos los tiempos, una y otra vez, como debe hacer todo novelista serio, porque contiene infinitas lecciones (2002d).
(I have read *Don Quixote*, the most important novel of all times, over and over again, as any serious novelist should, for it contains infinite lessons [own translation]).

As can be seen, although Coetzee was asked about writers, he answered alluding to *Don Quixote*. His assessment is somewhat surprising, for he puts it on a higher level than other highly valued works of fiction, like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Crime and Punishment* and *Madame Bovary*. Moreover, Coetzee uses *Don Quixote* to draw a line: novelists are serious or not depending on the extent of their knowledge of Cervantes’ novel. Finally, the justification for his assessment, that *Don Quixote* ‘contains infinite lessons’, is connected to the Brechtian model that lies behind the creation of the Elizabeth Costello cycle and explored in Chapter 3 – the idea of the lesson.

Nonetheless, although there is a straight line of descent from Cervantes to Coetzee, he also received *Don Quixote* in a mediated way that included the reading of Borges. Crucially, while Borges provided an intellectual background from a peripheral perspective, distinctive tropes and technical innovations, Coetzee also seems to have looked for a model suitable for him as a writer working in the medium of the novel. In a similar vein, a further important opinion on *Don*

Quixote was expressed by Coetzee in an interview with *Clarín* in 2019. When asked ‘¿Qué tiene que ver Cervantes con Coetzee?’ (‘What has Cervantes to do with Coetzee?’), he answered:

Su gran libro me parece único en el sentido de que inaugura una nueva forma literaria, la novela y, en el mismo movimiento, concluye esa forma al eclipsar a todos sus imitadores y sucesores. No estoy solo entre los escritores en venerar a *El Quijote* (2019d).
(His great book seems to me unique in the sense that it inaugurates a new literary form, the novel, and with the same stroke concludes that form by eclipsing all his imitators and continuators. I am not alone among the writers who worship *Don Quixote* [own translation]).

Significantly, although Coetzee is asked directly about Cervantes, he refers to *Don Quixote* with a radical assessment in terms of the historical literary system of the novel. From that perspective, Coetzee’s view implies that any novelist who tried to surpass *Don Quixote* would be doomed to fail, for the book is as it were the alpha and the omega of the genre. Moreover, Coetzee’s valorisation of *Don Quixote* is also related to elements in the novel that are very innovative and foreshadowed their postmodern reworkings, and so accord with his interest in intertextual treatments. In other words, he considers *Don Quixote* as an *Urtext* that embodies within it the full life cycle of the novelistic craft.

Therefore, Coetzee’s view also implicitly reveals that the genre as we know it has run its course – for if he judged it would continue to evolve, *Don Quixote* could at least theoretically be surpassed or matched – which seems in line with a certain scepticism he has shown about the term ‘novel’. Consequently, Coetzee’s answer also seems to imply that the only honest stance a contemporary novelist can take is to attempt a return to the spirit of *Don Quixote*, which in my reading is precisely wherein the achievement of the *Jesus* novels lies.

In the first part of this chapter, I showed that this fourth, Hispanic world of the *Jesus* novels is intimately linked to *Don Quixote* and to questions of translation, originality and continuity. In the second part I will develop this analysis further by linking *Don Quixote* to the question of cultural transmission, originality and continuity in the *Jesus* novels. From the

previously analysed phenomenon of translation in the trilogy I will move to the transmission of the classic and analyse the crucial role of *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* in this process, which, coupled with the precariousness of libraries and other related features, contribute to the making of the imaginary Hispanic, southern world of the *Jesus* novels.

The Transmission of the Classic

The reception history of *Don Quixote* allows me to show that the version of the novel Coetzee has inherited was in fact a highly mediated one. As I showed at the beginning of this chapter, a very important point to consider is the Cervantean epigraph to *Schooldays*, 'Algunos dicen, segundas partes nunca fueron buenas'. This epigraph appeared originally in *Don Quixote* II (1615), but also refers to the apocryphal *Don Quijote de Avellaneda* (1614), which unlawfully presented itself as the continuation to Cervantes' first part (1605).

Coetzee's work teems with references to *Don Quixote*, and Cervantes has a pivotal position in his literary history. But in order to assess better what Cervantes means for Coetzee, and especially for the *Jesus* novels, we need to move outside the conventional history of the Anglophone novel to understand how a seventeenth-century Spanish novel came to exert such influence – and what kind of influence this was. The methodology will be to bring the insights of Spanish scholarship on Cervantes and his European reception to bear on the *Jesus* novels, which will shed a different yet important light on the trilogy, showing how the creation of the classic develops through its translation and reinvention in different languages and contexts. Significantly, this points to a renewed consideration of *Don Quixote* as a 'world novel', rather than a 'Spanish novel', and indeed undermines the idea of any literary text – and particularly the *Jesus* trilogy – being narrowly national, as Hispanic scholarship shows.

Translation in *Don Quixote* – both its history and treatment within it – is intimately linked to the same trope in the *Jesus* novels. Within the larger canvas of this thesis, this insight problematizes our understanding of Coetzee as among the foremost practitioners of the Anglophone world novel, for his position is far more complicated. As I will show, the novel form as we know it is an English language one only through a history of translation. This prompts a diversion away from the Anglophone reading and critical tradition of Cervantes, so we can appreciate it from a Hispanic perspective in line with the overall focus of this work.

Don Quixote not only travelled from Spain to England, France and Germany very quickly, but also to the most remote parts of the seventeenth-century world. In fact, *Don Quixote* can fairly be considered as the first global book for two reasons. One is that in 1605 hundreds of copies of the first part were sent from Seville to Mexico and Lima (Cervantes xi). The other is found in the second part (1615), in which an astonished Don Quixote is told by the bachelor Sansón Carrasco that there is a book about him written by Cide Hamete Benengeli, that more than 12,000 copies have been printed, and ‘y a mí se me trasluce que no ha de haber nación ni lengua donde no se traduzga’ (‘and it becomes clear to me there is no country or language into which it is not being translated’, 567). Therefore, *Don Quixote* acquired a well-deserved world reputation shortly after publication. Nonetheless, its renown was subject to change in a reception history that spans more than four centuries.

Surprisingly, the novel was initially better understood abroad than in Spain. In fact, as Francisco Rico has shown, while there were no commentaries or critical reviews of *Don Quixote* in Spain during the seventeenth century,

en la Francia y en la Inglaterra de esos años, el libro tuvo en cambio una vivaz presencia en el horizonte intelectual y operó como poderoso fermento de la creación (15).
(In France and in England at the time, the book had by contrast a vigorous presence in the intellectual horizon and operated as a powerful ferment for creativity [own translation]).

