



## The author on the stage with multiple hats in J. M. Coetzee's *Elisabeth Costello*

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### Abstract

J.M. Coetzee is directly or indirectly always concerned with the multi-layered narrative texts problematising the concept of authorship and narration. This study treats the two novels as “textual narratives” and “narrative dramas” at a time. From a postclassical narratological perspective, the study investigates the narrators and narrative levels in J. M. Coetzee's *Elisabeth Costello* (2003) with authors without authority. The characters in the novel occupy the roles of authors, narrators and characters having remarkable intellectual, self-conscious and reflective capabilities. The implied author, playing with the evasive links between the biographical connotations and fictional denotations, elucidates the fictional status of the novels regarding various narrative and authorial strategies. The study aims to reveal that it complicates the narrative levels and narrative voices and further incorporates them with that of the implied author. The study, therefore, foregrounding the narratological insights into literary representation of the characters, narrators and fictional authors, explores how Coetzee questions the notions of fiction, history, metatextual narrative and narrative drama amalgamating the elements of narrative representation, ideology and morality, politics (ecopolitics) and literary theory, writing as a semiotic praxis and writing as performance. The paper concludes that Coetzee undermines the hierarchical concepts and binary oppositions (textual, fictional, cultural, historical) assumed or produced through the act of writing or representation.

**Keywords:** Authorship, narration, narrative levels, narrative drama, aged intellectual

“As historias se cuentan a si mismas, no las cuenta uno”<sup>1</sup>

Authors no longer have the lightness,  
the distance from subjective needs and interests,  
required for teaching us how to feel, and, in consequence,  
we no longer have “faith in the artist and his truth”  
(Coetzee, 2003, p. 207, 2004)

<sup>1</sup> Translation: “Stories tell themselves, you don't tell them” *Diary of a Bad Year*

Anyone acquainted with Coetzee's novels realises the fact that they pose challenging questions regarding reality, representation and textuality. The elusiveness of reading in *EC*, even resisting to biographical criticism, is based upon his genuine experiences and observations as an author himself. So, his fiction, is rich in intriguing narrative accounts, contradictory narrative levels and striking ideas open to conceivable, yet unsettling possible readings, many of which are provocative and disquieting. The study analyses how narrative accounts and textual narratives are organised as part of the parables of aged public intellectuals. The notion of aging is not only a motif in the narratives but also a reference to their public image and strong opinions as experienced and influential opinion makers.

### **Classical and Postclassical underpinnings: Intertextual and intergeneric drama of narrators**

Coetzee's attitude towards narrative deviates from the conventional sense of storytelling, which reminds that of the belated concepts offered by classical and postclassical theory and incorporates these new levels with possible effects and functions of the narrative. Using the terminologies offered by classical narratology from a postclassical perspective, we can argue that the narrative strategies in *EC* have to do with the manipulations of the contextual parameters that resist the narrative determinations of the possible interpretative processes of the narrative. The classical and postclassical apparatus and postmodernist and post-humanist terminologies are found in a state of collaboration as well as contradiction. The former keeps on the possibility of narration, while the latter essentially undermines the idea of representation. The former foregrounds the narrative imagination, while the latter reveals the textuality of narrative discourse. Coetzee, associating himself with the ongoing tradition, attempts to rewrite Ulysses, taking a non-epic journey, as implied in the opening passages of the novel: "the imaginary Elizabeth Costello is herself a novelist, an Australian born in 1928. Her best-known work is *The House on Eccles Street* (1969), in which she gives Molly Bloom from Ulysses her own story to tell." . In this sense, as Çıraklı puts (2022), "narrative image is continuously tested, impaired, crippled, damaged – or surprised and subverted– by the very textual set of concepts, which refer to strict ideologies and ideological bias, and devour an epistemic ground on which human being and human consciousness make sense." Coetzee's novels, then, are not only narratives of intellectual degeneration but also sagas of "narrative images". The intertextual storage of the novels are therefore not the references to the previous texts but mere "vanity" of moral, philosophical and ideological assets and assumptions that prove useless in the textual drama and dramatic text in *EC*.

Intertextual discourse and intergeneric play in Coetzee's *EC* is noteworthy as it extends its limit to metatextuality, not only by laying out critical comments but also presenting these texts as part of the narrative discourses and dramatic scenes. The originality and keen parody of the texts and narratives turn out funny comedies or parodies of other texts or dramatic situations. One of the main arguments of this thesis is that these texts are not referenced or questioned in terms of meaning, but they are undermined in terms of diminishment of the "effect." Gérard Genette, in his *Palimpsests*, argues that "any text changes or expands on the content of another text" (Genette, 1997, p. 92), and Foucault, in his invention of "author-ity" questions the very notion of author upon a text. However, in these novels, Coetzee explores and questions the inadequacy of the author or a text (discourse) in retaining the so-called authorial power. Accordingly, author and authorship are among the most heated topics in the history of literature, particularly after the rise of individual authors with the renaissance. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, structuralism and narratology, as scientific disciplines, elucidated the critical terms primarily "author" and drew up lines between the author and narrator, conceiving the narrative prospectus a patterned narrative discourse. Thus, the figures of

“author, narrator and character” appeared to be distinct textual constructs and have received remarkable critical attention.

Easygoing critics almost always emphasise how Coetzee creates doubles for himself and how we should consider the correspondences between his biography and narratives. For example, even the selection of the name “John” seems to be a trick, for Coetzee readily must have known that the naive readers or critics would take it another double for “J-ohn M. Coetzee”. This study essentially criticises this naive and outworn inclination for historical-biographical reading of Coetzee novels. In fact, this study argues that Coetzee, as an implied author, intentionally manipulates these readers or critics to intrigue them into a biographical interpretation of the novels. However, the complicated use of narrative strategies shows that the implied author foregrounds the importance of “narrative representation, only through which the “author's condition” can be represented. *EC* as a narrative, therefore, provides a platform for the exploration and depiction of the author. It is seen through the discrepant narrative layers and levels that Elizabeth is not adequately involved in the events as a character, nor does she feel adequate to have genuine touch with reality as an author. As an activist, she feels too weak to change reality; as a human being, she cannot believe appropriately in / rely adequately on humanity; as an academician, she cannot convince the addressee enough; as a narrator, she cannot achieve her task of storytelling, and so on... As Çıraklı argued (2022)

classical categories of extradiegetic – intradiegetic or heterodiegetic – homodiegetic narrators do not suffice to explain Coetzee's strategy of reversal and narrative drama of modern authorship. An author appears with various roles in different narrative levels and social layers. His strategy of reversal refers to his act of “narrativization of the texts” through which a text is tested/judged by its rhetorical power or its degree of persuasion. The readers are invited to perceive the aged intellectual with diverse narrative roles: author-intellectual, author-novelist, author-character, author-narrator and author-focaliser. Her lectures comprise remarkable narrativization of the texts, and as a novelist, she is being narrativized through a narrative by another author. The author's narrative drama or drama of narrative in *Elisabeth Costello* indicates the inadequacy of “writing,” “narration,” and “performance.” (106).

