



Intertextual Weavings in John-Maxwell Coetzee's *Slow Man*.

KOMENAN Casimir

Département d'anglais

Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

casimirkomenan@yahoo.fr

Introduction

Coined by Julia Kristeva, who used it first in 1966 to refer to her dialogue with Mikhail Bakhtin's texts, intertextuality is defined by Kathleen Robinson-Malone as an inventive means used to mean the various manners in which texts are linked to other texts. (Robinson-Malone, 2011, p. 5) Deriving from poststructural theory which essentially refuses literary texts' links with external reality, intertextuality typically gives attention to the text itself and to the ways in which meanings can emerge from it. (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 44) Indeed, different types of transtextual relationships¹ may appear in the text giving birth to intertextual weavings in which several texts are integrated in order to build up various layers of meanings, as it is the case in John-Maxwell Coetzee's *Slow Man*. This novel absorbs and transforms a mosaic of texts so much so that in its analysis the explanation of the intertextual connections between texts is extremely important.

The point of this study is to show how Coetzee resorts to intertextual weavings in order to construct meanings in *Slow Man*. To reach this goal, these questions will be answered: What are the intertextual references present in the novel? And how do they interact with and relate to one another in order to make up meanings? In other terms, I will show how Coetzee's treatment of intertextual references contributes to enrich significations in his book. Gérard Genette's five transtextual relationships will be used as theoretical tools in this article.

¹ Gérard Genette defines five types of transtextual relationships founded on the poetics of transtextuality or textual transcendence, that is everything that makes the text in overt or covert connection with other texts: intertextuality, which is the co-presence relationship between two or several texts; paratextuality: the relation that the text keeps with its paratext: title, subtitle, intertitle, preface, postface, etc; metatextuality: the comment relationship uniting a text to another one; archetextuality: the whole of general or transcendent categories or types of discourses, enunciation modes, literary genres, etc; and hypertextuality: any relationship uniting a "B-Text" (Hypertext) to a previous "A-Text" (Hypotext) (My translation). Marc Escola, "Atelier de théorie littéraire: les relations transtextuelles selon G. Genette", extraits de Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes*, Le Seuil, Collection "Poétique", 1982, http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?Les_relations_transtextuelles_selon_G_Genette, consulted on November 9, 2012.

On the macrotextual level, as well as on the microtextual one, two main types of intertextual links, falling respectively into the categories of intertextuality named anagram² and contamination³, will be examined, since intertextuality appears as a hermeneutical strategy given to the reader. (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 38) Thus, whereas part one investigates the Bible as a hypotext for *Slow Man*, which becomes a hypertext, part two describes and analyses ways in which Coetzee's prose is contaminated both by allusions to authors and characters from other works of fiction and by intratextual, paratextual, metatextual and archetextual elements drawn from the field of literature.

I-The Bible as a Hypotext

As an intertext, the Bible is a hypotext whose role is to provide the religious anchoring of *Slow Man* as a hypertext. This is due to the fact that the novel abounds in many biblical references. These are hints in the hypertext that bring the informed reader to think of the hypotext. Here, Genette's hypertextuality concept is brought to the fore. Hypotext and hypertext are classified under the category of intertextuality called "anagram". So *Slow Man* as "B-Text" (hypertext- "hyper" = above) is an anagram of the Bible as "A-Text" (Hypotext- "hypo" = underneath). "B-Text"'s close relationship to "A-Text" will be analyzed as concerns the comparisons of characters' actions and thoughts. According to Genette, the father of the hypertextual model, there are two criteria explaining the link between hypertext and hypotext. The first one is that a far-reaching link is needed, which means that a few serendipities are not simply what is required, but an entire system of agreement. Secondly, the connection must not be implicit, but it has to be explicit. Clues in the hypertext must lead to the hypotext. (Nikolajeva, 2005, pp. 37-38). Indications connected with the Scriptures in *Slow Man* point to Christianity and to the holy book of the Christian religion, consisting of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1-A Lexis Borrowed from Christianity

² "Anagram is a coded message in which letters have changed place [...] In intertextual analysis, the concept of anagram is used for texts in which we can easily identify the intertext by rearranging the constituent elements or merely by connecting each element to a similar element in another text." In Maria Nikolajeva, "Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction", <http://books.google.com/books?isbn=14616515X>, p. 37, consulted on July 25, 2015.

³ "The term contamination is self-explanatory. In a contaminated text, elements of many other texts appear throughout, and it is not always possible to determine exactly where they come from" (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 37).

Christianity is the religion that is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the belief that he was the son of God. According to this religion, when Jesus Christ comes back on earth preceded by the angels, the dead people will resuscitate from their graves and face God's judgment on the Day of Judgment. Alluding to the Resurrection, the time when all dead people will become alive again, when the world ends, the narrator uses a religious phrase like "the angels' clarion" to talk about Paul Rayment's mother's mortal remains buried in the cemetery in Ballarat where they are waiting for the angels' clarion call, that is to say a clear message or request for the dead to get out of their graves: "Who are his family? [...] He has a sister. She passed on twelve years ago, but she still lives in him or with him, just as he has a mother who, at times when she is not in or with him, awaits the angels' clarion from her plot in the cemetery in Ballarat. A father too, doing his waiting farther away, in the cemetery in Pau, from where he rarely pays visit." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 8)

In this sentence, "Sick even before the wrath of God, transmitted through his angel Wayne Blight, struck him down" (Coetzee, 2005, p. 54), the expression and words such as "the wrath of God" and "angel" are taken from Christianity where they allude to the extreme anger of God, the being or spirit that is worshipped and is believed to have created the universe, and also to the spirit who is believed to be a servant of God, and is sent by God to deliver a message or perform a task. Other religious words and expressions like "he has done no significant harm", "he has done no good either", "pronounce judgment on such a life" and "the Great Judge of All", appearing all on page 19, refer to the notions of doing good and doing harm, which are respectively praised and forbidden in the Catholic religion, and to the Almighty (God), who will judge everyone who has ever lived on the Judgment Day. These terms apply to Paul Rayment who thinks that he will be condemned by God when he dies because he has no children.