Crucially, the English reception was particularly strong, as the translation of the first part appeared in 1612, before the second part appeared in Spain, and therefore in the ‘narrow gap’ between the two volumes Foucault identified.

Furthermore, the first annotated edition was also English, by John Bowle (1725-88), which appeared in Salisbury in 1781, as Rico notes:

La primera edición que entronizaba el *Quijote* en el supremo Parnaso de la literatura nació, por tanto, en Inglaterra y a impulsos de un mecenas inglés (17).
(The first edition that enthroned the *Quixote* in the supreme Parnassus of literature was born, consequently, in England and motivated by an English sponsor [own translation]).⁸⁵

Remarkably, this publishing flow from Spanish to English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is in the opposite direction to the one described by Thompson for today’s publishing world, which shows how international power shifts shape the way books travel (2012, 13). In a similar vein to Rico, Martín de Riquer notes:

Inglaterra, que había sido la primera nación extranjera que había traducido el *Quijote*, era también la primera en dar una gran edición del texto original de la obra, con lo que reafirmaba el entusiasta y admirable cervantismo inglés (264).
(England, which had been the first foreign nation in translating *Don Quixote*, was also the first to provide a great edition of the original text of the work, and in so doing reaffirmed the enthusiastic and admirable English Cervantism [own translation]).

This is another important parallel between *Don Quixote* and the *Jesus* novels, for if the first translation of Cervantes’ novel appeared in English in 1612, the first complete translation of the trilogy appeared in Spanish in 2019. So, although the order is inverted, the languages are the same. If we consider the quixotic touchstone of the cycle and the fact that Coetzee himself orchestrated a first Spanish publication, this seems more than a mere coincidence. Therefore, while Coetzee had no direct relation with the Spanish world, his South African origin and writing

⁸⁵ The edition was published ‘por J. y R. Tonson in 1738’. The sponsor was Lord Carteret.

language nonetheless situate him in a direct line of descent from the country in which *Don Quixote* exerted its utmost influence from an early point.

There is another detail in *Don Quixote's* reception history that is important for our study. Crucially, the quixotic references in the trilogy are related not to Cervantes' novel, but to a torn and frayed copy of a children's version of it, and this book – titled *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* in the trilogy – has an historical antecedent (CJ 151). Interestingly, the title of the Spanish original was *El Quijote de los niños y para el pueblo* (1856), which translates as *The Children's and People's Don Quixote*, connecting infancy with the sort of utopian, classless social structure of Novilla and Estrella. As Rico notes, this book

alcanzó no menos de ocho ediciones y desde la segunda (1861) fue libro «declarado de texto para las escuelas por el Consejo de Instrucción Pública» (28-9).
(Reached no less than eight editions, and from the second one (1861) was 'declared a textbook by [Spain's] Council of Public Instruction' [own translation]).

Therefore, the pedagogic aspect of the children's version and the fact that David's copy is found in the East Blocks community centre has an historical antecedent in the later vision of *Don Quixote* in Spain as a 'serious' book that teaches lessons, which also dovetails with one of the major tropes of Coetzee's mature period.

Significantly, at this point Borges works as a hinge, for he is both a late example of Cervantean reception and an influence for Coetzee. It must be stressed that in rewriting Cervantes this way, Coetzee is also following the Borgesian procedure of 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*', as outlined in Chapter 3. Although the *Jesus* novels have *Don Quixote* as their backbone, the influence of Borges is also present in various guises, especially in order to show how what we take to be an original may only be a reflection. An example: in *Schooldays*, Arroyo explains to Simón that

Our so-called true names, the names we had before *David* and *Simón*, are only substitutes, it seems to me, for the names we had before them, and so on backwards. It is like paging through a book, back and back, looking for page one. But there is no page one. The

book has no beginning; or the beginning is lost in the mists of the general forgetting. That, at least, is how I see it (*SJ* 198).

This passage comes directly from Borges: in his short story ‘El libro de arena’ (1975, ‘The Book of Sand’), an Orcadian bookseller specializing in Bibles knocks on the door of the narrator’s flat in Buenos Aires. Although the protagonist is not interested because he has many rare Bibles, the bookseller then offers another sacred book, which he calls the Book of Sand because it has no beginning and no ending. In fact, when the narrator opens it, he is unable to locate page one, for the pages kept appearing ‘como si brotaran del libro’ (‘as if they sprouted from the book’, 321). Significantly, this procedure is also replicated in the fictional panorama of the *Jesus* novels, for in them there is no visible origin: characters do not know where they come from or which language they spoke before Spanish. This phenomenon is also directly related to the problem of translation and the difficulty in distinguishing between an original and a transcription, which I analysed previously. More importantly, there is no author, for Cervantes is nowhere to be seen as the true creator of *Don Quixote*, the only book in the trilogy. Therefore, I insist that far from engaging exclusively with the narrative of the historical Jesus, the *Jesus* novels install *Don Quixote* as a kind of Bible.

In the rest of this chapter, in order to understand precisely how Coetzee builds the Hispanic world of the trilogy, I will perform a reading that looks at the phenomenon of translation in a twofold way, particularly reflecting on the fact that while translation allows a transmission, there is something that is inevitably lost in the process, but the loss also enables an eventual artistic creation by a child. This phenomenon is related to the discovery of Spanish and *Don Quixote* in *Childhood*, the immersion in a world imbued by Cervantes’ book in *Schooldays*, and the quixotic stories David invents in *Death*.

We have seen that in *Childhood* David discovers a copy of a children's version of *Don Quixote*. However, it is Simón who suggests a use for the book as a learning device for David.

As Simón notes:

You and I are going to read this book together, a page each day, sometimes two pages. First I will read the story aloud, then we will go through it word by word, looking at how the words are put together. Is that agreed? (151-2)

Because David agrees, a pact is established between the two of them that will allow the child to see the world as a reflection of *Don Quixote*. Significantly, the episodes of *Don Quixote* David reads in *Childhood* are very real and exist in Cervantes' novel, beginning with a presentation of the character and the naming of Rocinante, which corresponds to *Don Quixote* I.1, and includes 'The Adventure of the Windmills', which corresponds to I.8 (152-3). They read and discuss the episode, but then crucially David tells Simón: 'He's not a windmill, he's a giant! He's only a windmill in the picture'.