Moreover, Elizabeth Costello (*EC*), also known as *Eight Lessons*<sup>2</sup>, extremely subverts generic conventions of the novel. In fact, many reviewers were cautious of referring to the book as a novel<sup>3</sup>. The novel, as suggested earlier by Barth (1981), complicates the “narrative levels and narrative layers”, which can be associated with serious, ironic and deconstructive purposes as emerged in the fictional and metafictional narratives, respectively. The functions of narrative discourses in the novel indicate six main categories: (1) explicative; (2) predictive; (3) purely thematic; (4) persuasive; (5) distractive; (6) obstructive (Genette [1983] 1988, pp. 92–4). Genette and his followers ordered these categories by emphasising the authorial complications of the narrative act and thus dissatisfying the thematic and ideological relations between the narrative frames, which deliberately deny or decree the hierarchies between primary and secondary narratives with decreasing emphasis on the representational narrative act. (Genette et al., 1983; D. Herman et al., 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> JM Coetzee: Countervoices.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Giovannelli, “JM Coetzee's unsettling portrayals of Elizabeth Costello,” *Acta Scientiarum, Language and Culture* 33, no. 1 (2011): 63-71.

The narrative point of view is a significant factor in the analysis of ageing in literature. For example, in the bibliography of some novels, old protagonists with over 60 years of experience are included in texts/narratives where the central character considerably shares the point of view. The impetus behind novels having a bibliography with no third-person narrative point of view is to strengthen one's sense of detachment from the story world. Readers are not involved in such narratives; they only perceive the story world and remain detached. Contrary to what has been the previous experience, ageing protagonists emphasize that the most well-developed and complex representations of life as experienced past. These characters are represented to share their story from their own points of view. Elizabeth Costello, however, is a sophisticated character with various features and traits that do not meet any existing stereotype of old or aged characters, maintaining an opposing view when reading the novel. Elizabeth predominantly owns this point of view, and thus negative stereotyping instances of the old protagonists can be considered hers. Hence, this analysis highlights *EC*'s third-person point of view with shifting perspectives and focal points.

The third person extradiegetic narrator takes over the narration of Lessons / Lectures 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8, yet John, Elizabeth or the audiences' minds are revealed along with the narration. The complication of the narrative structure is more evident when the reader understands that this third-person narrator can be fused with the narrating mind of Elizabeth, who frequently thinks of or imagines herself in the third person. Nevertheless, this indicates an extradiegetic posture, as the narrator speaks from without: The parts narrated in the third person also indicate Elizabeth Costello's role as a narrator. Surprisingly, she is said to address herself in the third person: "the person whom she, to herself, calls she" (Coetzee, 2003, p. 207). That split in the narrative role also indicates the split of personality. "Split" in this context has to do with the "narrative gap" regarding narrativity and "degeneration" regarding reality. O'Sullivan, in this context, finds the act of narrating and narrating time very crucial. He argues:

For Coetzee, the "everlasting present" of the story is "nothing but the moment of narration itself" (579); the "construct of narrative time has collapsed", and there is only the "time of narration left" (579). However, the problem of authority returns when we are left with nothing but the "moment of narration itself" (O'Sullivan, 2011, p. 128).

The complication of order regarding the story of Elizabeth and John Costello, the reader has to be involved in a challenging task to construct the story.<sup>4</sup> The chronological order is distorted, and Elizabeth's lessons/lectures appear irregularly. For example, the reader understands in lessons 3-4 that John is "married". In Lesson 1, the reader questions whether John is "married and unmarried" as he sleeps with Susan Moebius, one of her mother's fans. The implied author complicates the narrative order in lesson/lecture 3, letting Elizabeth Costello mention a previous lecture she gave "two years" prior to her famous Kafka lecture ("Report to an Academy"). This is, of course, a reference to the lecture delivered in Lesson 1.<sup>5</sup> "As a Woman Grows Older," represents *Elizabeth Costello* making critical and

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<sup>4</sup> The intricate use of narrative methods demonstrates that the suggested author emphasizes the significance of "narrative representation," which is the only means by which the "author condition" may be expressed. For instance, even the use of the name "John" seems to be a ruse, since Coetzee must have anticipated that ignorant readers or critics would mistake it for "J-ohn M. Coetzee." So, the naïve reviewers nearly always emphasize how Coetzee creates doubles for himself and the correspondences between his life and fiction. This dissertation primarily critiques this simplistic and outmoded historical-biographical view of Coetzee's works. This research indicates that Coetzee, as an implied author, manipulates these readers or critics purposely in order to entice them into biographical interpretations of the books.

<sup>5</sup> Coetzee cites this in his wellknown critical account *The Lives of Animals* (The part appears in a footnote: 18n1).

polemical discussions amidst the American Presidential campaign, which is also a sign of alienation between the authors and reality. They raise political issues and serious concerns about the policymakers but are useless and ineffective through their political, critical and polemical discussions. The extra-diegetic and homodiegetic narrator-focaliser Elizabeth Costello is imprisoned in a narrative layer that signifies a sterile story world. Lessons 3-4 call into question Elizabeth as a mother and explore the mother-son relationship. As an author, she is praised on the stage and the fictional realm of authorship but excluded from life; as a mother, she keeps being an “other” for John. As she persists in her “sacred” authorship, John takes her role seriously, supporting animal rights. John’s love and sympathy for his mother are obvious across the narrative, yet the son hardly takes her seriously.

Authorship has turned out to be a profession. All professional writers write primarily for an implied audience, so an international writer like Elizabeth Costello has developed the habit of writing for strangers. Hence, Coetzee explores such elusiveness, distinct streams of narration and sterile truths observed in the case of modern authorship, and three essential features are significant in the case of postmodern writers: They do not have genuine touch with “(a) experience; (b) audience; (c) truth. Fiction and textuality have overcome experience, modern technological developments and globalisation have extended afar audience; (c) postmodernism, information technologies and the new media and the rise of post-truth have turned upside down idealised, achievable and existent notion of truth (Carstensen, 2007, p. 80). Coetzee states that “a (rash?) decision to set down the truth, as though after a lifetime of exploring one had acquired the credentials, amassed the authority, to do so” (Coetzee, 1985, p. 232). This raises the critical yet eternal question of “author.”

