

**‘FOR ME ALONE PAUL RAYMENT WAS BORN’:  
COETZEE’S *SLOW MAN*, *DON QUIXOTE*, AND THE  
LITERATURE OF REPLENISHMENT**

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The American novelist John Barth famously envisaged postmodernist fiction as a ‘literature of replenishment’. The word ‘replenishment’ has positive connotations, I think: it suggests a hopeful future for fiction, rather than a disappointing, dissipating end to narrative storytelling as we know it, as some other versions of postmodernism put forth. Barth’s writings on postmodernist fiction are essentially concerned with the novel as a form and a genre—Barth himself admits, for example, ‘my own preference from the first has been the novel’—and a key touchstone for Barth in his formulation of his definition of postmodernist fiction as a literature of replenishment is Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (*FB*, 61). Throughout his critical writings—the most famous examples being ‘The Literature of Exhaustion’ (1967) and ‘The Literature of Replenishment’ (1980)—Barth makes the case that *Don Quixote* is not only the first example of the novel proper but also the first example of the postmodernist novel in particular. Barth suggests, for instance:

commonly called the first modern novel, *Don Quixote* is in several respects the first postmodern one as well: in its incremental awareness of itself as fiction, in its impassioned and transcendent parody of the genre it ends up glorifying, and not least in its half-ironic amplitude. (*Further Fridays*, 87)

In ‘The Literature of Replenishment’ especially, Barth argues that ‘with *Don Quixote*, the novel may be said to *begin* in self-transcendent parody and has often returned to that mode for its refreshment’ (*FB*, 205). That, in a sense, is what this present essay is about. In it, I want to discuss J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Slow Man* (2005) with recourse to Barth’s definition of postmodernist fiction as a literature of replenishment and, in particular, its relationship with *Don Quixote*. There is a clear intertextual relationship between Coetzee’s novel and Cervantes’s, and when we examine it in the light of Barth’s theory of postmodernist fiction, the importance of that relationship becomes ever clearer.

Coetzee's status as a postmodernist writer is of great debate amongst his critics. While this essay does not afford me room to discuss it in detail, it is my contention that Coetzee is a postmodernist writer and that Barth's notion of the literature of replenishment is entirely appropriate. I have found David Attwell's summation particularly helpful in this respect:

Although Coetzee might well be described as working within the culture of postmodernism, he certainly does not do so in the spirit of abandonment that seems to typify much of what goes under the name. (*DP*, 3)

Barth's definition of postmodernist fiction as a literature of replenishment is also free from what Attwell calls 'the spirit of abandonment'. Parody has also played a significant part in Coetzee's work throughout his career. His novels *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) parody Beckett and Kafka respectively; moreover *Foe* (1986) and *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) not only rewrite Defoe and Dostoevsky but also feature the novelists as characters. Coetzee's oeuvre also shows he is not above self-parody: the collection of Coetzee's in *Dusklands* (1974), the near-namesake JC in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), and the trilogy of, to use Coetzee's own term, *autrebiographical* texts—*Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002), *Summertime* (2009)—all show Coetzee confusing and questioning the role of the writer and the author's relationship with his or her literary work.<sup>1</sup>

Parody, then, is an important part of Coetzee's creative and critical practice—parody being, according to Patricia Waugh, the fusing of creation and critique (68). To quote Attwell once more:

Coetzee's use of parody is complex and changing. *Dusklands*'s parody of colonial discourses is bleak, at times aggressive; in the later fiction, however, the parodied texts, such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana* [in *Foe*], apart from being more literary, are treated with more respect. (*Coetzee*, 129)

I would argue that the parodic practice at work in *Slow Man* is more akin to that in *Foe* than to that in *Dusklands*. To paraphrase Attwell, *Don Quixote* is parodied with a certain amount of respect. This is also the case, let me add, in another of Coetzee's novels that parodies Cervantes: *Age of Iron* (1990). In that novel, Mrs Curren, a retired academic living

in South Africa and dying of cancer, writes a long letter to her daughter who lives in the United States. Mrs Curren befriends a homeless man called Vercueil, who, along with his dog, takes up residence in her house. The relationship between Mrs Curren and Vercueil is akin to that of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and ‘age of iron’ is, after all, a quotation from Cervantes’s novel (Cervantes 76–77). According to Patrick Hayes, who has to my knowledge discussed the relationship between *Don Quixote* and *Age of Iron* in most detail:

Elizabeth [Curren] and Vercueil (and his young dog) are the Quixote and Sancho of our *Age of Iron*: just as Sancho looks after Quixote’s old nag, Vercueil is always called upon to drive Elizabeth’s Rocinante the aged but beloved Hillman. (Hayes 119)

As Hayes points out, Mrs Curren names her car after the Knight of La Mancha’s knackered steed: ‘Up Boyes Drive the car was labouring now, willing but old, like Rocinante’ (see *Age of Iron*, 18).