Although Simón proceeds to explain to David that most people agree with Sancho, including 'the artist who drew a picture of a windmill' and 'the man who wrote the book', David chooses to follow the passionate, Romantic spirit of Don Quixote and Emma Bovary. From this moment on, David breaks the pact he had with Simón and henceforth chooses to see reality according to the inner logic of *Don Quixote*, and the world-making he will henceforth create during his short life will be consequently marked by this perspective. Even if the episodes of 'The Cave of Montesinos' and 'Don Pedro and the Puppets' appear in *Childhood* in the same order as in the second part of *Don Quixote*, David begins to see reality his own way (162-5). Therefore, when discussing 'The Cave of Montesinos', he tells Simón: 'He is the hero *and* he is the magician. You tie him up with ropes and put him in a box and when you open the box he isn't there, he has escaped' (163). Although Simón protests ('You have to give up your own

fantasies. You have to stop being silly. You have to stop being a baby’) and they have the book in front of them, the drift has already begun (165).

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, in *Schooldays* both the Spanish-speaking world and the world of *Don Quixote* have become assimilated by David. While there are no specific readings of Cervantes’ original, the centrality of the children’s version to the cycle persists like a background hum: David carries his copy with him and seems to have learned its lessons, and this relates to the Hispanic world-making that develops across the trilogy. Moreover, David applies ideas from *Don Quixote* to real life situations. For example: when David asks Simón whether he will go crazy, the latter responds he will not, to which David remarks ‘But Don Quixote did. He had the kind of head that goes crazy’, which is a rather mature and accurate assessment of the origin of the Don’s problems. This vision is confirmed by Simón’s assertion I quoted in the epigraph: ‘Don Quixote is a good model to follow in your life’ (227).

Don Quixote returns to the fore in *Death*, in which the perpetual conflict between reality and unreality comes to its breaking point, as conveyed by Simón:

David cannot or will not do sums. More worryingly, he will not read. That is to say, having taught himself to read out of *Don Quixote*, he shows no interest in reading any other book. He knows *Don Quixote* by heart, in an abbreviated version for children; he treats it not as a made-up story but as a veritable history (9).

Therefore, the conflict I alluded to earlier becomes explicit: ‘They have had arguments about *Don Quixote*, he and the boy’, for David suddenly and for no reason interjects conversations with remarks about Don Quixote, which shows that as a child he has built a relationship with Cervantes’ character that adults cannot grasp (9, 24).

A little later a crucial event happens: David ‘fell and the strength did not flow back into his legs’, in a scene with Kafkaesque undertones (‘He had lain on the field, helpless as a beetle’, 50). From that moment on, David becomes permanently sick, but his ailment will be coupled with a creative blossoming in which he tells quixotic stories that are not in Cervantes’ text: while

his body deteriorates, his spirit elevates. In Chapter 10, Simón and Inés are walking through the hospital when ‘they hear David’s voice, even, confident’, as he tells one of those stories. The scene is described as follows: ‘Perched at the foot of David’s bed, listening as he speaks, is a young woman, plump as a pigeon, in a nurse’s uniform. Around her cluster the other children from the ward’ (64-5). Significantly, while the reader can tell that the stories drift completely away from the tradition of the European realist novel *Don Quixote* inaugurates (‘The white horse Ivory had a secret power: he could grow wings whenever he wanted’), Simón does not make it explicit (‘He read the book so many times that it sank into his memory. *Don Quixote* became part of him. Through his voice the book began to speak itself’, 72-4). Although here Simón is describing the very same process Pierre Menard underwent in Borges’ short story, the result is precisely the opposite: a completely different story which is also narratively removed from the original text.

As can be seen, by the conclusion of the trilogy David no longer needs *Don Quixote*: he is telling his own Cervantean story, which – in a Chinese box structure – we are reading in a very Cervantean trilogy, thus reflecting the important trope of transmission and reception of literary works across the trilogy. Significantly, David’s storytelling is not rooted in libraries or proper novels, but in his own childish imagination (‘one of *his* stories of Don Quixote’, my emphasis, 98). Therefore, his spiritual blossoming takes the form of a revindication of storytelling, and this is where the title of the trilogy is in my view explained. For, David tells his stories and is followed by other children in the way the historical Jesus was followed by his disciples (‘David pauses. In silence the children await his next word’, 89). From that perspective, David’s message could be that the sheer creative act of storytelling is more important than its textual fixation in writing, under the name of a certain author, and that the former will prevail for as long as human beings exist. This possibility relates to the phenomenon that Walter Benjamin described in ‘Der

Erzähler' (1936, 'The Storyteller'): 'The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale' (146). This is also an example of the transmission of the classic, for David's stories will become the quixotic experience for the Arroyo children.

Interestingly, there is also an autobiographical element at play here. In *The Good Story*, Coetzee reminisces about his own experience of storytelling during his childhood: 'I remember at the age of eight or nine becoming aware of myself as a child inordinately given to fantasy', which brings him closer to David, who dies aged ten (155). Coetzee then analyses his grasp of reality as a child: 'I compared myself with other children of my age, contrasting the ease with which they handled the real world with my own ineptitude', which has a parallel with David's peculiar grasp of reality (156). He goes on to explain that his whole family circle disapproved of his storytelling, except for his mother. Crucially, the English first edition of *Childhood* has a sepia picture of two men and a woman: Vera Wehmeyer, Coetzee's mother. Their appearance and clothes on the cover photograph match those of the 'two men and a woman, dressed in white, the men in shirts and long trousers, the woman in a full skirt and a blouse with the collar turned up', that we encounter in Chapter 9 of *Childhood* (68). We learn a little later that the woman turns out to be Inés, who becomes David's mother in the trilogy. Therefore, there is a parallel between the flowering of storytelling in both the real Coetzee as a child and the fictional David, one also enabled by their mothers, suggesting that the trilogy might be more autobiographical than it may have seemed to be in the first place. This motherly origin of storytelling seems reinforced by the question Coetzee asked during his speech at the Nobel Banquet: 'And for whom, anyway, do we do the things that lead to Nobel prizes if not for our mothers?' (2003c).

The above reinforces the idea that David was a storyteller, and that his stories will prevail despite his early death. In this light, Simón's reflection in the final paragraph of the trilogy may

be misguided, when he laments there is no written message by David explaining what the message of Don Quixote was (*DJ* 197). Significantly, although David dies, his work is continued by the children of Juan Sebastián Arroyo, Joaquín and Damián. In order to pay homage to David's life, they create a spectacle called 'The Acts and Sayings of David', followed by dance and music, in which the main themes of the trilogy all come together, including the (mis)understanding of numbers (166).