### **Aged public intellectual as Author-Character-Narrator: J. M. Coetzee's *Elisabeth Costello***

Foucault’s famous question “What is an author?” resounds in every point of the Elizabeth Costello. This Australian author (an aged female novelist) is a crucial representative of the global author, who has to do with more than textual or historical concerns. A global author is one who engaged a confident cultural position within the global world. S/he attempts to exert its potential to frame out the narrative with particular function and meaning of “we in its exclusive form,” (*Elisabeth Costello* 40-41). The role of global authors is extended from nations, achieving beyond local struggles. For example, Elizabeth Costello (Coetzee’s fictional author) is said to have re-penned *Ulysses*. The keen and apparently playful reference to the historical author’s rewriting of *Foe* (and the protagonist Defoe) and *The Master of Petersburg* with particular references to Dostoevsky and the historical period at the time of revolution, Elizabeth Costello’s imaginary “The House on Eccles Street” and imaginary *Ulysses* is aimed at challenging all these historical, narrative and textual categories. He attacks history and reality as such, in referencing Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus. Or, The voice of the addresser (Coetzee’s lecture) refers to many voices at a time. Robinson takes over the narration of the story but this supposed voice, as a lingering agency, is on the go to signify its true referent” (Çıraklı, 2022). As a matter of fact, Coetzee published the novel *Crusoe* under the pseudonym of Daniel Defoe (79). Kochin argues that “Coetzee writes out of and in response to the material history of literature” (4). In fact, he, from a historical – and somewhat Marxist -- point of view, considers authorship ‘a capitalistic game the professional authors are involved. The authors are supposed to “play the game by the rules of the [established order and] state” (Coetzee, 1992, p. 364). Hence, the critics who discuss

the notion of “authorship” concerning historical-economic parameters refer to the historical author’s views. This is because it seems Coetzee prioritises “Defoe” and assigns him a representative value. As Kochin (2008) puts “Defoe was the first writer to make a living by the sale of his books and pamphlets to the public, that is, to book buyers who did not know him, and who bought his books because they wanted to read them” (Kochin, 2008, p. 80). So, Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello* and Robinson Crusoe as a self-reliant character with strong opinions, integrated skills and over-confident storytelling seem to be appropriate figures to explore the position of modern author as narrator and character within the text and as a powerful individual emancipated from the security of the patronage. Even though, there might be hot debate as to whether patronage is completely removed from the so-called sector, it is an undeniable fact that modern author turns out to be an essential “stakeholder” of the system. Çıraklı argues, “not only concerning the economic power but also regarding, in Bourdeau’s (1986) terms, “cultural capital”, modern author is a sort of contemporary “influencer” holding and retaining a significant “intellectual capital” (2022). It is very clear in his *Elizabeth Costello*, when the authors save intellectual capital like the goods and commodities having a considerable exchange value. An author with a *prima facie* (write in latin) is a “business(wo)man” in the economic sense (*EC*, 166-7).

However, we should not conceive of such an author as one who has transcended or outgrown cultural, literary and historical institutions, but rather as one who writes within world-wide cultural mediums with international receivers, including the Swedish Academy with its globalized (and politicised) nomination stages and procedures (or, relatively humbler organizations or associations like PEN International.

[1] I’m a country girl myself, she would like to say, but does not, though it is true, in part. Nothing exceptional about being from the country. [2] Each of the entertainment staff is expected to give a short public talk. [3] ‘Just to say who you are, where you come from,’ explains the young coordinator in carefully idiomatic English. [4] His name is Mikael; he is handsome in his tall, blond, Swedish way, but dour, too dour for her taste. (*EC*, 37).

Coetzee states “The efforts of authors to give us lessons, therefore, no longer work to promote those ideals: authors are disgraced, that is to say, are deprived of their expected grace, by the spirit of righteousness (Coetzee, 2004, pp. 12–13). The spirited human consciousness with strongly implanted idea of formulated virtues and morality, the overconfidence in one’s own –socially constructed and unreliable— consciences of those who has the right to condemn one, is not so innocent as we think him or her to be. The myth of the righteous person, as depicted and explored in *Elizabeth Costello*, does not provide a graceful ground for the “suffering of the innocent” or, for holding the correct moral or humanist stance or political correctness. Authorship with the privilege of righteousness has absolved itself of complicity. Costello, and thus Coetzee, try to regain their innocence through discourse and discursive engagement, yet their intellectual desire to be rescued falls to remorse. As Foucault (1969) suggested earlier, “the themes destined to replace the privileged position accorded to the author have merely served to arrest the possibility of genuine change” (Foucault, 2019, p. 118). J. M. Coetzee, in this regard, takes on a difficult job to show, explore and represent Foucault’s words in a way that depicts the situation of author in particular narratives in the face of the grand narrative of authorship. His fictional narratives and memoirs are devoted to reveal the critical change in the reception of authorship. Particularly *Elizabeth Costello* (and *Diary of a Bad Year*) elucidates the issue apart from what Barthes, Foucault or Derrida have so far discussed under the title of “death of the author” and represents this “degraded image of author” within the narrative framework

by using narrative strategies filled with postclassical implications. Various kinds of situational irony emerge from the contradictory and discordant narrative levels, which clearly indicate the authorial status having lost its monopolic, monologic and univocal dominance over the other voices. Kochin maintains “Coetzee’s body of writing can be seen as what the Greeks called an *askēsis*, a series of exercises designed to purge him of the impulse to take idealistic stands in the manner of an author” (Kochin, 2008, p. 82). Doubling or tripling the focal points with alternating narrative streams of essays, lectures, interviews, mental speculations, free indirect discourses and dialogues, the implied author puts all these elements together, in his nonfiction (i.e. memoirs) and fictions (i.e. *Elisabeth Costello*). *EC* deliberately hints at there are significant references to the biography of the historical author. David Attwell stresses that Coetzee exerts using generic pluralities to document an author’s progress as writer, critic, narrator, focalizer and a character. Elizabeth Costello comprises philosophical essays, religious pamphlets, scientific reviews, literary passages, and reviews on history, politics, economy, philosophy, drama / film, commerce / advertising, even the comic strip and cartoons, sports, journalism, and cultural accounts, generic stereotypes as the historical author’s nonfiction has included. The character *Costello* is seen to discuss “the white tribe,” “the Afrikaner,” “Global South” or “African Novel.” *Elisabeth Costello*, as particular narrative against the grand narrative of truth, resists any compromises in what conventional narratives require of the implied readers, never trying to narrow or eliminate the gap between the mass-market lowbrow readers in the street and the so-called intellectual highbrows. That is not the declaration of the victory of all-encompassing “popular literature, culture and humanities.” What Coetzee highlights in Elizabeth Costello, then, not merely South Africa, but world and global culture is a challenging and complicated concept. Regarding the problems cast by the contemporary world and the global humanist culture, Coetzee argues that:

As for the other pieces you mention, pieces on South African society, I think they deserve a quiet death. I am afraid that at a certain stage of my career – the mid 1980’s – I slipped a little too easily into the role of commentator on South African affairs. I have no talent for that kind of political/ sociological journalism. To be more specific, I am too suspicious of the genre, of the vision it locks its practitioners into, to give myself wholly to it, yet I lack enough zeal to try to turn it upside down or inside out. Anyhow, I am far too bookish, far too ignorant about real people, to set myself up as interpreter, much less a judge, of the lives they live (Coetzee, 1992, pp. 103–104).

It is clearly seen in “Eight Lessons.” As highlighted in the narrative by the third person narrator, and Joe’s stream of consciousness intertwined with the free indirect discourse, the implied reader learns about the professional life of the author protagonist Elizabeth Costello, whose major works deal with realism, realistic representation and reality (“The Lives of Animals” and “The Humanities in Africa”), deconstruction of history and realism (“Realism”) or mimicry of the previous authors (an imitation of Kafka: “At the Gate”). Coetzee, as a contemporary professional author, support themselves by lecturing, speaking and, notably, teaching at university. The outcome is a literature produced for academic professionals, replete of academic conventions and reflective not just of literary traditions but also of generic boundaries, aesthetic prejudgements, literary-critical schools and reading habits and fashionable styles or emerging reading schools. Elizabeth Costello, therefore, discusses from the inside this transition from the book writing to academic writing, or vice

versa.<sup>6</sup> In a spoof of “postmodern reflexivity,” the critical lectures and courses in *Elizabeth Costello* consist mostly of anecdotes about academicians, where she emerges as a storyteller and re-maker of the past.

Elizabeth’s “Lesson One: “Realism”, where John describes his mother’s visit to the college and literary award talk, represents how Costello as author attacks reality, history, authorship, liberal humanism, humanist assumptions and idealisations and hierarchical construction of what we call reality<sup>7</sup>:

[1] The blue costume, the greasy hair, are details, signs of a moderate realism. [2] Supply the particulars, allow the significations to emerge of themselves. [3] A procedure pioneered by Daniel Defoe. [4] Robinson Crusoe, cast up on the beach, looks around for his shipmates. [5] But there are none. [6] ‘I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them,’ says he, ‘except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows.’ [7] Two shoes, not fellows: by not being fellows, the shoes have ceased to be footwear and become proofs of death, torn by the foaming seas off the feet of drowning men and tossed ashore. [8] No large words, no despair, just hats and caps and shoes.

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[9] For as far back as he can remember, his mother has secluded herself in the mornings to do her writing. [10] No intrusions under any circumstances. [11] He used to think of himself as a misfortunate child, lonely and unloved. [12] When they felt particularly sorry for themselves, he and his sister used to slump outside the locked door and make tiny whining sounds. [13] In time the whining would change to humming or singing, and they would feel better, forgetting their forsakenness.

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[14] Now the scene has changed. [15] He has grown up. [16] He is no longer outside the door but inside, observing her as she sits, back to the window, confronting, day after day, year after year, while her hair slowly goes from black to grey, the blank page (*EC*, pp. 4-5).

Shifting narrative perspectives between third person (John) and first person (Elizabeth), are interwoven with *intradiegetic* narrative layers (not narrator), in which Elizabeth appears to be a lecturer, an ambiguation of rhetorician and storyteller, politician and manipulator, historian and novelist. Five lessons out of the total eight in the narrative, including the section “As a Woman Grows Older,” are told from third person point of view from Elizabeth’s perspective (they are narratologically different categories) and three lessons are told from a third person point of view but from the perspective of John, Elizabeth Costello’s son.

Even though Elizabeth Costello’s career is said to have been launched by telling Molly Bloom in Joyce’s *House on Eccles Street*, she preaches about the crucial need to stop reiterating the stories inbred through the existing heritage of the past. In this sense, Cornwell argues that the protagonist is portrayed to “deliver the lectures that comprise the greater part of the texts in which she appears. The snatches of narrative in which the lectures are

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<sup>6</sup> Remember Coetzee’s Nobel talk, he typically exercises self-reflexivity and responds to academic invitations by reading a short story.

<sup>7</sup> The sentences are numbered to follow up the swithes of the narrative modes.



embedded are there for the sake of the lectures” (Cornwell, 2011, p. 355). What is more, she holds on her storytelling moment at the time of her non-authentic and unrealistic “lecture” about reality. Thanks to the narrative strategies and the narrative medium of depiction, her claims prove situational irony: She argues that we avoid inherited stories, from which we must be liberated in order to create our own stories. However, the very moment of storytelling, and the only narrative medium she can exist, additionally give way to a dramatic irony from the perspective of the audience.<sup>8</sup>

That is also an indication that Costello is suffering the “loss of faith in the liberating potential of rewriting and retelling” of the previous stories. Modern authors’ creative zone has long been outworn, and Costello’s remarks can be considered a justification for the fatigue of their imagination, storytelling and creative talents. Making the authors and writing the objects of representation and the arts, therefore, seem to be the last material to use and elope with to mark the end of creative powers of the artists. She, posthumously, would only begin to regain these creative powers after death as implied in the last lesson. Such death is also a reference to her being an “object of the arts”, which is a reversal in the concept of human being. As Çıraklı argued “Within the framework of humanism human being is the sole centre, after the rise of humanities human being is the essential subject, and after the postmodern/post-narrative turn, human being becomes an object” (2022).

