

## Fugal Musemathematics Track One, Point Two: J.M. Coetzee, Ethics, and Joycean Counterpoint

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### Abstract

This multi-parted essay, now broaching its second part ('Point Two'), pursues as contrapuntal set of relationships some points of contact, overlap, or synchrony among various border-voicings: literary, linguistic, musical, autobiographical, mathematical, and ethical. Its controlling technique is the inescapably general and abstract notion of fugal pursuit more particularly lodged in the etymological derivation of 'fugue' from *fugere* and *fugare* – to flee and to pursue. What 'Point Two' of the essay pursues, by way of that hunting call and response that characterizes fugal texture, is of course in the first instance its own first part; but, more specifically and concretely, the essay continues a fugal reading of how J.M. Coetzee – introduced in 'Point One' as a nomadic expatriate – in his later fiction follows into exile James Joyce's siren-song fugal practice; to begin with, as the essay's first part illustrates, in the contrapuntal arrangement of *Diary of a Bad Year* (see *Word and Text* 4.1, 158-175). Migrating across its own rows on the page and again migrating to and from the various segments of this multipartite essay, my reading articulates an always at least doubled performance, a fugal reading and writing, that first follows by imitation the linguistic practice of Coetzee following Joyce, but that also – as in Coetzee – subsequently seeks to unsettle the Sameness of imitation by the contrapuntal surprise attending the always unique advent of individual exile, expatriation, or the unexpected arrival of some Other, harbingers all of ethics perchance. In order to pursue its prey, this essay has itself entered into exile, fleeing from the eminent domain of orthodoxly-governed argument even to the point of risking the exceptionable: whereby, for example, and for the shape of its presentation, it eschews Chicago Style citation while conforming in other respects to the stylistic protocols of *Word and Text*.

**Keywords:** *fugue, counterpoint, autobiography, ethics, James Joyce, J.M. Coetzee*

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The music fugally embodied in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, especially in the 'Sirens' chapter, and re-embodied in J.M. Coetzee's novels, especially the recent ones, sounds by way of the body, as always, by way of the eye, the ear, the hand, the breath, the feeling mind and reasoning heart tuned by practice and passion, all parts collaborating more or less simultaneously in constantly re-invented imitation backed up by blood-beat, kidney, lung, muscle, liver – the list is long – rendered in letters and words, ink, paper, over which on the occasion of handling the first published copy of *Ulysses* in 1922 on his fortieth birthday Joyce is supposed to have said, counterpointing the words of The Word as reported in Matthew 26, '*Hoc est corpus meum*', this is my body (Steinberg 61). Joyce apparently pronounces these charged words again, knife in hand, peering with poor eyesight at the cake produced on the occasion of the anniversary of these birthdays (Hodgart 75), a birthday cake 'with a replica of *Ulysses* on it' (Gordon 54) over which Joyce supposedly reiterates these body-words already inscribed inside the textual body of *Ulysses* (5. 566) and already executed as the structural principle of *Portrait of the Artist*, but also everywhere present in the Joyce auto-corpus.

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In self-imposed exile, Joyce thus links autobiography as writing with and of and despite the body to an ancient tradition in mystic thought that conceives of the world as a trilogy authored by a Creator who self-wrote not only the Book of Scripture but also the Book of Nature, the corporeal world itself, a 'book written by the finger of God' as Hugh of St Victor puts it (qtd. in Josipovici, *World* 29), counter-signing both early books with a third, the word made flesh in Jesus incarnate.

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For musicians in Bach's day – as also before and after – counterpoint is a manifestation of God's order, an imitation of eternal polyphony, a foretaste of heaven. (See Yearsley.)