Coetzee also makes reference to Cervantes and *Don Quixote* in two important speeches he gave in 1987. Accepting the Jerusalem Prize, Coetzee mentions in passing ‘the first of all novelists, Miguel Cervantes, on whose giant shoulders we pigmy writers of a later age stand’ (*DP*, 98). Coetzee’s remark echoes a phrase of Barth’s: ‘*Quixote* is where we novelists came in’ (*FB*, 122). Coetzee also affirms Cervantes’s influence in ‘The Novel Today’, a short speech Coetzee gave at the Weekly Mail Book Week in Cape Town. Coetzee opens his talk thusly:

Speaking as a novelist, I would like to make some observations on the relation of novels and novel-writing to the time and the place in which we live. What is it that I and other writers are doing, I want to ask, when, as people making our own history or people living out the history of our time or people enmired in history or people undergoing the nightmare of history, depending on how one sees it, we write these long prose works that we call novels? Are we trying to escape historical reality, or, on the contrary, are we engaging with historical reality in a particular way, a way that may require some explanation and some defence? I need hardly say that this is a question that has been addressed by novelists and theorists of the novel since at least the time of Cervantes. (‘Novel Today’, 2)

The questions at the heart of the contemporary novel, Coetzee makes clear, are the questions that have always been at the heart of the novel. That is why *Don Quixote* is such a significant text and why, Barth reminds us, postmodernist fiction frequently returns to it for refreshment. Coetzee's *Slow Man* is the story of Paul Rayment, who lives in Adelaide, Australia and who, on the novel's first page, is hit by a car while riding his bicycle. As a result, one of his legs is amputated and, refusing prosthesis, Paul is confined to his apartment and is reliant upon domestic help for assistance. After trial and error with an agency, Paul settles on the Croatian immigrant Marijana Jokić, with whom Paul promptly falls in love. Things start to unravel for Paul when, having declared his love for the married Marijana and also offered to pay for her son Drago to attend a private school, the eminent Australian novelist Elizabeth Costello arrives at his door. Costello, it seems, is intent on writing a book about Paul; she spends the rest of the novel trying to convince him to behave in a manner worthy of a literary hero and, in particular, Don Quixote. But Paul refuses and, as a result, *Slow Man* unfolds as a novel about a literary hero who simply will not behave like Don Quixote, even if the rest of the fictional world surrounding him expects it.

*Slow Man*'s debt to *Don Quixote* has already been noted by others, albeit briefly. Peter McDonald, for instance, in his review of Coetzee's novel for the *London Review of Books* makes passing reference to Costello's mission to 'get [Paul] to join her on a series of quixotic pensioners' "adventures" (25). Jens Gurr, in a very probing essay highlighting the metafictional practice at work in *Slow Man*, draws attention to the novel's citation of *Don Quixote*, albeit only in a footnote (n.96). Like Don Quixote, Paul is over fifty, single and childless. Throughout the novel there is an increasing sense that Paul regrets this predicament: 'childlessness looks to him like madness, a herd madness, even a sin' (*SM*, 34). Paul's 'madness', then, links him with Don Quixote, a madness brought on by reading too many books of chivalry. Paul's madness and Don Quixote's madness are both a result of isolation and solitude. Paul's bicycle, moreover, like Don Quixote's knackered horse Rocinante, is a somewhat outdated mode of transport, emphasised unfortunately for Paul when he is knocked off his bike, as I have already mentioned, on the novel's first page. Even the fleeting glimpse of Marianna, a young, blind woman being led from the hospital by an old woman, hints at the golden age of Don Quixote for Paul, even if he is oblivious to it: 'their image stays with him: the crone leading the hastily clad princess in an enchanted sleepwalk' (*SM*, 36). What is more, when in *Slow Man* we read 'history is full of one-armed sailors', is there not a

faint trace of the plight of Cervantes himself (*SM*, 26)?<sup>2</sup> Throughout *Slow Man*, then, there are subtle but significant nods to the world of *Don Quixote*.