Costello’s following lecture “Lesson 2: The Novel in Africa,” takes place aboard a cruise tourist liner to Antarctica, where authors, critics or intellectuals are staged as lecture givers, our Elizabeth Costello is embarked accompanied by an old Nigerian novelist. They are scheduled as part of entertaining and funny presentation with a Russian band. The former author Emmanuel Egudu<sup>9</sup> presents himself in a funny way. He reads his own biography, portraying himself in the third person, which glimpses at the narrative distance between the orator and the rhetoric:

“He lectures at American institutions, informing the young of the New World about the exotic topic on which he is an expert, just as an elephant is an expert on elephants: the African novel. An elephant is a fine animal, but he should not be confused with a zoology professor” (42-3).<sup>10</sup>

Emmanuel Egudu is, in a sense, Coetzee’s dark stereotypical doppelganger, despite the fact that he seems to be nothing more than “embodied” entertainment and is presented to be the “punchline” of his own discourses and jokes. Through this figure, Coetzee creates another version of intellectual author, presenting a black African ex-novelist as a character,

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<sup>8</sup> In Coetzee's Nobel talk, Robinson Crusoe states that there are a finite amount of tales in the world, forcing us to recount them in order to continue writing. This plagiarism, like Joyce's reiteration of Homer's *Odyssey*, is best seen as an effort to put previous tales to work so that we are free to create our own.

<sup>9</sup> The name bring to mind Romanus Egudu, a researcher of West African oral poetry.

<sup>10</sup> Remember Roman Jakobson’s rejecting Nabokov (at the time a member of the curator team of butterflies at Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology) at the department of comparative literature. J. M. Coetzee, the historical author, implies that contemporary author should be, figuratively put, both an elephant expert and a biologist. Coetzee, Costello and Mr. C are all experts of novel writing and academicians on literary criticism.

he posits an uprooted version of a former South African writer and critic in Anglophone descent. Emmanuel is neither an excellent example of a beast nor a teacher. In his emotional cruise-ship speech, he extols the glories of the traditional African perspective on life and art, while refusing to accept anything about the realities of contemporary Africa, other than its failure to provide him with the luxuries he has become used to (*EC*, 37, 41-2). As shown in Elizabeth Costello's teachings in lesson five and lesson six, the implied author demonstrates that the readers cannot aspire to discover the foundation for a gracious future in Western culture and high cultural society. 11 But he represents in Lesson 2 how global multiculturalism falls so naïve and emotional and it extremely proves to be a fallacy. The representation of a fake intellectual on the stage with outworn argumentations, acquired memorisations, stale seductions and hack philosophy, the implied author reveals how Emmanuel Egudu's shallow lecture provides the audience with no solace for sorrow and alienation. Sharing the desk with Elizabeth Costello, he does not know that the contemporary readers are no longer naïve enough to fall for Emmanuel's line and the contemporary readers on the brink of posthumanism and in the face of the death of universals, are still open to hold considerable tolerance and understanding of universal experience of humanity, yet they are not naïve enough to be seduced easily by the stories of multicultural spices. Costello's Australian origin provides her with a degree of comfort, which allows her to disparage the afrikaneer writer, Emmanuel's (and therefore Coetzee's) business of writing for strangers (Kochin, 2008, pp. 51–52).

Regarding the grand narrative of humanism, it is also noteworthy that Coetzee demonstrates that whilst diversity and multiculturalism cannot ultimately rescue us. The grand narrative of Western humanism is also unlikely to do so. The humanism of the West, even the humanism of the factual writer Paul West, is incapable of reconciling the worst atrocities the West has committed:

[1] The book she was reading that day was by Paul West, an Englishman, but one who seemed to have freed himself of the more petty concerns of the English novel. [2] His book was about Hitler and Hitler's would-be assassins in the *Wehrmacht*,<sup>11</sup> and all was going well enough until she came to the chapters describing the execution of the plotters. [3] Where could West have got his information? [4] *Could there really have been witnesses who went home that night and, before they forgot, before memory, to save itself, went blank, wrote down, in words that must have scorched the page [...]<sup>12</sup> how their limp old-man's penises would quiver one last time? One after the other to the scaffold they went, in a nondescript space that could have been a garage or equally well an abattoir, under carbon-arc lights...* (*EC*, pp. 157-158).<sup>13</sup>

Lessons 3 and 4 of "The Lives of Animals" are structured around a new moral claim and questions the human centred morality. Lectures at Waltham College, where the old intellectual is invited to give a series of lectures, discusses the humanist capitalistic notion of production in the form of factory farms, which refers to victimisation of endless number of fellow creatures, whose death never indicates a moral concern from the perspective of human centred morality, capitalistic order of cultural humanity, hypocrisy of liberal humanism. The essentialist view of the need for the products derived from animal farming

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<sup>11</sup> Originally put in italics.

<sup>12</sup> Long and lingering stream of passage skipped. *Brackets mine*.

<sup>13</sup> In the focalising part [4], italics are mine.

is compared to that of Nazi death camps, which in this case, signposts a radical reaction and a keen response to politically correct standards of void and immoral essentialism. The present study argues that Costello as a broad minded intellectual and a sensitive child of nature, in fact, deconstructs history and historical facts invented upon the myth of innocence and humanity. So, her aim is not to retell the past story of the Jews in Auschwitz nor Stalin's extermination of virtually incalculable millions. She uses a narrative strategy of multiple narration to draw the attention to the discrepancies and inconsistencies between the narratives. Keeping the past stories as they are, she carefully and keenly adds new stories to them, thereby revealing the gap in the consistent stories and simply calls into question the value of consciousness in rational acting. Costello acknowledges the disappointment of the West. She explores the fundamentals of the romantic idealism and essentialist morality and calls into question the centrality of human and human consciousness in the wake of human's implanted and inherited horrors and, in fact, enacts this catastrophe with varying elements of consciousness and self-awareness. Costello's lecture, as she stressfully implies, preaches about this issue and ponders the primacy of human being as a conscious entity, turns out to be a meditative performance not to persuade the audience, but to "save her own soul" (89). So, John perceives her resistance to comply with the current—and over-confident—human condition that she, too, will suffer and die in a world of misery and death. At the conclusion of "The Lives of Animals," he soothes her by stating, "It will soon be over" (*EC*, 115). Any hope of comfort fall afar, so the protagonist cannot help pontificating about and problematising animal rights and animal abuse. The very narrative drama and dramatic irony become overt in that her beliefs in the form of verbal manifestation emerge as a verbal performance that meets the need for a few good words with a smile, positive acclaim, rewarding response and huge hugs.

The theorists, intellectuals or philosophers have thus far failed to give sufficient and explicative ethical ground to the author's talent and skill to empathise with the animals. Humanists should have long been aware of their own animal bodies, feeling them, to be moved sympathetically with the animal suffering or exaltation depicted—and legitimised—in the cultural history. Yet Coetzee requires us to acknowledge that Costello's effort to derive moral lessons from the power of authors. In the passages Elizabeth Costello refers to Ted Hughes, the implied reader is provided by a new account as to how animals experience their bodies and how Hughes makes the reader feel like an animal, how we can imagine ourselves embodied the way animals experience their bodily existence. The examples of a "jaguar" or a "salmon" indicate the protagonist's quest for a better understanding of "living" experience:

[1] Rilke's panther? [2] What panther? [3] His confusion must show: the girl next to him pushes a photocopied sheet under his nose. [4] Three poems: one by Rilke called 'The Panther', two by Ted Hughes called 'The Jaguar' and 'Second Glance at a Jaguar'. [5] He has no time to read them.