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The semiological network figured in the previous part of this essay as a telephone exchange that comes to link in partial proximity Elizabeth Costello from Coetzee's *Lives of Animals* to 'JC' from *Diary* is operated by J.M. Coetzee, living animal and common denominator, the one who confesses but '*entirely* parenthetically' to an interview concerning 'Autobiography and Confession' – at this parenthetical juncture most centrally concerned with the body as irreducible witness to suffering – 'that I, as a person, as a personality, am overwhelmed, that my thinking is thrown into confusion and helplessness, by the fact of suffering in the world, and not only human suffering' (*Doubling* 248). The body, articulate or otherwise, can be deformed into speechless pain, as embodied words can sometimes testify. Thus it is that J.M. Coetzee, Professor of General Literature at the University of Cape Town, where Samuel Beckett by chance once applied for a lectureship in Italian (*Letters* 523), comes to honour the commitment marked by his 'yes' with two unusual (estranged and estranging) or, as Viktor Shklovsky might also have said, 'defamiliarized' lectures, proffered from outside, from abroad, from one of the former British colonies, to the philosophers at Princeton who largely constitute his audience and who no longer obviously think of themselves as either ex-colonials or as bodies in exile (with exceptions, perhaps: Derek Attridge maybe, who has followed both Joyce and Coetzee, even into some kind of exile, and whom I salute).

What readers experience in the ‘Sirens’ chapter from Joyce’s *Ulysses* is the visceral seduction of sound-sight both abstractly and particularly embodied as fugal experience for the ear and for the eye, the eye and ear that pursue one another and flee from one another while words laughingly imitate the music they pursue in bodily performance. ‘I said somewhere’ says Stravinsky ‘that it [is] not enough to hear music, but that it must also be seen.’ ‘I repeat’ repeats Stravinsky: ‘one sees music. An experienced eye follows and judges, sometimes unconsciously, the performer’s least gesture.’ In music, as much as in choreography, ‘we give special attention to the control of gestures’ (128). We watch the movements of the other; we open ourselves by sight and sound to the Other.

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Tancredo Pavone, the charmingly eccentric composer (modeled after Giacinto Scelsi) in Gabriel Josipovici’s novel *Infinity*, is reported to have put it this way: ‘One cannot think one’s way through artistic problems, he said, one has to go about it in a different way. Bach did not think, he said, he danced. Mozart did not think, he sang. Stravinsky did not think, he prayed’ (47).

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As readers of Joyce we are invited to follow a contrapuntal score initially produced by a body writing, and to follow this score elsewhere with our own bodies as if performing, re-embodiment, a bodily performance (counter-point) as though we were keyboard players scanning a score with our eyes and with keyboard familiarity intimately lodged by complex choreography in mind and body – ‘Piano playing, a dance of human fingers’ writes Ludwig Wittgenstein (*Culture* 36e) – participating in what researchers in psychology are increasingly wont to call embodied cognition, the kind of cognition that allows a pianist to auto-identify a recording of her own performance of some musical piece among other recorded performances of the same piece.

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Taking a second-century risk in writing down – graphically counterpointing – an ancient and oral mystical tradition (Stenring 15), the *Sepher Yetzirah* embodies a similar idea in the second paragraph of its second chapter: ‘twenty-two fundamental letters [of the Hebrew alphabet]: God drew them, engraved them, combined them, weighed them, permuted them, and with them produced everything there is and everything that will be’ (this is the version rendered by Borges in ‘On the Cult of Books’ 119).

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Despite their modest array of scholarly footnotes, Coetzee’s lectures are constituted as a fictional broadside of some sort: a story in two “chapters” or ‘Lessons’ (as they will later be called upon republication) in which is embodied Elizabeth Costello, a fictional character from the once-colonies, born in Australia of Irish descent (*Elizabeth* 179), who perhaps by chance shares her last name with a friend of the (real) Joyce family, Nuala Costello, with whom Beckett imagined himself in love during the ’thirties. Not ‘at all’ an Italian name Joyce says of ‘Costello’, writing to his daughter in Italian, but ‘a corruption, I think, of two Irish words meaning: beautiful foot’ (*Selected Letters* 373-74).

‘Even if this is a new piece that the pianist has performed only once in silence (on an electronic piano without headphones on), he will be able to recognize his own play’ such research into embodied cognition discovers: no doubt because as he listens to the recording he made without hearing it at the time, listening now after the fact the pianist recognizes the ‘bodily sensations’ that accompany his auto-kinetic performance: ‘He feels the closest match listening to himself, thus recognizing himself through his body as much as through his ears’ (de Waal 59-60).