Paul Rayment is character who has no children, though he has got married to Henriette, his ex-wife. As a sixty-year-old man, he is childless and single, so he believes that he has sinned against God, because he has failed to fulfil God's mission for man on earth, which is to fill the earth, and he also believes that if he repents, God will forgive him his sin, as the narrator puts it:

Now, on the contrary, childlessness looks to him like madness, a herd madness, even a sin. What greater good can there be than more life, more souls? How will heaven be filled if the earth ceases to send its cargoes? When he arrives at

the gate, St Paul (for other new souls it may be Peter but for him it will be Paul) will be waiting. ‘Bless me father for I have sinned,’ he will say. ‘And how have you sinned, my child?’ Then he will have no words to say, save to show his empty hands. ‘You sorry fellow,’ Paul will say, ‘you sorry, sorry fellow. Did you not understand why you were given life, the greatest gift of all?’ ‘When I was living I did not understand, father, but now I understand , now that it is too late; and believe me, father, I repent, I repent me, *je me repens*, and bitterly too.’ ‘Then pass,’ Paul will say, and stand aside: ‘in the house of your Father there is room for all, even for the stupid lonely sheep.’ (Coetzee, 2005, p. 34)

Words, expressions and sentences like “sin”, “souls”, “heaven”, “St Paul” or “[St] Peter”, “Bless me father for I have sinned”, “I repent, I repent me, *je me repens*”, “Father” and “lonely sheep” are part and parcel of the lexical field of Christianity and respectively refer to an offence against God, the spiritual parts of people, believed to exist after death, the place believed to be the home of God where good people go when they die, that is to say the paradise, Jesus Christ’s two disciples Paul and Peter, who are recognized by the Christian Church as being very holy, because of the way they have lived or died, a sinner’s prayer asking for God’s help and protection, a sinner’s repentance showing that he is sorry for the sin, the wrong that he has done, the word used by Christians to refer to God, and the sinner, the soul that has moved away from the herd of true believers.

Jesus Christ’s mother, the Virgin Mary, is referred to through the “plaster statuette of the Virgin Mary” in this sentence: “The Dutchman who married his mother and brought her and her children from Lourdes to Ballarat kept a framed photograph of Queen Wilhelmina side by side with a plaster statuette of the Virgin Mary in the living-room.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 66) Elizabeth Costello, a famous fictional Australian writer, pays a visit to Paul Rayment in order to see for herself the disabled man that the latter has become after the amputation of his right leg, which has been seriously damaged in the road accident that he has undergone on Magill Road. As she tells Paul Rayment, she is “a doubting Thomas”, that is a person who is unlikely to believe something until they see proof of it: “‘So,’ she says. ‘I am rather a doubting Thomas, as you see me.’” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 81) This expression stems from the Bible. It is related to St Thomas in the Bible, who did not believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead until he saw and touched his wounds.

As another vocabulary from Christianity, the term “godfather” appears many a time in the novel. Because he has fallen in love with Marijana Jokic, the day nurse who cares for him, Paul Rayment wants to pay for her son’s school fees as a way for him to show his gratefulness

to his employee who is very competent in her work. By doing so, he becomes Drago's godfather, as the narrator describes: "He has become a godfather. A godfather: one who leads a child to God. Does he have it in him to lead Drago to God?" (Coetzee, 2005, p. 92) In the Roman Catholic Religion, a godfather is a male godparent, a person who promises at a Christian baptism ceremony to be responsible for a child and to teach them about the Christian religion. In his letter to Mel, Drago's father, Paul Rayment explains his help to the family, but above all he defines the meaning of the term "godfather". He writes:

It is not just money I offer. I offer certain intangibles too, human intangibles, by which I mean principally love. I employed the word godfather, if not to you then to Marijana. Or perhaps I did not utter the word, merely thought it. My proposal is as follows. In return for a substantial loan of indefinite term, to cover the education of Drago and perhaps other of your children, can you find a place in your hearth and in your home, in your heart and home, for a godfather?

I do not know whether in Catholic Croatia you have the institution of godfather. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. The books I have consulted do not say. But you must be familiar with the concept. The godfather is the man who stands by the side of the father at the baptismal font, or hovers over his head, giving his blessing to the child and swearing his lifelong support. As the priest in the ritual of baptism is the personification of the Son and intercessor, and the father is of course the Father, so the godfather is the personification of the Holy Ghost. (Coetzee, 2005, p. 224)

Such terms as "Catholic Croatia", "priest", "ritual of baptism", "the Son and intercessor", "the Father" and "the Holy Ghost", show the reader that Coetzee writes his novel with vocabulary borrowed from Christianity. Thus, "Catholic Croatia" refers to the Catholic Church in Croatia, "priest" to a person who is qualified to perform religious duties and ceremonies in the Roman Catholic Church, "ritual of baptism" to the baptism sacrament which is an important religious ceremony. As for "the Son and intercessor", "the Father" and "the Holy Ghost", they respectively designate Jesus Christ, God and the Holy Spirit, that is God in the form of a spirit. The three elements represent the Trinity, which is the union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God in Christianity. Beyond the use of words and expressions related to the Catholic religion in his novel, Coetzee also alludes to biblical verses.