[6] 'Hughes is writing against Rilke,' his mother goes on. [7] 'He uses the same staging in the zoo, but it is the crowd for a change that stands mesmerized, and among them the man, the poet, entranced and horrified and overwhelmed, his powers of understanding pushed beyond their limit. [8] The jaguar's vision, unlike the panther's, is not blunted. [9] On the contrary, his eyes drill through the darkness of space. [10] The cage has no reality to him, he is *elsewhere*. [11] He is elsewhere because his consciousness is kinetic rather than abstract: the thrust of his muscles moves him

through a space quite different in nature from the three-dimensional box of Newton — a circular space that returns upon itself (*EC*, p. 95).

As for “Lesson 5: The Humanities in Africa,” Elizabeth Costello, as a novel and novelist, a narrative and storyteller, a serious issue in humanities and an intellectual, similarly focuses on a lecture in an academic medium in Johannesburg, presented at the opening of a university division on the occasion of her sister Blanche’s invitation. She is now a clergywoman (a prioress Sister Bridget) at the institute. This characterisation shows another keen and clever example from Coetzee’s collection of the types, which is full of implications regarding the fact that they are both part of author-itarian institutions, a critical and harsh reference to authorship, figuratively put, as a form of humanitarian clergy. The counter-balanced arrangement of the doubling of professions two sisters have attained are noteworthy here: Her sister is previously a classical scholar, a Catholic nun at present and a member of medical missionary at the institute; and Costello is a former academician and novelist, who has turned out as a cultural preacher. As a matter of fact, Sister Bridget delivers a purposefully controversial speech depicting the chasm between the humanist goals of literary studies and Christianity. Here, it can be argued that Coetzee, as ahistorical and implied author, demonstrates a sight of this gap, displaying post-Christian and post-humanist opinions by clerics and academics, preachers and authors. The scene is a bit scary as much as it causes the modern readers to flinch at the faux pas of mentioning it aloud.

In the scene when Blanche takes our protagonist author Costello to the Zululand hospital in remote place, where she meets a talented woodcarver, Joseph, who has spent his whole life making replicas of painful Jesus image, the idealised human being writhing and suffering in anguish on the cross in various sizes, Coetzee’s strategy of reversal and strategy of multinarrative are at work: Elizabeth sees skill squandered, Sister Blanche sees personality sacrificed in appreciation of “Our Saviour’s” sacrifice (137-8). Through the gap between the interwoven narratives and focalisations emerges the critical revelation of the aforementioned counter-balanced, yet too naïve, arrangement. Ms Costello has no rebuttal for Blanch’s conviction of Christian view of life based upon Western humanism: she concedes that humanism has failed to deliver on its promise of redemption. The enlightenment and the age of reason evolved into a questionable contemporary human conception with bodily expression as discussed in the early twentieth century:

‘When I was a student,’ she says, turning back to the Godwins, ‘which would have been around 1950, we read a lot of D. H. Lawrence. Of course we read the classics too, but that was not where our real energy went. D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot - those were the writers we pored over. Perhaps Blake in the eighteenth century. Perhaps Shakespeare, because as we all know Shakespeare transcends his time. Lawrence gripped us because he promised a 126 form of salvation. (Coetzee, 2003, p. 126)

Elizabeth agrees that Western humanism high culture can only endure if it can discover a novel and appealing means to satisfy the need for redemption. Elizabeth’s only convincing answer to Blanche’s sermon is the promise of enjoying the moments of pleasure available even in the midst of misery and sorrow, when still beautiful women give themselves sexually to men for love, charity, or money. Elizabeth is said to have refrained from writing this response down, but she raises this argument to her sister (Coetzee, 2003, pp. 147–155). That

is a naïve and weak gesture on her part, as it simply contributes to the comedy of manners and the drama of lecturing. The readers should give them credit for such wonderful material for humour.

Another humanist myth Elisabeth Costello attacks takes place in “Lesson 7: Eros.” Costello contemplates the mythic grand narratives of natural connection between female and male (sacred heavenly arrangement of the lovers). With acute reference to real American poet Robert Duncan, (back in “Lesson 1: Realism”) and John’s casual talk with the fictional character Susan Moebius<sup>14</sup>, portrayed to be an academic on Elisabeth Costello oeuvre, so a professional critic of his mother’s books are brought together. The historical author Coetzee’s sense of humour is obvious in the names as they correspond to historical notions, figures or ideas. The implied author’s referring the “heavenly gift of authors and poets” (28) correspond to the debate of authorship on various levels. On the one hand, the readers are tasked with determining the depictions of striking analogies and imaginative powers of the historical author, implied author and the character as a focalizing agent in the narrative. The extended metaphor assuming sexual contact between gods and women, Elisabeth is depicted to provide representations of authors’ heavenly capacity in coinage, rhetoric and language use in a way that transcends mere reality. As an author and novelist, the protagonist indirectly refers to herself as having a divinely gifted mind. She in a way differentiates herself from the readers and her adoring followers and audience, dividing a line between mortality and vanity of the male and female readers and perpetual creativity of the artists. An author, therefore, “ceaselessly nibble away at her substance in a frantic attempt to emulate the divinity she embodies” (3, 6, 28, 30-1). Elisabeth believes that she may suffer the same fate as “the actress Frances Farmer in the film Frances, who was repeatedly raped by scumbags who want to brag that they fucked a movie star when she was a mental hospital” (185).

Regarding the questions “Do humans and gods continue to have conferences?” or “Can we still understand the language of the world?” or “Do things still inspire us to write?” *Elisabeth Costello* presents a narrative of interrogation in the postscript as follows:

#### **Letter of Elisabeth, Lady Chandos, to Francis Bacon**

Dear and esteemed Sir, You will have received from my husband Philip a letter dated this 22nd August. Ask me not how, but a copy of that letter has come under my sight, and now I add my voice to his. I fear you may think my husband wrote in a fit of madness, a fit that by now may have passed. I write to say: It is not so. All that you read in his letter is true, save for one circumstance [...] Perforce I became his dryad: it was I whom he entered when he sought to enter her, I who felt his tears on my shoulder when again he could not find her in me. *But a little time and I will learn to be your dryad, speak your dryad speech*, I whispered in the dark; but he was not consoled (original italics, *EC*, 227).

