Coetzee's Traumatized Creatures:

Toward a Post-Anthropocentric and Posthumanist Understanding of Trauma

Thesis Research Master Comparative Literary Studies

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Introduction

"I know what it is like to be a corpse" (*The Lives of Animals*), Elizabeth Costello tells her son and daughter in law in J. M. Coetzee's novella *The Lives of Animals* (1999). In *The Lives of Animals* the fictional novelist Elizabeth Costello gives a lecture about, supposedly, animal rights at the equally fictional Appleton College. The broader context in which Costello makes this remark is as a critique of Thomas Nagel's essay "What is it like to be a bat" (1970), in which the philosopher addresses the nature of consciousness and the problem of thinking as a privilege reserved for man. Nagel's argument is as following:

> Certainly it is possible for a human being to believe that there are facts which humans never *will* possess the requisite concepts to represent or comprehend […] Reflection on what it is like to be a bat seems to lead us, therefore, to the conclusion that there are facts that do not consist in the truth of propositions expressible in a human language. We can be compelled to recognize the existence of such facts without being able to state or comprehend them. (Nagel 441)

Yet, Costello wonders, if she is able to imagine her own death, why would it not be possible to imagine herself as a bat or, for that matter, any other animal? By saying that she knows what it is like to be a corpse, Costello seems not to address the philosophical identification with the animal, as Nagel does, but rather a literary identification in the sense that she emphasizes that literature can show us – and here she is specifically talking about Ted Hughes' poem about "The Jaguar" – that we *can* actually embody animals through a "process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and

no one ever will" (*LOA* 53). In *The Lives of Animals* Costello cites Nagel, who, regarding the question what it is like to be a bat, contends that he can only imagine:

> [w]hat it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted by the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. (Nagel qtd. in *LOA* 31)

Costello does not agree with Nagel and instead questions his idea by emphasizing the mortality that all beings – human and non-human – share. Alternatively, "Costello appeals to the example of Kafka's animal stories [specifically "A Report to an Academy" and its learned ape Red Peter] in order to counter Nagel's doubts about whether we can have knowledge of other animals' minds" (Danta 7). Following this thought, she wonders what the knowledge of her own mortality means in Nagel's terminology:

> Do I know what it is like for me to be a corpse or do I know what it is like for a corpse to be a corpse? The distinction seems to me trivial. What I know is what a corpse cannot know: that it is extinct, that it knows nothing and will never know anything anymore. For an instant, before my whole structure of knowledge collapses in panic, I am alive inside that contradiction, dead and alive at the same time. (*LOA* 32)

According to philosophers Jacques Derrida and Cora Diamond, it is exactly this mortality that humans and animals share. Following this idea, Costello feels that "there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination" (LAO 35) and argues that, when we press ourselves, we can imagine our own death as well as "think[ing] ourselves into the being of another" (*LOA* 26).

Chris Danta ("Like a Dog . . . Like a Lamb") argues that exactly the "bodily fate" of "becoming a corpse" (732) implies that "[t]o the extent that the animal traces a line of escape or a way out for the human, each becoming-animal of the human is also a becoming-corpse" (732). First of all, the idea of becoming-animal finds its origin in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). The becoming, and therein the becoming-animal, that Deleuze and Guattari describe is not a structured process but rather a process that is signified by *involution,* meaning that it is an "alliance and symbiosis" in which the object turns on itself, as becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 238). The becoming(-animal) works like a virus, a contamination. It does *not* work by filiation, but operates against itself, like a heterogeneous multiplicity (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 242). These "multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion, enter certain a*ssemblages;* it is there that human beings effect their becomings-animal" (Deleuze and Guattari 24). Becoming-animal is thus characterized by a decentralization of the humanist idea of man as a being at the center of the universe. The increasing gap between man and nature seems to have led humans to experiencing some sort of feeling of loss or emptiness. Becoming(-animal) can be seen as a reaction to this feeling of loss; a seeking for meaning within a vacuum which has emerged due to the human attitude towards nature and the animal.

What Danta subsequently seems to imply with the use of the term *becoming,* is that the animal is, like death, a means of escape for the human. The animal "whose body the human community first appropriates and then expels into the desert in order to expiate its sense of guilt" (Danta 726) signifies, like death, a sort of ultimate abandonment, a being naked. This is precisely why Costello uses the example of Red Peter. The learned ape in Kafka's story is, as she argues, "not an investigator of primate behavior but a branded, marked, wounded animal presenting himself as speaking testimony to a gathering of scholars" (*LOA* 26). Subsequently, Costello presents herself in a similar manner when giving her speech at Appleton College,

contending: “I am not a philosopher of mind but an animal exhibiting, yet not exhibiting, to a gathering of scholars, a wound, which I cover up under my clothes but touch on in every word I speak” (*LOA* 26). According to Danta, this “wound” that Costello covers up is the “wound of finitude” (732).

Yet, if mortality is a wound or trauma that presses upon man, what exactly does Costello’s remark imply? Cora Diamond (“The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy”) asserts that Costello’s argument that she knows what it is like to be a corpse signals an *embodied* instead of an *abstract* understanding of our own being (cf. 73). Subsequently, Costello’s feelings of woundedness are the result of her becoming aware of her own exposure and vulnerability to death. Animals as beings that do not have language to express themselves share this very same vulnerability with humans, which Costello emphasizes by referring to Kafka’s Red Peter. Essentially, it is the difficulty – or impossibility – to give voice to something, because it is either too confronting to acknowledge or because one lacks the means to give voice to it, that is what characterizes trauma as well.

In this thesis I will combine the scholarly debate on embodied or affective versus abstract (knowledge about our) existence in the world and our relation to other, non-human beings as addressed within the field of animal studies – e.g. by Diamond in her essay and Costello in *The Lives of Animals* – with the way in which these notions are approached differently within philosophy and literature. The purpose of combining these lines of thought is to critically reflect on what is to be considered the central concern of this thesis: trauma. Although it might initially seem strange to combine animal studies with investigations into a humanist concept such as trauma, the reason for approaching trauma and trauma theory from this perspective is to explore the possibilities of looking at (traditional) trauma studies in a different light. Instead of taking on a humanist approach – which is what traditional trauma

theory is known for, as will be addressed in Chapter 1 – I will show how the strand of animal studies and its theorization of concepts like the creaturely, embodiment, woundedness, suffering and vulnerability can change the idea of trauma as a construct of anthropological difference, which is specifically the result of Sigmund Freud's theorization of trauma. Instead, the emphasis will be on approaching trauma in a non-humanist – that is, an anti-anthropocentric – way by studying posthuman(ist) thought as well as particular ideas and concepts on the being of human and nonhuman beings that find their origin in animal studies. I will study how trauma theory might benefit from looking beyond the human being and what such an approach would imply, as well as in what way literature can contribute to thinking about this posthumanist approach of trauma.

In this introduction, I will first introduce animal studies and trauma studies as two areas of academic thought that form the basis of the investigations in this thesis. Although I will introduce their similarities, the specific areas of study and their specific connection will be examined more elaborately in the first chapter, which will provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. Hence, this introduction will briefly introduce trauma theory as an area of scholarly discourse within the field of literary studies as well as show how, through the theorization of trauma and the critique on traditional trauma, we can draw a connection between trauma and the non-human other as addressed within animal studies. In doing so, it is important to introduce the concepts of the creaturely and "the open" within this introduction, as they will frequently return within the thesis. The notions of the creaturely and "the open" not only address the borderland between man and animal, but are also of importance in theorizing trauma in a different manner. Therefore the notion of the creaturely, a term originally coined by Walter Benjamin and discussed by Eric Santner in *On Creaturely Life:* (2006) and Anat Pick in *Creaturely Poetics* (2011), and the notion of "the open" as the gap or

caesura that exists between man and animal, as discussed by Giorgio Agamben in *The Open: Man and Animal* (2003), will be addressed briefly.

Having addressed these theoretical aspects, the introduction will furthermore explain the important role that literature can play – and especially the literature of South-African writer J. M. Coetzee – within approaching trauma in a non-humanist and anti-anthropocentric manner. The endeavor of this thesis is, therefore, twofold. First it will, in the theoretical framework, give an overview of how trauma, the human and the non-human other have been theorized within philosophy and history in order to argue *how* and *why* trauma theory could benefit from concepts that have been theorized by animal studies, such as the creaturely and vulnerability. Second, it will address this theory from the perspective of literature, which means that each of the following chapters will, through studying a specific novel by Coetzee, show in what way trauma occurs in that specific novel and how this trauma is subsequently dealt with. Finally, the conclusion will argue why these specific novels by Coetzee can be considered as approaching trauma in a different – creaturely – manner and will explain *how* trauma theory can specifically benefit from this – literary – approach in critically reflecting on its theorization of trauma.

Man, Animal, Trauma

On the surface, trauma and trauma theory might not seem immediately relatable to the field of animal studies and posthumanism. Yet, like animal studies, trauma studies "emerged in the mid-1990s as a product of the 'ethical turn' affecting the humanities," (52) as trauma scholar Stef Craps ("Wor(l)ds of Grief") argues. The birth of the concept of trauma however, dates back to the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, and is commonly used to describe responses to extreme events (cf. "Wor(l)ds of Grief" 53). According to anthropologist and sociologist Didier Fassin and psychiatrist and anthropologist Richard Rechtman, the "history

of trauma is one that expresses, in the most concrete terms […] a particular idea of the human being" (Fassin and Rechtman 30) in that it hierarchically places human suffering above all other forms of suffering. Trauma has been extensively theorized by Sigmund Freud in the twentieth century – especially after World War I, as will be explained in Chapter 1 – and his theory on trauma has long formed the basis for how trauma and its supposed treatment were perceived.

Under the direction of Cathy Caruth, literary scholarship started addressing the notion of trauma within the 1990s. Following Freud's ideas on trauma, Caruth theorized trauma as an event "outside the range of usual human experience" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 3), which could subsequently lead to its reenactment at later moments in the life of the person who suffered the traumatic experience. Caruth argues that a "trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge […] and thus continually returns, in this exactness, at a later time" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 153). By conjoining the Freudian psychoanalytical view of trauma with the theory of deconstruction – e.g. concerning the difficulty of representation – Caruth argues that the "textual 'undecidabilty' or 'unreadability' comes to reflect the inaccessibility of trauma" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 1). How this exactly works according to Caruth will be more elaborately addressed in Chapter 1.

At this point, it is important to investigate in what way trauma can be connected to the nonhuman other. Kari Weil (*Thinking Animals*) argues that the question ethics raises in regard to the non-human other is how we can know how to treat and approach others that we cannot presume to know (cf. 17). According to Weil, especially this notion of alterity is what brings "animal and trauma studies together" (17). She argues that "we can recognize the serious harms rendered to victims of horrific acts, but we cannot count on those victims to tell us their stories or what to do about them" (Weil 17). Indeed the idea that animal studies and trauma

studies have certain similarities can be further explored by looking at the notion of the creaturely, which scholar Santner (*On Creaturely Life*) describes as "the peculiar proximity of the human to the animal at the very point of their radical difference" (12). The origin of the concept of the creaturely will be further explored in the next paragraph, but for now it is important to note that the creaturely can be seen as connecting trauma and animal studies because it emphasizes the interaction and reciprocity between the internal and external other and, through that, highlights the importance of embodiedness.

The Creaturely and "The Open"

The importance of the relation between man and animal within academia is illustrated by the publication, in March of this year, of a special issue of *The European Journal of English Studies*, which was specifically dedicated to the creature. This issue, called "Modern Creatures," aims to "trace the fluctuations and instabilities that beset the modern elevation of the human by mapping humans' exposure to – and uncanny overlap with – their natural and supernatural others" (Vermeulen and Richter 4). The creature, or the creaturely, addressed in this issue is not a new concept. In his reflections on (natural) history German philosopher Walter Benjamin used the creature (*Die Kreatur*) and the creaturely (*Das Kreatürliche*) in talking about the nonhuman dimension.[1] Benjamin contends that the creaturely is the "speaking historical subject whose voice should not be obliterated by any theory" while simultaneously "introducing a new discourse that is […] both alien and familiar" (Nägele 160). According to Benjamin, the creature is the figure of modernity and, as such, "figures human subjectivity as a sexualized body that speaks, as the flesh permeated by the word, inscribing the body in the experience of the law" (Nägele 161).

[1] E.g. in his correspondence with Austrian-Israeli Jewish philosopher Martin Buber.

In the twenty-first century, Benjamin's ideas on natural history have been rediscovered and re-interpreted by philosophy and literary scholars, among whom are Santner and Pick. Following Benjamin's idea that the creature is the figure of modernity, Santner argues that creaturely life is the product of man's "exposure to a traumatic dimension of political power and social bonds whose structures have undergone radical transformations in modernity" (Santner 12). Film scholar Anat Pick (*Creaturely Poetics*), interprets the creature as a "living body – material, temporal and vulnerable" (5). Additionally, referring to the work of Benjamin, French philosopher Simone Weil and literary scholar Erica Fudge, Pick shapes what she calls creaturely poetics. In her understanding of the creaturely, she does not so much focus on vulnerability as a "universal mode of exposure" (Pick 5), but rather illustrates how "reading through a creaturely prism consigns culture to contexts that are not exclusively human, contexts beyond an anthropocentric perspective" (5).

Investigating the implications that the notion of the creaturely has in the field of animal studies, trauma theory and other areas of thought, I will use Agamben's understanding of "the open" in order to contextualize the notions of trauma and its implications for both man and animal. The notion of "the open" as used by Agamben originates in the work of poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Rilke combines plant and animal life (the natural life of *die Kreatur*) with "the open" in stating that the creature has the capacity to "inhabit a seemingly borderless surround" (Santner 1) that is the open, a line of thought that will be further explored in Chapter 1. For this moment it is important to understand that Agamben perceives the animal as moving in the open. Yet, so he argues, the animal has no sense of its being in this open, since it is not aware of its borders.

Could we, then, argue that creaturely life occurs within the open? This is something that this thesis will investigate. Agamben designates "the open" as the fundamental break, or caesura, between man and animal that is created through modernity's anthropological

machine, which he describes as the dichotomy between man and animal that has been created by both science and philosophy within modernity. This machine "functions by excluding as not (yet) human and already human being from itself, that is, by animalizing the human" (*The Open* 37). This idea of "animalizing the human" underlies the processes within history in which humans were structurally depicted as less than human or animal in human form, for example during World War II, when the Nazis depicted Jews as less than human.

However, it is exactly the proximity between man and animal that the notion of the creaturely and "the open" signify that are important within this thesis. Within animal studies, this proximity is thoroughly investigated. An important idea herein is that the "Western philosophical and theological tradition as insisting on demarcating the division between man and animal so as to define what is quintessentially human" (Kuzniar 5) is criticized. A philosopher who, in his work, aims at complicating the notion of such a border between man and animal is Jacques Derrida. Especially his essay "The Animal That I Therefore Am (More to Follow)" (2002) has been highly influential within the philosophical discourse on the relation between man and animal. Like Agamben, Derrida tries to demolish the borders that have historically been built up between the human and non-human animal.[2]

The Role of Literature

In this thesis I will argue that the different ideas on trauma culminate in the notion of the creaturely through, especially, literature. To explain this major role of literature, it is first of importance to consider in what way trauma and non-human life are approached within literature and why this is of interest in discussing the notion of trauma and creatureliness within literature.

[2] In *Melancholia's Dog* (2006), Alice Kuzniar argues that these man-made delimitations "that lie in the possession of a soul, language, consciousness, or anticipation of death" (175) are thoroughly arbitrary.

First of all, within the dominant poststructuralist trauma theory the main idea is that "trauma is the inaccessible truth of remembering" (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 231) which is, according to the thought of traditional trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, something that "can only be adequately represented through the use of experimental, modernist textual strategies" because their "fragmented, non-linear, anti-narrative forms" demonstrate "similarities with the psychic experience of trauma" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 4-5). More recently, poststructuralist trauma theory has been criticized for its modernist and Eurocentric approach of trauma, which will be discussed more elaborately in Chapter 1.

Yet, through concepts theorized within animal studies, the concept of trauma and its representation in literature is being rethought. Through the work of scholars like Jacques Derrida, Cora Diamond, Kari Weil, Cary Wolfe and that of novelist J. M. Coetzee, ideas on the importance of literature and its power to grasp and reflect on things that cannot be grasped and reflected upon through the language of philosophy have become increasingly important. This is exactly what Cora Diamond tries to address within her essay "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy." Wolfe even argues that, in Diamond's essay, "[t]here is the suggestion […] that imaginative and literary projection can somehow achieve in this instance what propositional, syllogistic philosophy cannot achieve (the nonconceptual, nonlogical force of 'I know what it's like to be a corpse')" ("Introduction: Exposures" 23). About the specific presence of the animal within literature Alice Kuzniar argues something similar in *Melancholia's Dog* (2006). She contends that literature – as well as other forms of art – has the capacity

> [t]o interrogate [its] own means of communication [that] offers insight into the controversies raised by animal rights philosophy, which explores precisely these

> tensions between animal inarticulateness and human morals, between the silent or silenced animal and a human compassion that responds to a glimmer of identification with the suffering brute. (Kuzniar 9)

What Kuzniar implies here is that philosophy addresses the animal at an abstract level, whereas literature actually has the capacity to engage with the animal at a level that emphasizes its proximity to the animal. Thus, instead of a philosophical approach to the animal and its relation to us as human beings, we should opt for a literary approach, as both Diamond and Kuzniar seem to suggest.

In this thesis I will argue that precisely through detecting and emphasizing the creaturely aspect within literary works – especially those of J. M. Coetzee – that trauma can be exposed. Understanding the creaturely as the "signifier of an ongoing exposure, of being caught up in the process of becoming creature through the dictates of divine alterity" (Santner 28), this concept will be used to connect the lives of man and animal with trauma. The notion of the creaturely can first be detected in the work of Rilke, who, in his poetry, connected this concept to the notion of trauma by pinpointing how the caesuras between man and animal result in a so-called "trauma in the realm of creaturely life" (Santner 4). Santner argues that this trauma emerges because both man and animal are never fully able to enter this open.

Fassin and Rechtman (*The Empire of Trauma*) observe that trauma has become a universal human experience, a construct which lies "in the moral economy of contemporary societies" (276). Simultaneously, the animal is also the victim of human exceptionalism within literature (and literary criticism) as well as philosophy (cf. Vermeulen and Richter 7). This human exceptionalism, Vermeulen and Richter argue, ignores the "exhilarating potential of creaturely encounters with other-than-human lives" (7). Yet, when looking at specific literary works that – to a certain extent – deal with trauma and the relation between man and

animal, will it be possible to read them from a non-anthropocentric or creaturely perspective? This is exactly what this thesis will investigate.

J. M. Coetzee

As already argued, a writer and critic whose work has been at the center of many different academic debates within the humanities – especially at those about the relation between man and animal – is South-African writer J.M. Coetzee. His novella *The Lives of Animals* is considered to have led the philosophical discussion about animal ethics towards a more creaturely way of thinking (cf. Pick 7). In this sense, the example at the beginning of this introduction in which Costello says that she knows what it is like to be a corpse, is emblematic for the way in which Coetzee, through the fictional character of Costello, manages to lead the discussion about the animal away from abstract philosophical contemplations toward a different kind of awareness of the animal that focuses on the proximity between man and animal by means of their shared vulnerability.

Yet, also in his other novels Coetzee critically interrogates the relation between man and animal. In fact, animals are omnipresent in Coetzee's novels.[3] In some of his novels Coetzee explicitly deals with animals (e.g. *Elizabeth Costello* and *The Lives of Animals*), in others there is a more implicit reference to the (either animal, animal-like or colonial) other in relation to the (human/white/male) self (e.g. *Disgrace*, *Foe*, *Life and Times of Michael K* and

[3] A systematic investigation of the role of animals in Coetzee is given by Louis Tremaine in his article "The Embodied Soul: Animal Being in the Work of J.M. Coetzee" published in *Contemporary Literature* 44.4 (2003). However, not only do animals appear in almost all of Coetzee's novels, it is also intriguing that there are some recurring motives within his work that refer to non-human animals, especially dogs. For example, the sentence "like a dog" – which are also the last words of Kafka's character K in *The Trial* – appears in *Disgrace*, *Slow Man*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and is addressed (in relation to *Disgrace*) in Greta Olson's article "'Like a Dog': Rituals of Animal Degradation in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Abu Ghraib Prison" in *Journal of Narrative Theory* 44.1 (2014), as well as in Chris Danta's "'Like a Dog . . . Like a Lamb': Becoming Sacrificial Animal in Kafka and Coetzee" in *New Literary History* 38.4 (2007).

Waiting for the Barbarians). And again other novels by Coetzee seem, on the surface, to totally abandon the relationship between man and animal (e.g. *Slow Man, The Childhood of Jesus*). Within the various ways in which Coetzee engages with humans as well as animals, especially his fictional character Elizabeth Costello seems to explicitly seek to ask (and answer) questions about the existence of beings. Costello makes an appearance in several of his texts (e.g. *Elizabeth Costello* and *Slow Man*), often initiating philosophical discussions about human and nonhuman life. Taking Costello's philosophical contemplations as exemplifying recurring themes within Coetzee's novels, the writer seems to endorse Agamben's idea that the discussion on the division between man and animal should not only be focused on human rights and values but should rather ask "in what way – within man – has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human" (*The Open* 15).