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These ideas of linguistic materiality and spiritual creativity, so attractive to Mallarmé and to Borges, are corporeally embodied in Joyce’s *Portrait* as verbal, stylistic, and narratological principles of fugal evocation – the sensuous evocation of a child’s privileged humanimal senses, all of them in synchronous touch with bodily organs and sensation: the ‘Once upon a time’ sound-touch of story (his father’s story of the ‘moocow coming down along the road’) and sight-touch (‘his father looked at him through a glass’) and song-touch (‘his song / *O, the green wothe botheth*’) and sight-touch fused with touch-touch (father’s ‘hairy face’, how ‘when you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold’) – I remember this, all the others too – and smell-touch (the ‘queer smell of the oilsheet’, bed-defense against urine; also the way ‘mother had a nicer smell than his father’) and, more or less all together now, music-touch-dance (‘he danced / *Tralala lala*’). All composed, all presented, all materially present “only” in words, the words of the first half-page overture of what will become a portrait of stylistic “evolution” portraying the maturing body – orgasms and all, both “real” and verbal – of one who desires to become ‘a priest of the eternal imagination’ (221), one who wittingly and wittily seeks with no little arrogance creatively to ‘forge in the smithy of my soul’ an aesthetic inwit, ‘the [as yet] uncreated conscience of my race’ (253), through fiery manipulation of material word into tumescent manifestation (aesthetically secular epiphany) so that: ‘In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh’ (217).

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No longer by chance, now surely by design, Elizabeth Costello is herself a celebrated novelist best known for *The House on Eccles Street*, an at least twice-fictive reinvention after Homer of *Ulysses* from the vantage point of Molly Bloom. *The House on Eccles Street* is ‘a great novel’ we learn courtesy of the access free indirect style gives us to her son John: ‘a great novel’ that ‘will live, perhaps, as long as *Ulysses*’, a novel – now in Costello’s words – reborn as remainder from what is left over in Joyce’s Molly Bloom, a being who ‘leaves her trace across the pages of *Ulysses*’ not only as the ‘perfume’ Derrida is tempted to retrace in ‘*Ulysses Gramophone*’, but ‘as a bitch on heat leaves her smell’ (*Elizabeth* 12-13). These few particulars are surely enough for now to substantiate son John’s thought-judgment that (like Joyce) Costello ‘is by no means a comforting writer’ (*Elizabeth* 5).

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The accumulating particulars also articulate a pointing towards the discomfiting attractions of fugal reading: an at least double reading, often more multiplied, as follows

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And some version of this oto-bio-performative-recognition is likely to be, to some degree, even for those tired ones struggling towards disembodiment, like Beckett's *Unnamable*, whose 'Eye is hard of hearing' (322) but who persists nevertheless, and who, unlike the inhabitants of what Coetzee calls the 'disembodied' late Beckett fictions that 'have never really held my attention', still has a materially verbal body, source for Coetzee of delight: 'Beckett's prose, up to and including *The Unnamable*, has given me a sensuous delight that hasn't dimmed over the years. The critical work I did on Beckett originated in that sensuous response, and was a grasping after ways in which to talk about it: to talk about delight' (*Doubling* 23, 20). What is being recognized here on many levels and registers are deeply ingrained gestures that some, including William Blake, would insist are fundamentally innate: gestures as unamenable to rationalist as to empiricist argument; indeed, antithetical to structures of argument as in *any* way *typically* practiced, inclining instead towards sensuously cognitive aesthetic and ethical delight in pattern, pleasure, performance, response, alterity, and joy.

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I remember this sensuous youthful embodiment. I could always tell by smell which of my parents had slept on what side of their bed. I remember also incredulously being asked at about eight years old, in the context of an apartheid South Africa: 'Do you want your children to go to school with Kaffirs?' 'Yes' I said.