The embedded narrative in which Costello tells the story of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his *The Lord Chandos Letter* or Philip, the Elizabethan lyric poet, and his *Lord Chandos*,

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<sup>14</sup> Mobius strip in geometry is a three dimensional un-ending shape.

and his relationship with his old mentor Francis Bacon. In these passages, Coetzee-the-  
implied-author's imitative discourse of "Letter of Elizabeth" and "Lady Chandos," supports  
the main argument of this dissertation. Rather than the truthvalue, reliability or  
persuasiveness of the singular narratives, the narratives under consideration attracts the  
attention to the existence of multi-narratives and ironic gaps between the narrative layers  
and levels. What is the heart of the matter in Coetzee's novels is not rewriting or  
reproduction, but the coexistence of the multiple narratives which always questions or  
subverts one another. All these narrativized discourses are at a constant textual relationship  
and they produce newer meanings, and they constantly produce newer narrative gaps,  
discordances and contradictions. For example, through the allusive passages of another  
female character (Lady Chandos), Elizabeth Costello attempts to make new analogies  
between the characters and herself. She alludes to the lady's raptures in the embraces of her  
formerly "divinely lyrical husband". The very female protagonist as an author resists and  
subverts the conception of "woman as a semi-divine dryad or nymph." Now, she is not an  
immobilized or paralysed writer incapable expressing herself, her experiential elations  
through intelligible words. Rather, she is the master of language, yet unable to control or  
have reality as such. Whether a Philip Chandos or an Elizabeth Costello, the author  
henceforth overwhelms the divine or overcomes the idealised constructions. The author is  
able to translate his/her sensitivities, experiences, elations, raptures, inabilities, dilemmas,  
disappointments into works of art, verbal or nonverbal, but these works are not only the  
results of creativity of human imagination, but also somewhat ludicrous and vain  
manifestations of the aged, intellectual speculations of the old, mental and imaginary  
arrangements of the notions. On the other hand, Elizabeth Costello is at the stage to tell the  
story of these ongoing ruptures, as an aged female author rather than a semi-divine authority  
or nymph, to forget about her incapability to fix the ruptures, nor her ultimate immobilization  
in terms of action.

All in all, as regards "Lesson 8: At the Gate," the readers are invited to perceive the  
author dead. Elizabeth Costello is now deceased, but she lingers in a midpoint, as if she were  
in a limbo, in a remote and strange imaginary city. Dooley, G., & Phiddian, R. (2016) argues  
that "we can read all of this as Coetzee's anguished personal reflections on the limits of  
fictional truth, but it is also possible to read it as the work of an author distancing himself  
from a cipher-like narrator (Dooley & Phiddian, 2016, p. 20). She appears somewhere  
reminding us of Kafka's Prague, Joyce's Trieste, and Hofmannsthal's Vienna. It is the  
protagonist Costello, who would walk through the "gate into the dazzling light" (Coetzee,  
1980, p. 131) (this sign of death previously used by Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarians*):

[1] 'Excuse me,' she says. He pays her no attention. 'Excuse me. Can someone open  
the gate for me?'

[2] He is filling in some kind of form. Without ceasing to write, he speaks. 'First you  
must make a statement.'

[3] 'Make a statement? To whom? To you?'

[4] With his left hand he pushes a sheet of paper across to her. She lets go of the  
suitcase and picks up the paper. It is blank.

[5] 'Before I can pass through I must make a statement,' she repeats. 'A statement of  
what?'

[6] 'Belief. What you believe.' 'Belief. Is that all? Not a statement of faith? What if I do not

believe? What if I am not a believer?'

(Coetzee, 2003, pp. 193–194).

At this scene, she is asked to make her statement of faith so that the guards would let her get through the gate. She needs to submit a "statement of her convictions" before the gate (193-4). She is immobilized at the gate and she found herself to strive for the eradication of her beliefs and convictions, such as those expressed in the previous lessons like "The Lives of Animals" and "As a Woman Grows Older." If redemption needs conviction in her hypothetical idealisations, the author as character cannot rescue the realm of textual inventions and the realm of reality, both of which cannot bring about everlasting self-confidence out of the presuppositions that have proved constructed idealisations, as John referred to as "the spirit of righteousness" before her death (remember the passage "As a Woman Grows Older").

The narrative entrapment will end when Elizabeth may appear as an ordinary character beholding the doctrine of salvation through storytelling and writing. In order to escape limbo and peacefully die, our protagonist Elizabeth Costello should spend forever writing and rewriting her "confessions," as suggested at the end of the incomplete narrative. Here, Elizabeth, like the pagan philosophers of the First Circle of Dante's *Inferno*, would spend her existence on the fringes of "divine justice," but her reliance to a "World to Come" would fall so naïve a creative and sensitive author hardly disregards (210).

Coetzee draws on the difference and nuance between the concepts by using the character's attempt to think over the dividing lines between "salvation" and "redemption." In response to Elizabeth Costello's assault on Paul West, which provides a clear example of exploring physical pain and bodily agony by means of recognized atrocities at the time and labelling the incidents as "terrible and startling," Costello highlights West's ideas raised in his "The Very Fine Hours of Count von Stauffenberg" and problematises the miseries of body. The idea that an author redeems the pain of bodies via arts and writing well corresponds to the contemporary artist's craving misery and suffering (West, "When Horror Invades Protocol"). As Kochin argues, "writing devoted to satire is ineffective" as it becomes a ridiculous drama of the act of writing. Recalling hardship might dull our reaction to it by making it more real to us. In the Elizabeth Costello lessons, the implied author "resists taking stands: he refuses to use his fiction to make a statement of what he believes (cf. Elizabeth Costello 194). Coetzee's lesson is not to live our lives without books: that is, say, what Rousseau's tutor preaches to his pupil Emile. Coetzee calls for a true independence from the authorial control, strategies and function requires that these writers' works live with them without being enslaved to them. In *Dusklands*, *The Heart of the Country*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, and other works, Coetzee has shown us how to live with, and how we can liberate ourselves from the colonial and contemporary literature of self-improvement.