Another recurring theme in the works of Coetzee, which can again be seen in light of the relation between man and animal, is the notion of the suffering being (e.g. in *Life and Times of Michael K, Slow Man. Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*). It is not surprising, then, that Coetzee in one of his literary essays refers to Benjamin's "call for a history centered on the sufferings of the vanquished, rather than of the achievements of the victors" (Coetzee qtd. in Pick 71). It is not only human or animal suffering that Coetzee seems to address but rather the suffering of the being or creature that resides within the borders between man and animal. Vermeulen argues that especially in his late fiction, Coetzee explores a "particular mode of suffering that is produced by the revelation of the fragility and contingency of time-honored forms of life" (657) which he, following Santner, calls "creaturely life." Subsequently, according to Cora Diamond, Coetzee's work is characterized by a sort of divergence or deflection that "happens when we are moved from the appreciation, or attempt to appreciation, of a difficulty of reality to a philosophical or moral problem apparently in the vicinity" (Diamond qtd. in Pick 10). This exposure and deflection, Pick argues, are

"intimately linked via the bodily vulnerability – the creatureliness – we share with other animals" (10).

In addressing the question how the anthropocentric nature of trauma theory can be changed into a more embodied and creaturely approach of trauma in light of animal studies and posthumanist thought and, fundamentally, what role literature has in this endeavor, I have specifically chosen to study a selection of literary works by J. M. Coetzee. Focusing on the work of Coetzee instead of, for example, Kafka or Rilke – writers who have both extensively written about animals – is a deliberate choice. Although the work of Kafka clearly influenced Coetzee, the latter also addresses trauma in his novels. Again, one can claim that Kafka *also* addresses trauma – i.e. think of the "wounded" ape Red Peter – yet, Coetzee uses Kafka's (philosophical) ideas on the being of the animal and on existence in general as a sort of inspiration. Coetzee seems to take Kafka's ideas, inhabit them – indeed in the same manner that Costello claims that it is possible to inhabit the animal "if we press ourselves" (*LOA* 32) – and *uses* these in his own writing. However, Coetzee's novels, as I will argue in this thesis, also take the proximity between man and animal as a given, meaning that Coetzee always already questions the strict division that exists between man and animal. The wounded or traumatized characters that subsequently make their appearance in his novels are addressed through the idea of living in proximity with human and non-human others.

My aim with using Coetzee is, by first focusing on one of his novels that *does* actually explicitly engage with animals: *Disgrace*, to clear a path that leads to an interpretation of the relation between the non-human and trauma that goes *beyond* the direct physical link with the animal. Moving towards a creaturely reading of two other novels that do not explicitly deal with animals, *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Slow Man*, will lead, as I will argue, to a different understanding of the trauma in light of the relation between human and non-human beings. In studying the above mentioned novels by Coetzee, the focus will especially be on

the notion of the creaturely and on showing how this creaturely approach of life can also be used in current debates on the anthropocentric nature of trauma and trauma studies. Furthermore, keeping the reflections on the work of Coetzee in mind, the creaturely will, in this thesis, be understood as a sort of borderland between the human and animal, related to Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, but yet more focused on Derrida's, Pick's, Agamben's and Santner's understanding of a kind of "open" that exists before, between and after human and animal.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter will provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. It will introduce both trauma theory and animal studies as areas of scholarly thought. Starting with investigating the origin of trauma theory within psychoanalysis and the theorization of trauma by Sigmund Freud, the chapter gives an account of how literary trauma theory came into being. Using Freudian trauma theory, deconstructive trauma theory as an area of studies within literary scholarship investigated how trauma and its reenactment could be addressed by and captured through literature. Yet, being a humanist endeavor made trauma theory the object of criticism at the end of the twentieth century. The chapter will address the origin of this criticism and how it relates to the field of animal studies. Subsequently, the chapter will investigate, through texts by Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Anat Pick, Eric Santner, Cora Diamond, Walter Benjamin, Dominick LaCapra, Kari Weil and Cary Wolfe, whether trauma can also be approached in a non-anthropocentric manner, that is, through focusing on notions such as woundedness, suffering and vulnerability. These investigations will ultimately lead to depicting what a creaturely approach of trauma will look like and such an approach can be detected in the work of J. M. Coetzee.

After the theoretical framework the structure of this thesis can roughly be divided into three parts: the animal, the open and the creaturely being. By first looking specifically at the human animal relationship in *Disgrace* in addressing trauma and trauma recovery, it is the status of the animal that is foregrounded. Then, by focusing on the trauma of a living between being man and being animal or animal-like in *Life and Times of Michael K*, the open as signifying the proximity between man and animal is addressed. And, finally, *Slow Man* captures how being man but ultimately realizing that, to overcome a trauma, one has to rely on methods and ideas that are deemed animalistic, leads one to exist as a creaturely being.

The second chapter, "Suffering and the Traumatized Animal: *Disgrace*" addresses (animal) suffering and vulnerability within Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (2000), as well as how these ideas relate to trauma. The presence of animals – especially dogs – within the novel will be at the center of attention, since they emphasize the notion of animal trauma but are simultaneously important in the process of human trauma recovery within the novel. Through emphasizing the suffering, vulnerability and woundedness of animals and the way in which protagonist David Lurie responds to this (and other forms of) suffering, this chapter will explore the creaturely residues of trauma. Subsequently, the notion of (the failure of) language will be related to trauma and the idea of (embodied) care will be introduced in order to move away from the Freudian "working through" of a trauma, towards as a means of curing traumatized beings through care. This means that I will specifically focus on the role animals fulfill in *Disgrace* and how their presence can be used in developing a way of approaching trauma in a manner that differs from Freudian and Caruthian trauma theory.

Chapter 3 "A New Form of Existence: *Life and Times of Michael K*" will, from the outset, approach the protagonist of *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) as a being that is neither fully human nor animal, but exists in the Agambian gap or open. The chapter will argue that Michael K is traumatized by how he is treated and looked upon by society and

subsequently finds his own way of "recovering" of this trauma, that is, by withdrawing from society and finding his own way of existence. This new form of existence is deemed animalistic by K himself as well as by others and is, again, intertwined with language, since K is not unable to express himself sufficiently through language. K's new form of existence, I will argue, is a creaturely existence, and therefore a way for him to overcome his trauma.

Lastly, Chapter 4 "Care/Love: *Slow Man*" will discuss the novel *Slow Man* (2006) in light of the investigations of the creaturely in the previous chapters. Although the animal – as a literal or metaphorical being – is least present in this novel, *Slow Man* does address the borderland between man and animal through its depiction of protagonist Paul Rayment as a lesser being due to his handicap. Being disabled, he is systematically deemed less human and more animal-like. The chapter will argue that, in the novel, physical and emotional trauma are being merged and that this subsequently emphasizes that Rayment is exposed to a creaturely kind of suffering, since he has, due to his trauma, entered an Agambian open in which he is physically as well as emotionally vulnerable. Like Michael K, Rayment finds a new way of living in which he accepts his disability, which can be seen as a creaturely existence as well. Yet, *Slow Man's* thematic of the creaturely is problematized by the appearance of Elizabeth Costello. The presence of Costello leads Rayment to become aware that this new and creaturely living is not the solution, but that he needs more. What Rayment needs is, as I will argue, not to be cured of his trauma, but to be cared for and, ultimately, loved.

Having discussed *Disgrace*, *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Slow Man*, I will show in the conclusion how the theorization and problematization of trauma theory by means of looking at the non-human other develops within these three novels by Coetzee. The conclusion will explore how a more creaturely approach of trauma can be brought into being and how this approach will subsequently lead to new insights in the way in which our society looks at trauma. While critically reflecting on ossified ideas about the concept of trauma, the

conclusion will furthermore show how this new approach enables us to develop new methods in thinking about and acting upon traumatic processes.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

In the romantic epic, *Gerusalemme Liberta,* Torquato Tasso tells the story of Tancred who "unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight" (Freud 16). When Tancred, after Clorinda's burial, wanders into a magic forest, "he slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again" (Freud 16).

With this poetic example Freud illustrates the workings of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In this essay, Freud is concerned with the way in which the human mind has a tendency towards pleasure and seeks to avoid displeasure by repressing memories of unpleasurable events. Freud investigates how such an unpleasurable memory or trauma can, unconsciously, repeat itself within the person that has experienced it. The story of Tancred and Clorinda exemplifies, so Freud argues, that the traumatized subject has a "passive experience, over which he has no influence" (14) but the memory of which is repeated in his mind as if it was happening at that very moment.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle is considered to be Freud's text that led to the conception of trauma as a psychological illness. Trauma had been addressed before, but it was Freud who developed the psychoanalytical approach to trauma following the extreme events within World War I and World War II.

1.1 Trauma Theory as a Humanist Construct

In many senses World War I and World War II were events that confronted humanity with its own weaknesses. The exclusion of others in the search for a "perfect" humanity culminated in World War II with a "clash of history, humanity and philosophy" (Lippit 80) in a sense that

all former notions of what a human was and what humanism contained were abolished through this extreme chain of events. The notion of trauma first occurred when the extreme events in World War I caused soldiers to develop symptoms of a so-called war neurosis. Initially interpreted as a sign of weakness or a lack of patriotism, the trauma of these soldiers was not taken seriously. Indeed, some of them feigned illness, as this was the only way to escape the terror of war, but, at the time, the psychological well-being of soldiers was not the highest priority. Although "combat madness" – a "serious manifestation of anxiety, panic and exhaustion" (Fassin and Rechtman 42) – was taken seriously, a soldier with "trauma insanity" was regarded as someone who was not willing to die for his country (cf. Fassin and Rechtman 42). Still, trauma was seen as something that did not happen to strong and patriotic soldiers, rather it was regarded as an "individual response of non ordinary men confronted with basic ethical choices which they were unable to take on" (Fassin and Rechtman 62).

This idea changed with Freud's writings on trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), both written around World War I and World War II. Before Freud used the term in his writings, "traumatic neurosis" was conceived as a condition to describe physical accidents in which a person was exposed to an extreme risk (cf. Freud 6). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud asserts, however, that "traumatic neurosis" is a "disturbance of the mental capacities" (6) and evokes symptoms that are similar to those of hysteria.[4] Traumatic neurosis is caused by an extreme event that surprises or frightens its victim, but subsequently, this "wound or injury inflicted simultaneously works as a rule against the development of a neurosis" (Freud 6).

[4] In *Studies in Hysteria* (1895), written in collaboration with physician Josef Breuer, Freud describes hysteria as a disorder that manifests itself through hallucinations, amnesia, unexplained pains, nervous tics, etc. (cf. Thurschwell 16). Freud and Breuer study a series of case histories of hysteria and assert that hysteria is not a physical but a psychological disease that has its origins in "sexual disturbances from early childhood" (Thurschwell 17).

Subsequently, the idea of repetition – also referred to as "repetition compulsion" or "compulsive repetition" – plays an important role in Freud's theory. The unconsciously repressed – the trauma – is compulsively repeated within the object, i.e. through the reliving of the traumatic experience in dreams. Freud specifically mentions nightmares of battlefield survivors who are, in a way, "haunted" by painful events and experiences, the so-called "war-neurosis." He emphasizes that the peculiarity about these reenactments of experiences is that they occur within the individual without the subject of this experience being able to control it, as if he or she were subjected to a sort of fate (cf. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 2). Freud relates this "compulsive repetition" to children's play, in the sense that in their play children "repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they […] make themselves master of the situation" (11). The repetitiveness of trauma can therefore be interpreted as the victim trying to – unconsciously – master the situation which he before was not able to control. Freud's theory is that, instead of the trauma being repeated, the trauma should be remembered by means of "working through," that is, through psychotherapy – the "talking cure" – or hypnosis. By putting an unmasterable experience into words, Freud contends, that the traumatized person regains control over the situation.

Additionally, Freud asserts that the study of dreams may be helpful in investigating the mental processes of trauma, as "dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (Freud7). Yet, in order to be able to cure a patient with traumatic neurosis, it is important that the traumatic event is not *repeated* within the subject, but *remembered* (cf. Freud 12). The trauma as an "unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 2) thus needs to be re-experienced as being a part of forgotten memory. However, this should happen in such a way that the traumatized subject realizes that the traumatic event is not reality at that

specific moment, but just a reflection of a forgotten event or past (cf. Freud 13). According to Freud this is extremely difficult, as the patient resists to re-experiencing the trauma: "the patient's resistance arises from the ego [the conscious], and […] the compulsion to repeat must be ascribed to the unconscious repressed" (Freud 14). He asserts that unconscious ideas cannot be grasped through consciousness because they happen *outside* consciousness.

After World War II and under the influence of Freudian trauma theory the conception of trauma changed; "psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis, conceive[d] trauma both at the level of theoretical debate […] and in actual practice" (Fassin and Rechtman 8). No longer a subjective experience of an individual but a "universal human experience" (Fassin and Rechtman 72), trauma was conceived as a legitimate disease, suffered by those who had been exposed to extreme events. The new insights in trauma based on Freud's ideas, led post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to be considered a serious illness.

Taking the psychological understanding of trauma and PTSD as a starting point, the definition of trauma in the 1980s became that it is "an event outside the range of usual human experience" ("Wor(l)ds of Grief" 54) which is reenacted at later moments. Because of the extreme nature of the event, it cannot be explained through reason and therefore cannot be fully grasped through language. The Holocaust was such an event, which subsequently called for a Freudian approach to trauma by means of "working though" the memory or trauma of that specific event (cf. Alexander 6). This idea of "working through" trauma is advocated in the work of psychologist and trauma scholar Dori Laub, as well as by literary scholars like Shoshana Felman and Caruth.

Trauma theory as a field of studies within literary scholarship arose in the 1990s out of this psychoanalytical conception of trauma, as well as out of the ethical turn affecting the humanities (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 1), which caused a shift from a methodological and

abstract way of thinking towards an epistemological and ethical focus within the humanities. The field especially focused on Holocaust testimony, literature and history. As an area of research within literary studies, trauma theory centers on how traumatic experiences are processed through literary texts and specifically addresses the "language of trauma and […] the stories associated with it" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). The focus is often on survivor testimonies of, especially, the Holocaust but also on victims of other genocides and extreme events (cf. *Postcolonial Witnessing* 1).[5]

Trauma was thus focused on human suffering, which, in the light of the horrific and inhumane methods of the Nazis in World War II, made sense; mankind was diligently seeking to re-find and redefine its own humanity. Under the influence of poststructuralist thought, trauma theorists developed a deconstructive trauma theory, in which Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) is seen as a foundational text. Within poststructuralist trauma theory, the Holocaust is often taken to be the cause of "an epistemological-ontological crisis of witnessing, a crisis manifested at the level of language itself" (Leys qtd. in Erll 3). Although deconstructive trauma theory is anti-analytical and anti-empirical, it does make use of psychoanalysis and psychology (cf. Kansteiner and Weilnböck 231). For Caruth, relating psychoanalytical views of trauma with deconstructive trauma theory is a means by which the extreme and ungraspable events and experiences that constitute trauma can be reflected upon.

Taking the concept of Freudian trauma as a starting point, this chapter will lay out the theoretical framework for this thesis. I will investigate the way in which discourse on trauma has led trauma studies and trauma theory to be a specifically humanist concern. Subsequently,

[5] Especially Charlotte Delbo's texts on her time as a prisoner in Auschwitz are often discussed in the context of trauma literature. Another example of a survivor novel is Primo Levi's *If This is a Man* (1947), which is the testimony of his imprisonment in the concentration camp Auschwitz by the Nazis.

I will examine how trauma has been construed as an aspect of anthropological difference between man and animal. Having started with theorizing trauma with reference to the ideas of Freud, the chapter will proceed with the way in which Caruth uses Freudian trauma theory and how she relates it to literature. Subsequently, the criticism on traditional trauma theory by theorists and scholars like Didier Fassin, Richard Rechtman, and Stef Craps will be addressed. Especially in recent years these scholars have critically reflected on the Eurocentric and anthropocentric nature of traditional trauma theory.

Secondly, the notion of trauma as a humanist concern will be explored in light of animal studies. Particularly within the field of animal studies the idea of the animal as a being without (un)conscious is questioned. The focus on animal rights and animal ethics has led to a different understanding of how we, as humans, relate to non-human animals. More recently, theorists like Jacques Derrida, Cora Diamond, Eric Santner and Anat Pick brought attention to questions of animality and the creaturely, as well as the presence of the animal within philosophy and literature/poetry. The chapter will explain how animal studies' theorization of the concepts of the creaturely, woundedness, vulnerability and the open can be used to rethink the anthropocentric nature of Freudian trauma theory and think ways to approach trauma in a different way.

1.2 Repetition Compulsion and the Role of Literature

In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History,* Caruth addresses, like Freud, the repetitive nature of trauma. She refers to the ideas of Freud in which he addresses the "possibility of integrating the lost event into a series of associative memories, as part of the cure […] as a way of the event to be forgotten" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* vii). She argues that the relation between trauma and survival arises because of the "very paradoxical structure of indirectness in psychic trauma"

(*Unclaimed Experience* 60) in the way that it is such an extreme, ungraspable, unexpected and horrific experience that it "cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge […] and thus continually returns […] at a later time" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 153). Caruth subsequently understands trauma as "a break in the mind's experience of time" (*Unclaimed Experience* 61), which is reenacted through the unconscious. Although the victim or survivor is conscious of the traumatizing event, he does not fully grasp the experience as such as traumatizing *at that very moment*. According to Caruth, this is when a state of shock or trauma arises, a threat that is "recognized as such by the mind *one moment too late*" (*Unclaimed Experience* 62). Subsequently, "the return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but, rather, of the attempt to overcome the fact that it was *not* direct, to attempt to master what was never fully grasped in the first place" (*Unclaimed Experience* 62).

Using Freud's theory, Caruth interprets trauma as the "unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 2). She argues that Freud's idea on trauma is "much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4), which we can see in relation to Freud's reference to the story of Tancred and Clorinda. In trauma, Caruth asserts, "the outside has gone inside without any meditation" (*Unclaimed Experience* 59), meaning that the person who has experienced an overwhelming and incomprehensible event does not have control over whether the event is reenacted in his mind because he is not able to give it psychic meaning. Rather, he is "possessed by an image or event" (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* 45), yet unable to escape the unconscious manifestation of the event which returns to the traumatized person in the form of, for instance, nightmares or flashbacks.

Caruth subsequently interprets the literary example of Tancred and Clorinda that Freud gives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as following:

> [it] represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent's repeated and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know. (*Unclaimed Experience* 3)

Paradoxically, the conscious and unconscious intertwine through the repetitive nature of the trauma, in which the repetition not only becomes an experience of the event itself, but simultaneously an "attempt *to claim one's own survival*" (*Unclaimed Experience* 64).

Caruth argues that the "incomprehensibility of survival" is central to Freud's idea of the "death drive" (*Unclaimed Experience* 64). The theory of the death drive in Freud's work is closely related to the "repetition compulsion." For Freud, the death drive is the desire of man to live "in a state beyond human life and consciousness" (Lippit 113), which has its basis in the idea that "instinctual life as a whole serves to bring about death" (Freud 33). Distinguishing between "ego-instincts" and "sexual instincts," Freud argues that the ego-instinct is a death-instinct and the sexual-instinct a life-instinct. Freud's hypothesis is that "ego-instincts arise from the coming to life of inanimate matter and seek to restore the inanimate state" (38), meaning that man instinctually feels that he has to follow the path towards death. Unconsciously, this death drive compulsively repeats itself within the subject. Subsequently, Caruth interprets the Freudian death drive as something that is like the awakening from a nightmare in the sense that a person feels he has failed to prevent something unexpected from happening while he was actually experiencing that very something. One awakes to the knowledge that before one can grasp what has happened (or

prevent something from happening), it already happened. Caruth calls it "the experience of passing beyond death without knowing it" (*Unclaimed Experience* 65).

Although it might initially seem strange that literary theorists such as Caruth engage with a psychological concept like trauma, it is by no means coincidental that literary scholars were interested in the phenomenon. The first reason for the development of trauma studies as an area of literary scholarship was as a reaction to accusations that the rather abstract deconstructive, poststructuralist and textual approaches of literary studies "had become indifferent or oblivious to 'what goes on in the real world'" ("Wor(l)ds of Grief" 52). Secondly, scholars like Caruth claimed that the concept of trauma is entangled with language, in the sense that a trauma causes an epistemological break in the human mind, which man is subsequently unable to grasp through language.

Caruth's assertion is that exactly through the language of the literary text, these ungraspable events *can* be explored. Whereas philosophy and history "make us forget about the traumatic flipside of all memory" (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 231), the idea within poststructuralist trauma theory is that literary texts are "capable of exploring the interdependency between trauma and memory in a more honest and productive fashion" (Kansteiner and Weilnböck 231). With Caruth leading the way, trauma theory sought to engage with this "real world." For Caruth, especially modernist and experimental textual strategies are fitting to adequately represent something as ungraspable as trauma, because their "fragmented, non-linear, anti-narrative forms" demonstrate "similarities with the psychic experience of trauma" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 4-5).

1.3 Criticism on Traditional Trauma Theory

The 1990s was an era in which poststructuralist trauma theory gained popularity, but also a time in which postcolonial criticism as an area of critical studies emerged.[6] Subsequently, postcolonial criticism influenced the critique on trauma studies that appeared in the twenty-first century. Poststructuralist trauma theory is criticized not only because of this aestheticized modernist concept and anthropocentric understanding of trauma, but also because of its all too universal (or Eurocentric) approach which diminishes the trauma of non-Western and minority groups. In his most recent book *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma out of Bounds* (2012), literary scholar Stef Craps argues that traditional trauma theory "tend[s] to ignore traumatic experiences and histories of currently subordinate groups both inside and outside Western society" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 53). This has resulted in trauma theory being preoccupied with Western experiences of trauma and accused of universalizing trauma.