In this spectacle, the role of *Don Quixote* is most important of all, for Joaquín and Damián reproduce the final scene of Cervantes' novel, when the Knight is on his deathbed. However, instead of a Don Quixote who forsakes his visions, makes amends and capitulates to reality, the way Cervantes described him, they portray him summoning Rocinante and asking for his sword, which allows us not only to witness again the creativity that the act of transmission and translation entails, but also to see it in the event (168). In David's world, Don Quixote does not surrender on his deathbed, but on the contrary takes his intrepid spirit even farther than Cervantes' creation, signalling that his adventures in fact continue, and so does storytelling. In the limited, provincial world of Novilla and Estrella, David was a vessel who during his all too brief lifetime not only brought his message across, but also encouraged a minor cultural flowering that persists after his death. In other words, the spirit of Don Quixote that David embodied keeps going, for although he dies, there are still stories to tell. This phenomenon brings me to the survival of the classic in the trilogy, which I will begin discussing by referring to the question of why Coetzee wrote three novels that constantly quote *Don Quixote* without ever mentioning its author's name.

Significantly, while Cervantes' book is full of references to real novels *and* their writers, in his conception of the *Jesus* novels Coetzee gives the impression that not only Cervantes, but all the writers who followed his path are forgotten, and this can be connected to his vision of

the library – as in Chapter 3 – and more generally to Western cultural decay, a constant topic of his late period. Just as in *Disgrace* David Lurie was downgraded from Professor of Classics to teacher of Communications 101, so in the *Jesus* novels *Don Quixote* is likewise degraded from its place as the greatest novel to a children’s version that David finds (‘flat on its face under other books, its spine torn off’) in a community centre. Peculiarly, there seem to be no proper libraries in the *Jesus* novels: while we discover there is a network of them on the penultimate page of *Death*, the only library that appears in the trilogy is ‘tiny’, ‘with a couple of shelves of books’ (*CJ* 151).

In other words, Cervantes, and by implication also Borges, Beckett and others who followed in his shadow, seem to have suffered in the *Jesus* trilogy the fate predicted in the pessimistic vision of the library in the Elizabeth Costello cycle, in what can be interpreted as a blurring of the idea of authorship. By contrast, the message of the trilogy seems to be that if books do not really survive in the libraries, storytelling nevertheless will go on. Crucially, this is related to Coetzee’s reflections on what the companions of Don Quixote think of him by the end of the novel: ‘The world turns out to be a more lively, more entertaining place when some of us live out our ideals (while the rest of us are content to watch)’ (*TGS* 77). Therefore, reminiscent of the final scene of *Barbarians* (in which the children’s play seems to imply there is a way forward despite the novel’s bleak fictional reality), here the continued survival of the classics is not foreclosed or precluded by David’s death. This may imply that even if migrants continue to arrive in the new land, their connection with their spiritual and cultural past will not be utterly and irretrievably lost.

While I have argued that *Don Quixote* is the formative text for the trilogy, other classics and languages have the same fate of survival, that is, only in attenuated form. I will continue my analysis of the classics in the *Jesus* novels by referring to the phenomenon of their different

linguistic versions I explored earlier, which is also related to a treatment of linguistic disavowal of English within the novels. Crucially, the word ‘English’ appears only twice in the whole trilogy. It first comes in a dialogue between Simón and David after the latter sings a German song Elena taught him. The lyrics closely resemble the first stanza of ‘Erlkönig’, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832):

*Wer reitet so spät durch Dampf und Wind?
Er ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
Er halt den Knaben in dem Arm,
Er füttert ihn Zucker, er küsst ihm warm. (CJ 67)*
(Who rides so late through mist and wind?
He is the father with his child;
He holds the boy in his arm,
He feeds him sugar; he kisses him warmly. [own translation]).

However, David’s song contains variations in each verse. The actual ‘Erlkönig’ stanza is:

*Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;
er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm. (Goethe)*
(Who rides so late through night and wind?
It is the father with his child.
He has the boy safe in the arm,
He grasps him securely; he holds him warmly [own translation]).

While the first three verses’ variations are barely noticeable, the fourth makes a melodramatic turn that sabotages the spirit of the poem, for ‘feeding sugar’ and ‘kissing warmly’ seem removed from the unsentimental fatherly solace permeating through the original. Furthermore, David’s song has a grammatical mistake, for the German verb *halten* (‘to hold’) in the third singular person is *hält* (‘holds’), not *halt* (‘hold’), which could be interpreted as a marker of fictionality.

Significantly, the ‘Erlkönig’ has a narratological role, for it foreshadows two important elements: while it marks the first intertextual treatment in the trilogy (for *Don Quixote* will appear later), it also foreshadows an important plot development: because the ‘Erlkönig’ is about a child’s death, its inclusion operates as a proleptic device external to the logic of *Childhood*, but

coherent considering the completed cycle. Contrary to textual evidence, David thinks the song is in English, and Simón does not correct him: ‘That’s all. It’s English. Can I learn English? I don’t want to speak Spanish any more. I hate Spanish’ (*CJ* 67). The second time the word ‘English’ appears is in *Schooldays*, when Simón suggests that David sing for Señora Montoya at the Academy: ‘Sing that English song you used to sing to me’ (*SJ* 133). Therefore, on the only two occasions that the word ‘English’ appears in the trilogy the allusion is to a language that is not only not dominant, but also only allowed to appear because of the music, suggesting a primacy of the latter. By contrast, when language is at the narrative centre of the trilogy, this is conveyed in Spanish and underpinned by the Cervantean element I have examined across this chapter.

There is a second German text in Chapter 3 of *Death*, a song David learned from Juan Sebastián Arroyo, sung to Inés and Simón. The latter remarks these songs are ‘Arroyo’s own compositions, addressed to a *tú* who may well be Arroyo’s deceased wife’ (*DJ* 12). The lyrics come from verses of ‘In diesem Wetter’, by Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866).

*In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus,
 nie hätt’ ich gesendet das Kind hinaus –
 Ja, in diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus,
 durft’st Du nicht senden das Kind hinaus!* (*DJ* 12).
 (In this weather, in this storm,
 I would never have sent the child out –
 Yes, in this weather, in this storm,
 you were not allowed to send the child out! [own translation]).

Just as in the ‘Erlkönig’, there are also variations in the novel’s text. The actual ‘In diesem Wetter’ verses are:

*In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus,
 nie hätt’ ich gesendet die Kinder hinaus;
 man hat sie getragen hinaus,
 ich durfte nichts dazu sagen!* (Rückert).
 (In this weather, in this storm,
 I would never have sent the children out;

they were carried out,
I was not allowed to say anything! [own translation]).