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The Joyce reader and listener or repeater (of music, broadly speaking) participates in bodily symp-em-path $\acute{y}$  (*meegevoel*) to some degree or another, if only (mundanely) manifest as the bodily extroversion of foot tapping, or, for someone like Wittgenstein, as (more exotic) every-day imaginative teeth-grinding:

When I imagine a piece of music, [...] I always, so I believe, grind my upper and lower teeth together rhythmically. I have noticed this before though I usually do it quite unconsciously. What's more, it's as though the notes I am imagining are produced by this movement. I believe this may be a very common way of imagining music internally. Of course I can imagine music without moving my teeth too, but in that case the notes are much ghostlier, more blurred and less pronounced. (*Culture* 28e)

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Fugal reading first imitates that which it reads – by citation, quotation, and commentary. This reading is then musically doubled or otherwise multiplied, in familiarity, to point towards that un-familiar otherness already half-heard, smelled, touched, glimpsed or otherwise apprehended to the point even of irritation or other discomfort.

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Not much comfort – little comfort no doubt for his original academic auditors – is to be found in Coetzee's lectures on this occasion (published as *The Lives of Animals*), which articulate an account much more deeply sedimented in the calculations of fiction than in the conventions of scholarly discourse: which perform instead a fictive account of how Costello presents a lecture and two other speaking occasions to the academic community of Appleton College, a fictive institution – as really read by Coetzee at Princeton.

Sensuous delight and joy are immediately Joyce-sired by the opening prose-poem-prelude to ‘Sirens’, which famously begins:

Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing.  
Imperthnthn thnthnthn. (11.1)

Impertinently flirtatious invitation for the eye and ear, the body and mind, to ‘Listen!’ (11.33); and to Look and to Feel. And if we do, we quite effortlessly find ourselves in a bar of the Ormand Hotel, drinking it all in as voyeurs, attended to by the words that make up a pair of seductive barmaids catering also to other customers dropping in, most of whom we know by now: as verbally constructed entities about and for whom we by now more or less care to the extent that we care for the intoxicating language that has incarnated them for us courtesy of the inheritance Flaubert left to Joyce and to Beckett and hence to Coetzee; a fugal language, the kind Cixous also pursues – femininely – as ‘the musicality of language in the manner of a confirmation’ (*Rootprints* 46).

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Cixous here also writes: ‘To write is to note down the music of the world, the music of the body, the music of time.’

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Thus Costello meets the obligations of an invitation to which she must at some point in fiction-fact have said ‘yes’, reincarnating the last word of *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom’s doubled and otherwise multiplied word: ‘Yes.’ Of this yes, Joyce says in a letter, ‘last word (human all too human)’ he says, ‘left to Penelope [...] indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport’ (*Letters* 278). In another letter Joyce genders the *yes* again and again associates it with engendering when he remarks of Molly’s ‘Penelope’ chapter that ‘Penelope is the clou of the book. [...] It begins and ends with the female word *yes*. [...] *Weib. Ich bin der [sic] Fleisch der stets bejaht*’ [Woman. I am the Flesh that always affirms (285)].

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At its heart then, and despite any dis-ease occasioned, Coetzee’s pair of lectures *affirms life*. This should be obvious, but it doesn’t seem to get much attention. The pair of lectures affirms its parity with Costello’s corporeally re-imagined Molly Bloom: only the beginning of a series of contrapuntal doublings – doublings of affirmation and affirmations of identity by *non-identity* – that link by negative dialectics Coetzee with Costello (and with Joyce), Costello’s articulations and audience with those of Coetzee (whose immediate audience includes the “really-embodied” academics contributing to this speaking-event), and in the end that extends beyond the participants in these symposia – beyond even the really-existent *textual* participants like Thomas Nagel – to yet others not actually present “in the flesh” on this occasion. In such ways *The Lives* (of humanimals) links together by affirmations of negative dialectics its cast of participants.