The argument is that traditional trauma theory – e.g. in Caruth, Felman, Laub and Dominick LaCapra – focuses too much on the Holocaust in theorizing trauma. Subsequently, Craps argues that feminist criticism and especially postcolonial criticism critique traditional trauma theory and the way in which it has focused on "the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men" (Brown qtd. in *Postcolonial Witnessing* 54-5), therewith "dismissing traumatic experiences of people of color, women, gays and lesbians, lower-class people, and people with disabilities" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 55). The danger of focusing on the Western and universalist approach to trauma is, as Craps argues, that "trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities as a result of this one-sided focus" (53). Rather, he contends – like other contemporary trauma scholars that criticize traditional trauma theory, such as Fassin and

[6] E.g. through influential works like Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1987) and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988); Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989); Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990); and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

Rechtman; and Kansteiner and Weilnböck – that trauma theory should look at the contemporary politics of trauma and aim at approaching trauma in another, non-universalizing and non-trivializing manner.

1.4 The Separation of Man and Animal

As argued earlier in this chapter, trauma theory has long been a solely humanist concern. Yet, with the emergence of animal studies as a field that addresses the relation between man and animal, a new discourse emerged that influenced trauma theory. Especially the aporias in Freudian trauma theory can be addressed by means of concepts that came into being through animal studies. However, before specifically addressing these aporias, it is of importance to reflect on the origin of animal studies as a field of scholarly research.

The field of animal studies found its origin in the movement away from traditional ideas on humanity (i.e. traditional Western philosophy's discourse on the Cartesian ruling of reason over nature) that started with Darwin's evolution theory in "The Origin of Species" (1859). The Enlightenment philosophy that considered man as being at the center of the universe and excluded the animal from the ontological world as external and other was slowly abolished. Instead, the animal was included in the community of "being." From occupying a symbolic and sacrificial role the animal became the denominator for difference within the eighteenth century. In *Electric Animal* (2008), Akira Mizuta Lippit argues that the human advancement in modernity "coincided with a recession of nature" (1), meaning that man also distanced himself from the animal. The new-found sovereignty of man made him feel superior to other, non-human forms of existence. Instead of being one with nature, man sought to dominate and subjugate nature.

In "The Animal Territory and Metamorphoses" in his work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Jean Baudrillard argues that man has destroyed the natural order with his desire to

control nature, therewith separating the savage beast from the rational human being. Subsequently, by using the animal in order to fulfill our human needs and wishes (e.g. through making it work for man, the object of laboratory testing and the object of consumption), we have structurally subjugated and commodified the animal. In further describing the status of the animal within our contemporary society, Baudrillard refers to the inhumanity of humanism, therein drawing a parallel between how we treat animals and the ways in which we have, throughout history, treated other minority groups within our society:

> animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed. A logic parallel to that of racism. An objective animal "reign" has only existed since Man has existed. It would take too long to redo the genealogy of their respective statuses, but […] the abyss that separates them follows domestication, just as true racism follows slavery. (Baudrillard para. 17)

Trauma studies has followed a parallel path in the sense that trauma scholars like Craps, in their criticism of traditional Freudian trauma theory, have argued that traumas of subordinate groups within society are often ignored. The anthropocentric nature of trauma studies could therefore be seen as the next aporia within Freudian trauma theory. Yet, within the last decade this anthropocentric nature of trauma studies is addressed by means of moving beyond Freud's understanding of trauma and how to "cure" it, towards a more embodied understanding of trauma. Herein, the focus is not on the working-through of trauma, but on woundedness, shared vulnerability and care.

1.5 Woundedness

The word "trauma" is derived from the ancient Greek word for "wound." Although our contemporary understanding of trauma is that of a psychological wound, it is interesting to return to the notions of the "wound" and "woundedness" and their meaning within philosophy, literature and animal studies. For this purpose I would like to focus on Cora Diamond's essay "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy" in which she is concerned with how certain experiences of events in reality are difficult to reduce to a philosophical idea or concept.

In her essay Diamond, takes on the example of J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*. Whereas scholars – e.g. Peter Singer and Amy Gutmann, whom Diamond also mentions in her essay – who have written responses to *The Lives of Animals* consider the novella as being about animal rights and moral and ethical issues concerning the animal, Diamond has a different interpretation. She argues that *The Lives of Animals* rather emphasizes the woundedness and exposure of Costello as a human being and tries to explain how these notions of the wound and exposure are fundamentally important in our relations with other-than-human beings. Using the thought of philosopher Stanley Cavell on skepticism and how it has influenced western philosophy, Diamond discusses the "difficulty of reality." This "difficulty of reality" is, according to Diamond, an "experience in which we take something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it," (Diamond 45-6) and which is, above all, so inexplicable that we cannot put it in words. Language fails to grasp the reality because we are unable to reduce what happened to an abstract or conceptual (philosophical) experience – an idea that indeed reminds of Freud's understanding of the relation between the unconscious and trauma and Caruth's conception of trauma.

Diamond uses Cavell's idea of "deflection" in explaining how philosophy thinks and rethinks issues within the language of skepticism (cf. Diamond 56-7). Interpreting *The Lives of Animals* as a discourse on animal rights can, therefore, also be seen as a way of

"deflecting" reality, because, through a philosophical understanding of how we are related to non-human animals we fail to grasp our *actual* existence in relation to other animals. Diamond contends that, instead of deflecting, we should focus on what we share with animals, which is a sense of vulnerability:

> The awareness we each have of being a living body, being 'alive to the world,' carries its exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with them. This vulnerability is capable of panicking us. To be able to acknowledge it at all, let alone as shared, is wounding […]. (74)

In that sense, the moral debate on animals and animal rights can be considered as the "easy way out;" as it allows us to distance ourselves from thinking about what it is we share with animals. Diamond wonders whether "there [can] be such a thing as philosophy that is not deflected from such realities" (74). When reading Cavell or Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, it seems that poetry or literature would be the solution to this deflection of philosophy. In her lecture, Costello indeed designates poetry – with an explicit reference to the poetry of Ted Hughes – as a (different) way of engaging with animals, because it "shows us that we too can embody animals—by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will" (*LOA* 53).

1.6 Can They Suffer?

Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham is considered one of the earliest advocators for animal rights. His famous words "[…] the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1823) are often referred to within the debate on animals within the humanities. Following

Bentham's thought, moral philosopher Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*[7] in 1975 in which he used the term "speciesism" to describe the relation that man has with animals; a relation in which man deems himself superior to the lesser being that he assumes the animal to be. Although the emergence of animal rights goes against ideas within traditional Western philosophy that sees the capacity for rational thought and its materialization in language as the divider between human and non-human beings, animal rights can still be considered hierarchical, as it "privileges a particular group of animals – those who can demonstrate a capacity for so-called rational agency – and leaves others unprotected" ("A Report on the Animal Turn" 3).

In *The Lives of Animals,* Coetzee's fictional character Elizabeth Costello begins her lecture with the story of Red Peter, the educated ape from Kafka's story "A Report to an Academy." In the story, Red Peter "stands before the members of a learned society telling the story of his life—of his ascent from beast to something approaching man" (*LOA* 18). Costello compares herself to Red Peter standing for the academy. In the lecture that follows, it becomes clear that the purpose of Costello in drawing a connection with Red Peter is to ask the question whether academia – in particular, philosophy – is able to address the question of the animal sufficiently. Referring to the same Kafka story Kari Weil argues in *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012) that language plays a key role in both "A Report to an Academy" and *The Lives of Animals,* as well as in the debate on the division between man and animal in general.

Taking human language as the denominator of difference between man and animal, what would we gain if an animal learned to speak like a human? Would the animal still be an animal, or rather "mimic […] human values and viewpoints" (6), Weil wonders. This is exactly where Weil sees the connection between animal studies and trauma studies:

[7] For a more detailed and chronological description of the development of the field of Animal Studies within the Humanities, see Cary Wolfe's "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities" (2009).

> Animal studies […] joins trauma studies both because of the violence done to animals and their habitats […], and because of the difficulty of assessing how animals experience that violence. Both raise questions about how one can give testimony to an experience that cannot be spoken or that maybe distorted by speaking it. (Weil 6)

Indeed, as Baudrillard contends, at a 1973 convention a group of veterinarians addressed the suffering of animals, more precisely, the *psychological* suffering. These veterinarians were especially "concerned about the diseases and psychological troubles that develop in industrial breeding farms" (Baudrillard para. 4). Although these concerns were specifically focused on bred animals, it is emblematic for the discourse on animals and animal suffering that appeared around that time. There is a clear reference to trauma in the statement given at the conference that "a psychic life of frustration represents an obstacle to normal development" (Baudrillard para. 8).

However, before explaining the relation between the two areas of study more elaborately, it is interesting to focus on the importance of language in the human-animal debate. In investigating how the "animal question" came into being through the linguistic, affective and the ethical turn (cf. Weil 6), Weil asserts that "in Lacanian psychoanalysis, subjectivity is born of a fall from wholeness into sexual division and desire and marked by a fall into language" (Weil 7), a statement which she uses to describe the divide within animal studies when it comes to language. When we take language to be the Cartesian divide between human and animal it is, on the one hand, the human who envies the animal because it is outside language, but on the other hand there is the idea that animals do actually speak, albeit in a different language (cf. Weil 7). Indeed we should far from underestimate the abilities of animals. In the past decades, research has shown not only that animals can suffer,

but also that some even have the ability to learn language (cf. Weil 8). Cary Wolfe argues that animals, with "the richness of their mental and emotional lives, the complexity of their forms of communication and interaction" ("Human, All Too Human" 567), have – following other marginalized groups – obtained a place in the socio-ethical academic discussion of inclusiveness (cf. "Human, All Too Human" 568).

Yet, not only trying to explain our relation to animals by means of the linguistic turn, the counterlinguistic turn within the humanities is characterized by its dismissive attitude towards the poststructuralist idea that there is no outside of language (cf. Weil 12). Whereas for humans the linguistic and ideological system is the ultimate – and only – means of (self-)representation, Weil wonders whether the notion of "representation" has brought us closer to animals or has only widened the gap that exists between humans and animals (cf. 12). Weil conceives the turn towards the animal as a criticism on Enlightenment ideals of the rational human as opposed to the non-rational animal. It is, she argues, an "attempt to envision a different understanding of what we humans are and consequently to enlarge or change the possibilities for what we can think and what we can do in the world." (Weil 13).[8] Indeed the idea of embodiment is related to the notion of trauma, as Weil also notes, in the sense that a traumatic experience is often inexplicable in language, but does reenact itself through the body. Yet, as we already argued with reference to Freud, the human has an internal need to bring back these inexplicable events to the realm of logic. The trauma as an experience at an unconscious level of the human mind is fluid and ungraspable, but yet "we desperately desire to know [it] through language" (Weil 9). For Freud, it is the "talking cure" that relieves man from his trauma.

[8] For more information on the affective or counterlinguistic and ethical turn within the humanities, especially concerning animal studies, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) – and, therein, especially the notion of "becoming animal."

Subsequently, the ethical turn within the humanities emphasizes the notion of vulnerability and passivity, which brings us back to Bentham and his question "can they suffer?". The posthumanist ethics that followed from deconstruction moves away from the Cartesian *logos*, instead exploring the abyssal space that exists in between man and animal. Questioning human exceptionalism, the ethical turn in animal studies focuses on anthropomorphism in rethinking notions of animal individuality or subjectivity (cf. Weil 19). In explaining how this rethinking works, Weil introduces the notion of sympathy and refers to Costello who argues that "some poets have that 'allows us to share at times the being of another'" (Weil 19), meaning that, instead of focusing on the difference between man and animal, we should embrace the proximity that man has to the animal and sympathize with, or open ourselves up to, the animal *as such* without trying to distill some sort of meaning, reason, language or agency out of them.

An essay that has been highly influential within the field of animal studies is Jacques Derrida's "The Animal That I Therefore Am (More to Follow)." In his essay, the philosopher comments on the role of the animal in philosophy. He takes on Bentham's question about whether animals can suffer, thereby emphasizing the passivity of the notion of suffering that is, according to Derrida, fundamentally connected with the notion of vulnerability. Questioning humanist subjectivity that tends to focus on rights, Derrida argues for a different understanding of the relation between human and non-human beings, that is, a focus on the embodied existence of the animal and "embodied finitude" ("Human, All Too Human" 570) that we share with animals.

Let us first address the notion of embodied existence; Derrida explains that the animal is not naked because it is not aware of its own nudity. The animal has, Derrida argues, "only the sentiment, the affect, the (conscious or unconscious) experience of existing in nakedness"

(374). Man as a conscious being, on the other hand, *is* aware (and ashamed) of its nakedness exactly *because* he has a sense of his nakedness. For Derrida, being "naked without knowing it, animals would not, in truth, be naked" (373), they just exist in the body. Subsequently, the "embodied finitude" of the animal is the "finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life" ("The Animal That I Therefore Am" 396).

It is interesting that Wolfe distinguishes two kinds of finitude in Derrida's essay; one that is the physical vulnerability, embodiment and mortality, the other the "finitude we experience in our subjection to the radically ahuman technicity and mechanicity of language (understood in the broadest sense as a semiotic system through which creatures "respond" to each other)" ("Human, All Too Human" 571). Indeed Derrida addresses the notion of "responding" in his essay. He claims that Western philosophy (e.g. Aristotle, Descartes, Lacan, Kant, Heidegger and Levinas) has argued that "the animal is without language. Or […] unable to respond" ("The Animal That I Therefore Am" 400). Being the passive being that the animal is, it does not have the ability or right to respond. Hence, responding is distinguished from reacting, as responding is considered to be "the property of man" ("The Animal That I Therefore Am" 400). How, then, can we relate the development of ideas – within Weil and Wolfe as well as in Diamond and Derrida – concerning animal vulnerability, (lack of) language, passivity and woundedness to trauma?

1.7 Being and Animal Captivity

Before addressing animal vulnerability and woundedness and the way in which they relate to the notion of trauma, it is of importance to first explain some concepts that have been theorized by various scholars within the field of animal studies and which are intertwined with the concepts of woundedness and vulnerability: the open, captivation and the creaturely.

In his essay, Derrida uses Heidegger's idea of *Dasein* – often translated as being-in-the world or existence – to call into question man's autobiography, that is, the nature of his being man and being able to call himself a man (cf. "The Animal That I Therefore Am" 393). In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben relates the notion of *Dasein* to the dehumanization – the process of separation of man and nature – of the human world. Agamben asserts that within the human world the being is fixed: "being 'thus' and 'not otherwise'" (*The Open* 20) – whereas the world of animals is rather fluid and elusive. Addressing this elusiveness of the animal being in Agamben, Lippit interprets it as resulting from the "human estrangement from subjectivity" (Lippit 98), since we try to explain everything in a rational manner, closing ourselves off from the unconscious which we feel is exterior to our human lives. Indeed, Jean-François Lyotard spoke about the "openness of animals" (Lippit 22) and Heidegger, rejecting the Cartesian metaphysical definition of "man as *animal rationale*, the living being that has language (or reason)" (*The Open* 50), called the animal *weltarm* (poor-in-world) and man as *weltbildend* (world-forming). Heidegger seeks to define existence or man's being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) by means of his relation to the animal, which is, as Agamben argues, a sort of open space. Subsequently, Agamben depicts the ontological status of the animal environment as "*offen* (open) but not *offenbar* (disconcealed)" (55), since the animal is present, but yet inaccessible in a non-relational manner (*The Open* 55).

Agamben argues that Heidegger "seeks to situate Dasein's fundamental structure with respect to the animal, and thus to inquire about the origin and sense of that openness which, with man, is produced in the living being" (*The Open* 50). The openness that Agamben refers to is the gap or caesura that exists between man and animal, between *Dasein* and the living being that only is. This abyss, he argues, exists because the animal "fundamentally lacks the possibility of entering into relation either with the being that it itself is or with beings other than itself" (*The Open* 54). Agamben explains that it is not simply the case that the animal is

only able to relate to its surroundings in an affective manner; rather, he contends that Heidegger sought to relate the being of the animal to the notion of captivation.

Captivation is interpreted by Heidegger and Agamben as the animal lacking awareness of its being and is not able to think at an abstract level (cf. *The Open* 52-3). Heidegger asserts that within the state of captivation, abandonment and emptiness are felt, and lead to a "being-left-empty as the essential experience of boredom" (*The Open* 64). He argues that the way in which the animal relates to its environment is intertwined with this notion of boredom. Boredom, as a state reserved for humans, is a feeling of profound abandonment or emptiness: "we are *taken* [hingenommen] by things, if not altogether *lost* in them, and often even *captivated* [benommen] by them" (Heidegger qtd. in *The Open* 64). Subsequently, Agamben argues that boredom as a state that man can find himself in, is the single way in which he can come in closest proximity to animal captivation (cf. *The Open* 65).

Another scholar who addresses the proximity between man and animal within the realm of biopolitics is Eric Santner. In his book *On Creaturely Life* (2006) Santner uses the notion of "the creaturely" – "the peculiar proximity of the human to the animal at the very point of their radical difference" (12) – to assert that the relation between human and non-human life is, above all, an ethical as well as a political one. Santner relies on Agamben's discussion of "the open" and the interpretation of the term by Rilke and Heidegger in arguing that creaturely life is the result of man's "exposure to a traumatic dimension of political power and social bonds whose structures have undergone radical transformations in modernity." (12) Santner further follows the connection Agamben draws between *Dasein*, boredom and animal captivation in talking about creaturely life. He sees Heideggerian *Dasein* as "an animal that has learned to become bored" and that "has awakened from its own captivation to its own captivation" (Santner 12), therewith drawing on Agamben's idea of ecstasy-belonging, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. However, in relating the notion of captivation to that

of the creaturely, Santner argues that the becoming bored is the "awakening of the living being to its own being-captivated, this anxious and resolute opening to a not-open, is the human" (Santner 12). In short, the open or abyss between human and animal remains, since the being captivated by *Dasein* – which Santner equates with boredom or being bored – brings man closer to the captivated animal, yet he remains unable to bridge the gap. As Agamben argues, this is because both human and animal are "open to a closedness" (*The Open* 65) of their own being.

Both Agamben and Santner argue that the split or open that exists between man and animal is closely related to the notion of trauma. Santner uses Freud's notion of the uncanny in asserting that man's proximity to the animal other is "an index of a traumatic kernel around which the 'ego life' of the other has, at some level, been (dis)organized" (xiii). Man's separation from the animal, and, therewith, his alienation from the open, has left its mark on man. Yet, in his book *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (2009), Dominick LaCapra criticizes the way in which both Agamben and Santner theorize trauma in light of *Dasein* and creaturely life. LaCapra argues that these posthumanist ideas

> still divorce the human from the animal and anthropocentrically seek the differential criterion (or essence) identifying the human, even when the criterion paradoxically points to an enigma or indistinction: a traumatic split, signifying stress, or anxiety-ridden form of self-questioning that serves to set apart the human or its 'post' avatars […]. (LaCapra 152)

Theorizing the animal by means of notions such as the creaturely or the open would, therefore, be yet another way of emphasizing *difference* and deeming the animal profoundly

other. Taking the passive animal that is the victim of its own captivity, LaCapra argues, is subsequently a means of taking it outside or beyond ethical and political concerns (cf. 153).

Yet, for Santner, the creaturely is actually intertwined with matters of politics. He argues that the concept cannot be explained without reference to the "state of exception" or sovereignty of man. Using both Carl Schmitt's and Agamben's ideas, Santner asserts that there is an *external* boundary that deems the other the "enemy" and outside the law, while simultaneously presupposing that there is also an "internal boundary between law and its immanent 'outside.'" (14), which Agamben calls "being outside, and yet belonging" (Santner 14) or "ecstasy belonging." Man can thus only live in a state of exception because he is sovereign and submitted to law. What Santner subsequently calls creaturely life is

> the life that is called into being […] by exposure to the peculiar 'creativity' association with [the] threshold of law and nonlaw; it is the life that has been delivered over to the space of the sovereign's "ecstasy-belonging," or what we might simply call "sovereign jouissance." (15)

Let us pause for a moment and critically reflect upon this statement in order to understand precisely what Santner's argument is. First of all, the "threshold of law and nonlaw" implies that Santner speaks of a place that is in-between, which is ungraspable for the law, but yet not totally external to the law. Indeed, the creaturely is the outside that is yet belonging, as though it fills the gap that exists between law and nonlaw. This "ecstasy-belonging" can be seen as an outlaw position. However, Santner speaks of the "*sovereign's* [my emphasis] 'ecstasy-belonging'," therewith implying that the state of exception is something that is presupposed for the sovereign being, thus the human.

It is interesting to note the parallel between this interpretation of sovereignty and Agamben's notion of "bare life." Both sovereignty and bare life can be seen as existing in a liminal or in-between state. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Agamben makes the distinction between *zoē* and *bios*. The former expresses the "simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods)" and the latter the "form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (*Homo Sacer* 1). In addressing this distinction, Agamben wonders why "Western politics first constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life" (*Homo Sacer* 7), therewith questioning how a sovereign being can be simultaneously included and excluded.[9] This same question can be asked concerning the separation between man and animal. However, when we understand the sovereign in a juridical sense as supreme power or authority, can we see the animal as sovereign as well because it is not totally external to the law? Because it is, essentially, its own being? Or is the non-human being outside these realms of sovereignty and non-sovereignty at all because these terms are man-made in the first place?

Asking these questions, we can wonder whether only the human has access to creaturely life or whether the animal can also experience it. Is man, through entering the creaturely realm, as far away from being human and as close as he can ever get to the animal?

[9] In *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009), Derrida criticizes Agamben's conception of sovereignty, biopolitics and the distinction he makes between *zoē* and *bios in Homo Sacer.* Derrida asserts that the distinction between *zoē* and *bios* is less clear than Agamben makes it seem to be and specifically seems to mock Agamben's style of writing, especially his depiction of himself as sovereign, e.g. by making remarks such as:

> I point this out with a smile only to recall that this is the very definition, vocation, or essential claim of sovereignty. He who posits himself as sovereign or intends to take power as sovereign always says or implies: even If I am not the first to do or say so, I am the first or only one to know and recognize who *will have been* the first. And I would add: the sovereign, if there is such a thing, is the one who manages to get people to believe, at least for a while, that he is the first to know who came first, when there is every chance that it is almost always false, even if, in certain cases, no one ever suspects so. (*The Beast and the Sovereign* 135)

Perhaps the creaturely is exactly the position of the outlaw, one that does not belong but simply *is.* A creature lingering in the corners, at home in the open space between man and animal. Is, then, the "sovereign jouissance" Santner refers to a sort of ultimate goal for the being within the creaturely realm? Perhaps this creaturely life can be seen as a fulfillment of a desire to be in closest proximity to the other. In her book *Creaturely Poetics: Animality in Literature and Film* (2011), Anat Pick argues that Santner interprets creaturely life as something *within* the human (cf. 74). The human that dwells within the creaturely can thus be seen as the Agambian being that is "outside, and yet belonging."