The most important changes are the shift from *die Kinder* ('the children') to *das Kind* ('the child'), and from *ich* ('I') to *du* ('you'), which removes the personal lamentation whilst providing an external admonition. 'In diesem Wetter' is part of *Kindertotenlieder* (1872, *Songs on the Death of Infants*), and operates as a proleptic device internal to the logic of *Death*, for it foreshadows David's demise, especially considering the *Kinder/Kind* shift. Furthermore, if the addressee may have been Ana Magdalena, as Simón implied, in David's version the *ich/du* shift seems an admonition to Simón: he was not allowed to send the child out (presumably to Punta Arenas).

The 'Erlkönig' and *Kindertotenlieder* are better known outside the Germanophone world today in their musical settings by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) in 1821 and Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) in 1905, which explains why David refers to them as songs. Furthermore, David mentions he sang the second one for Juan Sebastián Arroyo, whose name is a literal translation of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), as his wife's is of Bach's wife as well (An[n]a Magdalena). Interestingly, although Simón adopts David, the father-son relationship David wants to forge is with Arroyo – for the latter supplies him with musical classics he proceeds to present to other characters in a childlike way – echoing the one Schubert and Mahler had with Bach as the master of their craft in the Germanic world.

This marks yet another connection the *Jesus* novels establish with the pinnacles of European artistic tradition, in parallel with the relationship to *Don Quixote*. While this situates Bach alongside Cervantes, musical classics seem more approachable in the trilogy than literary ones, for while there is a direct musical line (Bach-Schubert-Mahler-Arroyo-David), there are no literary intermediaries between Cervantes and David (although his book is a children's version of *Don Quixote*, and he will later invent whole passages that are not in Cervantes' original, as we saw earlier). Interestingly, if the literary references in the *Jesus* novels are Hispanic, the musical

ones are Germanic – although they are often Hispanicised, which shows the overlap and struggle of Spanish, English and German within the trilogy, in what Wilm has called a ‘palimpsestic use of languages’ (2016, 217). This phenomenon is foreshadowed in *Diary* when Señor C considers Bach as his father, but also wonders ‘Why not Schubert...? Why not Cervantes?’ (DBY 222). Unlike in that book, creators in the trilogy are never mentioned by their real name: what matters are their etiolated or attenuated creations, recalling Borges’ idea that literature’s ‘history could be concluded without mentioning a single author’, as noted in Chapter 2. This can be related to Coetzee’s late-style poetics: if *Summertime* destabilised the idea of authorship by having an autobiography written by someone other than the author, the *Jesus* novels complicate it further by blurring the difference between original and translation.

The transformation of ‘Erlkönig’ and ‘In diesem Wetter’ from poems into compositions and then into children’s songs brings us again to the survival of the classic, and this time I will approach the phenomenon by analysing the narrative space of the *Jesus* novels. The territory in the trilogy is not culturally self-sufficient, and immigrants carry with them and encounter on arrival a transplanted Western culture in a way characteristic of countries of the New World that have a strong European component, but particularly of the Hispanic region of the south: the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina and Uruguay) between 1930 and 1950, which seems the main model for the narrative space and time of the *Jesus* novels. All three countries received a significant influx of European immigrants who escaped large-scale conflict (the Spanish Civil War and the two World Wars) or state persecution (National Socialist or Communist, which can be connected to the characters Señora Weiss, a German name meaning ‘white’, or Dmitri, a Russian one).

At this point we must note an important Hispanic-American set of texts that has strong connections with the *Jesus* novels. I am referring to Juan Carlos Onetti’s *La vida breve* (1950, *A*

Brief Life), *El astillero* (1961, *The Shipyard*) and *Juntacadáveres* (1964, *Body Snatcher*). Like Coetzee's cycle, Onetti's is also composed by three novels, collectively known as *Novelas de Santa María* (*Santa María Novels*). Furthermore, they take place in the south, in an imaginary place in Uruguay, on the northern shore of River Plate, near Montevideo. Moreover, just like in Coetzee's trilogy, in Onetti's fictional territory there are also only two settlements, the Colonia suiza (Swiss Colony) and Santa María, which relates to Novilla and Estrella. In yet another Coetzeean gesture *avant-la-lettre*, in *La vida breve* Santa María is described by Brausen as 'la ciudad de provincias' ('the provincial city'; 2011, 431).

Significantly, just like in the *Jesus* novels, Onetti's fictional world is full of immigrants with European names who must learn Spanish, as Brausen declares: 'trato de enseñar español a los alemanes recién desembarcados' ('I try to teach Spanish to the newly disembarked Germans', 447). Furthermore, the oblivion trope is also present in Onetti, when Díaz Grey (Brausen's invention, a doctor) says: 'se reconoció abandonado por la vida en aquella ciudad de provincias, hombre sin recuerdos' ('he recognised himself abandoned by life in that provincial city, man without memories', 506). Moreover, there is also a parallel between Simón's work in the docks in *Childhood* and the shipyard that dominates Onetti's second Santa María novel.

These commonalities are indeed so strong that they recall a cultural landmark that unites both names, the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, for Novilla could be considered 'Santa María the New'. Therefore, if there is a Hispanic novelistic precedent to Coetzee's project of 'a southern literature from the South', it must be Onetti's. And while all these common elements could be coincidental, there is more to it: in an interview with *El País* in May 2014, the author's widow, Dorothea (Dolly) Muhr, prompted Winston Manrique Sabogal to write that 'El Nobel surafricano J.M. Coetzee ha pedido novelas suyas, cuenta Dolly' ('The South African Nobel laureate, J.M. Coetzee, has requested his novels, Dolly tells', Manrique 2014). Finally, in

a personal interview in Buenos Aires in 2015, Coetzee revealed that ‘Onetti’s widow gave me all of his novels in English translation’ (2015f).

In the *Jesus* novels, the temporal setting in the 1930s-40s – which broadly coincides with that of the Santa María novels – is underpinned by the presence of certain objects and instruments no longer or infrequently used today (coins, landline telephones and horse-drawn vehicles), coupled with the conspicuous absence of hypermodern technology gadgets (smartphones, tablets and computers). There is one further justification for my temporal proposal, namely the inclusion of a verse of ‘Los ángeles colegiales’, included in *Sobre los ángeles* (1929), by Spanish poet Rafael Alberti, who emigrated to Argentina in 1940, which is recited by Señor Arroyo in *Schooldays*: ‘Las estrellas errantes, niños que ignoran la aritmética’ (‘The errant stars, children who do not know arithmetic’, 97).⁸⁶ Alberti’s quote reinforces the idea that if the passage Simón and David undertake from the old world into the new world of Estrella and Novilla can be matched to a real sea voyage immigrants made during the last century, it would be from Europe to the Southern Cone. Crucially, Arroyo says ‘as the poet wrote’, which gives the impression Alberti is not a poet among many in the new world, but rather *the* poet of this community of exiles.