The object, too, of Paul's affections, Marijana Jokić, is not dissimilar either from Aldonza Lorenzo, the peasant woman Don Quixote christens Dulcinea of Toboso. Marijana is first introduced as 'a sallow-faced woman who, if not quite middle-aged, exhibits a thickening about the waist that is quite matronly' (*SM*, 27). When she offers to dust Paul's books, he falls in love with her:

In her he begins to see if not beauty then at least the perfection of a certain feminine type. *Strong as a horse*, he thinks, eyeing the sturdy calves and well-knit haunches that ripple as she reaches for the upper shelves. *Strong as a mare*. (*SM*, 50)

This physical description is reminiscent of *Don Quixote*: Sancho Panza, upon learning that Dulcinea is really the peasant woman Aldonza Lorenzo, remarks: 'she can throw a metal bar just as well as the brawniest lad in the village. Praise our Maker, she's a fine girl in every way, sturdy as a horse' (199). The fact, furthermore, that Paul becomes enamoured with Marijana while she cares for his books is a moment easily identifiable with Don Quixote: his adventures and his infatuation with Dulcinea are born, of course, out of his love for books of chivalry.

Then there is the presence in *Slow Man* of the novelist Elizabeth Costello. Costello gave her name to and was the protagonist of Coetzee's previous novel, and her appearance in *Slow Man* means she is the first recurring character in Coetzee's work. Arriving unannounced, and giving only her name as a means of introduction, Costello sits down on Paul's sofa, takes his hand, and recites what we as readers know to be the opening lines of the novel:

*The blow catches him from the right, sharp and surprising and painful, like a bolt of electricity, lifting him up off the bicycle. Relax! he tells himself as he tumbles through the air, and so forth.*<sup>3</sup> (*SM*, 81)

Paul is, in a moment of neat metafictional and intertextual quality, having his own story told to him; he is, if you like, being read *Slow Man*. Paul soon realises that he does know who this stranger Elizabeth Costello is: 'he tried once to read a book by her, a novel, but gave up on it, it did not hold his attention' (*SM*, 82). This is an example of the

subtle, self-transcendent parody at work in *Slow Man*. While in *Elizabeth Costello*, Costello's novel *The House on Eccles Street*—which picks up the story of Marion Bloom, Leopold's wife, from James Joyce's *Ulysses*—is described as 'a great novel; it will live, perhaps, as long as *Ulysses*; it will certainly be around long after its maker is in the grave', in *Slow Man*, Costello is paired with a character who cannot even finish one of her books (Coetzee, *Costello* 11).

The introduction of Costello in *Slow Man*, coupled with her identity as a writer and one intent on writing a book about Paul may seem, on the face of it, a strange, unsettling move. As Dominic Head shows, however, Costello's appearance in *Slow Man* is actually in keeping with the themes of previous novels by Coetzee:

When Elizabeth Costello arrives in the novel, a third of the way in, the frame is deliberately broken and the novel changes its tenor. In some respects this is a familiar Coetzeean operation, where the realist illusion is laid bare and yet simultaneously relied upon. This unsettling manoeuvre gives rise to some startling effects in the earlier novels—*Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe* in particular. Here, however, it involves a jolt for the reader, who is no longer able to sustain belief in Coetzee's creation. There is also the nagging feeling that the novel has run out of steam or invention, and that the novelist has recourse to what is, on the face of it, a familiar postmodernist device to keep it afloat. This particular form of self-consciousness—deliberating overtly on the question of artistic inspiration—can be an aggravating form of navel-contemplation, especially when it is the *lack* of inspiration that becomes the focus. (Head 88)

Subtly, and perhaps unconsciously, Head here brings to light the importance of *Slow Man*'s metafictional strategies and its engagement with *Don Quixote*. Head implies that the introduction of Costello is due to a nagging feeling that the novel—meaning *Slow Man* in particular—has run out of steam or invention.