Having established that the creaturely is a realm that is only accessible for human beings, it can be argued that Santner's creaturely is indeed an anthropocentric concept. When looking at the conception of "trauma in the realm of creaturely life" (Santner 4), we can conclude that for Santner trauma is something that can only be experienced by human beings. Yet, Pick has a different interpretation of the creaturely, which finds its origin in the notion of vulnerability.

1.8 Vulnerability

In addressing the notion of vulnerability, it is interesting to look at Diamond and Derrida, as well as the interpretation of their ideas by Pick and Wolfe. Diamond's and Derrida's understanding of vulnerability is, for a large part, similar, but there are some slight differences in their arguments. Whereas both Wolfe and Pick address these differences, the latter also relates them to the notion of the creaturely. Pick begins her book *Creaturely Poetics* by stating that it is "neither strictly about humans nor about animals" (1). Furthermore, instead of taking on an *internal* focus – like Wolfe does in *Animal Rites* – by means of focusing on the "self" in the "discourse of species," she seeks to focus on the *external* by "considering the corporeal reality of living bodies" (Pick 3). For this purpose, she draws on the idea of

vulnerability that Simone Weil uses in *Gravity and Grace* (1952). In this book, Weil argues that "vulnerability is a mark of existence" (Weil qtd. in Pick 3), which Pick sees as a statement that relates vulnerability and existence to notions of beauty and ethics, since these are characteristics that are not only reserved for humans. Pick sees vulnerability as "a universal mode of exposure" (5), therewith moving away from Santner's interpretation of the creaturely in light of man's sovereign position. Whereas Santner's understanding of the creaturely implies that species are, as it were, subjugated to a "higher" sovereignty, Pick deems this perspective anthropocentric and suggests an interpretation of the creaturely *beyond* this perspective through the notion of vulnerability. She argues that "to speak of animals' vulnerability […] is to draw attention to their outstanding position in the judicial, political, and moral orders." (Pick 15).

Indeed, we already established through Diamond that (the exposure to) vulnerability and mortality are things that the human shares with animals, as we are, like animals, embodied beings (cf. "Introduction: Exposures" 8). Diamond argues that animal studies as an area of investigation that came into being through the (human) rights tradition, is now evolving from being purely focused on rights to a more broader focus on vulnerability, care and loving attention (cf. Diamond 69-73). According to Wolfe, she contends that the rights debate is "locked into a model of justice in which a being does or does not have rights on the basis of its possession (or lack) of morally significant characteristics that can be empirically derived" ("Introduction: Exposures" 13). Although animals have always existed side by side with humans, they were taken to *be* or to *mean* something through man's thought and imagination, for instance within philosophy, religion, literature and art (cf. "Introduction: Exposures" 16). Without entirely abolishing the human-animal divide, animals should rather be thought of as "fellow creatures." For Pick, this can be done through the notion of vulnerability, which "offers a fundamental challenge to liberal humanism, both in terms of the

rejection of the notion of rights and in a radical critique of subjectivity" (16). This idea of animals as our fellow creatures can be confronting, Diamond explains by referring to the confusion Elizabeth Costello feels concerning our relationship with animals. It is "a sense of astonishment and incomprehension that there should be beings like us, so unlike us, so astonishingly capable of being companions of ours and so unfathomably distant" (Diamond qtd. in Pick 187).

Concerning the notion of vulnerability, Diamond's ideas correspond, to a certain extent, to those of Derrida. Both scholars understand the ethical bond between human and nonhuman animals as congregating in the notion of mortality. However, whereas Diamond argues that man has a relation to his own mortality, Derrida rejects this on the basis that we can never fully grasp the concept of death ourselves, it is always through an other that we recognize it. Wolfe addressed this difference between Diamond and Derrida, arguing that, in Diamond

> there is the suggestion […] that imaginative and literary projection can somehow achieve in this instance what propositional, syllogistic philosophy cannot achieve [e.g. Costello who says "I know what it's like to be a corpse], but Derrida would see this, too, as a "deflection" of "exposure": exposure not just to mortality but also to a certain estranging operation of language. ("Introduction: Exposures" 23)

Literature as a means of exposure that brings us closer to non-human animals would therefore be just another manner of deflecting, as we are still only able to come closer to the animal through a mediated idea of shared vulnerability. In trying to grasp the vulnerability or mortality that we supposedly share with animals, we rely on language, which ultimately brings us back to a form of anthropocentric humanism that deems the animal inferior to man's

reason and ability to use language. Opposing this argument, Pick asserts that Coetzee's novels can be seen as the materialization of a deflection themselves, because of the relation between Coetzee's characters and the bodies of (non-human) others (cf. Pick 9-10), an argument we will return to in discussing Coetzee's *Disgrace* in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Yet, language is important for Diamond as well. Like Derrida her opinion is that language has caused humanity to develop a blind spot towards its understanding of its conceptual life. Wolfe argues that for Derrida it is clear that "we *don't* have a concept of 'the human'" ("Introduction: Exposures" 27), but that this is actually a good thing. Rather, we are always already "radically other […] ahuman in our very being" ("Introduction: Exposures" 28), since we are not only mortal, but also because our subjectivity is formed through the "subjection to and constitution in the materiality of language" ("Introduction: Exposures" 28). For Derrida, the notion of *différence* is of key importance in this context, as the kind of

> "not being able" renders uncertain and unstable […] the relationship of the human to itself because it renders unstable not just the boundary between human and animal but also that between the organic and the mechanical technological. And for these very reasons – because of the estrangement of "the human" from the "auto–" that "we" give ourselves – the relation between the human and nonhuman animal is constantly opened anew and, as it were, permanently. It is a "wound," if you will, that can never be healed. ("Introduction: Exposures" 28)

To summarize Derrida's argument, he implies here that man is unable to conceptualize his own life as a human, since there is always the barrier raised by language. We can only describe our own being through an intricate semiotic system: language. Exactly the "not being able" is the gap or, if you will, caesura, that makes our conceptual life as such possible. For

Diamond, on the other hand, reality is *not* language, language only reflects on reality. For her, the "coming apart of thought and reality belongs to flesh and blood" (Diamond qtd. in "Introduction: Exposures" 30), not to language. For Derrida, however, the coming apart of thought and reality can be traced back to language, since the relation we have to our own flesh and blood is constituted by language. Eventually, the becoming aware of one's inability to grasp one's own being through language leaves man exposed. This is exactly what Derrida addresses in "The Animal I Therefore Am": the animal gaze exposes man to its own being and nakedness:

> the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself. (381)

Man's nakedness in front of the animal makes him vulnerable, since there is a gap within his existence as he knows it. This gap or abyss leads us to realize that we are, essentially, unaware of our own being. We fail to understand, fail to grasp our essential being in relation to other creatures. This inability to understand is the wound or trauma that presses upon man.

1.9 A Creaturely Approach to Trauma

As argued earlier in this chapter, the anthropocentrism of trauma theory often goes unnoticed, but has been recently addressed by various scholars. Could we, in trying to move away from the anthropocentric approach to trauma theory, start by rethinking how a *creaturely* approach to trauma theory that focuses on vulnerability and woundedness would function? And how could literature play a role in this process?

In the last pages of *Creaturely Poetics* Pick claims that, first of all, "a creaturely ethics […] does not depend on fulfilling any preliminary criteria of subjectivity and personhood. Its source lies in the recognition of the materiality and vulnerability of all living bodies, whether human or not, and in the absolute primacy of obligations over rights" (193). It is, thus, the creature *as such* that is addressed. Not the rational creature or the conscious human, but the embodied, living being. It is, as it were, a movement away from a humanism that tries to include the animal, towards a different form of life in which our living together is reshaped – I am not sure if we can even call it humanism – that Pick calls a "contracted" humanism (cf. 193). For Pick, this approach of the human-animal divide within animal studies can be seen as a different way of dehumanizing the humanities. However, instead of giving the word *dehumanization* a negative connotation (e.g. in referring to the Holocaust as the event that led to a dehumanization of man), she argues in favor of a more positive approach involving the notion of "contraction" (cf. Pick 6).

For Pick, and other scholars such as Santner, Diamond, Derrida and Slavoj Žižek, vulnerability can be this form of "contraction." When applied to trauma, this would mean that the focus is not on the Freudian "working through" of trauma through trying to understand the workings of the unconscious and neither on the victimization of trauma survivors. Instead, it is focused on notions of vulnerability, care and empathy that are related to Agamben's concept of "bare life" as a life detached from subjectivity (cf. *The Open* 38), a life of exposure. Thus, instead of approaching trauma in a humanist and rationalist way, a creaturely approach of trauma focuses on the embodied experience. However, as Pick argues, "the creaturely is not simply a synonym for the material and corporeal. It carries within it (as inflection, as horizon) an opening unto a religious vocabulary of creation and created, and so attempts a rapprochement between the material and the sacred" (17). In this way, a creaturely trauma theory would move away from the ideas that grew out of the ethical turn in

deconstruction, which focused on testimony or saw deconstructive writing as a form of testimony itself. In this respect, Santner votes instead for a "more psychoanalytic approach to the 'creaturely' residues of traumatic events" (cf. 52) that can be materialized, he asserts, in specific works of prose fiction that foregrounds a mode of "exposure." Yet, the passage in which Santner speaks of this creaturely approach of trauma – specifically in the work of W. G. Sebald – remains rather vague. It is, therefore, of importance to further explore how we could elaborate on this idea of approaching trauma in a creaturely manner through literature.

In their article "Creaturely Constellations" (2015), Pieter Vermeulen and Virginia Richter address the importance of literature within thinking through trauma in a creaturely way. They argue that

> literature itself can be seen as an unruly life form that elicits response. Located at the affectively and ethically saturated meeting point of the culture, the social and the biological, literature has relayed, mediated and absorbed the forces to which human life finds itself exposed. (2)

Again, it is the notion of exposure that is emphasized. Ultimately, literature puts philosophy into question, as literature has the power to explore the gaps that philosophy as an occupation based on the rational explanation of things is not able to explore, as Elizabeth Costello asserts as well in *The Lives of Animals*. The "quarrel," in that sense, between philosophy and literature is an ancient one, already addressed by Plato. Unlike theory, literature has an inherent "heterogeneity, […] contamination, [and] impurity" that exceeds *logos* (Lippit 133). Lippit argues that this means that

> only in the literary text […] the animal remains in the body as a foreign element without, at the same time, corrupting that body irreversibly. Literature can be seen, in the tradition of Freud's *unheimlich* economy and Derrida's *pharmakon,*[10] as an example of 'antiliterature,' a vaccine against itself and the animality it harbors. (134)

Literature, thus, has the ability or power to foreground the presence and absence of the animal without making the animal the absolute other. By exposing the animal or the borders between man and animal, literature grasps the "open" – the fundamental break, or caesura, between man and animal. But how could this ability of literature to grasp the open be useful for trauma theory?

Let us, for this purpose, return to Freud's conception of the unconscious in his theory on trauma. In the essay "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" (1957), Jacques Lacan argues that the unconscious is structured like language. The Freudian unconscious, as Lacan interprets it, is part of the symbolic order.[11] According to Freud, the reenactment of a trauma is an unconscious process. When we follow Lacan's line of thought this would mean that it is a process at the symbolic level, thus structured like language. For Freud, the traumatized person can be "cured" through psychotherapy, which entails talking about the trauma. Indeed, the cure is achieved through language. If we, instead, approach trauma at a more affective or creaturely level that moves away from language, a

[10] The notion of *pharmakon* is described by Derrida in his writings on Plato. In *Phaedrus* Plato briefly mentions Pharmacia (*Pharmakeia*) which is also "a common noun signifying the administration of the *pharmakon*, the drug: the medicine and/or poison" ("*From* Dissemination" 1701). The *pharmakon* ultimately operates through seduction and is a substance and nonsubstance at the same time, therewith "exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance" ("*From* Dissemination" 1701).

[11] Lacan distinguishes the symbolic order from the "imaginary" and the "Real." The symbolic order is "the dimension of symbolization into which the human being's body, to the extent that he or she begins to *speak*, must translate itself. The Symbolic is the dimension of articulation, not equivalent to pointing or naming. Like algebra, the "Symbolic" is a structure of *relations* rather than *things*" (Leitch 1159).

whole range of new possibilities appear. Still, literature is language as well, so how can it address and deal with trauma in a different manner?

Stephen Mulhall critically interrogates the healing capacity of literature in his book *The Wounded Animal* (2009). Although he refers to Diamond who emphasizes that literature has "the capacity […] to enlarge our moral imagination, to educate the heart towards enlarged and deepened moral sympathies" (Mulhall 13), he also wonders "If human embodiment exceeds the grasp and the (un)certainty of all human sense-making systems, it must exceed that of literature; how, then, can literature properly represent this excess, if not by enacting it—by exceeding its own limits?" (Mulhall 202). Thus, on the one hand, our exposure to other beings (human as well as nonhuman) emphasizes what we share with others, rather than in what way we differ from them. Literature has access to this different realm of imagination that addresses bodily experiences, whereas philosophy is always already deflected and only able to address the rational aspect. For Costello literature critiques reason, as she asserts in *The Lives of Animals.* On the other hand, literature still tries to grasp this process or enactment through language.

However, this thesis suggests that literature has the inherent capacity to address and approach something as ungraspable and fluid as trauma in a different, non-linguistic way, that is, through emphasizing the notions of the creaturely, vulnerability and suffering, instead of on trying to literally and consciously grasp a trauma, ideas that will be elaborated upon in discussing the various novels by Coetzee. As I will argue in the following chapters, especially the work of J. M. Coetzee explicitly as well as implicitly explores these concepts of the creaturely, vulnerability and suffering.

Chapter 2: Suffering and the Traumatized Animal: *Disgrace*

"We are of a different order of creation from the animals" (*Disgrace* 74), David Lurie, the protagonist of J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (1999) insists. In the novel, Lurie represents the Cartesian philosophy that marks the division between the rational man and the non-rational animal. While he agrees with his daughter Lucy that there is no higher life and that "this is the only life there is" (74), he nonetheless asserts that, concerning the animal, we should "not lose perspective," as the animal is "just different" (74). Lucy disagrees; for her, life is something that is shared by humans *and* animals. This disagreement between Lurie and his daughter is emblematic for the fundamentally different attitudes towards life, being and the relation between man and animal that are addressed in *Disgrace*.[12]

Disgrace is one of Coetzee's most celebrated, yet also most criticized novels. Set in post-apartheid South Africa, the novel tells the story of fifty-two year old Afrikaner David Lurie, once a Modern Language professor, now professor of Communications at the Technical University of Cape Town, who gets expelled from the university for having seduced a (black) female student.[13] Lurie seeks refuge at his daughter's farm in the countryside, where she runs a dog kennel. He starts volunteering at the local Animal Welfare

[12] In his essay "The Dog Man Becoming Animal in Coetzee's *Disgrace*" (2005), Tom Herron depicts *Disgrace* as the philosophical counterpart of *The Lives of Animals* in the sense that the subject in Costello's lectures are animals but the text itself is actually devoid of them, whereas in *Disgrace* animals are omnipresent, but not – or, at least not specifically – the subject of a philosophical debate.

[13] It is interesting to note that the "seduction" of the student – Melanie Isaacs – by Lurie is interpreted in different ways. Whereas some scholars, literary critics and reviewers explain the events that happened between Lurie and Melanie Isaacs as a "seduction" or an "affair" (e.g. Lurie himself in the novel (*Disgrace* 42); Michael Morris in "Coetzee Thinks Publicly About New South Africa" in *Cape Argus*. 10 August 1999), others emphasize that it is a *violent* seduction or rape that can be assessed in relation to the South African history of racial oppression (e.g. in Lucy Graham's "'Yes, I Am Giving Him Up'" (2002)).

League, where he helps with the killing and disposing of unwanted dogs.[14] When his daughter is gang-raped in her own house by two black men and a boy while Lurie is locked up in the bathroom, things start to change fundamentally.

Since its publication *Disgrace* has been elaborately discussed by literary scholars and critics. The many different aspects of the novel have been addressed within various discourses ranging from postcolonial studies to ethics, (moral) philosophy and animal studies, and are interpreted in light other texts of, i.e., Derrida, Kafka, Plato, Levinas, Foucault and Spivak. Yet, without disavowing the presence of the wide variety of themes and discourses within the novel, this chapter will instead focus on (animal) suffering and trauma in the novel. While the notion of trauma and the presence of animals – mainly dogs – in *Disgrace* have been discussed before,[15] this chapter specifically focuses on how (animal) suffering and vulnerability relate to trauma and, subsequently, how this addresses the proximity of man and animal as discussed in the first chapter. Through emphasizing the suffering, vulnerability and woundedness of animals and the way in which Lurie responds to this (and other forms of) suffering, this chapter will explore the creaturely residues of trauma. This means that we will specifically look at the role animals fulfill in *Disgrace* and how their presence can be used in developing a way of approaching trauma in a manner that differs from Freudian and Caruthian trauma theory.

To get an insight into how Coetzee approaches trauma in *Disgrace*, I will first address the varieties of suffering and woundedness within the novel and how these traumas influence

[14] In *Melancholia's Dog* (2006), Alice Kuzniar relates the disposing of dogs in *Disgrace* to Kafka's *The* Trial. She asserts that the dogs are "to be disposed of, made to disappear, be dispatched to oblivion" (172) and that "to die like a dog, as Josef K. does in Kafka's *The Trial*, is to die in shame" (172).

[15] I.e. in "Pursuing Ghosts: The Traumatic Sublime in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" (2005), Kimberly Wedeven Segall addresses trauma. Subsequently, in various critical reviews on the presence of animals – especially dogs – is reviewed, i.e. in Tom Herron's "The Dog Man: Becoming animal in *Disgrace"* and Derrek Attridge's "Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's *Disgrace*" (2000).

the lives of the characters. Subsequently, I will argue that these different traumas cause Lurie to become more aware of animals – the dogs – and his own proximity to them.

2.1 Trauma

We can see the rape of Lucy as the most "obvious" trauma that occurs within the novel. I would like to argue that the victim of this trauma – Lucy – and the witness of this traumatic event – Lurie – initially deal with this trauma in a traditional, Freudian way. Lucy represses the trauma by not talking about it to her father, the only thing she says is "I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life" (*Disgrace* 161). Although Lurie does not understand Lucy's silence, he respects it and feels that "patiently, silently, Lucy must work her own way back from the darkness to the light" (*Disgrace* 107).[16] In her essay "Pursuing Ghosts: the Traumatic Sublime in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" (2005), Kimberly Wedeven Segall relates Lucy's "refusal to share her experience with Lurie" as "evok[ing] Gayatri Spivak's argument on the difficulties of inscribing the voice of the oppressed figure." (48). She argues that "[a] text's ability to violate an-other […] is further complicated when traumatic experience is involved. Presumptions of knowing another person's traumatic experience could be classified as part of this epistemic violation" (48). This argument indeed

[16] After Lucy's rape, Lurie finds his daughter moody and withdrawn. Lucy's response Lurie's question whether she "didn't pick up something from those men" (124) is by saying "Men? […] Which men?" (125), while simultaneously "playing with the cat." Not only does Lucy repress the memory of the experience with her response, which implies that she either *has* forgotten the event – which is unlikely – or that she tries to forget it by denying that it happened, her response "Which men?" could also be interpreted as her deeming those who raped her non-human. However, the "playing with the cat" part I find a curious allusion to Michel de Montaigne's famous remark: "when I am playing with my cat, how do I know she is not playing with me?" which Derrida also refers to in "The Animal That I Therefore Am." Not only does the presence of the cat emphasize the possibly "healing" nature of animals within the novel, it perhaps also foreshadows Lurie's changing attitude towards and growing engagement with the dogs he kills in the Animal Welfare clinic. In the end, Montaigne's question whether we play with the cat or whether the cat is actually playing with us becomes the question whether we are *taking care* of the animal or if the animal is rather *taking care* of us.

resonates with Stef Crap's criticism on traditional Freudian trauma theory that pathologizes survivors "as victims without […] agency, sufferers from an 'illness' that can be 'cured' within existing structures of institutionalized psychiatry" ("Wor(l)ds of Grief" 56), that is, through the "talking cure."

After the attack, Lurie's psychological state of being can be regarded as "in shock." His trauma is a literal one – his head is partly burned – as well as a psychological trauma. The shock manifests itself physically in a trembling that starts with his hands and soon "spread[s] to his whole body" (*Disgrace* 101) and he has nightmares – "chemical hallucinations" as he calls them himself – in which his daughter cries out for help.[17] Yet, Lurie hopes that time will not only heal his physical wound, but also Lucy's psychological trauma: "His scalp is healing over […] Presumably Lucy is healing too, or if not healing then forgetting, growing scar tissue around the memory of that day, sheathing it, sealing it off" (*Disgrace* 141).