Coetzee himself argues that his narratives, always adopting a critical attitude towards representation, unearth conventional assumption of the human being and produces a discourse exposing the inhumanity of these novels. He puts, "for the writer the deeper

problem is not to allow himself to be impaled on the dilemma imposed by the state [and culture or existing order].” He tries to “imagine torture and death” (Coetzee, 1992, p. 364). Thus, for the contemporary author, “Paul West is not a devil, but a hero: he has journeyed into the labyrinth of Europe’s history, slain the Minotaur, and returned to tell the tale” (168). Moreover, in “The Humanities in Africa,” Elizabeth’s sister, informs her that psychological books are unnecessary: “We do not need to reference books... to know what pettiness, baseness, and brutality humans are capable of” (Coetzee, 2003, p. 128). Elizabeth concludes therefore argues that “the depths of human depravity without desensitizing both the author and the reader” can be outlined through rethinking and revisiting Paul West. What lies at the heart of Elizabeth Costello is the rejection and failure of “would-be-instructive” narrative discourses, postures and genres. The protagonists’ narratives do not tie –and in fact are unable to involve— the readers to well-considered, all-too-human ideas of writers. To this purpose, Elizabeth’s critical statements against the global capitalistic and human centred “Great Satan” at the conclusive section in her “As a Woman Grows Older” brings about no effect nor arouse any particular sympathy towards the protagonist. Elizabeth as the author character (and therefore Coetzee as historical and implied authors) problematises writing as a divine or sacred profession or an idealised act. Writing performance is not divine not because it enables the artist create a world as they believe, express or narrate but because it signifies a rather distinctive performative outcome or an idiosyncratic physical action known as act of writing. Elizabeth finds writing “graceful”, which “can be an expression of our bodies that uncovers them.” Elizabeth puts:

without saying what they are, uncovers them from the illusions fostered by particular conceptions of embodied life: old, young, beautiful, decrepit, deformed, scarred, wounded, lecturing, listening, reading, rapt by erotic longing or sexual pleasure, ravaged by disease or starved by apathy, bodies lived, “embedded in life” (*EC*, p. 32).

This revelation of embodied experience transcends any discourse or writing in the form of embodied performance or performed reality, making writing heavenly [17]. For Elizabeth, writing or creating a character that becomes, speaks or thinks requires showing, exhibition or revealing rather than telling, confession or believing and storytelling itself seeks no purpose other than itself. So, Coetzee, in *EC*, explores the act of storytelling not only from the perspective of textuality. Elizabeth, incorporates other texts, other narrations, and other stories into her process of storytelling, text production, contemplative activity and performative writing. As in the case with *EC*, Coetzee’s narrative always co-exists with that of Elizabeth Costello, and hers is reproduced with other narratives at a synchronious medium of narrative, and so on. The vain attempt at the writing, transforms its topic “into an object appropriable by the reader or listener,” as Barthes earlier discusses, and this appropriation falls apart from “any merely personal motivation of the author” (Barthes, 1990, pp. 88–90), yet the existence within a narrative medium is always related with the tone and mode of presentation regardless of what is made as part of the belief or motivation of the author. Costello’s conceiving “the act of writing” as a performance or “bodily activity,” may fall her into D. H. Lawrence’s “heated vitalism” or Bakhtin’s material (bodily) and chronotopic diversity of a “grotesque body in the carnivalesque medium” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 26,29,317). An ongoing dialogic imagination is at work in *EC*, and the novelistic discourses produced in *EC* is therefore indicate performative responses as well as textual responses.



Each page in fact, offers a dialogical space in which personal and general issues are debated first in the essays and then between the main protagonists and inside each narrator's consciousness to the extent that the writing becomes the vehicle of orality and rings with each speaker's idiosyncracies in terms of syntax, vocabulary and register. The narrative status of the essays is ambiguous on two counts: temporal and logical. First if one analyses their relation to the fictional narratives, they are posterior to them since they are the concrete end product of a process which originates in the fiction. Their juxtaposition on the page dissimulates a temporal gap. Second, although the formal division of the page separates them from the texts below, they are in fact implicated in them, or more precisely, they form the outside of the inside, both proceeding from the same substrate. This common substrate can be broadly defined as the process whereby enunciating instances appropriate language and emerge as speaking subjects. (Samin, 2009, p. 49)

If we also consider the fact that these authors are also aged intellectuals, their bodily activity is also at a state of degrading, and Ms Elisabeth Costello, most probably, like Mr C, has fingers, not strong enough to type smoothly and use the keyboard or pen regularly. The brilliance of their mind and their physical bodily experience are subject to fading and degeneration in terms of power. Their fading vitalism is an eventual chapter in the life of Elisabeth Costello, who started questioning and undermining the role of human consciousness and the transcendental idealisations and arrangements of humanity that give priority to authorship. On the other hand, their degrading bodily performance marks a critique of the immanent understanding of what embodied minds can do:

to attempt to show in writing how bodies write is precisely to follow Barthes in resisting "the reduced conception of the body . . . [as] what is opposed to soul" (Barthes on Barthes 80).<sup>19</sup> Just such an immanentist understanding of writing as a bodily activity is expressed in Elisabeth Costello: "Only by an ingenious economy, an accident of evolution, does the organ of ingestion sometimes get used for song" (54, 150). (Kochin, 2008, p. 90)

Hence, as can be seen, Elisabeth Costello, in her attempt to violate the dualities of transcendent and immanent assumptions about authorship, represents an embodied narrative and dramatic scream of the fading "importance" of "witerly, readerly, textual and performative" authorship, and indicates a pointless act of authorial grace.

## **Conclusion**

Against the authority of the grand narrative of authorship, which was once seriously challenged by the idea of "death of the author" popularised by influential postmodern theorists like Barthes and Foucault, Elisabeth Costello as an old intellectual and author character, tries out or acts out (or appears to be) a "funny" depiction of "live degenerating corpse" –with outworn ideas and melting flesh— the life of a dead idealist author, having so many solid and strong opinions that do not make her strong in the face of loss of ideals, meaning, hierarchies, performance and graceful embodiment. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that Coetzee (as an historical and implied author) recognises the fact that authorship can be self-deceptive as with the idea of representation. Coetzee, like Barthes,

“grapple with the limitations and deceptions of self-writing, taking themselves and their work as points of reference” (Powers, 2016, p. 324). Coetzee’s attempt to create “narrative dramas” also indicates his strategy of reversal presenting and “representing the authors’ and texts’ drama within narrative” (Çıraklı, 2022) through narrating levels and textual layers with shifting perspectives, through which not only the author and but also authorship appear to be fading away on textual and performative levels. Therefore, these novels as literary depictions and allegorical pictures use ethical debates and concerns as themes, and rather attempts “to face the ethical challenges of authorship” (Galván, 2016, p. 182). So, the present study shows the authors and intellectuals “at work” and “in life.”

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