2-Allusion to Biblical Verses

Biblical verses are the short numbered divisions of chapters in the Bible. In the Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament which tells the history of the Jews, their beliefs and their relationship with God before the birth of Jesus Christ, God has assigned a mission to man, which is to multiply and fill the earth in order to dominate over it. Since Paul Rayment has no wife and no children who could look after him in his old age, particularly in his present state of health due to the amputation of his right leg, he now realizes that he has committed a sin; he has failed to fulfil God's mission given to man, as the narrator tells:

He, alas, is no spirit being as yet, but a man of some kind, the kind that fails to perform what man is brought into the world to perform: seek out his other half, cleave to her, and bless her with his seed – seed which, in the allegory or perhaps the anagogy unfolded by Brother Aloysius, he forgets which is which, represents God's word.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 33)

“To perform what man is brought into the world to perform: seek out his other half, cleave to her, and bless her with his seed” alludes to Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 28, which reads: “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”” (Genesis1:28, Bible, New International Version) Another verse Coetzee makes an allusion to in the Bible is related to the following passage:

Someone else has been moved into the room, a man older than himself come back from hip surgery. The man lies all day with his eyes shut. Now and again a pair of nurses close the curtains around his bed and, under cover, attend to his body's needs.

Two oldsters; two old fellows in the same boat. The nurses are good, they are kind and cheery, but beneath their brisk efficiency he can detect – he is not wrong, he has seen it too often in the past – a final indifference to their fate, his and his companion's. From Dr Hansen he feels, beneath the kindly concern, the same indifference. It is as though at some unconscious level these young people who have been assigned to care for them know they have nothing left to give to the tribe and therefore do not count. *So young and yet so heartless!* he cries to himself. *How did I come to fall into their hands? Better for the old to tend the old, the dying the dying! And what folly to be so alone in the world!* (Coetzee, 2005, p. 12)

Paul Rayment and the other old sick man in the hospital bed face the same problem, which is the indifference of both Dr Hansen and the nurses who care for them. In fact, despite their kindness, their cheerfulness and their competence in their work, they feel totally indifferent or show no interest in their patients' plight. They do not care at all about their suffering, they do their job and that is all they can give. In view of such heartlessness or

cruelty from the part of the young medical staff, Paul Rayment gives this outcry: “*So young and yet so heartless! [...]. How did I come to fall into their hands? Better for the old to tend the old, the dying the dying! And what folly to be so alone in the world!*” Among these words showing Paul Rayment’s reaction of anger or strong protest at nurses’ and doctors’ detachment, this sentence, “*Better for the old to tend the old, the dying the dying!*” is an indirect reference to a verse in the New Testament, the second part of the Bible, that describes the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And this verse reads: “Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60, Bible, New International Version) As a matter of fact, to one of the characters in the Bible who has been called by Jesus Christ to go and announce God’s kingdom, and who wanted first to go and bury his dead father, Jesus Christ said: “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” This verse means that what should matter for the man is not the burial of the dead father, who will be buried in any case by those who are spiritually dead, but to go and bring the good news about God’s realm to the world, which will allow him to save his soul from spiritual death. Likewise, as far as Paul Rayment and the old sick man are concerned, it is not the young nursing staff, but rather old men like them who can take care of them correctly, because as old people they can better understand the fate undergoing by their fellow men. Here, Coetzee points out the failure of the younger generation to look after the older one, forgetting that they too will become old one day. Though young Wayne Bright calls on old Paul Rayment in his hospital room, he fails in his choice of words addressed to the protagonist.

While he is admitted to hospital after his grave accident which cost him the amputation of his right leg, Paul Rayment receives the visit of Wayne Bright who caused the accident by violently hitting the protagonist with his car when the latter was riding his bicycle on Magill Road. Refusing to acknowledge that it is his “real bad driving” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 20), which brought about the accident, Wayne Bright says these words to Paul Rayment: ““Thought I’d see how you are getting on, Mr Rayment,” says Wayne. ‘I’m really sorry for what happened. Real bad luck.’” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 20) Shocked by this so-called justification for the accident (“Real bad luck”), which is an insult, Paul Rayment only has this thought, as his faith in God allows him to have: “*Go, and sin no more*: that is the best he can think of right now.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 21) These words make the reader think of those Jesus Christ said to the adulterous woman that he delivered in the Bible. In fact, to the people who wanted

him to condemn that woman, Jesus Christ said: “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone.” (John: 8-11, New Living Translation) So, nobody threw any stone to her, since among her accusers the old men were the first to abandon their accusation. When Jesus Christ asks her if the crowd has condemned her for her adultery, she answers no, and Jesus tells her that he also does not condemn her: “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” (John 8: 11, New Living Translation) Through his “Go and sin no more”, not only does Jesus Christ show that he has forgiven the woman her sin, but also he teaches her to change her behaviour. In the same way, thinking of the same words in relation to Wayne Bright’s misconduct, Paul Rayment reveals that he forgives Wayne Bright who has to admit his fault and avoid bad driving which can jeopardize the life of road users.

Except the fact that the Bible as a hypertext appears as a book in a book, that is in *Slow Man* as a novel, which is thus considered as a hypertext, it can also be noted that Coetzee’s text is marked by contamination.

II-A Contaminated Text

At the microtextual level, where the text can be examined in specific details (Nikolajeva, 2005, p. 41), it can be said of *Slow Man* that it is contaminated by mentions the text makes of other writers and their characters, of paratextuality, metatextuality and archetextuality. Contamination is a form of intertextuality appearing through direct quotations, indirect references to other texts.