Before addressing how Lurie's attitude towards the dogs in the clinic changes after this event, it is of importance to address the other trauma's and cases of suffering within the novel, as they also influence Lurie's behavior. The story, so it is argued by various scholars, is situated within a larger context of a society that still bears the traumatic legacy of apartheid. This legacy and its problematic (side-)effects can be considered as explicitly and implicitly haunting the novel. Lurie interprets the rape of Lucy as an act of historical revenge: "history speaking through them [the rapists] [...]. A history of wrong [...] It may have seemed personal but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (*Disgrace* 156). Lucy answers by saying that "They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying?" (*Disgrace* 158) Lurie strongly disagrees with Lucy's passive attitude and finds it a severe miscalculation that she wishes to "humble" herself before history (*Disgrace* 160). Segall refers to Desmond Tutu's words

[17] Segall argues that the "unexpected shift in the romantic opera that he [Lurie] is composing." (41) can also be considered a reaction to or even a reenactment of the trauma.

"How are the "ghosts of the past" recognized so they "don't return to haunt us" (48), in addressing how, through this dialogue between Lurie and Lucy, the novel raises the question "how is experiential memory assessed after a history of violation?" (48).

When looking at the first part of the novel in which Lurie seduces Melanie Isaacs, there is a parallel to be detected between this event and the rape of Lucy. The committee of inquiry which Lurie has to appear before after Melanie has filed a complaint against him, speaks rather of "abuse" instead of an "affair", arguing that the there is too little attention for "the long history of exploitation of which this [the affair or abuse] is part" (*Disgrace* 53). Indeed, this could either be the "history of exploitation" between men and women, but it is more likely that it refers to South-Africa's own history of apartheid, since Melanie, a black female student, inhabits the subordinate position and Lurie, the white male professor, the position of power, of *care*.[18] Contending that Lurie is traumatized by his being put before the committee of inquiry and subsequent dismissal from the university is perhaps a bit excessive, but he is definitely affected or – to a certain extent – *wounded* by his own actions and its consequences. Melanie remains the official "victim," although critics disagree on whether she was a "willing" or "unwilling" victim.[19]

Something that addresses the problem of the history of violence and how it is dealt with even more profoundly is Lurie's attitude and behavior as a white, middleclass man who does not consider himself racist. Though, whether he wants it or not, through him the voice of the white oppressor still speaks. Lurie only becomes aware of this when he finds the boy who

[18] As Mr Isaacs, Melanie's father puts it when he confronts Lurie with the affair: "If we can't trust the university, who can we trust?" (38)

[19] Whether Melanie is traumatized by the affair remains unclear, although critics who see the affair as abuse would, for obvious reasons, argue that she certainly is. The affair has not let Melanie unaffected, but since the novel is narrated from the perspective of Lurie, the reader for a large part remains in the dark about Melanie's own feelings about the events. Yet Lurie's ex-wife Rosalind recounts that Melanie "took sleeping pills" (45), which Segall interprets as her "attempt[ing] to commit suicide" (Segall 44) and Melanie does withdraw from Lurie's course and, in fact "wants to give up her studies and get a job," (*Disgrace* 36) or so her father tells Lurie.

raped Lucy peeking at her through the bathroom window. He calls him a "filthy swine" (206), realizing that "phrases that all his life he has avoided seem suddenly just and right: *Teach him a lesson, Show him his place*" (*Disgrace* 206). Yet, even before the rape of Lucy this discourse is already present in the way in which Lurie respectively refers to and treats the prostitute Soraya and his student Melanie Isaacs. The sex with Soraya he describes as "the copulation of snakes" (*Disgrace* 3) and the sex he has with Melanie in her house he reflects on as being "not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox closes on its neck" (*Disgrace* 25). In tracing "otherness," Segall argues that Lurie's "fusing canine and human realms paradoxically [indicates] Lurie's trace of racism" (49), yet also "signals […] a diffuse sense of *responsibility* [my emphasis]" (49). This important notion of "responsibility" will be expanded on in the next paragraph. First, it is interesting to look at the "fusing" of the canine and human, in light of the animal metaphors Lurie uses in addressing others or his relationship to others throughout the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, Lurie feels that the committee of inquiry that he has to appear before after the incidents with Melanie accuses him of being "a shark among the helpless little fishies" (*Disgrace* 54) and sees the reporters who are waiting for him after the inquiry at the university as "circl[ing] around him like hunters who have cornered a strange beast and do not know how to finish it off" (*Disgrace* 56). After arriving at his daughter's farm, he tells her that he does not like the name of Bev Shaw because "it reminds [him] of cattle" (79) and he and he refers to Lucy's rapists as "spur[ring] each other on […] like dogs in a pack […] their weapons, tucked warm and satisfied between their legs – *purring*" (*Disgrace* 159). One notices the difference in Lurie's choice of animal metaphors; the men – including himself – are predatory beings; wild beasts, sharks, "prowling wolf[s]" (*Disgrace* 168) or vipers who "thrusts [themselves] upon" (24) their victim, whereas the women are the

weak animals who need to be taken care of or for. The "helpless little fishies," of which Melanie is a "poor little bird" (*Disgrace* 32) or a rabbit caught by a fox (cf. 25). Yet, after the attack, Lurie's metaphors change. The rapists are still the predators, the "jackal[s]" (*Disgrace* 208) and "swine[s]" (206) with "piggish eyes" (92) who were "not raping [but] mating […] [their] seed driven into the woman […] meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine" (199), but Lurie himself has become the "fly – casing in a spider web" (107).

2.2 Wounded Animals

As argued, dogs are omnipresent in *Disgrace*: Lucy runs a dog kennel and in the Animal Welfare clinic Lucy's friend Bev Shaw treats and euthanizes sick and superfluous dogs – the "old, the blind, the halt, the crippled, the maimed, but also the young, the sound," as for all of them the "term has come" (*Disgrace* 218).[20] All dogs in the novel are, in a sense, wounded. Having found refuge at Lucy's house, Lurie soon becomes bored of having not much to do. Lucy suggests that he could help Bev at the Animal Welfare League. Although Lurie is not very enthusiastic, he agrees to help out at the clinic. Skeptical about Bev Shaw's work, he calls her "not a veterinarian but a priestess, full of New-Age mumbo jumbo, trying, absurdly, to lighten the load of Africa's suffering beasts" (*Disgrace* 84). Yet, his attitude towards Bev's work changes after the attack at the farm.

Could we assert that the dogs at Lucy's Kennel are also traumatized by the attack? Certainly, the men who will later rape Lucy are barked, snapped and growled at by the

[20] Lurie's task is to assist Bev with the killings and dispose of the dog carcasses at the end of every week. Lurie alludes to the similarity between the killing and disposing of the dogs and the Holocaust – in a similar way as that of Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals* where she equates the way we treat animals with the way in which the Third Reich treated Jews. The disposing of the dog carcasses Lurie asserts to as "in fact, *Lösung* (German always to hand with an appropriately blank abstraction): sublimation, as alcohol is sublimed from water, leaving no residue, no aftertaste [...] *lösen* the week's superfluous canines" (*Disgrace* 142).

anxious dogs in the cages, as if they smell that something is wrong.[21] Lurie, hit on the head and dragged inside by the men, hears that "the barking of the dogs grows louder again, more excited" (*Disgrace* 95). One of the men shoots at the dogs with a rifle, while Lurie is watching from the bathroom window:

> For a moment, the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once, another, with a gaping throat wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movement of this being who does not even bother to administer a *coup de grâce*. A hush falls. The remaining three dogs, with nowhere to hide, retreat to the back of the pen, milling about, whining softly. Taking his time between shots, the man picks them off. (*Disgrace* 95-6).

The only dog that remains unharmed is Katy, the bulldog that was abandoned by her owners and hid herself from the men. After the attack, "she is subdued and timorous, following Lucy about, keeping close to her heels" (*Disgrace* 133).[22] Lurie finds it surprising that he is no longer irritated by Katy's snuffling and panting the after attack, yet I would like to argue that especially this disappearance of irritation towards the dog is emblematic for the change Lurie goes through and which is seen in his behavior towards the animals in the clinic.

When Lurie first starts helping Bev at the animal clinic it seems to be merely out of obligation towards Lucy. When Bev tells him "you have a good presence. I sense that you like animals" (*Disgrace* 81), he holds his distance, sarcastically responding: "Do I like animals? I eat them, so I suppose I must like them, some parts of them" (81). He does not really

[21] Indeed, when working in the animal clinic and euthanizing dogs, Lurie comes determined that the dogs *"can smell your thoughts*" (142) in the same way that they can, as Bev said before, "smell what you are thinking" (81)

[22] Katy's behavior can be interpreted as a reaction to the traumatic attack in which the other dogs were killed and which has left her anxious and afraid. However, keeping Montaigne's cat in mind, we might also wonder whether, in this situation, Katy isn't actually also *taking care* of, or looking after Lucy.

understand Bev's work and "shudders" (*Disgrace* 82) by the sight of the goat with the swollen scrotum she treats, but he is intrigued by the way in which she gives the (unwanted) animals a "last resort" (*Disgrace* 84). As for himself, he comes to find that working at the clinic might be cathartic, a way of washing off his own disgrace.

It is only after the attack that Lurie actually begins to *care* about dogs in the clinic as well as about other animals. Alice Kuzniar addresses Lurie's changing attitude by arguing that he "struggles with the problem of how to cope with shame and guilt over others' suffering, for when [he] attends to abandoned, suffering, and dying dogs, he seems to reach for atonement" (174). This is also seen in his reaction to the presence of the soon to be slaughtered sheep that Petrus has bought for the feast he is throwing. The presence of the sheep and the notion that they will soon be killed makes Lurie aware of the strange relation between man and animal. He contemplates that the sheep are

> destined since birth for the butcher's knife. Nothing remarkable in that […] Sheep do not own themselves, do not own their lives. They exist to be used, every last ounce of them, their flesh to be eaten, their bones to be crushed and fed to poultry […] Descartes should have thought of that. The soul, suspended in the dark, bitter gall, hiding." (*Disgrace* 123-4)

This thought discomforts Lurie, whereas he, only days before, argued that animals don't have proper souls and that he likes to eat animals, "bringing the slaughter-beasts home to acquaint them with the people who are going to eat them" (*Disgrace* 124) seems utterly wrong to him.

Returning, then, to the notion of responsibility and how it relates to the fusing of the animal or canine with the human realm, we can determine that, after the rape of Lucy, Lurie's feelings about animals as well as the language with which he speaks for and to animals

changes. The rape of his daughter has not only made him feel more responsible towards her but also towards other living beings around him. He subsequently comes to realize that suffering is not something that is reserved for man. Quoting Mike Marais, Kuzniar contends that Lurie's assistance in dog-euthanasia is the "acceptance of the impossibility of death and also the transformation of his [Lurie's] desire for the Other into self-substituting responsibility" (177). Suffering is thus no longer an individual occupation, but is intertwined with the notion of responsibility. This is also foregrounded in Lurie's thinking about his work in the clinic after he has returned to Cape Town. No longer being part of the process of disposal, he feels that he, the only one who felt the responsibility of taking care of them *after* their death, betrays the dogs. They will be "tossed into the fire unmarked, unmourned […] will he ever be forgiven?" (*Disgrace* 178).

2.3 Shared Vulnerability and Suffering

In discussing the novel, Segall introduces the notion of the "traumatic sublime," which she sees as "a troubling sensation that occurs when a painful event of the past is changed into a disturbing image, shifts the gaze from the self to an-other," therewith "alter[ing] the focus from the protagonist to another character" (42). Segall sees the attack as having led Lurie into a state that can be depicted as the "traumatic sublime." Although I agree with Segall that the attack causes Lurie to develop "some awareness of others, outside of himself" (Segall 49) I would not want to go as far as deeming the experience a "traumatic sublime" (41) one. Rather, I would like to move away from this abstract understanding of "awareness of others" in arguing that Lurie first of all starts to realize –both consciously and unconsciously – his own proximity to the dogs he works with in the animal clinic.

Lurie comes to find the things he shares with the dogs at the clinic are the things he looked upon with skepticism before: suffering, vulnerability, and, indeed even finitude[23], which also returns in his opera on Byron: "*Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangent*" (162) ["There are tears for things and mortal things touch the mind"]. After the attack, Lurie contemplates

> a vital organ has been bruised, abused – perhaps even his heart […] In a while the organism will repair itself, and I, the ghost within it, will be my old self again. But the truth, he knows, is otherwise. His pleasure in living has been snuffed out. Like a leaf on a stream, like a puffball on a breeze, he has begun to float toward his end. (*Disgrace* 107)

This growing awareness of his *own* vulnerability is exactly the "universal mode of exposure" (Pick 5) that man shares with non-human beings. Lurie's own vulnerability coincides with his changing attitude towards the work in the animal clinic. He contemplates how the dogs that are brought to the clinic are unwanted, and that this is the moment "where he enters their lives. He may not be their savior, the one for whom they are not too many, but he is prepared to take care of them once they are unable, utterly unable, to take care of themselves" (*Disgrace* 146). Whereas before his opinion on animals was that they "don't have proper

[23] This notion of finitude that we share with animals is discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, with reference to the ideas of Derrida in "The Animal Therefore I Am (More To Follow)." Derrida asserts that

> The most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this non-power, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish" (396)

Yet, in her book Kuzniar wonders if the idea of "sharing" in mortality" is not rather a way of "anthromorphized specularity" (173).

souls" (*Disgrace* 78) because "their souls are tied to their bodies and die with them" (78), later on he describes the dog euthanasia at the clinic as an "unmentionable" process in which "the soul is yanked out of the body" (*Disgrace* 219).

Vulnerability is subsequently closely related to feelings of shame or, even, humiliation. Like Derrida who feels ashamed and vulnerable when his cat is looking at him while he is naked, Lurie feels ashamed because his daughter humbles herself "like a dog" (205) after the rape. I would like to argue that in the example of Derrida as well as in this example from *Disgrace*, roles are reversed. In Derrida the cat is no longer the subordinate pet, but, through its gaze, gains a dominant position over the man – Derrida himself. Lucy, on the other hand, finds that she should marry Petrus to be better protected from future attacks. She argues that, although this might be humiliating, it is perhaps "a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with noting but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity" (*Disgrace* 205). Lurie argues that this would be as living "like a dog" (*Disgrace* 205). Yet, through stating this, Lurie does not only fuse canine and human realms, but refers to the history of apartheid as well. Whereas in the old South-Africa the black man – often deemed the "savage beast" in colonial discourse – was the white man's subordinate, the roles have changed now and Lucy, the white woman, is to subject herself to Petrus. Lurie interprets Lucy's choice as her not wanting to take control of her own life, like "one of the three chimpanzees, the one with his paws over his eyes" (*Disgrace* 161). He feels that it is, ultimately, a defeat. For Lucy, however, leaving the farm would be defeat. She decides to acknowledge her own vulnerability and live with the humiliation rather than running away from reality. Although Lurie does not understand Lucy's attitude, he, in the end, humbles himself as well, though not before the apartheid history but before the dogs.

2.4 The Failure of Language

Segall interprets "the metamorphosis of Lurie's sublimations [as] […] part of [his] emotional development and his sublimated desire to hear the voices of the subjugated." (56). With reference to trauma, this would indeed be a Freudian or Caruthian way of relating trauma to language or, rather, the failure of language. Lucy's silence and the silence of the dogs that are unable to narrate their stories and Lurie's subsequent failure to present or represent the "wounded voices" (Segall 50), is not a traumatic sublime, as Segall wants us to believe. Surely, Lurie reenacts the traumatic event through the writing of the opera, but this is, essentially, not the way in which he "*succeeds* in embodying a symbolic trace of the traumatic past" (Segall 50), because the opera is, essentially, still language.

I would like to assert that it is exactly the writing of the opera that is Lurie's traditional, rational, Freudian, or Caruthian way of dealing with the trauma at the surface of *consciousness,* but that his *actual* dealing with the trauma is rather a *creaturely* one. Without being consciously aware of it, the animals – the dogs at the clinic, Katy, the sheep that Petrus will slaughter for the feast – have become important for him. Although I do think that Segall is hinting at an embodied understanding of trauma by asserting that Lurie's "attempts to control the past through words" fail and that the "spectral and literal bodies [Lucy, the dogs] create a resistant discourse" (50) instead, I would not want to describe is as a "traumatic sublime." Segall chooses a more Derridian understanding of trauma in the sense that she addresses man's inability to grasp his own being through language, which leaves him exposed, whereas I would like to approach the novel slightly different by following Diamond's idea that language cannot ever adequately grasp reality but only reflect on it. Language *is* not reality but *reflects* on reality. The trauma can thus not be rationalized through language – e.g. through writing the opera – but through an embodied understanding of our proximity to other, non-human beings.

Although Coetzee still investigates man's proximity to the animal through the language of the novel, he seems to be trying to *exceed* language and move towards an embodied awareness of other beings through the story he tells. Mike Marais refers to this embodied awareness as sympathy that "counters" violence. Sympathy as a non-rationalist concept is simultaneously "limited and delimited by language" ("Violence" 95). He asserts that realism "fails to realize […] that sympathy is intentional or directional, that one always sympathizes with someone else from one's position in language and culture, and therefore that language and the values it bears cannot not limit one's sympathies." ("Violence" 94). It is in the details that this shift towards bodily instead of rational existence is established within the novel, which we can especially recognize in Lurie's behavior concerning the killing and disposing of dogs: "He had thought he would get used to it. But that is not what happens. The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets […] Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake" (*Disgrace* 142-3). No longer does his *mind* respond to the animals, but is it his *body* which evokes a reaction.

Can we consider Lurie's response to the dogs in the clinic one of sympathy or empathy as understood by Marais? It is, Marais argues "[t]hrough its inscription of difference, [that] language, the bearer of discourse and ideology, denies the specificity and therefore commonality of the other person's body" (97), but that "sympathy holds out the possibility of being affected by another entity rather than simply asserting conceptual control over it" ("Violence" 95). The inability of the abstract and realist nature of language to capture something as fluid as sympathy echoes in Lurie's thoughts as well while he is working in the clinic. He cannot stop crying when he assist Bev with the euthanasia, but

> [h]e does not understand what is happening to him. Until now he has been more or less indifferent to animals. Although in an abstract way he disapproves of cruelty,

> he cannot tell whether by nature he is cruel or kind. He is simply nothing. He assumes that people from whom cruelty is demanded in the line of duty, people who work in slaughterhouses, for instance, grow carapaces over their souls. Habit hardens: it must be so in most cases, but it does not seem to be so in his. He does not seem to have the gift of hardness." (*Disgrace* 143)

Lurie is unable to grasp his own changed attitude towards the animals through language. Instead, his response to the killing of the dogs is a bodily one. It is impossible to rationalize the subsequent sympathy or empathy he feels for these dogs that are thoroughly abandoned. Yet, it is also the kinship he feels with these dogs, the sense of shared abandonment that causes him to feel related to these animals. Marais explains that exactly "through its proximity with the body, sympathy constantly intimates the possibility of responding to other bodies as singular entities, that is, in a non-conceptual way that does not reduce their otherness" ("Violence" 94-5). Lurie has, as it were, opened himself up to the body of the other, through which similarities rather than differences are emphasized.

2.5 Embodied Care

Silently Lurie helps Bev Shaw with the killing of the dogs, "he has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing" (*Disgrace* 219). The disposing of the carcasses is his task, which he takes very seriously. Instead of leaving the bags with the dog carcasses for the incinerator crew to dispose of, he

> [o]n Sunday evenings [...] brings the bags to the farm in the back of Lucy's kombi, parks them overnight, and on Monday morning drives them to the hospital grounds. There he himself loads them, one at a time, on to the feeder trolley,

> cranks the mechanism that hauls the trolley through the steel gate into the flames, pulls the lever to empty it of its contends, and cranks it back, while the workmen whose job this normally is stand by and watch. (*Disgrace* 144)

With this process he prevents the bags from being left with the rest of the waste from the hospital, piled up at the roadside, as he "is not prepared to inflict such dishonor upon them [the dogs]" (*Disgrace* 144). Subsequently, he burns the dogs himself because else, when rigor mortis stiffens the corpses over night, the workmen will beat the bags to break the bones in the morning to make it easier for them to be loaded into the truck. It is his way of taking care, of preventing the dogs who have been unwanted their whole lives from further disgrace. It is, he feels, the least he can do.

Derek Attridge wonders in "Age of Bronze, State of Grace" (2000): "If a dog is an absolute other, what is a dead dog, and what response does it demand?" (114). I would like to argue that Lurie does not take on the job of disposing because he is interested in some sort of response. The taking care of the bodies of the dead dogs is, essentially, not about the dogs themselves, but about his own proximity to the dogs. It is a way of washing himself clean without having the impression that he will ever be entirely able to do that. The caring for the dogs is as close as he can get to the atonement Kuzniar speaks of. This desire for atonement is subsequently seen in Lurie's reaction towards the sheep that Petrus is going to slaughter for the feast. According to Attridge, Lurie's behavior towards the dogs as well as the sheep "can't be termed an ethical response, nor [as] really an affective reaction; it's an impulse more obscure if no less commanding than these […] not a practical commitment to improving the world but a profound need to preserve the integrity of the self." ("Age of Bronze" 115) It is not a way of "sentimentaliz[ing] the animals he kills" (*Disgrace* 143) Lurie assures, he rather has become "the dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomt; a *harijan*" (*Disgrace* 146).

Lurie's thinking of himself as a *harijan* – an outcast or pariah – reminds of Agamben's "being outside, and yet belonging," since Lurie finds himself, through the care he takes of the dogs, in a sort of gap in between what he considered his former self and what is his new self. Subsequently, this gap brings him in closer proximity to the dogs.

This proximity is especially felt towards one particular dog at the clinic. Although Lurie "has been careful not to give it a name" (*Disgrace* 215), Bev calls the dog *Driepoot*. Lurie develops a "particular fondness for [this] young male with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it" (*Disgrace* 215), however, no one wants to adopt the dog, which means that "its period of grace is almost over [and] soon it will have to submit to the needle" (215). Yet, although Lurie notices that Driepoot also feels a sort of unconditional affection for him – "the dog would die for him, he knows" (*Disgrace* 215) – he decides, in the end, that also for this dog the time has come. He could spare the dog for another week, but what difference would that make? "Are you giving him up?" (*Disgrace* 220), Bev asks. Yes, is his answer, "Yes, I am giving him up" (220). This "giving up" is not an act of cruelty, nor just a dispatching of those of which there are "too many;" rather, "concentrate[ing] all his attention on the animal they are killing" (*Disgrace* 219) is essentially an act of love.