By such graft (in all the several senses of this word) we find ourselves in a time prior to the proliferation in bars of television: a time when real bodies, music, and drink – body-tone, timbre, and terroir – still took center-stage, not pixilated simulation or juke-box-karaoke machine. The reading affects simul-prompted here are as much musico-mental as they are visuo-visceral: bodily-complex orthographic prompts shaping our response to characters constructed “only” from letters of the alphabet, like that Leopold Bloom whom by now we know well and whom we soon come to know is now walking along the Liffey quayside, approaching the Ormond where he will eat ‘with relish the inner organs’ again at a supper of sliced liver with bacon and a bottle of cider (11.520), approaching at this or some contiguous point in time the Essex bridge (‘Yes, Mr Bloom crossed bridge of Yessex’ [11.229]) about to be cuckolded (again), and shaping our response also to the cuckolding agent himself, Blazes Boylan, who by chance stops by at the Ormond about now to drink a sloe gin ‘thick syrupy liquor for his lips’ (11.365), lips on the way to an assignation with Molly Bloom at the Bloom residence on Eccles Street, lips which stop at the Ormond on the way despite being a little late for their date, ‘slowsyrupy sloe’ (11.369).

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The slow-medium of letters in a book makes it typographically so: it sloesyropy says: yes, so be it, be it so, sloe-slow, slow-sloe; and we engage with the letter-words and their dance (there is time, we don’t have to “make time” for it, for them); we see, we hear, and we think-feel by practice of fugal reading. We help make the sloe syrupy slow so – no Twitter tweeting letter-limited hurry here, nor other pressing restriction.

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*Lives* accommodates the ontologically non-existent who are nevertheless centro-textually present (Costello herself, her son John, and daughter-in-law Norma, for instance, Kafka’s Red Peter also), and embraces those who could never strictly-speaking have been present “in the flesh”, despite their presence on paper and despite their once having been vital flesh, the dead ones (Kafka, Sultan, or Srinivasa Ramanujan, for example), and links itself also to the still living ones who were not there “in the flesh” to hear Coetzee speak: most readers of *Lives*, and also those other philosophers *in absentia* who write on topics close to Costello’s heart. And, for purposes still to be remembered, this personnel listing should include a Martian and also, no less strangely, should include the otherness of writing itself: what Cixous calls ‘the jubilation of writing’ that testifies I am not yet dead (*Rootprints* 26) and whose potentially dangerous deployment Coetzee marks as constitutive insofar as ‘everything that you write, including criticism and fiction, writes you as you write it’ (*Doubling* 17).

Even limited by selection, the cast of characters as here-listed – real, fictive, absent, present, concrete, abstract, somewhere in between – is considerable and characterized by a considerable range of alterities; hence the strategy of selecting where possible particular names of particular bodies for their exemplarity (the unnamed Martian of undetermined body must be excluded for a little longer).

And this sloesyrrupy slowness slowly read in fugal practice is not just the self-indulgence of protracted entertainment, not that entertainment is insignificant; nor just prurience, though it *is* connected to sensual pleasures. This is also “about” writing, reading, and the justice (or injustice) that words do to the experience of inhabiting a body in the presence of other bodies, and about the extent to which words constitutively participate in the thought-sensation of being a body beholden to other bodies.

This slowness is also the grafting performance that could potentially produce an ethics of the sort Coetzee seems fugally to pursue with the help of JC and Costello among others, including fictively (auto)biographical characters from *Summertime*: like Margot Jonker, née Coetzee, who once prided herself on her capacity for *meegevoel*, for feeling-with or intuitively knowing without being told ‘what was going on in other people’s hearts’, though she remembers also being less capable of ‘feeling with’ her Cousin John’s sense of having had his heart wrenched by the Karoo of their childhoods (97).

Margot’s failure in this latter regard has little to do with lack of connection to the Karoo, which she feels has (also) ‘taken over her heart’ (129) and to which she imagines herself bound ‘with rivets through the heart’ (140). But she no longer has the child’s sometimes direct access to *meegevoel*. And unlike John, who is rumored to write poetry (in a place ‘where poetry is not a manly activity’ [129]), she has little time to spend with words.