1-Reference to Authors and Characters from other Books

Coetzee’s *Slow Man* is full of references to other authors such as Daniel Defoe (toward 1660-1731), known as the writer of the first English novel, Homer, a Greek poet who would have lived at the 8th or at the 9th Century before Jesus Christ, Socrates (470-399 before Jesus Christ) and Elizabeth Costello, a fictitious writer. One striking example is that when the night nurse asks a question to Paul Rayment about his family and friends, he answers saying that has got many friends and that he is not Robinson Crusoe, as the narrator tells:

‘You don’t have family? Says the night nurse, Janet, the one who allows herself banter with him. ‘You don’t have friends?’ She screws up her nose as she speaks, as though it is a joke he is playing on them all. ‘I have all the friends I could wish for,’ he replies. ‘I am not Robinson Crusoe. I just do not want to see any of them.’ (Coetzee, 2005, pp. 13-14)

In his last two sentences, “I am not Robinson Crusoe. I just do not want to see any of them”, Paul Rayment alludes to Daniel Defoe’s novel entitled *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In fact, Robinson Crusoe is the eponymous character who was a castaway on an island, so he was isolated from all his relatives and friends. Paul Rayment does not identify himself with Defoe’s character because his situation is different from the latter’s in that he is not separated from his friends; he still gets into touch with them, but he only does not want to meet any of them. The reference to Robinson Crusoe shows the type of character Paul Rayment is: he is well instructed and may have read many books. In other words, he is part of the literati, meaning educated and intelligent people who enjoy literature.

Through Paul Rayment’s plight Coetzee raises philosophical questions about man’s existence on earth, as shown in his references to a philosopher like Socrates and also to such a poet as Homer. Actually, viewed as the first and the greatest of the philosophers, Socrates who had been accused of corrupting the youth, had been condemned to suicide by drinking a cup full of hemlock. Thus, his life has been “shortened”. In the same way, the protagonist is doomed to seclusion and loneliness. In fact, Paul Rayment’s life has been restricted by the amputation of his right leg, so that he has become a “Slow Man”, a man whose mobility has been reduced and henceforth he is confined to his flat and its immediate environment, like a prisoner in his cell. The narrator points out this fact:

“He has lost the freedom of movement and it would be foolish to think it will ever be restored to him, with or without artificial limbs. He will never stride up Black Hill again, never pedal off to the market to do his shopping, much less come swooping on his bicycle down the curves of Montacute. The universe has contracted to this flat and the block or two around, and it will not expand again.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 25)

Reflecting on his new life as a disabled person forced to stay in a closed space, Paul Rayment asks himself questions in which he wonders what Socrates would say about a limited life, one in which one is confined to wheelchair after the accident: “A circumscribed life. What would Socrates say about that? May a life become so circumscribed that it is no longer worth living?” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 26) As a philosopher, Socrates may well try to answer such an existential question, which is to know if the life that Paul Rayment is living after the accident on Maguill Road is worth living. In other words, what is the value of a life in which one has lost the freedom of movement, one of the most fundamental human rights? Such is the question Paul is asking himself and wants Socrates to answer.

Following the accident he has had, Paul Rayment's limbs have been so violently hit by Wayne Bright's car that they have been dislocated. Describing the violent impact on Paul Rayment's legs, the narrator in charge of the protagonist's story in *Slow Man* borrows a word from Homer:

Unstrung: that is the word that comes back to him from Homer. The spear shatters the breastbone, the blood spurts, the limbs are unstrung, the body topples like a wooden puppet. Well, his limbs have been unstrung and now his spirit is unstrung too. His spirit is ready to topple." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 27)

As a lexis taken from Homer's poem, certainly from *The Iliad*, a poem written in ancient Greece, where this word has been used to depict the negative impact of war on war victims, this word also aptly apply to Paul Rayment who falls victim to violent accident. Indeed, both Paul Rayment's legs and spirit "have been unstrung", meaning weakened. And just like Homer's war victim whose sternum smashed by a spear shows blood bursting or pouring out suddenly, with unstrung legs and a body collapsing like a marionette made up of wood, Paul Rayment becomes unsteady physically and mentally and is about to fall down. Coetzee uses Homer's term "unstrung" to describe Paul Rayment's state of mind after his accident. A common point between Homer and Paul Rayment is that both of them suffer from an infirmity. The former became old and blind, whereas the latter becomes a disabled person in his old age. Here again the reader may realize what kind of character Paul Rayment is. He is educated and cultured, just like Coetzee, the author of the novel under study.

Another writer Coetzee invites and summons in his prose writing is Elizabeth Costello, a well-known Australian novelist. As a fictitious character, Elizabeth Costello pays a visit to Paul Rayment to whom she declares her love. On page 120, the reader is given a biography of Elizabeth Costello through Paul Rayment's perspective:

Contemporary World Authors, in the reference section of the library, has a brief biography together with the same nautical photograph. Born Melbourne, Australia, 1928. Lengthy residence in Europe. First book 1957. List of awards, prizes. Bibliography but no plot summaries. Twice married. A son and a daughter. (Coetzee, 2005, p. 120)

Fictional Elizabeth Costello from *Slow Man* is very much the same as the Elizabeth Costello from Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). Here, there is intratextuality (Coetzee's references to his own text) because both *Slow Man* and *Elizabeth Costello* have an intratextual relationship, for Coetzee resorts to self-allusions. Elizabeth Costello allows the reader to leave

the field of intratextuality and land up on the area of intertextuality when she refers to Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), the famous Irish writer, in order to portray the absurd situation in which she, Marijana, Mel, Drago and Paul Rayment find themselves waiting in vain for something they are expecting individually. Elizabeth Costello says:

‘So there we are. We are all unhappy, it seems. You are unhappy, Drago, because the ructions at home have forced you to pitch your tent on Victoria Square among the winos. Your mother is unhappy because she must take shelter among relatives who disapproves of her. Your father is unhappy because he thinks people are laughing at him. Paul here is unhappy because unhappiness is second nature to him but more particularly because he has not the faintest idea of how to bring about his heart’s desire. And I am unhappy because nothing is happening. Four people in four corners, moping, like tramps in Beckett, and myself in the middle, wasting time, being wasted by time.’ (Coetzee, 2005, p. 141)

Drago, Marijana, Mel, Paul Rayment and Elizabeth Costello herself are four characters whose situations remind the reader of the cases of Samuel Beckett’s two characters (Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo)) in *Waiting for Godot* (1953). As tramps, that is to say homeless or jobless people, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, namely God, to come and change their situations. But the latter never turns up. Like Beckett’s characters, Drago, Mel, Paul Rayment and Elizabeth Costello brood; they spend their time doing nothing and feeling sorry for themselves; they are all sad, each according to his or her particular expectation. Drago has left his father’s house because the latter has beaten his mother whom he suspects to have sexual intercourse with Paul Rayment; Marijana is now staying with her sister-in-law who does not approve of her suspected relations with the novel’s protagonist; Mel believes that he is a deceived husband; Paul Rayment is not happy for two reasons: first, his state of amputee, and second, he does not know how he can win Marijana’s heart; and Elizabeth Costello is despaired of being loved by Paul Rayment. Coetzee’s characters’ different plights reveal the absurdity of human existence, as Samuel Beckett shows in his absurd drama.

To Paul Rayment who stays indoors feeling sorry for himself and doing nothing to materialize his courting Marijana, Elizabeth Costello advises not to remain shut away in an ivory tower. Indeed, leading henceforth a stay-at-home life owing to the amputation of his right leg, Paul Rayment finds himself in a situation where he is separated from the problems and practical aspects of normal life. As Elizabeth Costello puts it, he needs to behave as Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, two characters who take initiatives, undertake tasks, projects and do concrete actions:

‘Remember, Paul, it is passion that makes the world go round. You are not analphabete, you must know that. In the absence of passion the world would still be void and without form. Think of Don Quixote. *Don Quixote* is not about a man sitting in a rocking chair bemoaning the dullness of La Mancha. It is about a man who clasps a basin on his head and clambers onto the back of his faithful old plough-horse and sallies forth to do great deeds. Emma Rouault, Emma Bovary, goes out and buys fancy clothes even though she has no idea of how she is going to pay for them. *We only live once*, says Alonso, says Emma, *so let’s give it a whirl!* Give it a whirl, Paul. See what you can come up with.’ (Coetzee, 2005, pp. 228-229)

Don Quixote and Emma Bovary are Miguel de Cervantes’s (1547-1616) and Gustave Flaubert’s characters respectively in *Don Quixote: The Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha* (1605) and in *Madame Bovary* (1856). According to Elizabeth Costello, both characters must inspire Paul Rayment in that they are enterprising. Driven by passion, which makes the universe go ahead, Don Quixote does not content himself with contemplating *La Mancha*, a region from South-west Europe; he is a man of action who does important and impressive acts by defending the oppressed. One of his most known exploits is the assault against the windmills that he takes for wicked giants. Likewise, Emma Bovary, in her quest for a better life, buys high-quality clothes on credit, even if she is moneyless. What matters to her, but also to Don Quixote, whose real name is Alonso Quijano, is to take advantage of their life at present, because man only lives once. So they should profit from their current life by attempting to do things. And Paul Rayment should follow Alonso’s and Emma Bovary’s lead.

It is also worth mentioning that Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* has been deeply influenced by Cervantes’s *Don Quixote: The Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha*⁴, and it is this deep influence which accounts for the common point between Alonso and Emma, particularly their life philosophy which leads them to act and take advantage of their existence on earth. Except intertextuality, namely the dialogue between Coetzee’s *Slow Man* and Cervantes’s *Don Quixote: The Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha* and Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, three other types of intertextual or transtextual relationships appear in the South African writer’s prose, particularly paratextuality, metatextuality and archetextuality.

2-Paratextuality, Metatextuality and Archetextuality

⁴ Soledad Fox and Carole Adache have shown in their articles the influence of Cervantes’s novel on Flaubert’s: Soledad Fox, “Flaubert and Don Quijote: The Influence of Cervantes on Madame Bovary”: <https://books.google.com/book?isbn=1845193970>, p. 35, consulted on September 29, 2015; Carole Adache, “Ateliers d’écriture avec Carole Adache: Cervantès se moque des plagiatés”: <https://ateliersdecritureac.wordpress.com/2014/04/cervantès-se-moque-des-plagiats>, p. 1, consulted on September 29, 2015.

“Paratextuality”, “metatextuality” and “archetextuality” are Gérard Genette’s coined terms. At the microtextual level, Coetzee’s *Slow Man* is a transtextual melting pot which is full of paratextual, metatextual and archetextual references that he summons from other works of fiction.