In fact, Alberti is the only poet quoted as such across the whole trilogy: while in *Childhood* there is a similar quote by Álvaro Avocado, ‘Remember what the poet said: bread is the way that the sun enters our bodies’, in fact there is no such poet, signalling the Spanish world-making of the trilogy and a Borgesian game of attributing works to authors who never existed (108). The image of a poet in exile can be related to the voyage of the Winnipeg, organised by Neruda in 1939, which brought 2,200 Spanish refugees from France to Chile in the biggest migratory

⁸⁶ Again, there is a slight variation from Alberti’s original: ‘las estrellas errantes son niños que ignoran la aritmética’ (‘the errant stars are children who do not know arithmetic’, 435).

movement of the Spanish Republican Exile (both Alberti and Neruda were also lifelong Communist Party members, which connects them to the utopian, post-revolutionary thread I analysed earlier). Significantly, most passengers were artists and intellectuals who contributed to Chilean cultural life: among them was the Catalan writer Cèsar August Jordana (1893-1958), Juan Benet's future father-in-law. This episode brings me to the idea of passage, which I will analyse, as I bring this thesis to a close, as 'carrying something across' in the way the Winnipeg passengers did. Furthermore, the phenomenon can be related to both the boat considered as ark and to the idea of a transplanted European archive – albeit as fragments or ruins.

The foundational myth of the trilogy is the idea of passage, seen as an event that occurs to Simón and David during the sea voyage. Although readers are not offered details, its most visible effect on characters is amnesia – the only remaining reminiscences being what Simón calls 'shadows of memories'. From this perspective, while they are stripped of something during their odyssey, there is also something they retain, which relates to the idea of passage as a series of Western cultural elements they are carrying across from the old world into the new world. In other words, even though Simón and David have forgotten their bodily or personal memories, they have carried across the collective cultural memory: hence the Alberti quote Simón renders with a slight variation, and David's ability to convey children's works that are in fact faded or etiolated forms of significant literary and musical artworks. Nonetheless, Simón and David do not know who the original creators of these classics were, and this is directly related to the phenomenon of forgetting I analysed earlier, and to the fact that if something was gained in the transmission, something was also lost.

One unanswered question is if these children's versions of the classics were recently brought by migrants or had been in Estrella and Novilla for a long time. The copy of *An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote* has 'its spine torn off', which could suggest it arrived some time ago.

Nonetheless, there are several markers indicating migrants have brought their culture recently: for example, when Simón visits the institute, he notices various Spanish courses on offer, but ‘no Spanish literature that he can see’ (*CJ* 121). Therefore, if his high culture expectation of becoming familiar with Spanish literature while he learns the language can be related to his previous life (in which presumably there were real bookshops and libraries, and not the diluted versions of the trilogy), it seems unlikely to be fulfilled in the new life. Moreover, the major cultural rule all immigrants must follow is learning Spanish. While Wilm noted that there are no native speakers and no indigenous people in the trilogy, this is in fact wrong, as textual evidence in *Schooldays* shows: Simón tells David they and the people around them are ‘the ones that didn’t have the luck to be born here’ and later notes Señor Robles ‘is writing a history of the colonization of the valley’ (Wilm 2016, 218; *SJ* 17, 24). Nonetheless, the people who arrived earlier do not seem to inhabit a higher cultural or linguistic realm than the new arrivals, which seems to show that the passing of time does not bring much rooting to this new land, as would correlate with Coetzee’s understanding of ‘settlers’, particularly in Africa (Attwell 2011, 9).

The cultural baggage that has been carried across could be seen as an *arché* – ark – or archive of the ruins of European culture re-configured in faded fragments, which characters may be able to interpret eventually – that is why I favour the ‘faded’ image to Pippin’s ‘begun to degrade, become corrupt’, which implies an irretrievable fall (2021, 42). The idea of the archive is also linked to Borges, as González Echevarría has noted, for from his New World position he was a keeper of the pinnacles of different literary traditions from the Old World: ‘the Archive, then, is like Borges’ study’ (1998, 23). Tracing the origin and meaning of the word *archivo* (archive) in Spanish, which stems from *arca* (trunk and ark), González Echevarría implies that:

Archive suggests not only that something is kept, but that which is secret, encrypted, enclosed, and also the common, though old-fashioned Spanish word for chest, for safe, for trunk, like the trunk found in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Aura* (32).

After establishing the relation of the archive with the novel, González Echevarría acknowledges that his vision is inspired by Foucault in *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), for he states that 'it is ultimately in that ambiguous and shifting space called literature that my Archive is lodged' (33).

The idea of passage as carrying something across also relates to the concept of survival and of translation. If, according to Coetzee in 'What is a Classic?' (1993), 'the classic is what survives', the survival of *Don Quixote*, 'Erlkönig' and 'In diesem Wetter' seems related to their sea crossing (SS 19). Once Simón and David are settled down in this new land, a reappraisal of the great artistic creations takes place not as we know them, but in a faded or etiolated way. Crucially, the vehicle for this process is Spanish, which provides artworks with an extension: it is through Spanish that the characters access a reflection of Cervantes and Bach, whereas other European languages do not exist in their world – they even mistake English for German. While characters are unable to grasp these creators' achievements, their continuous appearance – albeit in this veiled, faded form – seems to imply that some people in this new land may be aware of their importance or somehow are their custodians, as Catholic monks and Arab scholars – like the fictional Benengeli – preserved Western and Eastern cultures, and that potentially they could survive further. In other words, just like the characters, the classics have also been transferred from the old world into the new world, and something has also happened to them along the way.

Coetzee developed his idea of the classic in opposition to T.S. Eliot's vision, as expressed in *What is a Classic?* (1945). For Eliot, 'it is only by hindsight, and in historical perspective, that a classic can be known as such' (SS 10). If Eliot's vision was restricted to the literary on a national sphere, and more precisely, to an English tradition purportedly descended from Rome, Coetzee's vision is amplified to include music and Hispanic and Germanic traditions, and particularly Bach.