How could we, then, use this changing attitude of Lurie towards animals after experiencing a traumatic event in defining a more creaturely or embodied approach to trauma theory? I would like to argue that Lurie himself is, essentially, the embodiment of the changing attitude towards the suffering and vulnerability of others within *Disgrace*. This awareness is established *through* the dogs – and some other animals – within the novel. The realist or Freudian way of dealing with his trauma, Marais asserts, would be to emphasize the "humanity, individuality, and normality of the victim [Lurie as well as Lucy] but also through denigrating the violator [the rapists]" ("Violence" 98). Although this is initially what Lurie

seems to be doing, through his work in the clinic he becomes aware of the limits of this line of thought. Through introducing the dogs in the clinic, Coetzee changes the realist narrative. This is exactly what Marais argues. He asserts that, with realist literature, "novelists and readers who empathize with persecuted victims may envision themselves as virtuous and innocent, alleviating their sense of responsibility for conditions that cause suffering" ("Violence" 98). Therewith, Marais argues, that sympathy is, like responsibility "made to fail" (99) because it is never enough.

However, I would not want to dispose of these notions of sympathy and responsibility as quickly as Marais does. It is not Levinas' understanding of responsibility for the other's death – *autrui* – as man himself being "responsible for the other inasmuch as the other is mortal" (Levinas qtd. in Graham 10), but another form of responsibility beyond Levinas' understanding, since Lurie "choose[s] to care for non-human others in the face of that most radical alterity, death itself" (Graham 10). To return to trauma, the suffering of the body is no longer solely reserved for the human being but rather something that is *shared* with other beings, such as dogs or other animals. Lurie shares his mortality with the dogs and feels that he is responsible in taking care of them, since "they are unable, utterly unable, to take care of themselves" (*Disgrace* 146).

This is how we should look at trauma as well. Not by emphasizing the importance of "working through," but by a creaturely approach of emphasizing the responsibility towards other traumatized creatures that, like us, are embodied beings. Not consciously trying to grasp the trauma – or, through the failure of the attempt to consciously grasp the trauma – Lurie, in the end, finds a different way of dealing with his trauma. He realizes that being traumatized is something that he shares with the dogs, as well as the vulnerability and suffering. In the end, the new approach is taking care: Lurie is taking care of the dogs that are to be euthanized, but these dogs also take care of him.

Chapter 3: A New Form of Existence: *Life and Times of Michael K*

At a certain moment in Coetzee's novel *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), the protagonist Michael K is overwhelmed by the thought that he "has become an object of charity" (*MK* 181). "Everywhere I go," he realizes,

> [t]here are people waiting to exercise their forms of charity on me […]. They want me to open my heart and tell them the story of a life lived in cages. They want to hear about all the cages I have lived in, as if I were a budgie or a white mouse or a monkey (*MK* 181).

The similarity between Michael K's feeling like a monkey and Red Peter, the protagonist in Kafka's short story "A Report to an Academy," is one that is easily drawn.[24] Kafka's ape Red Peter, once captured at the Gold Coast, has since focused on becoming human in order to survive in his new life – or reach some kind of freedom – and is invited by a learned academy to give an account of his former life as an ape. However, Red Peter is unable to narrate about his life as an ape because he already transformed into a human and asserts that he can only describe what happened to him and how he felt as an ape in human terms. Similarly, Michael K is urged to speak about his life by the medical officer and the commander of the rehabilitation camp he is brought to, but he chooses to remain silent. Like Elizabeth Costello's reference to Red Peter – or even to *feeling* like Red Peter herself – in her lecture in *The Lives of Animals*, Coetzee's allusion to Red Peter in *Michael K* emphasizes a kind of exposure. It is

[24] Besides the connection with Kafka's story "A Report To An Academy," the protagonist Michael K in *Life and Times of Michael K* bears similarities to Kafka's protagonist Josef K in *The Trial* (1925). Josef K's last words in this book are "Like a dog," which are words that appear in many of Coetzee's novels, as also argued in the introduction of this thesis. In *Life and Times of Michael K* the sentence "like a dumb dog" (*MK* 28) is used in referring to Michael K.

the exposure of a creature, not fully human, nor fully animal, before other beings. Yet, in the case of Michael K, this exposure provokes a sense of pity, compassion or sympathy that is interpreted as a being in need of *care*.

Taking these notions of exposure and care, this chapter will use the findings of the first and second chapter in arguing how Michael K's way of dealing with trauma is closely intertwined with these notions. I will argue that K's loss of his mother, his land, his nation and, arguably, his self, can be interpreted as a trauma. With reference to the conclusions about the creaturely approach of trauma that are drawn in Chapter 2, this chapter will argue that K deals with his trauma in a creaturely way. Herein, this chapter will not as much focus on the animal metaphors within the novel, like Chapter 2 did with *Disgrace*. Although these metaphors are omnipresent in *Life and Times of Michael K* and certainly important in addressing the creaturely in this novel, the chapter will rather focus on how the *animalistic* features of K – or the way in which he is deemed animal-like by others – can be related to a creaturely approach of trauma. Within this approach it is important to also address K's silence and investigate what the traumatic implications are for being someone "who has no 'voice' in society" (McColl Chesney 310).

3.1 Trauma and Abandonment

Life and Times of Michael K is set in Apartheid South Africa, where an imaginary civil war is on. The protagonist Michael K is a colored man born with a hare-lip, which has made him the object of scrutiny and pity his whole life. Trying to escape war-driven Cape Town with his dying mother, Michael K begins a journey to Prince Albert, the rural town where his mother grew up. During their attempt to cross the country, K's mother dies, leaving K to find his own way. What follows is a narration of K's wanderings through the country; from living at the abandoned farm where his mother was born and surviving in the mountains to being put in

several resettlement and labor camps. When a severely malnourished K is found in his self-made burrow, he is brought to a camp hospital, where one specific doctor "find[s] himself increasingly obsessed with the desire to make Michael K talk and tell his story" (Mills 179). Yet, in the end, K escapes the camp which, as I will argue, can be read as an escape from "traditional" approaches to trauma – the talking cure – and the movement towards a new and embodied way of dealing with trauma.

Michael K is traumatized at several levels and his traumas are characterized by a mode of abandonment. The loss of his mother can be considered as the trauma that leaves K in a sort of vacuum, as if in a state of utter desertion. After Anna K's death, Michael finds that "he did not miss her […] except insofar as he had missed her all his life" (*MK* 34). This idea of missing something is emblematic for K's whole life as an outcast. His childhood he has lived in isolation because of his hare-lip. Even his mother "shivered" (*MK* 3) the first time she laid eyes on him after giving birth. Being "handicapped," K spent his childhood in Huis Norenius, a place where "afflicted and unfortunate children" (*MK* 4) learned elementary things like reading, counting, sweeping and bed making. Subsequently, after his mother's death, K finds himself even further withdrawn from society. K retreats at the abandoned Visagie farm in Prince Albert where his mother grew up, contemplating that he is living "by the rising and setting of the sun, in a pocket outside time" (*MK* 60). This notion of living "outside time" can be seen as a sort of retreat from the law, as a way to "escape the force of the law and persist in its shadow" (Mills 190), an idea we will return to in discussing the novel's relation to Agambian biopolitics.

When the grandson of the Visagies – deserted from the army – turns up at the farm and treats K as his subordinate while looking upon him as if he is "like an animal" (*MK* 62), K decides to leave the farm. He finds a cave up in the mountains where he seeks shelter and thinks:

> Now surely I have come as far as a man can come; surely no one will be mad enough to cross these plains, climb these mountains, search these rocks to find me; surely now that in all the world only I know where I am, I can think of myself as lost. (*MK* 66)

K, retreating from the world, makes himself invisible and decides to just wait – indeed, he waits in the shadow of the law – as if waiting for life to happen to him. This is exactly what he does later on in the novel, when he makes himself a burrow on the land of the Visagie farm.[25] At first he was abandoned by society, but this new form of living that he found for himself is much more a self-inflicted abandonment, or, as I will argue, rather a new way of living.

In "Life Beyond Law: Biopolitics, Law and Futurity in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*." (2006), Catherine Mills argues that "*Michael K* can profitably be read in conjunction with Agamben's conception of biopolitics and the condition of abandonment" (178). She contends that "Michael K appears as a limit-figure of the human and animal, in which the caesuras that Agamben argues cross the human being in modern politics become evident" (178). Agamben's ideas are certainly useful in discussing certain aspects of *Michael K*. As discussed in Chapter 1, Eric Santner asserts in *On Creaturely Life* that the creaturely is intertwined with politics in the sense that it relies on Agamben's notion of "ecstasy-

[25] The burrow K builds can again be read as an allusion to one of Kafka's short stories. In "The Burrow" (1931), Kafka narrates the story of a creature – presumably some sort of "hybrid between man and animal" (Weigand 152) – that has spend its life building a hiding place: a burrow with an intricate network of underground tunnels and platforms. Although K's burrow is smaller, it is similar to the burrow the creature in Kafka's story builds: "hollow[ed] out the sides of the crevice till it was wider at the bottom than the top, and to flatten the gravel bed. The narrower end he blocked with a heap of stones. […] he laid the three fenceposts across the crevice, and upon them the iron sheet, with slabs of stone to hold it down. He now had a cave or burrow five feet deep" (*MK* 100). It is interesting to note that, shortly before he published *Michael K*, Coetzee wrote a paper about this particular Kafka story with the title "Time, Tense and Aspect in Kafka's 'The Burrow'" (1981).

belonging" as an outlaw position, a "being outside, and yet belonging." This state, Santner asserts, is interwoven with that of the creaturely – or "bare life," its Agambian equivalent – and can be applied to Michael K's state of being as well. However, Mills argues that Agamben and Coetzee interpret biopolitics and its consequences differently. She asserts that, in Agamben,

> [b]iopolitical capture of life takes the form of abandonment, and this condition can only be overcome through the redemption of humanity in a unified 'form of-life' in which the human and inhuman elements of the human being can no longer be separated. (Mills 178)

In contrast, she argues that Coetzee's "portrayal of hope […] rests on the realization of spaces for living within the ban of the law" (178-9). I would like to elaborate on this assertion by Mills in exploring whether this difference is indeed apparent and, if so, how Coetzee's different outlook on biopolitical life can be used in reshaping the approach of trauma as discussed in earlier chapters.

As Mills argues – interpreting Michael K's position within the novel in an Agambian fashion – K can be seen as "essentially *abandoned to and by* the law" (180) in the sense that he is an outcast in the real world in which the authorities do nothing to protect him, yet his only way to continue his life is by obeying those very same authorities. In the novel this paradox of biopolitical life or, as Mills argues, of the "relation of the subject 'before the law'" (180),[26] is to be found in description of life in the several camps as places where the "state of

[26] The notion of being "before the law" is reminiscent of another Kafka story with the title "Before the Law" (1919). Mills also refers to Agamben's reading of Kafka's "Before the Law," arguing that Agamben

exception has becomes the rule" (Mills 182).[27] Mills argues that K is *exposed* to the law "while the law simultaneously withdraws from its subject" and adds that "this abandonment to the law is evinced in the random violence of the police state" (183). So far, Mills' understanding of Michael K's position is in line with Agamben's understanding of the state of exception and bare life. Yet, in dealing with the trauma of being the "victim" of biopolitical life as such, K does not act in an Agambian fashion. Rather, Coetzee makes K find hope within the given limits of biopolitical life, as I will explain in the next paragraph.

3.2 The Voiceless Creature

In "Toward an Ethics of Silence: Michael K" (2007), Duncan McColl Chesney describes Michael K as a "figure of silence" (307) as well as "likened in his behavior to an animal" (310). These two assertions are closely intertwined. First of all, K's hare-lip is at various moments referred to as an animalistic feature. Anna K's first sight of baby Michael is of his "lip curled like a snail's foot" (*MK* 3) and Noël, the commander of the rehabilitation camp, recounts K's "moisten[ing] his lips with his lizard-tongue" (139). Subsequently, K's cleft lip does not allow him to speak properly, which makes him an outcast. This is confirmed by the

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> [e]xplicitly criticizes his more deconstructive contemporaries for failing to grasp the full significance of the man from the country. For Agamben, the man from the country is best understood on the figure of the Messiah, whose task it is to overturn the law in fulfilling it. Against Derrida in particular, Agamben argues that the last line of Kafka's parable indicates not that an event has happened in not happening, but that the closing of the door indicates the overturning of the law. Hence, for Agamben, resistance to biopolitical capture requires a *"euphoric"* resolution of the *aporias* of biopolitical capture in the inauguration of a new form-of-life beyond the ban of the law, which necessitates the overturning of the law in its fulfillment. (190)

Mills alludes to the idea that K could possibly be interpreted as a messianic figure or savior as well (cf. 189). In light of Mill's and Agamben's understanding of Kafka's "Before the Law," it is arguable that K is a messianic figure in the sense that he finds his own path, eschew from the law.

[27] Agamben argued about concentration camps that they can be considered as "the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule" (Agamben qtd. in Mills 183).

medical officer in the camp hospital, who asserts that he is "not sure he [K] is wholly of our world" (130) and asks whether K never thought of getting an operation, as he will "find it easier to get along if he could talk like everyone else" (*MK* 131). K answers by saying "I am what I am" (*MK* 130), seemingly comfortable with his being outside "normal" human discourse. At the end of the novel, K even thinks to himself "I am more like an earthworm […] Or a mole […] that does not tell stories because it lives in silence" (*MK* 182). K is aware of his inability to make himself understood through language, an inability that he thinks of in terms that are reminiscent of Agamben's notion of the open or the caesura that exist between man and animal: "Always when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding baulked, into which it was useless to pour words. The words were eaten up, the gap remained" (*MK* 110).

Mills interprets K's position as an outcast and his silence as him living in an Agambian caesura, since he has an "ambiguous relation […] towards language" (186). Subsequently, "his own nutritive existence" (Mills 182) – interpreted as the Aristotelian "vegetative life shared by all living things" (Mills 184), which can be understood as a *bodily* existence – is emblematic for his life in the open. This life lived in the caesura is, instead, an "impersonal life," a Deleuzian concept which Agamben describes as "a principle of virtual indetermination, in which the vegetative and the animal, the inside and the outside and even the organic and the inorganic, in passing through one another, cannot be told apart" (Agamben qtd. in Mills 185).[28] I rather find that describing Michael K in this Agambian manner makes him sound like a sort of hybrid, half man and half animal, or man in the process of becoming animal. On this matter, Mills asserts that

[28] Mills argues that David Lurie's transformation in *Disgrace* can also be considered as "impersonal life," as Lurie "comes to recognize as belonging to both animals and humans" (184). I am not sure if I completely agree with Mills, since her description of Lurie hinges on the idea of Lurie "becoming-animal" as a state described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), which is quite different from what I tried to argue in Chapter 2 on Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

> [t]he problem for Michael K is not one of "becoming-animal" through recognizing the life shared by humans and animals. Instead, the problem is that, in being unable to distinguish himself apart from animality, the caesuras which Agamben has identified as constitutive of the human being stand out ever more boldly. (185)

This argument of Mills is certainly interesting, but I wonder whether K himself sees his behavior or own being as animalistic, and therefore taking place within the caesura, in an Agambian sense. I would rather like to argue that K does not *choose* to emphasize his own animality – e.g. by living in a burrow or comparing himself to an earthworm – rather he is somehow *forced* into the animal state of existence through the traumas he has suffered.

For K, silence is a way in which he has dealt with things his whole life, as a sort of coping mechanism. Physically he has trouble speaking, but his silence is also the result of being deemed simple all his life; being "prohibited speech, in the rules of the Huis Norenius" (McColl Chesney 310) and being marginalized within society. Being silent and hiding in the shadows is K's way of dealing with confronting events in his life. This state of existence results in K being a subject "in the disjuncture between the speaking being and the living being" (Mills 186), indeed a place "in between." K's state of being can thus be interpreted as traumatized by being forced to live within the constraints of the law.

When we, then, look at traditional trauma theory, it is clear that, in the case of K, the Freudian method of "working through" a trauma by talking about it is not successful. This is emphasized in the passage in which the camp's medical officer tries to persuade K to speak:

> *Talk*, Michaels[29] […] You see how easy it is to talk, now *talk*. Listen to me, listen how easily I fill this room with words. I know people who can talk all day without getting tired […] Give yourself some substance, man, otherwise you are going to slide through life absolutely unnoticed […] You don't want to be simply one of the perished, do you? Well then, *talk*, make your voice heard, tell your story! (*MK* 140)

Yet, however hard the medical officer tries, K silently refuses to speak. In a sense, K's silence is a form of resistance; his "muteness cannot simply be taken to mean that he *cannot* speak. Rather, the point is that he *will not* speak […]" (Mills 186). But this resistance is not a resistance to entering into speech alone. Although McColl Chesney argues that "K, in his silence, is […] 'witness' to the inhumanity of the society of camps and systematic violence" (311), I would rather emphasize the relation between K's silent resistance and trauma. Looking at traditional trauma theory, his silence can also be interpreted as resisting the idea that a trauma can only be recovered from through some sort of – spoken or written – testimony of survival. Indeed, even the medical officer comes to realize "the inadequacy of the official story and K's unsuitability to the system" (314) in the end, therewith placing him, as it were, *outside* the system as such. Like the animal, he is silent and like the animal he is "outside, but yet belonging."

3.3 A Creaturely Approach to Trauma

As argued earlier in this chapter, Mills contends that Coetzee understands biopolitical life in a different manner from Agamben. Instead of merely focusing on the notion of abandonment, Mills argues that Coetzee in *Michael K* rather emphasizes that there is also hope *beyond* this

[29] In the camp hospital everyone calls K "Michaels." This misspelling of K's name exemplifies that the camp staff is unable to grasp the being of K within language, therewith also misrepresenting him.

abandonment. Biopolitical life brought loss upon K; first the loss of his mother, then loss of his land and finally the loss of the self, or so Mills argues.[30] What follows is not a Freudian and

> redemptive 'working through' of Loss, in which the subject emerges from the darkness of loss into a new dawn, but rather because, as Judith Butler writes, that which is irrecoverably lost may itself 'provide the condition of a new political agency', in which loss 'becomes the condition by which life is risked, by which the questions of whether one can move, and with whom, and in what way are framed and incited by the irreversibility of loss itself.' (Mills 189)

In short, the traumatic loss makes one stronger and allows one to move further, to have hope, to retreat *beyond* abandonment and begin a new life. This living on hope is also what McColl Chesney emphasizes in his article by stating that Beckett's phrase "I can't go on, I'll go on" (321) quite aptly describes the novel's central thematic. Although I agree with Mills and McColl Chesney that hope plays an important role in *Michael K*, I do think that there are other aspects besides the hope for a new life that make K able to escape the loss or abandonment imposed by biopolitical life, namely: care and the acceptance of one's own vulnerability.

It might seem odd to return to the notion of care, since "ha[ving] become an object of charity" (*MK* 181), is what K seems to look upon with great reluctance. Additionally, he does not even know what his own attitude is towards helping other people. When the man of the house K finds shelter in says that "people must help each other, that's what I believe" (*MK* 48), K "allow[s] this utterance to sink into his mind," wondering:

[30] I would like to question K's loss of the self. I rather think that, in the end, K *regains* himself, his true being.

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

McColl Chesney argues about this passage that K is not able to think in abstractions and therewith places himself outside the discourse of the state that only seems to be able to think in these abstractions (cf. McColl Chesney 312). However, K *does* care for the vegetables he grows in his garden at the Visagie farm. In "An Infinite Question: The Paradox of Representation in *Life & Times of Michael K*" (2003), Tamlyn Monson argues that "[t]he love and care with which K treats the vegetables is a sign of responsibility […] To do something for the Other. To give" (94). Subsequently, this cultivation of land seems to "strengthen his sense of self" (900) David Babock argues in "Professional Subjectivity and the Attenuation of Character in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*" (2012). Babock asserts that "K interprets the pleasures he takes in cultivation as an inner truth about himself, one in which his professional being develops beyond the social context in which it was learned" (901). His whole life K has lived as a being in need of care, as a subject of the law, yet, through his gardening, he comes into the position of *giving* care.

To return to K's not being able to think in abstractions, we can detect a relation to his silence and search for another way of existing outside the law as a "refusal of the state of exception that governs his society" (McColl Chesney 319). This refusal is simultaneously a choice to preserve his own dignity and follow his own beliefs, which can essentially be interpreted as K taking care of himself – which starts with his taking care of the garden – avers to the rule that society wants to impose on him. After finding out that K has escaped the

camp, the medical officer says that he is sure that K will die "of exposure" (*MK* 156) in the open. Yet, he also seems jealous of K's escape of the camp – and maybe even of his escape from language. McColl Chesney argues that "the officer is merely looking for escape. He has interpreted K as a figure of escape or evasion […] [who] manifests an indefatigable, though passive, will of resistance" (317). The medical officer comes to realize his own longing for freedom through K's escape. "It came to me with great force," he realizes,

> that I was wasting my life, that I was wasting it by living from day to day in a state of waiting […] War time is a time of waiting […] Still, it occurred to me to wonder whether Felicity [the nurse at the camp hospital], to name only Felicity, thought of herself as living in suspension, alive but not alive, while history hesitated over what course it would take" (158)

Precisely the figure of K, of a man that is "too stupid, too absorbed [with fantasy of making the desert bloom with pumpkin flowers] to listen to the wheels of history" (*MK* 159) makes him realize that this might be the only way of escaping. His resistance to the general discourse is, eventually, what leads K towards his own freedom.