However the introduction of Elizabeth Costello, I would argue, coupled with her complicated relationship with Paul, the novel's metafictional strategies and its intertextual links to *Don Quixote*, are a means of acknowledging the exhaustion of the novel form and genre in

general and of moving from exhaustion to replenishment. This for Barth is a key part of the replenishing process:

Literary forms certainly have histories and historical contingencies, and it may well be that the novel's time as a major art form is up, as the times of classical tragedy, Italian and German grand opera, or the sonnet-sequence came to be. No necessary cause for alarm in this at all, except perhaps to certain novelists, and one way to handle such a feeling might be to write a novel about it. (*FB*, 71–72)

Barth goes on:

If this sort of thing sounds unpleasantly decadent, nevertheless it's about where the genre began, with *Quixote* imitating *Amadis of Gaul*, Cervantes pretending to be Cid Hamete Benengeli (and Alonso Quijano pretending to be Don Quixote), or Fielding parodying Richardson. (*FB*, 72)

The underlying theme of *Slow Man*, I would argue, is therefore a response to the feeling that the novel's time, to paraphrase Barth, is up. The introduction of Costello into the novel and the ensuing story of her trying to coax Paul into a Quixote-like adventure, show *Slow Man* returning to the self-transcendent parody of *Don Quixote* and gaining refreshment from it.

The introduction of Costello to Paul is a subtle twist on events that occur in Part Two of *Don Quixote*, whereby virtually everyone Don Quixote and Sancho Panza meet already know them, having read Part One of Cervantes's novel. Elizabeth Costello and Paul's predicament is by no means a carbon copy of the premise of Part Two of *Don Quixote*; but that is precisely the point. From the moment Elizabeth Costello enters, *Slow Man* ceases only to be a story about, in Costello's own words, 'a man with a bad leg and no future and an unsuitable passion' (*SM*, 85). Thanks to Costello's presence, *Slow Man*'s status as a deeply metafictional and intertextual text, a novel concerned with the construction of a fictional narrative, of the power and importance of stories, and the complicated relationship between a writer and his or her characters, is brought to light. *Slow Man* discusses these issues, moreover, by engaging with and receiving refreshment and replenishment from *Don Quixote*.

The fact remains too that *Slow Man* is a novel about a figure more like Alonso Quixano the Good than Don Quixote; a man who, like Quixano at the end of *Don Quixote*, rejects the tales of chivalry that have inspired his adventures, claiming instead to ‘despise them’ (Cervantes 935). Paul remains resistant to Elizabeth Costello’s pleas for him to start living, to embark on an adventure, to ‘be a main character’, and *Slow Man* asks what a novel would be like with a protagonist who does not want to be a hero—who does not want to be Don Quixote (*SM*, 229). Paul does not desire or crave any kind of dramatic life, despite the fact that he is surrounded in the novel by characters whose own behaviour encourage him to do so. I refer not only to Elizabeth Costello but also to the supporting cast of *Slow Man*. Take Drago Jokić, Marijana’s son, who has ‘a name from folk-epic: *The Ballad of Drago Jokić*’ (*SM*, 69). I would suggest that Paul’s interest in Drago in the novel stems not only from Paul’s pathetic pursuit of Marijana but also the subtle suggestion that Drago himself is worthy of the attention of a central character. Paul’s own apathy toward adventure, however, pervades the novel. In an attempt to coax him out of this atrophy, the novel as a whole, and Elizabeth Costello in particular, repeatedly compare Paul with Don Quixote. In fact, when Paul ventures out on the tricycle the Jokić family make especially for him, Costello even calls Paul by Don Quixote’s own nickname, ‘my knight of the doleful countenance’ (*SM*, 256). Previously, Costello had implored Paul to behave more like Don Quixote in order that his story could be told. She pleads with him:

‘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 claps 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’.

‘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?' (*SM*, 229)

In contrast, then, with Don Quixote's friends—who burn his books and seal up his library while the Knight recovers from the injuries obtained on his first sally—Elizabeth Costello spends her time in *Slow Man* encouraging Paul to engage more with books: she begs him to behave like a hero and a main character and, upon first arriving at Paul's apartment, 'was going to say I was from the State Library' (*SM*, 80).

Why, then, does Elizabeth Costello persist with Paul when he is so clearly uninterested in behaving like a hero? The answer can again be found in *Don Quixote*. Throughout *Slow Man*, Elizabeth Costello reminds Paul that he came to her, that he appeared to her, and that she will not leave until he begins his adventures. Costello insists to Paul:

'No good pulling faces at me, Mr Rayment,' she says. 'I did not ask for this any more than you did'.

'Ask for *what*?' He cannot keep the irritation from his voice.