One striking illustration of paratextuality appears in the allusion to Plato’s book mentioned in Paul Rayment’s readings. To represent appetites, passions and the self, Coetzee resorts to the illustration on the cover of Plato’s book, as Paul Rayment remembers:

A memory comes back to him of the cover of a book he used to own, a popular edition of Plato. It showed a chariot drawn by two steeds, a black steed with flashing eyes and distended nostrils representing the base appetites, and a white steed of calmer mien representing the less easily identifiable nobler passions. Standing in the chariot, gripping the reins, was a young man with half-bared torso and a Grecian nose and a fillet around his brow, representing presumably the self, that which calls itself I. (Coetzee, 2005, p. 53)

To illustrate the idea that Paul Rayment as the self or as an “I”, that is as a subject, must whet his passionate sentimental appetites by taking action in order to declare his love to Marijana and do everything that is humanly possible to conquer her, Coetzee makes a vivid description of the cover of Plato’s book, presumably *The Republic*, a book written around 380 BCE. By summoning such a paratextual element (the illustration on Plato’s book cover), Coetzee demonstrates that the paratext can be used to produce meaning in a novel. He does the same with Croatian books titles, which allow Paul Rayment to wonder about the type of religious people the Croatians are, in order to better understand Marijana’s and her husband’s personality:

In the public library – where thankfully he does not have to leave ground level – he finds two books on Croatia: a guidebook to Illyria and the Dalmatian coast and a guidebook to Zagreb and its churches; also a number of books on Yugoslav Federation and on the recent Balkan wars. On what he has come to enlighten himself about, however – the character of Croatia and its people – there is nothing. He checks out a book called *Peoples of the Balkans* [...] *Peoples of the Balkans: Between East and West*, so runs the full title. Is that how the Jokics felt back at home: caught between Orthodox East and Catholic West? [...] *People of the Balkans* dates from 1962, before Marijana was even conceived. (Coetzee, 2005, pp. 63-64)

Paul Rayment is not an uncultured or an uncultivated character; his thirst to know more about Croatia and its people by reading in a library books about them shows evidence of

the fact that he is a highly cultured man. Through the reference to the Croatian book entitled *Peoples of the Balkans or Peoples of the Balkans: Between East and West*, Coetzee not only links the protagonist's life with the Jokics family members, who are characters interacting with him, but also shows that they belong to a country torn between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic one. What is meant is that on the cultural and religious levels, one part of Croatia is Protestant and the other one is Catholic. Because of this quality and feature which makes Marijana different from the other nurses that the protagonist has hired, Paul Rayment can better understand Marijana's "orthodox nursing practice" (Coetzee, 2005, p. 63), as she takes good care of him.

With the title of a book written in French, Coetzee lets meaning emerge showing that titles can be interpretative strategies. As a matter of fact, to illustrate Paul Rayment's ungratefulness when he asks Elizabeth Costello to leave his flat and find somewhere else to stay, Elizabeth Costello tells the protagonist about the story of Sinbad and the old man. According to this story the old man meets one day Sinbad at a river side and begs him to hold him on his shoulder and help him to cross the river. When they reach the opposite side, the old man refuses to get down from Sinbad's shoulder and says that Sinbad is henceforth his slave, who will carry him everywhere he wants to go. For Elizabeth Costello, Paul Rayment is the old man, and she is Sinbad. In Paul Rayment's remembrance, the source of this story is given through its original and translated titles: "He remembers the story. It was in a book called *Légendes dorées, Golden Legends*, in his book-chest in Lourdes." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 129) The title as a paratextual element links Coetzee's *Slow Man* with *Légendes dorées* or *Golden Legends*, particularly as far as the story of Paul Rayment and Elizabeth Costello is concerned. Once more, Coetzee shows that paratextuality in its title aspects can be used in the process of meaning-making.

Making meaning in *Slow Man* is also done through metatextuality, another kind of intertextuality establishing a commentary relationship between Coetzee's prose and another work of fiction being written inside the novel under study. Indeed, as if she were showing the reader that Paul Rayment's plight was not sufficiently eloquent to be the subject of a book, Elizabeth Costello, who has come to pay a visit to the protagonist in his own flat, plans to write a novel on Paul Rayment's life as a "Slow Man", a man whose life is circumscribed by his disability or infirmity. Thus, she reveals that Paul Rayment's case is a textbook case worth of being put in a book just like Alonso's and Emma Bovary's examples have been dealt with

by Cervantes and Flaubert. In a conversation between Paul Rayment and Elizabeth Costello, the subject in question is brought up:

‘See what I can come up with so that you can put me in a book.’ ‘So that someone, somewhere *might* put you in a book. So that someone might *want* to put you in a book. Someone, anyone – not just me. So that you may be *worth* putting in a book. Alongside Alonso and Emma. Become major, Paul. Live like a hero. That is what the classics teach us. Be a main character. Otherwise what is life for? (Coetzee, 2005, p. 229)

Fictionalizing Paul Rayment’s story is the subject at stake. That is the reason why these phrases and sentences (“so that you can put me in a book”, “So that someone, somewhere *might* put you in a book”, “So that someone might *want* to put you in a book”, “So that you may be *worth* putting in a book”), expressing the same idea, are repeated many a time in the above excerpt. Elizabeth Costello invites Paul Rayment to transcend himself, to rise above his condition as an amputee, to live a normal life, to go out and visit friends, to look for ways in which he can woo Marijana and win her heart. Paul Rayment must not let himself be affected by the ups and downs of life; he must rise above them, take his destiny in hand so that he can become a major or a main character, a hero in Elizabeth Costello’s book, just like Alonso and Emma. It must be added that the terms “major [character]”, “hero” and “main character” are part of literature metalanguage (“meta” = over, beyond) justifying the metatextual relationship between *Slow Man* and Elizabeth Costello’s book being written on Paul Rayment’s current life. Since Elizabeth Costello’s comments are metafictional ones (metafiction means that the author in a work of art deliberately reminds the reader that it is fiction and not real life), the kind of transtextual connection in question here is referred to as metatextuality.