Inherent to this care of the self is the acceptance of vulnerability. Vulnerability is, as Diamond contends, something that is "capable of panicking us" (74), yet K seems to *embrace* his vulnerability as a part of his embodied existence and resistance to living a life in which he is subjected to language. It is exactly K as an embodied, living being instead of a rational and speaking being that emphasizes the mode of "contraction" that we addressed in the first chapter. Relating these ideas back to trauma, it can be argued that K characterizes the non-Freudian approach of trauma recovery exactly through his embodied existence in which he embraces his own vulnerability by beginning to take care of himself.

Chapter 4. Love/Care: *Slow Man*

Having suffered a terrible accident after which his leg needs to be amputated, Paul Rayment, protagonist in Coetzee's *Slow Man* (2005), realizes that, from now on, he is no longer free but dependent on the care of others. He realizes this as soon as he wakes up in the hospital where he has been brought after the accident, calling his new position in the world a "zone of humiliation" (*SM* 13). For Rayment, being in need of care is thoroughly humiliating. Subsequently, he feels that his life without a leg makes him a lesser man, contemplating that the

> [c]ut seems to have marked off past from future with such uncommon cleanness that it gives new meaning to the word *new*. By the sign of this cut let a new life commence. If you have hitherto been a man, with a man's life, may you henceforth be a dog, with a dog's life. (26)

In this passage, the literal trauma of having his leg amputated fuses with the mental trauma of living his future life with only one leg. Additionally, Rayment feels he no longer has a man's life but is "a dog, with a dog's life," which indicates that he feels truly vulnerable, exposed to the gaze of others and dependent on their care. It is interesting here that Rayment describes his new life as a "dog's life," because that does not seem to be quite fitting. He seems to think in dichotomies: either this or that; either man or dog. But why would Rayment's new state of being be an animalistic kind of existence? Could we argue that, through the accident, Rayment is exposed to a creaturely state of being? I would like to assert that Rayment's new life is characterized by a sort of mode of abandonment; a mode of bareness or a floating in a space "in between." This new vulnerability and abandonment lay bare, as Santner puts it, the

"radical contingency of the forms of life that constitute the space of meaning within which human life unfolds" (Santner qtd. in Vermeulen and Richter 5). Rayment has entered what Agamben would call a "bare life," which is exactly the life within the caesura that exists between man and animal. It is a zone of indeterminacy in which what is obtained is "neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself" (*The Open* 38). Rayment has become the creature that is being "marked by an indeterminacy that puts the borders between particular life forms in question [….] [and] thus becomes a being that dwells in the gaps between species, a threat to the very system of classification" (Abott qtd. in Vermeulen and Richter 3).

In this last chapter of this thesis I will indeed claim that Coetzee's novel *Slow Man* portrays Rayment as a being that is exposed to a creaturely kind of suffering due to the accident. This exposure has led him to entering an Agambian open in which he is extremely vulnerable, physically as well as emotionally. Using the investigations of the relation between trauma and animal suffering in Chapter 2 and the idea of finding a new way of (creaturely) living after a trauma in Chapter 3, this chapter will rely on these notions and show how they come together in *Slow Man's* thematic of care and, ultimately, love. Subsequently, the way in which Paul Rayment and the people around him deal with the trauma he has suffered will be used in formulating why this specific novel by Coetzee is of importance when one wants to approach trauma in a more creaturely manner.

4.1 Physical and Emotional Trauma

In the three novels discussed in this thesis, the notion of trauma in its literal sense is most obvious in *Slow Man*: Paul Rayment gets hit by a car while cycling and his injuries are so severe that his leg needs to be amputated. Unable to accept the loss of his leg and unwilling to get a prosthesis, Rayment retreats in his apartment. After dismissing the first nurse who takes

care of him after the accident, he is assigned a new nurse: Marijana Jokić, for whom he develops feelings of, supposedly, love. When famous writer Elizabeth Costello – the very same Elizabeth Costello that appears in Coetzee's earlier novels – suddenly arrives on Rayment's doorstep, claiming that she is there because Rayment came to her, things start to change. In the events that follow Elizabeth confronts Rayment with his way of living after the accident and relations between Rayment, Marijana (and her family, especially her son Drago) and Costello become increasingly intertwined.

The physical trauma that Rayment suffers leaves him exposed in the same manner that David Lurie is exposed in *Disgrace* after his affair with Melanie Isaacs and the rape of his daughter. In addition, Rayment's exposure is also similar to Michael K's exposure to a world to which he does not seem to belong. As I have argued in the previous chapters, Lurie finds a kind of redemption in the animals at the Welfare League and K finds his freedom in a new form of living beyond the law. Although Lurie's and K's trauma are already very different from one another, the trauma Rayment suffers differs even more because the context in which his trauma appears is not a (post)apartheid one. To the contrary, *Slow Man* takes place in Australia, which means that the underlying trauma of living in a (post)apartheid society – a thematic that implicitly haunts many of Coetzee's novels – is not present. Yet, precisely the fact that this novel is *not* set in South Africa but *does* involve a being that is traumatized and subsequently affected by how he is treated by society is what makes it interesting within our discussion on the creaturely approach of trauma. The similar ways in which Lurie, K and Rayment respond to the traumas they suffer emphasizes their existence as a living, embodied beings that share their lives with other beings. The focus is thus on the being *as such*; the being that exists and feels, and not so much on the differences in the kind of trauma they suffer.

As Stephen Mulhall rightfully contends in his book *The Wounded Animal*, a "single human life can endure violent discontinuities that threaten both its unity as a life, and the mind's capacity to accommodate them" (243), but these discontinuities also form the difficulty of reality as,

> [o]n the one hand, nothing is more easily explicable, since even accidents are embedded in a perfectly intelligible causal sequence of events; but on the other hand, accidents necessarily lack significance, they mean nothing, and so the immensity of meaningful consequence they can bring in their train defies comprehension. (Mulhall 243).

Thus, although the traumatic events that happen in the three novels are all of a very different order, their resemblance lies in the way in which the different characters respond to and deal with their traumatic experience. This is also a point that Shadi Neimneh and Nazmi Al-Shalabi address in their article "Disability and the Ethics of Care in J.M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*" (2011). They wonder whether a post-apartheid novel such as *Slow Man* "prove[s] Coetzee's commitment to a suffering humanity and a generalized ethical sense beyond the apartheid context" (36) as a broader thematic within his oeuvre. In this chapter, I will indeed argue that this is partly the case. However, I will also relate this kind of suffering to the notions of the creaturely and vulnerability.

First of all, I will briefly summarize Rayment's initial response to the trauma. The accident has left Rayment unable to accept his new life without his leg. As he tells himself "he is not the kind of amputee who masters his new, changed circumstances and generally *copes*, but the crepuscular kind" (*SM* 16-7). Incapable and not willing to adjust to the new circumstances he finds himself in (e.g. not able to cycle anymore and at the mercy of the care

of others), he is suddenly feels vulnerable, because he is a man with one leg, and therefore "a lesser man, not a new man" (*SM* 133). The accident was a traumatizing event and has changed "something" in Rayment's life that he himself cannot quite grasp. Yet, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, he reflects on his new life as a "dog's life". This shift from a human life to the life of an animal can be read in light of the notion of the creaturely as well. In "Creaturely Constellations" (2015) Pieter Vermeulen and Virginia Richter contend that exactly the moment at which "human life is exiled from the structures that used to house it and separate it from animal life," (5) creaturely life – as understood by Erich Auerbach and Walter Benjamin – is generated. In the case of Rayment, the accident thus makes him feel exposed, since he "finds [him]self abandoned to an existence that does not coincide with the animality to which [he], nonetheless, remains mercilessly riveted" (Vermeulen and Richter 5). He went from being a full, rational and moral being to "lesser bein[g], handicapped, diminished" (*SM* 113), a state of existence he deems animal-like.

4.1 The Creaturely Approach

After the accident, Rayment is initially the one who needs care; who is cared for. Withdrawn from the life outside his house, abandoned and humiliated he contemplates:

> Four months have passed since he was released from hospital and allowed to return to his former life. Most of that time he has spent cloistered in this flat, barely seeing the sun. Since Marijana stopped coming he has not eaten properly. He has no appetite, does not bother to take care of himself. The face that threatens to confront him in the mirror is that of a gaunt, unshaven old tramp. In fact, worse than that. At a bookstall at the Seine he once picked up a medical text with photographs of patients from the Salpêtrière: cases of mania, dementia, melancholia, Huntingdon's chorea. Despite the untidy beards, despite

> the hospital nightshirts, he at once recognized in them soul mates, cousins who had gone ahead down a road he would one day follow. (164)

Although this passage might paint a quite depressing picture of Rayment's state of being, it can actually be regarded as showing his adaptation or resignation to his own state. Maybe even a sort of recovering from the trauma of having to give up his former way of living. In his essay "Abandoned Creatures" (2013), Vermeulen argues that "at first, Rayment simply denies his creaturely condition: not only does he refuse his prosthesis, he also resists professional help; his aim remains to 'recover himself,' to remain 'his old self,' and to 'take care of [him]self'" (668). Rayment's creaturely suffering does, however, not demand the sort of "standard" care that is given to him in the form of nursing, generosity or other forms of empathy. Vermeulen refers to Santner's understanding of the creaturely in calling this process a "breakdown of a time-worn universe of meaning" (660), meaning that the rules of how one should react to a traumatic event or behave toward someone who is traumatized have been rendered obsolete. Instead, as Santner argues, there is the need for "a new, yet still inarticulate, mode of *Einfühlung*, as a thinking responsive to the 'twitchings' of creaturely life" (Santner qtd. in Vermeulen 660).

At a certain point in the novel Marijana asks how Rayment's leg is. He deems this "a stupid question with a stupid answer" (*SM* 183) because he no longer has a leg:

> How can his leg be fine? There is no leg. The leg in question was long ago hacked off and incinerated. *How is the absence of your leg?:* that is what she ought to be asking. *The absence of my leg is not fine, if you want the truth. The absence of my leg has left a hole in my life, as anyone with eyes in her head ought to be able to see.* (*SM* 183)

This "hole" in Rayment's life is something that is materialized due to the accident; he entered a space of nothingness in which his sovereign selfhood is vanished (cf. Vermeulen 666). He feels like "an after-man, like an after-image" (*SM* 34), as if he "experiences the whole of his life after the incomprehensible impact of the accident, both inner and outer, as utterly unmoored from its original" (Mulhall 245). This being an "after-man," a "post-man" is clearly the figure of the posthuman; Rayment is the man in disunity with himself, not fully human anymore, but rather in a state of becoming something else. However, what this "something else" exactly is remains unclear. Rayment even wonders "Am I alive or am I dead? Did something happen to me on Magill Road that I have failed to grasp?" (*SM* 233), a thought that is reminiscent of Caruth's depiction of the Freudian death drive as "the experience of passing beyond death without knowing it" (*Unclaimed Experience* 65). In short: for Rayment things are shaken up; the traumatic experience has suddenly marked him a disabled man, an outlaw within society, even a "lesser man" (*SM* 113). He still belongs to society, but is also excluded because of his new state of being, a position that indeed recalls Agamben's ecstasy belonging.

Only at the end of the novel does Rayment begin to accept this new creaturely life in the hole, gap or, if you will, Agambian "open". He, in a way, accepts the new sort of nakedness he has by being exposed to this open, even though he is ashamed and feels vulnerable under the gaze of others. Referring to the thought of Levinas, Santner argues that this kind of "shame does not simply refer to one's reduction to one's animal nakedness but pertains to the dimension where one is […] riveted to oneself, placed in that (non)relation to an opacity that is one's own being" (23), or, as Agamben contends, where a being is exposed to an "'outlaw' dimension of law internal to sovereign authority" (*The Open* 29). The latter is a state that characterizes many of the protagonists in Coetzee's novels (e.g. *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Childhood of Jesus*), it is a vulnerable state of being.

Yet, I would like to argue that *Slow Man* shows not only that the creaturely can be detected, as Vermeulen does in his article, but also that the novel in fact takes the notion of the creaturely even further. I agree with Vermeulen that Coetzee's work "communicate[s] the affect of suffering" (656) and explores creaturely life, but I would like to argue that especially these ideas of the creaturely can be used in reading the novel as a work that tries to approach trauma in a different way, that is, through focusing on care and love. When reading the novel in this light, the presence of the character of Elizabeth Costello becomes of great importance, as I will argue in the next paragraph.

4.3 Elizabeth Costello and Hospitality

It is striking that literary scholars often discuss *Slow Man* as a novel about (the difficulties of) authorship and even of the novel-form itself,[31] especially with reference to the arrival of Elizabeth Costello. At first, the appearance of Costello in the novel might be considered as odd, for she does not seem to have a particular reason to have come to Rayment. Costello keeps insisting: "[y]ou came to me, as I told you: the man with the bad leg" (*SM* 89). Yet, although her presence is peculiar, the role she plays in Rayment's life changes: from being an unwelcome outsider she becomes a – though still not particularly welcome – person who changes his perspective on things and the course his life takes. I would like to argue that especially the presence of Costello as signifier of the difficulties of authorship and the novel form can be related to the difficulties of trauma and trauma recovery that are addressed in the novel through the persona of Paul Rayment.

Initially, Rayment feels that Costello has intruded his life and tries to subject him to some sort of "biologico-literary experiment" (*SM* 114) because she wants to set up a meeting

[31] E.g. in Pieter Vermeulen's "Abandoned Creatures: Creaturely Life and the Novel Form in J. M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*" (2013), Michael Marais' "Coming Into Being: J. M. Coetzee's *Slow Man* and the Ethics of Hospitality" (2009) and David Attwell's "Mastering Authority: J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* (2010).

between him and the blind woman Marianna,[32] whom he once briefly saw in the hospital. The argument Costello gives for wanting to set up this meeting is that he and Marianna share an unwanted exposure by being handicapped. Costello argues that Marianna does not crave for

> consolation, much less worship, but love in its most physical expression. She wants to be, no matter how briefly, as she was before, as you in your way want to be as you were before. I say to you: Why not see what you can achieve together, you and Marianna, she blind, you halt? (97)

A win-win situation, so Costello seems to think. However, one wonders what exactly this experiment entails.[33] Is Elizabeth, essentially, deciding whether Rayment is a human or inhuman being? Or does the biologic-*literary* experiment rather refer to Rayment being "tested" as a novelistic character by Elizabeth? Vermeulen reads *Slow Man* in its entirety as a biologico-literary experiment that "tests and explores the forms of life that are produced when the elements that traditionally make up the world of the novel have ceased to function, and now confront the characters with their contingency and obsolescence" (657). This statement indeed reminds of *Michael K* as well as *Disgrace* and how their protagonists deal with their subsequent trauma.

Although Vermeulen's argument specifically refers to the form of the novel, we can also apply it to Rayment's life and the trauma he suffers. Is it true that a being is rendered obsolete once he has suffered some kind of trauma? I would argue that he might become

[32] It is interesting that, although Marijana and Marianna share the same name, albeit with a different spelling, their paths never cross in the novel. Subsequently, neither of them is aware of the other's existence and the role they both play in Rayment's life.

[33] This experiment reminds of Kafka's Red Peter, as Rayment feels like Costello treats him "like a puppet" and "make[s] up stories and bully us into playing them out for you. You should open a puppet theatre, or a zoo" (*SM* 117).

obsolete in his or her previous, complete or traditional form, but it simultaneously enters a new state of being, as we have seen in *Michael K*. When we would approach Rayment's trauma in a traditional Freudian way, the solution would be to turn to physical as well as psychological care in order to *cure* Rayment from his trauma. Yet, when we approach the trauma in a creaturely manner, as Vermeulen does relying on the thought of Agamben, we could argue that Rayment finds himself in an "abandoned" state, in a "zone of nonknowledge" (Vermeulen 657) in which man is "rendered unsavable and outside being," specifically because "only with man there can be something like being" (*The Open* 91). Subsequently, when being a sovereign man thus ceases to exist, being as such no longer exist either. We can see this in Rayment's behavior as well, since he, after the accident, feels as if in "a cocoon of dead air" (*SM* 3). He moves from being in a "world governed by action, reason, and desire to a world of dependence and care" (Vermeulen 658). Although this "care" is initially the reason for his feelings of humiliation, the notion of a new or different sort of "creaturely" care eventually becomes the beacon he holds on to.

Before addressing this notion of care more elaborately, I would like to return to the introduction of Elizabeth Costello in the novel. Michael Marais approaches the introduction of Costello in the novel in terms of Derridian hospitality and the notion of the guest, arguing that "Coetzee's concern with hospitality is evident in his extensive use in his fiction of the trope of the arrival of the stranger who precipitates change in the host who receives her" ("Coming Into Being" 274).[34] Subsequently, this concept is also closely intertwined with language. At this point, it is interesting to pause for a moment and examine the notion of hospitality – as used by Levinas and Derrida – and reflect on how it relates to the problem of care within history and philosophy, as well as to care within the novel.

[34] In the same article Marais also argues that *Life & Times of Michael K* can read be within the same discourse of hospitality as *Slow Man.* In the case of *Michael K* Marais specifically thinks of the medical officer's reception of K, which he deems similar to *Slow Man's* hospital setting (cf. Marais 274).

Although the notion of the guest or foreigner is a recurring theme within the work of Derrida, in his book *Of Hospitality* (2000) – originally a series of seminars that Derrida conducted – he specifically addresses hospitality through the notion of the foreigner. Derrida contends that the problem of the foreigner is at the origin of philosophy itself, as "the question of the foreigner is a question *of* the foreigner, addressed *to* the foreigner. As though the foreigner were first of all *the one who* puts the first question or *the one to whom* you address the first question" (*Of Hospitality* 3). With this understanding of the foreigner, Derrida seems to imply that asking questions and critically reflecting on the self is a task inherent to philosophical thinking. With reference to the foreigner in Plato's *Sophist*, Derrida argues that "The Foreigner shakes up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal *logos:* the being that is, and the nonbeing that is not" (*Of Hospitality* 5). The task of the foreigner that is hospitably taken in is, thus, to – as an outsider – "intrude" within a prior formed structure and critically reflect on that structure, which he can because he is, to speak with Agamben, "being outside, and yet belonging."

The notion of the foreigner who is received as a guest is inherently connected with language, as the foreigner is partly foreign because he speaks another language. Derrida sees this language of the foreigner as the point where the (paradoxical) question of hospitality begins. He argues:

> [m]ust we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country? If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with a language, would the

> foreigner still be a foreigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him? (*Of Hospitality* 15-17)[35]

This passage also alludes to the notion that being hospitable also means that the host has some kind of mastery over the guest/foreigner who intrudes into his country/house – e.g. the way in which Rayment decides whether Costello can stay or has to go. Thus, although the host is hospitable towards the guest, he remains in control, as he is ultimately the one who speaks the language of the "home." Yet, the "law of unlimited hospitality," Derrida contends, is non-reciprocal, as its purpose is "to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition" (*Of Hospitality* 77), which one can see as being opposed to the conditional (empirical) law of philosophy.

It is exactly the unlimited, unconditional and absolute hospitality Derrida speaks of that is connected to literature as well. Derrida contends that absolute hospitality is something that is "graciously offered beyond debt and economy, offered to the other, a hospitality invented for the singularity of the new arrival, of the unexpected visitor" (*Of Hospitality* 83). Relating this passage to literature, we can see the text as being the guest and the reader the host who takes upon him to be hospitable towards the guest, to be open to his alterity. In *The Singularity of Literature* (2004), Derek Attridge argues that literature can have the capacity "to offer to a reader" an "openness to alterity" when he moves away from "mechanical and instrumental interpretation" towards readerly hospitality,[36] which implies that he has "a

[35] This is certainly a question we could ask regarding to the position of the animal within our society and the relation between man and animal as discussed in the previous chapters.

[36] Attridge interprets Derridian hospitality toward the other as "impl[ying] a willingness not just to accept the other into one's own domain, but to change that domain, perhaps radically, in order to make the other welcome" (*Singularity* 152).

readiness to have one's purpose reshaped by the work to which [he] is responding" (*Singularity* 80). Herein, the notion of responsibly – and therewith to care – is also of great importance, as the host cannot exist *as* a host without the guest and vice versa as becomes clear in the reading of Costello's intrusion into Rayment's life in light of Derridian hospitality. Whether they want it or not, both Costello and Rayment come to feel responsible for the other – in the same manner that David Lurie comes to feel responsibility for the dogs – which can be seen as a sort of self-sacrificing responsibility that is characterized by a mode of passivity. Marais argues that Levinas describes the passivity of the responsible subject as being "an offering oneself which is not even assumed by its own generosity, an offering oneself that is a suffering, a goodness despite oneself" ("Coming Into Being" 277).

In arguing in what ways "the subject constructs itself in relation to other identities" ("Coming Into Being" 275), Marais distinguishing between Derrida's conditional and unconditional hospitality, the first one being a "hostile process of inclusion and exclusion" (275) and the latter a process that "comes into being in the self's pre-reflective and traumatic exposure […] to otherness" (275). Marais subsequently argues that for both Costello and Rayment "[u]nconditional hospitality is an effect of the host being taken 'hostage' by the visitor" ("Coming Into Being" 276), in the sense that Costello is a guest in Rayment's house and life, but Rayment, at the same time, is the guest in Costello's life, as she claims that he has come to her. She cannot further explain *why* he has come to her, he simply has. Both lives are, thus, interrupted or affected by the appearance of the guest/other:

> [The] arrival of the stranger or other is unannounced and wholly unexpected, she cannot be known in advance from within a priorly formed system of linguistic conceptuality. In not being able to name, to grasp in language, the stranger, the host loses her sovereignty over and distance from this visitor. ("Coming Into Being" 275)

In a sense, this is the same way in which trauma works: a traumatic experience unexpectedly "invades" the life of the host. Subsequently, the host is unable to grasp this trauma through language and, therewith loses its sovereignty and, I would like to argue, is placed in a position that is similar to the Agambian "bare life." Marais emphasizes that this change the host undergoes is involuntary and that, therewith,

> [u]nconditional hospitality marks a shift from ethical philosophy's focus on a self who actively and consciously comprehends the experiences of others in terms of a priorly formed conceptual system to the pre-reflective effect of others on that self. ("Coming Into Being" 276)

When connecting this notion of hospitality to that of trauma, it makes one wonder what the *actual* trauma within the novel is. Is it Rayment losing his leg and his subsequent feelings of humiliation of being dependent on the care of others, or is it the appearance of Costello in his life? I would like to argue that both readings are possible, but that the figure of Costello as a guest can be read as an analogy of the workings of trauma as well. Yet, the presence of Costello also directs Rayment to a *creaturely* approach of his trauma.