'I did not ask for *you*. I did not ask to spend a perfectly good afternoon in this gloomy flat of yours'.

'Then go! Leave the flat, if it so offends you. I still have not the faintest idea why you came. What do you want with me?'

'You came to me. You—'

'*I came to you? You came to me!*' (*SM*, 85)

If Paul is guilty of not behaving in a manner worthy of *Don Quixote*, Costello is completely innocent. Her assertions throughout the novel are a testament to this. Here, for instance, is one of her final pleas to Paul:

'You were made for me, Paul, as I was made for you. Will that do for the present, or do you want me to give it to you *plenu voce*, in full voice?'

'Speak it in so full a voice that even a poor dullard like me can understand'.

She clears her throat. 'For me alone Paul Rayment was born and I for him. His is the power of leading, mine of following; his of acting, mine of writing'. (*SM*, 233)

In this moment, Costello assumes the position of Cide Hamete Benengeli; her words are a direct quotation from the end of *Don Quixote* when, after the death of the knight, the novel's narrator records the words of Benengeli: 'for me alone was Don Quixote born, and I for him; he knew how to act, and I to write; the two of us alone are one' (Cervantes 939). *Slow Man*, therefore, is a novel seeking to establish itself and its hero as another Don Quixote. It has the necessary things in place: the narrator ready to chronicle the brave knight's noble deeds, and the maiden in whose name he performs them. But *Slow Man* fails completely to live out its quixotic ambitions; it fails even to motivate its hero to embark on a single adventure; it fails, moreover, even to convince him to recruit a faithful squire.

Why, then, does Paul fail to become the Quixote Elizabeth Costello believes he is destined to be? The answer, I would suggest, is to do with Paul's attitude towards books. It almost goes without saying that *Don Quixote* is a book of books and its protagonist a man of books. According to Robert Alter:

Don Quixote's adventures, of course, begin in a library and frequently circle back to the contents of that library in thought or in speech, and more than once in action; but it is equally remarkable that the world into which he sallies is flooded with manuscripts and printed matter. (Alter 5)

Paul is definitely and defiantly *not* a man of books; he displays none of the passion for stories and storytelling characters from *Don Quixote* share. *Don Quixote* is, after all, a novel so awash with characters who love reading and telling stories that on one occasion, when Don Quixote is put upstairs to rest while he and his companions frequent an inn, the supporting characters read to one another a novel of chivalry, *The Man Who Was Recklessly Careless* (Cervantes 271). Moreover, Paul shows little interest in books as objects of any great worth, only really valuing his volumes of photography. Reading is not a priority for Paul: 'his study is lined from floor to ceiling with books he will never open again, not because they are not worth reading but because he is going to run out of days' (*SM*, 47). It is an attitude towards books as different from Don Quixote's as it is perhaps possible to be. After all, Don Quixote

spent his times of leisure—which meant most of the year—reading books of chivalry with so much devotion and enthusiasm that he forgot almost completely about

the hunt and even about the administration of his estate; and in his rash curiosity and folly he went as far as to sell acres of arable land in order to buy books of chivalry to read. (Cervantes 20)

Even at the end of his life, in fact, Don Quixote admits he regrets not renouncing the ways of chivalric romance earlier: ‘this realization has come so late it does not leave me time to compensate by reading other books that can be a light to the soul’ (Cervantes 935). Even after repenting and renouncing his books of chivalry, Don Quixote still maintains a great love for books themselves and a deep pleasure in the act of reading.

This is not the case, however, with Paul. In contrast with writers—such as Foe, Dostoevsky and Elizabeth Costello—often at the heart of Coetzee’s novels, not to mention Don Quixote himself, Paul

tends to trust pictures more than he trusts words. Not because pictures cannot lie but because, once they leave the darkroom, they are fixed, immutable. Whereas stories—the story of the needle in the bloodstream, for instance, or the story of how he and Wayne Blight came to meet on Magill Road—seem to change shape all the time. (*SM*, 64)

The faith that characters in the novels of Coetzee often place in stories—Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg* being perhaps the best example—is entirely absent in Paul. The only stories he thinks of, we read early in *Slow Man*, are ‘of people who bring about their own end’ (*SM*, 13). In direct contrast to Don Quixote’s love for books, and in contrast too to refreshment and replenishment, Paul’s stories are suicidal ones, leading away from life and towards death. Even Paul’s faith in photography, however, is lampooned in the novel when one of the Fauchery prints in his collection is stolen by Drago and doctored so that Drago’s father Miroslav appears amongst a group of nineteenth-century Australian miners (*SM*, 217–18). Elizabeth Costello warns Paul not to ignore stories:

Nothing that happens in our lives is without a meaning, Paul, as any child can tell you. That is one of the lessons stories teach us, one of the many lessons. Have you given up reading stories? A mistake. You shouldn’t. (*SM*, 96)

Paul, however, does not heed her advice. He sees no value in storytelling and has no interest in having adventures or behaving like a literary hero. The only novel he read by Costello, I mentioned earlier, Paul could not finish; he considers only his books on photographs a collection: ‘the rest are just common or garden books’ (*SM*, 47).

Despite all of Paul’s resistance to literature, to books, reading, storytelling, adventures, heroes and knights of chivalry, the novel continues to refer to him specifically in textual terms. There are signs, even, that Paul himself does as well: ‘I am not Robinson Crusoe’, he protests to a nurse (*SM*, 14). He may not be, but such a remark in a novel like *Slow Man*, Jens Gurr points out, ‘surely says more than merely he does not feel lonely and does not want to see his friends’ (102n). Furthermore, while still in hospital, Paul admits that ‘from the opening of the chapter, from the incident on Magill Road to the present, he has not behaved well, has not risen to the occasion: that much is clear to him’ (*SM*, 14–15). The incident on Magill Road, even Paul has to concede, marks a fresh beginning—a new chapter—in his life, even if it is an unpleasant, sorrowful, bitter chapter. This is reinforced by Paul’s nurse, Madeleine: ‘it’s a new chapter in your life...the old chapter is closed, you must say goodbye to it and accept the new one’ (*SM*, 59). The place of such a phrase in a novel like *Slow Man*—a text desperately coaxing its protagonist into doing something heroic—takes on a particularly powerful resonance. Nobody reinforces this image of Paul as a text better than Elizabeth Costello, however. ‘Don’t dissemble, Paul,’ she tells him, ‘I can read you like a book’ (*SM*, 101). Costello’s frustration, however, is that she cannot convince him to behave like a book; she cannot persuade him to live up to his quixotic calling.

In his review of *Slow Man*, John Lanchester describes it as ‘a novel about the difficulty of writing novels’. He notes that ‘Paul doesn’t want to be a main character. He doesn’t want to be a hero’ (Lanchester 6). *Slow Man* is without doubt a novel with a reluctant protagonist, and what I think emerges is the fact that it is a text whose central character is asked to conform to but mostly contradicts the behaviour of Don Quixote. The novel itself, and Elizabeth Costello in particular, repeatedly compare Paul with Don Quixote, encouraging him to embark on an adventure worthy of the Knight of the Sorrowful Face. And yet Paul refuses. *Slow Man*, then, is a novel about a man refusing to behave like Don Quixote; it is a novel examining the repercussions of having a character unwilling to behave like a literary hero. It is a parody of the whole quixotic legacy: a refreshing and replenishing twist on novels that have followed in the footsteps of *Don Quixote* by being about fictional characters obsessed with fictional works. Be that as it may, the

metafictional qualities of *Slow Man* emphasise throughout that this novel by Coetzee has not abandoned the self-conscious mode of fiction defined by Alter, nor the self-transcendent parody of *Don Quixote* and Barth's definition of postmodernist fiction as a literature of replenishment. As a novel being refreshed through its engagement with *Don Quixote*, *Slow Man* and its reluctant hero reinforce the importance of books, stories and other previous writings and narratives for the formation of postmodernist fiction.

## NOTES

### Abbreviations

<i>DP</i>	<i>Doubling the Point</i>
<i>FB</i>	<i>Friday Book</i>
<i>SM</i>	<i>Slow Man</i>

<sup>1</sup> For the origins of the term *autrebiography* see *DP*, 394. For a further discussion see Coetzee and Attwell.

<sup>2</sup> In Coetzee's next novel, *Diary of a Bad Year*, Señor C refers to it specifically: 'let not the cruel loss of your hand be forgotten', he writes to Cervantes (222).

<sup>3</sup> Costello changes one word of the opening of *Slow Man*: whereas here she says Paul 'tumbles' through the air, the first sentence of *Slow Man* says Paul 'flies' through the air (1).

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