Paul Rayment witnesses Elizabeth Costello’s writing “the book of him, the book of his life” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 53), as the narrator tells:

He glances at what she is writing. In fat letters: (*EC thinks*) *Australian novelist – what a fate! What does the man have in his veins?* Under the words, a line across the page scored savagely into the paper. Then: *After the meal they play a game of cards. Use the game to bring out their differences. Blanka wins. A narrow, intense intelligence. Drago no good at cards – too careless, too confident. Marijana smiling, relaxed, proud of her offspring. PR tries to use the game to make friends with Blanka, but she draws back. Her icy disapproval [...]* Are they to be a family together after all, he with the ice-water in his veins and the Jokics, so full of blood? What else is Costello plotting in that busy head of hers? The scribbler sleeps, the character prowls around looking for things to

occupy himself with [...] The scribbler's busy head lies at rest on the pillow. (Coetzee, 2005, p. 238)

The scene being described by the narrator is suggestive of the fact that metatextuality is at work in Coetzee's *Slow Man*. In fact, the friendly relationship that Paul Rayment is trying to keep with Marijana and her children (Blanka and Drago), who have become the family that he does not have, is brought out by the metatextual link that *Slow Man* has with Elizabeth Costello's book on the protagonist's life as a disabled person. Such words as "writing", "letter", "novelist", "words", "the page", "paper", "plotting" (meaning putting in a book), "the scribbler" (meaning author or writer) and "the character" are all part and parcel of metalanguage from literature showing that Elizabeth Costello is self-consciously writing about Paul Rayment, Marijana, Blanka and Drago. In addition, the use of the term "game" ("a game of cards", "Use the game to bring out their differences", and "use the game to make friends"), suggests that literature is a game just like the game of cards. It is within the framework of this literary game that Elizabeth Costello writes a book in which Paul Rayment, Marijana, Blanka, Drago and herself are characters. As a literary device, metatextuality can be viewed as a playful element allowing the writer to produce meaning in his work.

Another way in which Coetzee makes meaning is his recourse to archetextuality. Thus, the archetext plays an important part in *Slow Man*. The introduction of letters, poems and drama exemplifies this fact at best. Indeed, *Slow Man* is punctuated with a series of letters which transform the prose text into an epistolary text, an "epistolary novel", as Elizabeth Costello puts it:

'No word from Drago? No news from the Jokics? she inquires. 'No word. I have written a letter, which I have yet to mail.' 'A letter! Another letter! What is this, a game of postal chess? Two days for your word to reach Marijana, two days for her word to come back: we will all expire of boredom before we have a resolution. This is not the age of the epistolary novel, Paul. Go and see her! Confront her! (Coetzee, 2005, p. 227)

As a result of the robbery of his Fauchery print (a photograph), Paul Rayment decides to write a letter to Marijana so that she can check if Drago has accidentally taken it away with him. But Elizabeth Costello tells him that the letter is not the right means to try and solve the matter, since it will take time (two days) to reach Marijana, and it will also take two days for him to receive a reply. For Elizabeth Costello, the age of the epistolary novel being over, what Paul Rayment has to do is to go and meet Marijana and talk to her about the problem.

Paul Rayment writes his first letter to Marijana to apologize for having declared his love for her. This letter reads as follows: “*Dear Marijana*, he writes, *I fear you may have misunderstood me*. He deletes *me* and writes *my meaning*. But what is the meaning she may have misunderstood? *When I first met you*, he writes, beginning a new paragraph, *I was in a shattered state*”. (Coetzee, 2005, p. 79) In his second letter to Marijana, Paul Rayment writes to explain the reason for his offer to Drago and to all three of Marijana’s children. The missive opens with this phrase: “*Dear Marijana*,” (p. 166) and closes with the signature (*Paul Rayment*), preceded by the ending formula: “*Yours ever*,” (p. 166). The whole letter is italicized, a graphic characteristics allowing the author to distinguish it from the novel’s text.

To Marijana’s husband, Miroslav, Paul Rayment writes also a letter to suggest what he can do to help the family to pay for Drago’s school fees; but also to reassure him that he has had no sexual intercourse with his wife. The letter is long enough; it extends on pages 223, 224 and 225. The marks of the presence of the letter are: the salutation (“*Dear Miroslav*,”) (p. 223); the sign-off (*Yours most sincerely*), and the signature (*Paul Rayment*). To show the reader that the text of the letter is another archetext that he includes in the prose text, Coetzee resorts to a typographic differentiation by the use of italics.

To illustrate Paul Rayment’s languishing in his flat, Coetzee summons lines of John Clare:

I am, yet what I am none cares or knows.
 My friends forsake me like a memory lost.
 I am the self-consumer of my woes
 (Coetzee, 2005, pp. 229-230)

Elizabeth Costello who quotes these verses uses them in order to warn Paul Rayment that if he keeps staying indoors, he will suffer a lot from sorrow, so he will have sole responsibility for his misfortunes: “Do you know the lines? John Clare. Be warned, Paul: that is how you will end up, like John Clare, sole consumer of your own woes. Because no one else, you can be sure, will give a damn.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 230) In fact, Paul Rayment is a single man with no proper family at all. So, except Marijana, Drago and Elizabeth Costello, he has nobody to care for him. His many friends that he has have not abandoned him. But he himself has decided not to meet them. As a result of this refusal to keep in touch with his

numerous friends, he undergoes loneliness and hardship. The introduction of the poem by John Clare in Coetzee's prose creates a sort of intergenericity or archetextuality which gives depth to the meaning of Paul Rayment's condition.