In *The Classic* (1975), a previous response to Eliot's lecture, Frank Kermode noted: 'it seems that on a just view of the matter the books we call classics possess intrinsic qualities that endure, but possess also an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions' (44). Kermode's assessment allows a reformulation of the question of whether the classics survive in the *Jesus* novels, and the answer is that while they may be visible for us, in the trilogy they are only recognisable to Álvaro Avocado, Juan Sebastián Arroyo and his children, David, and perhaps to Simón, but not the other characters.

The trilogy's fictive reality stems from a European culture and language that have been transplanted into a territory located on the edge of the West, which is also where Borges is positioned. In this new southern world, characters rediscover the spiritual value of artistic creations through the intuitive powers of a child, and the vehicle for this process is learning a new language. In the trilogy, therefore, Spanish has a role as a key to Western culture – as reflected in different ways I have explored across this chapter. These include the encounter of the Old World (embodied in *Don Quixote* and the parallel with Ceuta and Melilla) and the New World, represented in many commonalities with the Hispanic American world. Crucially, while characters arrive in a new land, they also seem to return to 'the shores of the Mediterranean, the cradle of European culture' evoked at the end of 'As a Woman Grows Older', but because of the phenomenon of forgetting I analysed earlier they cannot recognise it as such. However, there seems to be a possibility of a rediscovery through the faded and ruined pillars of music and literature in the veiled way in which they are rendered in the trilogy. This process takes place either through a slightly attenuated or etiolated artistic transformation (*Don Quixote/An Illustrated Children's Don Quixote*) or a more substantial change (poem/composition/song 'Erlkönig' – 'In diesem Wetter'), even though most adult characters seem unaware of the originals.

Significantly, when the adult characters are exposed to the infantilized versions of the classics, they do not experience any aesthetic pleasure, a far cry from Coetzee's 'stunned overwhelmedness' upon first hearing Bach in 1955 (SS 14-5). Furthermore, they are also very far from 'the consistent framing of aesthetic experience in terms of its emotional and physical effects' in Coetzee novels that precede the trilogy, as remarked by Michelle Kelly (196). Consequently, the conditions for the rediscovery of the classics are far dimmer than those that enabled the survival of Bach's art after 1750 – which Coetzee defined as private study and performance coupled with a lack of 'public awareness' (SS 13). While in *Schooldays* Inés and Simón seem to tacitly acknowledge the existence of the original *Don Quixote*, no one is studying Cervantes or interpreting Mahler in the *Jesus* novels: their originals are nowhere to be found, their names forgotten (SJ 73). Although their works according to Coetzee's definition certainly are classics, for 'the classic is what survives', they are presented in an etiolated or diminished form that corresponds to the translated nature of Spanish in the trilogy. However, these faded classics do not seem to have much life left in them and lack regenerative capacity. Because they are not intellectualised, they cannot be criticised.

In the trilogy, the classics are presented by David in a childish way and with additions and modifications of his own. Therefore, their survival relies on their translation into a new medium, specifically into children's versions. However, while high culture artworks are presented in this form, at least one figure from popular culture is presented unaltered and is perfectly identifiable to characters in *Childhood*, as when David watches television: 'Simón, come and see! It's Mickey Mouse! He has a dog named Plato, and he is driving a train, and the Red Indians are shooting arrows at him. Come quickly!' (183). Although Mickey Mouse was originally an artwork, he is conveyed through television (significantly, both became cultural phenomena during the 1930s-40s, the period in which I suggest the novels are set). In that respect, in the

trilogy Mickey Mouse has more value than the classics, for he is presented in the way his creator Walt Disney (1901-66) envisaged. A possible interpretation is that characters can no longer distinguish high culture from entertainment for children: as Pippin implies, ‘in Novilla, Plato might have the same standing as Pluto’ (2021, 43). This observation brings me to explore the possibility of a *continued* survival of the classic, which is complicated by the culturally watered-down vision of the cycle.

If T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) was a lament for the deterioration of cultural values that were nevertheless still visible, the *Jesus* trilogy seems to suggest that traditional high culture and its leading classics in their original form no longer carry meaning in the West. What the reader is presented with instead are some of its ruins, and aspects of their spiritual value which are seemingly retrievable, at least in part and to some degree, through the intuition of a gifted child. This can be related to a reminiscence contained in Coetzee’s ‘What is a Classic?’. Although he first listened to Bach’s *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* (1722-1742, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*) as a child, Coetzee explains he came to identify it ‘only some time later, when I had become more familiar with what, at the age of fifteen, I knew only – in a somewhat suspicious and even hostile teenage manner – as “classical music”’ (SS 9). Therefore, it is possible for a child to discover the classics intuitively, for – as Coetzee’s own intellectual development shows – the critical tools will come eventually.

However, we never get to discover if David would have grasped the classics intellectually, for he dies before adolescence. In fact, one of the blind spots – or a conscious authorial decision – of the *Jesus* novels is that while David is the classics’ interpreter, he is not given a chance to fully develop his capacity. Therefore, the experience of the classics in the *Jesus* novels remains pre-intellectual (that is, interpreted by a child from children’s versions), or even anti-intellectual (for example, when David says ‘I don’t want to speak Spanish anymore. I hate Spanish’), in what

Elmgren calls ‘resistance to learning’ (*CJ* 67, Elmgren 126). Interestingly, even though David accesses the classics intuitively, most adults seem unaware of their significance, which connects with Wilm’s observation that ‘the real children are the adult citizens’ (2016, 205). According to Dmitri, this is also the opinion Ana Magdalena had of Simón (‘you are just a lost child’), which contradicts his main narrative position as the quintessential adult figure in the trilogy, thus bringing him closer to David (*SJ* 222).

This marks yet another parallel with *Don Quixote*, for in the last part of the novel Sancho also begins to see life through the Knight’s vision. This phenomenon is also connected to a lack of real parenthood in the *Jesus* novels. Although they are full of children, there are no births in them, and parents are mostly surrogate fathers and mothers: not only Inés and Simón to David, but also Ana Magdalena ‘became a mother’ to Juan Sebastián’s children, as we learn in *Schooldays*, thereby reflecting the blurring between original and translation that permeates across the whole cycle (200). This surrogacy is indeed a crucial element, for, as I showed earlier, at the ending of the trilogy there is some indication that the Arroyo children – and potentially other children as well – share David’s powers of perception and decoding, therefore allowing the possibility of a survival of the classics beyond his death and the narrative world of the *Jesus* novels.

It is probably still too soon to fully appreciate the importance of the *Jesus* cycle in the whole Coetzeean corpus: a full assessment will only be possible once the manuscripts become available for researchers. However, there are two important facts that are worth mentioning despite this current lack of archival materials. At least on quantitative terms, the 740 pages of the *Jesus* novels make them the most extensive literary project of Coetzee’s career, far surpassing the 496 pages of *Scenes from Provincial Life*. The fact that he tackled this project during his eighth decade says much about the staying power, discipline and rigour that have characterised his whole career.