Although Marais reads the presence of Costello in *Slow Man* as an allegory of writerly inspiration that cannot be invited (cf. "Coming Into Being" 281) and uses the hospitality metaphor in describing the writer – Costello, or, for that matter, Coetzee himself as the author of the novel – as "becoming host to an unknown and unknowable visitor" (281), I would like to relate Marais' line of thought in his article to the notion of trauma instead. Marais argues with respect to the metaphor of hospitality that, in *Slow Man*, "the host is not sovereign in [the] relationship [between him and the visitor]: she is invaded and taken hostage by the

unannounced visitor and, in the process, dispossessed of self-possession" ("Coming Into Being" 281-2), a description I find explicitly fitting in relation to the workings of trauma. Yet, this argument is again connected to the notion of language; not only in the sense that trauma is unexplainable in words, but also that, in the end, trauma recovery is also "to write, and therefore to act, while being acted upon by an unknown authority. It is to write despite oneself" ("Coming Into Being" 282).

Thus, the difficulty of approaching trauma in a more affective or creaturely way is, as I already addressed with reference to Mulhall in the first chapter, that "[i]f human embodiment exceeds the grasp and the (un)certainty of all human sense-making systems, it must exceed that of literature; how, then, can literature properly represent this excess, if not by enacting it—by exceeding its own limits?" (Mulhall 202). Within *Slow Man,* this is indeed the struggle that is addressed at the level of the content – through the figure of Costello – as well the in the sense of the novel as a whole. Marais puts forward that Coetzee in and with *Slow Man* represents the struggle

> whether language, and therefore the novel itself, is able to represent absolute hospitality. It qualifies the suggestion (with which it nevertheless coexists) that love may be represented by pointing to the fact that language is, at the very best, singularly ill-equipped to perform this task. ("Coming Into Being" 284)

Could love indeed be the answer? Or do we, in the end, always need language to give meaning to this love. Both Mulhall's and Marais' argument on the simultaneous limits and necessity of language seems to call into question our whole investigation in this thesis about a different, more embodied approach of trauma, away from the linguistic approach of traditional trauma theory. Yet, I would like to argue that *Slow Man,* like *Disgrace* and *Life*

and Times of Michael K, succeeds in approaching trauma in a different or creaturely manner because, within the novel, there is an *awareness* of the limits of language that nevertheless does *not* deflect, but instead focuses on suffering, vulnerability and care.

4.4 Care Instead of Cure

After the accident, Rayment seems not only to feel ashamed of being dependent of the care of others, but also of getting extra attention of other people because the supposed pity they feel for him. He feels that others see him as no longer fit to participate in society and that he, as a disabled man, "will end up in an institution for the aged and infirm" (*SM* 17). Rayment refuses to get a prosthesis for his amputated leg as he "dislikes prostheses, as he dislikes all fakes" (*SM* 255) and he is sure that "his crippled self […] will somehow, with the aid of a crutch or some other support, get by in the word, more slowly than before, perhaps, but what do slow and fast matter any more?" (*SM* 16). Vermeulen argues that, with this attitude, Rayment exposes himself to the outside world, indeed to the "pitiless gaze of the young" (*SM* 13) and "the gaze of the outsider" (*SM* 38). I would like to argue that this attitude is, in a sense, a way of repressing the trauma in a Freudian manner. Although Rayment knows everything has changed after the accident, he tells himself that he does not need any professional help or care to survive.

At first, Rayment thus relies on reason to reflect on his accident. According to Costello, he can initially not accept care because he has an "aversion to the physical" (*SM* 234), which, as Marais argues, "stems from his fear of losing control over himself" (278) and has to do with his disapproval of "being caught up in the 'grip of passion'" ("Coming Into Being" 278). This attitude of Rayment changes as the novel progresses. Being handed over to the caring hands of Marijana Jokić, Marais contends that Rayment begins to wonder why it is that "he has changed despite himself" ("Coming Into Being" 278). Neimneh and Al-Shalabi argue that

this change in Rayment is materialized because, in the course of the novel, he comes to realize that care, or rather, *loving* care, is what he needs. They argue the following:

> [a] disabled body needs care beyond a traditional medical treatment. The novel, thus, establishes a distinction between cure and care, between medical attention expected to heal a body—i.e. mechanical care—and loving care expected to touch the soul or overwhelm the recipient of such care. (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 37)

This loving care in the novel takes the form of Marijana. Although Marijana's profession is to give Rayment care, he detects in her, as Neimneh and Al-Shalabi argue, a "loving touch" in handling his stump. She seems to have "no interest in fixing it up, returning it to some ideal efficiency" (*SM* 32).

The care that he receives from Marijana is highly physical. She silently cares for his leg, without him getting the feeling she pities him or wants to comfort him into thinking that his life with one leg is not as bad as it might initially seem – like Margaret McCord does by telling Rayment "you are still yourself" (*SM* 38). Instead, it is "just" care that Marijana gives. Yet, Costello and Rayment interpret the word "just" before "care" differently. For Costello it means that Marijana takes care of him because it is her job to take care, noting more, nothing less. She argues:

> What we need is care: someone to hold our hand now and then when we get trembly, to make a cup of tea for us, help us down the stairs. Someone to close our eyes when the time comes. Care is not love. Care is a service that any nurse worth her salt can provide, as long as we don't ask her for more (*SM* 154)

However, for Rayment this kind of care is of the more emotional kind and therefore closely intertwined with love, because it is an *embodied* care without judgment that does not have curing as its main purpose. She "cares for Rayment's body with her hands. It is the personal touch that distinguishes her care from the cures of mechanical medicine. In a sense, she heals the soul trapped within a damaged body" (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 37). Thus, by accepting Marijana's care after his traumatic experience, Rayment moves away from and, in the end, refuses the Freudian "working through" of his trauma by means of language.

Nonetheless, what complicates the relation of care between Rayment and Marijana is the fact that Rayment comes to feel an "unconditional care" for Marijana (cf. "Coming Into Being" 278), which expresses itself in Rayment developing feelings of love for his nurse. Neimneh and Al-Shalabi argue that "care becomes a loving treatment when the person cared for is moved by the care giver or when the care giver moves the person cared for" (37), and that "under Marijana's ministrations of care, there is the element of love and passion transferred to Rayment" (37). He wants to "offer something for her in return" (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 36). However, it is clear that Rayment already *pays* for the care he receives from Marijana, but yet he wants to do show her the same selfless care as she shows him – or as he *believes* she shows him – in order to make it a more "equal" exchange of care. Nevertheless, care, in the Levinasian sense, is not a reciprocal responsibility, which makes Rayment's desire to take care of Marijana – and her family – even more peculiar.

I would like to argue that this urge Rayment has to, somehow, *return* the care, is his way of dealing with his trauma, in the same sense that David Lurie deals with his trauma by caring for the dogs in the clinic. Rayment tells Costello that, after the accident, he has been "haunted by the idea of doing good" (*SM* 155). This idea of doing good does not limit itself to Marijana and her family alone; also Costello becomes an object of care, even though this is not the loving care he feels for Marijana but rather a "humane" sort of care: "He cares for her

out of obligation" (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 39). It is interesting that, in the end, Costello revises her earlier notion of care as "a form of duty or an ethical imperative with no feelings attached to it." (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 39) by confessing that the "kind of care she is after is 'loving care' rather than mere nursing" (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 39), while Rayment develops from a being that can only think in a rational manner to one that opens himself up to love. But how does this shift in both characters relate to trauma?

In the end it is through language *and* care that Costello and Rayment come closer to each other or reach "a marriage of a kind. [A] [c]ompanionate marriage" (*SM* 232). Costello promises to teach Rayment how to "speak from the heart" (*SM* 231) in return for loving care. This is exactly wherein the difficulty lies: speaking from the heart is, just like speaking or writing about love, not *actually* love itself. Marais contends that Coetzee captures this difficulty within the novel, as he shows that "the medium and form of the novel are hostile to love" (286) and that, instead, language should be rendered "hospitable to that to which it is hostile. Despite itself, the medium of the novel must be made hospitable" (286), therewith "reduc[ing] language's reduction of love" ("Coming Into Being" 286). *Slow Man*, therefore, "does not present itself as Paul Rayment's growth to love, but as a *literary* representation of such a development" ("Coming Into Being" 285). The novel is a constant going back and forth between the solution of language and the solution of love. At a certain point in the novel,

> Rayment reflects that the language he speaks 'does not come from my core' (*SM* 198). Instead of coming '[f]rom the heart' (*SM* 231), which is earlier described as the seat, or indeed home, of love, the place where it 'takes up residence' (*SM* 149), his words come from the 'word-box' that he carries around in place of a heart (*SM* 230, 234). ("Coming Into Being" 284)

When we relate this passage to trauma, we can see quite clearly that Rayment is only able to deal with his trauma in a traditional way, even when he tries to approach it differently by relying on care and love.

Exactly Rayment's struggle is the more general struggle that Coetzee addresses within all of his novels: there is "something" – in the novels we are discussing in this thesis this "something" is a trauma – that cannot be grasped or explained by language, yet the only way to grasp or explain it is trying to somehow materialize it into language. However, instead of focusing herein on solving or curing something – like the traumas of Lurie, K and Rayment – with language as a mediator, there are also ways of approaching this "something" by simultaneously being aware the inherent insufficiency or defects of that very approach. As Marais argues, this culminates in the fact that "rather than presenting Paul Rayment's growth to love, Coetzee presents his novel's failure to present this development" ("Coming Into Being" 287). Thus, although love *can* be the solution to the problem or trauma, literature can, ultimately, not (re)present love as it is thwarted by language. Yet, because Coetzee is *aware* of this inherent deflection, he *does* succeed – or, partly succeed – in giving a minor insight in what lies behind the smoke screen of language.

Conclusion

What would trauma theory look like if it were more attuned to the creaturely residues of trauma? This is the key question of this thesis, a question that is approached from a slightly different angle in each chapter. Theorizing Freudian trauma theory in the first chapter and showing how its humanist focus is taken on by literary scholars such as Caruth, we examined how this traditional approach of trauma could move towards a more affective and embodied approach that finds its origin in concepts theorized by animal studies and, more importantly, examining the role of language and literature in this process. Through investigating these concepts – creatureliness, the open, vulnerability, woundedness, suffering, care – as well as their reenactment through/in literary texts I aimed at theorizing how trauma could be approached in a more anti-anthropocentric manner. With the purpose of emphasizing certain aspects within the process of investigating how a different approach to trauma might be materialized, each chapter focused on a different literary work by J. M. Coetzee. Especially focusing on the separate works in the various chapters led to interesting insights in the similarities as well as differences in approaching trauma within these novels. For example, the characters in the various novels are all traumatized in a different way, yet they deal with their trauma in a similar manner.

In order to be able to compare the various ways in which trauma is dealt with within the novels discussed in this thesis, it is of importance to briefly summarize the key argument of each chapter. First of all, the second chapter on *Disgrace* focuses on several cases of human as well as non-human suffering and physical as well as a psychological trauma. The novel mainly addresses the psychological aftermath of certain events, e.g. David Lurie's and Lucy's state of being after the attack and the rape of Lucy, Lurie's state after his dismissal from the university, as well as the broader context of living in a post-apartheid society. The

materialization of trauma in *Disgrace* is, therefore, threefold: physical, psychological and socio-historical. Initially, the main characters in the novel deal with these different traumas in a traditional, Freudian manner, as is argued in Chapter 2. Yet, especially the way in which protagonist Lurie deals with his trauma soon changes into a more embodied or affective approach through his work at the Animal Welfare League. The key point is, then, that Lurie finds out that what he shares with the dogs in the clinic and with other beings in general, is a mode of suffering, vulnerability and abandonment, which leads to a different interpretation of the notion of care. It is not only Lurie who cares for the dogs in the clinic; his work in the clinic is a sort of cathartic experience which makes him realize that the dogs are also taking care of him. Of great importance is that this notion of care is not an *political* response to a situation with the expectance of some sort of reciprocal counter-act, it is, rather, a response of love – although Lurie would perhaps never admit to that.

Especially this notion of (nonreciprocal) care or love for the other – which is entangled with Derrida's notion of hospitality – is what characterizes Coetzee's fiction, as Neimneh and Al-Shalabi also assert in their article on *Slow Man*. They argue that Coetzee's novels are

> motivated by love or not, care as an ethical response to the other guarantees the abnegation of political violence and ensures a fair, humane treatment of fellow human (and even non-human) beings. Coetzee's fiction signifies that when we 'care' for each other by acting out of love or, alternatively, out of an ethical sense of duty, we necessarily move beyond injustice and oppression. (Neimneh and Al-Shalabi 40)

It is interesting that, although the responses of characters within the novels of Coetzee – i.e. think of the medical officer in *Lives and Times of Michael K* and Marijana in *Slow Man – can* be seen as emphasizing the ethical side of care, there also seems to be a sense of responsibility

that goes *beyond* the notion of ethics. This responsibility is characterized by a certain passivity and purposelessness. It is an *infinite* responsibility that characterizes the relation not only between one person and the human or non-human other, but also the responsibility of language and, essentially, that of literature towards the reader and vice versa.

In *Life and Times of Michael K* the focus is on K as a creature that lives in a state *in between*. Not fully belonging to the world of humans but neither to that of the animal, he can be considered an abandoned being. Whereas the dogs in *Disgrace* are abandoned beings that Lurie sympathizes with and that, essentially, help him in recovering from his trauma, K's state of being does not end with sympathy or care, but is rather a sort of transformation in itself. K's trauma is that he is abandoned by a society that deems him less human. Unlike Lurie, who initially tries to work through his trauma by working on the Byron opera – he does not try to overcome this trauma trough language but has accepted his difference and his inability to explain himself through language. The "new" and more animalistic way of living that K takes on as the novel progresses should, then, not be considered as really "new" but rather as a return to a sort of original state of being, a bare life. Living *outside* the law as a response to the trauma of living *inside* the law is different from Lurie's way of dealing with trauma. Lurie finds comfort in the notion of his proximity to other beings and the idea of care for others whereas K find comfort in accepting his own vulnerability and difference as well as in taking care of himself through a more embodied, affective and, essentially, creaturely way of living, that is, a living in the Agambian gap or caesura.

After the movement towards the other in *Disgrace* and the existence in the gap between man and animal in *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Slow Man* relies, in a way, on both of these methods but additionally takes the issue even further by exploring care and love more elaborately. First, it is the physical trauma that Rayment suffers – the accident that leads to the amputation of his leg – that makes him feel like a "lesser man" and an "after-man" living a

"dog's life," descriptions that are indeed reminiscent of the status of the posthuman. Rayment is naked, exposed and vulnerable. Although Rayment, like Lurie and K, eventually accepts this vulnerable state, recovering from his trauma does not lie in emphasizing proximity and simply accepting and giving care in a passive manner – like Lurie does – or creating a "new" life in accepting an existence within the caesura – like K does. Rather, Rayment can be seen as a character that moves *beyond* care, since *Slow Man* entangles the notions of suffering, vulnerability and care with that of hospitality and, essentially, literature.

Although hospitality is not addressed in the chapter on *Disgrace*, the hospitality trope can certainly be applied to the intrusion of the rapists into the home of Lucy. Lucy's hospitality is violated by the men. This violation of hospitality is, essentially, an act of control that, within the novel, emphasizes that hospitality carries a sort of inherent risk. However, in *Disgrace* as well as *Slow Man* Coetzee shows that there is another, more "successful" kind of hospitality that is related to care. The violation of hospitality in *Disgrace* is diametrically opposed to Lurie's relationship with the dogs. It is as Marais says about the relation between Rayment and his guest Costello: "the host [is] being taken 'hostage' by the visitor" ("Coming Into Being" 276). The notion of hospitality is, thus, always related to the other or the guest which is a relation of mutual responsibility as well as one that is difficult to grasp in language, as both *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* show. When looking at *Michael K*, it would seem problematic to regard the novel in terms of hospitality. Yet, when we consider K as a figure outside the law and, in a sense, outside language, we could argue that the character of K can be regarded within a broader context of the ethics of hospitality within a South Africa torn by war; K as the unwelcome guest in a society that does not want and accept him as the being he is, yet does aim at exercising control over him.

However, as is already argued in Chapter 4, the notion of hospitality within *Slow Man* is also related to literature – especially through the figure of Elizabeth Costello. The presence

of Costello explicitly emphasizes the different approach of trauma in *Slow Man* compared to that in *Disgrace* and *Michael K*, as her presence signifies the inherent difficulty of language – and literature – to capture pure hospitality, pure care, pure love, which is also the difficulty of trauma. As Marais argues about *Slow Man:* "[the] novel […] is wholly ambivalent on the issue of whether or not language can accommodate the writer's self-sacrificing generosity" ("Coming Into Being" 283), therewith implying that it is impossible to know beforehand whether language succeeds or fails to grasp something as fluid as hospitality and, for that matter, trauma. The solution to the impossibility of language and, indeed, to the impossibility of putting trauma into words, might be, as all three of Coetzee's novels essentially suggest, care and love.

How to move forward from this conclusion? And, more importantly, how to apply this conclusion to trauma? When language or literature might simultaneously form the solution and obstacle in capturing the other and, essentially, capturing trauma, where do we go from here? McColl Chesney argues that exactly "[B]y drawing attention to the impossibility of the literary capture of the 'other' […] Coetzee raises the question of the role of literature itself" (317) *through* his literary texts. However, it then might be the case that "Coetzee succeeds in his failure (as literature does) rather than failing in his success" (McColl Chesney 317), meaning that he, through his fiction, shows that it is impossible to ever fully capture the other.

Yet, I would like to argue that this is a limited understanding of Coetzee's fiction. As we have investigated in this thesis, and especially in relating the notion of trauma to concepts theorized by animal studies, specifically within Coetzee's novels the affective notions of suffering, abandonment, vulnerability, creatureliness and care are foregrounded as *answers* to the abstract notion of recovering from a trauma through language alone. Of course Coetzee's novels emphasize the difficulty of the process of capturing something as fluid as trauma

through language simply because his novels *are* language. Regarding Coetzee's literary attempts as a failure would, therefore, be false on the basis of the argument that his fiction also emphasizes that the embodiment of the other's suffering or being in general exactly through the expression of sympathy, responsibility, empathy, care and, essentially, love, while simultaneously being aware of the limits of all the above.

For trauma theory this conclusion would mean that, by focusing not so much on language as a means of "working-through" a trauma but on notions such as (shared) vulnerability, suffering, responsibility and care instead, we might come to a different, more embodied understanding of what something as ungraspable as trauma actually means and how it can be dealt with in a non-anthropocentric manner. It might seem odd that literature is of importance in this process, but, as I tried to explain, exactly literature has the capacity to foreground a certain exposure of being, since it urges the reader to use his imagination, to be hospitable towards the text, instead of purely and simply relying on language. Thus, being hospitable – and, especially being hospitable in an *embodied* way – to a trauma, thinking through the different concepts that we have discussed in this thesis might lead to interesting insights that bring us beyond the idea of trauma a single event that is too extreme to grasp and cannot be placed within schemes of prior knowledge.

The question remaining is, how can this idea of a more creaturely, non-anthropocentric approach of trauma be further explored within the field of literary studies? In my view, it would be interesting to apply the concepts that are theorized this thesis to other novels of Coetzee. I think it would be especially interesting to study *The Childhood of Jesus* in light of hospitality as well as Agambian bare life (e.g. the main characters in the novel are "guests" in a new country, starting a new life that is unlike the life they lived before and, additionally, the character Davíd can be regarded as a messianic figure but also bears similarities to Michael

K). Subsequently, it would also be interesting to examine works by different authors in light of the concepts theorized in Chapter 1 in order to see how the idea of a more embodied approach of trauma would work in other novels. Is it only in the work of Coetzee that notions of sympathy, vulnerability, suffering, abandonment and care are addressed in relation not trauma, or is/are there other literary works that address these issues as well. And, if so, how can these works contribute to the discussion we started within this thesis?

Secondly, I think that it would be interesting to further examine the notion of Derridian hospitality with respect to trauma, and especially how it relates to (the singularity of) literature. The revival of the theme of hospitality in the humanities in recent years, especially in within the context of globalization, terrorism, migration and identity, already shows that there is certainly room for an even broader application of the term. With regards to literature and its relation to questions of hospitality and affect, it would then also be interesting to look at Derek Attridge's latest book on the distinctiveness of literature: *The Work of Literature* (2015) that, unfortunately, only came to my attention after finishing this thesis.[37] It would be interesting to examine how literature portrays being traumatized by living in a biopolitical time (i.e. especially with reference to globalization, but also terrorism and war) and whether this literature also addresses a different approach to dealing with these trauma's. What would, for example, a more creaturely approach of these (different) kind of trauma's imply? For all we know, the answer to this question is that a more embodied approach to a variety of different traumas might lead to a revaluation of the concepts of care and love.

[37] An online preview of the *The Work of Literature* taught me that, interestingly enough, the introduction of the book starts with a quote of Elizabeth Costello from a Coetzee story called "As a Woman Grows Older."

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