To bring about change in such a human condition, Paul Rayment has to drop his inaction, his letters to Marijana and to Miroslav. What he had better do is to resort to "action and passion", as Elizabeth Costello says:

'[...] Life is not an exchange of diplomatic notes. *Au contraire*, life is drama, life is action, action and passion! Surely you, with your French background, know that. Be polite if you wish, no harm in politeness, but not at the expense of passions. Think of French theatre. Think of Racine. You can't be more French than Racine. Racine is not about people sitting hunched up in corners plotting and calculating. Racine is about confrontation, one huge tirade pitted against another.' (Coetzee, 2005, p. 227)

Through terms like "drama", "(French) theatre", "tirade", "Racine" (1639-1699), and "passion", Coetzee refers to the theatrical genre, to the play considered as a form of literature which is fundamentally based on "action", as the etymological meaning of "drama"⁵ suggests in ancient Greek. Leaving inactivity or inaction due to his physical disability and becoming a proactive man, an active man, a man of action, will lead Paul Rayment to behave as a theatre or a drama character, an actor, that is to say a person who performs on the stage. As a playwright or a dramatist, Racine is an action man, an active and aggressive man, who writes plays for the theatre where actors perform actions. Elizabeth Costello suggests that Paul Rayment should single out actions like Racine, he must act or struggle in order to meet Marijana, to confront her, namely to deal with the heart problem that he has with her. The word "tirade" used in this sentence defining the term "confrontation", "one huge tirade pitted against another", is a metalanguage from theatre; it is a long reply or a long monologue made by a character from drama.

As can be seen, "drama" as an archetext has an evocative power which is to express the notions of action and passion (a very strong feeling of sexual love): This is tantamount to showing that Paul Rayment who has fallen in love with Marijana should act, fight for his

⁵ "The etymology of the word drama, which is derived from the Greek verb *dran* meaning to do or to act, is important in determining its meaning. Basically, drama involves the presentation of a situation or the telling of a story in terms of physical action [...] Usually this action is visible physical action on stage [...]" John Foy, "What is Drama? Definition and Etymology" in *What is Drama? Definition and Etymology*. 10 Jan. 2009 <http://ezinearticles.com/?http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-drama?-Definition-and-Etymology&id=1867000>, consulted on October 10, 2015

passion for his employee. And it is this passion that leads him to offer his help to Drago and to Blanka, Marijana's children. The reference to the Racinean dramatic art considering "life as drama, action and passion" is not fortuitous, since the French dramatist's theatre depicts passion as a fatal force which destroys the one possessed by it.

Conclusion

To put it in a nutshell, it can be said that Coetzee produces meanings in his novel by using the resources of intertextuality. Thus, at the macrotextual level, the Bible has been used as a hypotext of *Slow Man* which has become a hypertext. The terms and verses borrowed from Christianity and from the Bible have become the threads or the materials with which Coetzee has woven or constructed his text in order to describe and depict the plight of Paul Rayment, as he interacts with the other characters in *Slow Man*. Such a discursive strategy brings the reader to observe that there is a book in a book, that is to say the Bible is integrated into *Slow Man*.

At the microtextual level in the novel, several layers of deeper meanings related to the protagonist's new condition, as a disabled person, have also been communicated to the reader through other narrative strategies as paratextuality, metatextuality and archetextuality, in which Coetzee's novel has kept a constant dialogue with titles and characters from books belonging to other writers. With the use of these elements in the weaving of his book, I can assert that Coetzee conceives the literary text as a scriptural paper tissue whose meanings can be constructed by a heterogeneous collection of words, expressions and devices thrown together, and above all borrowed both from the Bible and from literature.

As components of the intertextual weavings, contamination and Genette's five transtextual relationships like hypotextuality, hypertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality and archetextuality make the reader better understand Elizabeth Costello's words to Paul Rayment: "Nothing that happens in our lives is without meaning." (Coetzee, 2015, p. 96) This sentence gains full meaning, in that in the same way no specific choice of any language units and any literary techniques is without meaning. Thus, Coetzee makes the reader become aware that in literature the selection of words and ploys is not fortuitous; nothing can be put down to chance in pieces of writing that are valued as works of art.



Bibliography

BECKETT, Samuel, *Waiting for Godot*, London, Faber and Faber, 1988.

Bible, New International Version

Bible, New Living Translation

BLOOM, Alan, *The Republic of Plato*, New York, Basic Books, 1968.

CERVANTES, Miguel de, *Don Quixote*, New York, Penguin Classics, 2003.

COETZEE, John-Maxwell, *Elizabeth Costello*, London, Vintage Books, 2003.

COETZEE, John-Maxwell, *Slow Man*, London, Vintage Books, 2005.

DEFOE, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, New York, Signet Classic, 1998.

FLAUBERT, Gustave, *Madame Bovary dans Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, collection "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", 1951.

HOMER, *The Iliad*, Richmond Lattimore, translator, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Webliography

ADACHE, Carole, "Ateliers d'écriture avec Carole Adache: Cervantès se moque des plagiat": <https://ateliersdecritureac.wordpress.com/2014/04/cervantès-se-moque-des-plagiat>, p. 1, consulted on September 29, 2015.

ESCOLA, Marc, "Atelier de théorie littéraire: les relations transtextuelles selon G. Genette", extraits de Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes*, Le Seuil, Collection "Poétique", 1982, http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?Les_relations_transtextuelles_selon_G_Genette, consulté le 9 Novembre 2012.

FOX, Soledad, "Flaubert and Don Quijote: The Influence of Cervantes on Madame Bovary": <https://books.google.com/book?isbn=1845193970>, p. 35, consulted on September 29, 2015;

FOY, John, "What is Drama? Definition and Etymology" *What is Drama? Definition and Etymology*. 10 Jan. 2009 EzoneArticles.com.:<http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-drama?-Definition-and-Etymology&id=1867000>, consulted on October 10, 2015.

NIKOLAJEVA, Maria, "Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction", <http://books.google.com/books?isbn=14616515X>, consulted on July 25, 2015.

ROBINSON-MALONE, Kathleen, "Literature and Intertextuality", <fr.slideshare.net/kathleenrobinsonmalone/literature-and-intertextuality>, consulted on July 25, 2015.