But even more crucially, on a larger scale and in line with the Hispanic focus of this study, there is no previous example in the history of literature of any other non-Hispanophone writer of Coetzee's stature having embraced Spanish in such a sustained, adventurous and creative way in a narrative project, even though this embrace is very complicated, mainly because the embrace is also a way to escape the English worldview, as Coetzee has declared himself. When the manuscripts become available new research avenues will be opened, and it will be possible to discover which of Coetzee's readings, and which specific countries and forms of speaking Spanish, added up to his vision of the trilogy. In the grand scheme of world literature, Coetzee's vision is at odds with Damrosch's theory, for in the trilogy there seems to be no authority, no empire, no prominence of America or Europe. It is a literature that gains in translation, but it does so in obscure ways. His work certainly disrupts the idea that world literature mainly takes place in English, and that English literature comes from a metropolitan centre from which it has travelled to other Anglophone zones. From that point of view, the *Jesus* novels have rendered our conception of the field more complex and ambivalent.

Conclusion

Reading Coetzee Differently

In Coetzee we find a writer who circulated widely in Spanish translation, and while his circulation began in the south, he eventually also intervened in it with a southern emphasis. We also confront an academic who brought a Spanish dimension to English studies at UCT and who later as a reviewer and critic continued to introduce Hispanophone writers to a global scale and who used his leverage as a world writer to do so. Moreover, we encounter a writer who drew significant tropes and strategies for his late politics of writing from Borges, a literary forebear and a fellow writer from the south. Finally, we engage with a practitioner of the medium of the novel who writes his most extensive narrative project with *Don Quixote* as its touchstone, establishing an intertextual dialogue with the founder of the European version of a form that seems to be ebbing away, and he does so from a Hispanic and southern perspective. For all these reasons, we now can read Coetzee differently.

As David Attwell wrote in *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing* in 2015, ‘few, if any living authors attract as much critical attention as Coetzee does’, and indeed the scope of scholarship on him increasingly resembles that on Beckett (xviii). From the vantage point of 2022, a dozen book-form studies, both monographs and essay collections, have been published in English alone since I came to Oxford. This reality certainly made pursuing doctoral research on Coetzee a daunting prospect. Although I have tried to provide a thorough view of Coetzee’s Hispanic and southern engagements across his career, because of the time and length constraints of a doctoral project there were many aspects I could not fully develop, which I would like to

enumerate here. Crucially, I am strongly persuaded that this thesis marks more of a trunk than a branch of Coetzee studies, and that other scholars might be interested in developing further the multiple Hispanic and southern connections across his *oeuvre*.

Although I examined the lectures for children collected in *Coetzee y los niños escritores* and their significance in Coetzee's career, it would be interesting to analyse his use of a computer programme in order to translate them from English into Spanish, and how this procedure relates to his experiments with computers during the 1970s. Although it is uncertain if the relevant materials exist, access to the translated texts could reveal stylistic patterns in Coetzee's corrections, and potentially the influence of Hispanophone writers. This would involve further study of the creative procedures and results of 'Hero and Bad Mother in Epic' (1978) and its engagement with Neruda.

There is also considerable potential for further study of the relationship and influence of Hispanophone writers on Coetzee. The rapport of Coetzee with Borges is so rich that there are still many aspects to consider, such as the possibility of an influence of Borges' style in Spanish on Coetzee's Hispanophone writing in the *Jesus* novels. In Neruda's case, a close reading of Coetzee's poetry from the 1970s might reveal new insights into his relationship with the Chilean poet, which again came to the fore in *Summertime* and in numerous interviews during the 2010s. Furthermore, it would be equally interesting to explore how García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* influenced Coetzee's trope of late male desire in *Slow Man*, *Diary* and the *Jesus* novels. Moreover, there is also an important similitude in the linguistic treatment of the stories behind both *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the *Jesus* novels, for both stem from *Don Quixote*. As Michael Bell has noted:

Just as the local (hi)story of Don Quixote is 'translated' from the notional Arabic, a prestige language at the time, of the fictional historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli, so the Buendías' history is inscribed in a Sanskrit which they cannot understand (180).

Finally, there is the case of Vargas Llosa, a contemporary writer who carries as much symbolic capital in the Hispanophone world as Coetzee does in the Anglophone world, not only as a world writer but also as a public intellectual, and their relationship might indeed also warrant an individual study. Significantly, of all the above writers, only Vargas Llosa has also written about Coetzee.

In terms of Coetzee's more recent critical gambits, there is his very personal and somewhat heterodox concept of the south. Although I have based a significant part of this thesis on Coetzee's idiosyncratic idea thereof, its formulation remains somewhat mysterious and ethereal. One must not forget that even though the notion is central to Coetzee's late politics of writing, it was also exposed in front of a very reduced audience in Buenos Aires, in most cases of only two dozen students and academics. Moreover, because in each of the lectures the concept of the south was meant to introduce a specific seminar on either South African or Australian literature and considering Coetzee's attitude towards his more occasional texts, it seems unlikely they will ever see the light of day in published form.

Similarly, although in Buenos Aires Coetzee advocated for a greater collaboration between the three different regions of the south he identified (Southern Africa, Australasia and the Southern Cone), it remains to be seen whether further developments will be possible in the future, especially considering the significant disruption of air travel due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the question of why his vision of the south was never expounded or elaborated in any other place than Argentina remains unanswered. Nonetheless, one thing is clear: when Coetzee spoke in Buenos Aires of the need for a 'southern literature of the South', he seems to have had in mind his own *Jesus* trilogy and its imaginary narrative landscape, which brings together aspects of the three regions of the south in English, but with a distinctive Hispanic accent.

J.M. Coetzee's work suggests that to understand world literature we need to pay attention not only to its Anglophone conception – which is indeed less exclusively Anglophone the closer we look at a writer like Coetzee – but also to its circulation in other languages and other worlds, and particularly so in Spanish and in the Hispanic world. Significantly, world literature translates into Spanish as *literaturas del mundo*, thus reflecting the variety and richness of the field. By the same token, Coetzee's *oeuvre* shows that the circulation of this or these world literature(s) not only takes place from the northern centres to peripheral zones, but also in the Southern Hemisphere, and particularly so within and across his personal elective territory of the south.

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 Maeterlinck, Maurice, *La inteligencia de las flores.*
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Murray, Les.
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