The exemplarity of those listed is a matter of naming and so also of embodiment – both of course not only indices of joy, but guarantors also of pain and death on the way – an exercise that Vico – crucial inspiration to Joyce and author of one of the earliest of autobiographies – describes in *The New Science* as ‘a wholly corporeal imagination’ by means of which the first science of ‘poetic wisdom’ expresses itself in its ‘poetic logic’ from which philosophy and the even later sciences would eventually derive, albeit by forgetting their poetic origins (112-17); or an exercise of what, following Vico, Croce identifies as the cognitive significance of art as intuition. Heidegger too, in the ‘Letter on Humanism’, thinks of a time before thinking consolidated ‘for the first time in the school of Plato’ into philosophy on three fronts: ethics, logic (singular), and physics; thinks of a pre-Platonic time when, according to Heidegger, *Ethos* still just meant ‘abode, dwelling place’, its common-place meaning (if Heidegger is right) thereby grounding thought in an everyday ethics of dwelling with its familiar poetic embodiment not yet intellectually reified as the philosophical discipline it was eventually to become (286).

Costello’s version of *meegevoel* and of the Vichian ‘corporeal imagination’ is the slow-media indebted ‘sympathetic imagination’ by means of which exercise she contends we become capable of ‘thinking ourselves into the being of another’, even a fictive other – like Molly Bloom – or a non-human other, ‘a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life’ as she puts it (35).



Working a side-job as her husband also does to keep their sheep farm afloat in the semi-desert, the adult Margot has determined ‘to live as good a life as the times allow, as good and as fair and as just’ (118). Hence the side jobs, since the farm is home not only to the childless couple, ‘but to thirteen other souls as well. To bring in the money to maintain the whole little community, Lukas has to spend days at a time on the road and she to pass her nights alone in Calvinia’, keeping book for a hotel (142).

Farmhands in mind, Margot has developed a practical ethic and is puzzled by the more lettered and less human-centric responses of Cousin John, who loses her by transforming a childhood *meegevoel* memory of hers – a memory of his violence against a locust – into a spirit-ritual of everyday apology to *Kaggen*, the mantis god of the Khoisan (96). Margot is puzzled also by John’s mention of a book chronicling a year lived observing a baboon troop in which book John remembers Eugène Marais writing that at sunset ‘when the troop stopped foraging and watched the sun go down, he could detect in the eyes of the older baboons the stirrings of melancholy, the birth of a first awareness of their own mortality’ (96-97).

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My essay in its first part, auto-bio-antecedent and hopefully also musical antecedent to this current or in musical parlance ‘consequent’ part (the leading part of a canon is called the antecedent, which precedes a consequent), begins – in part – by taking an interest in the interest Wittgenstein demonstrates in his *Lectures and Remarks* on the foundations of mathematics, whence my essay in its initial part begins, and in which Wittgenstein expresses an interest in a (hypothetical) group of woodsellers who calculate the price of the wood they sell by measures other than those that seem “usual” to most easily imaginable practices. Fugally to recapitulate: Wittgenstein imagines a mathematico-economics in which the price of wood might be priced on the basis of a two- rather than a three-dimensional measurement-calculation of the size of the pile of wood for sale. This is neither the usual way of measuring, nor the usual way of thinking.

Increasingly interested in “doing things differently”, the later Wittgenstein approaches ethics also in a more nuanced and slower manner that differentiates itself from the early and typically curt *Tractatus* proposition: ‘there can be no ethical propositions’ (6.4.2). In the ‘Lecture on Ethics’, for instance, this later Wittgenstein is consistent with the earlier in refusing to name ethics a science, since ‘What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense’ (12). But, strikingly adopting an autobiographical mode of address at the end of the lecture and afterwards – ‘I speak *for myself*’ (16) – Wittgenstein also here adds: ethics ‘is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it’ (12); ‘I don’t belittle this human tendency; I take my hat off to it’ (16).

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Sympathetically thinking difference, Costello thinks in particular of what it would be like to be a bat, a thought-pattern suggested by the thought not embodied – in her or Vico’s or Joyce’s sense of embodiment – within Thomas Nagel’s thought-experiment, ‘What Is It Like to Be a Bat?’ In this experiment, Nagel finds himself incapable of imagining beyond the point of what ‘it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves’, finds himself ‘restricted by the resources of [his] own mind, [which] are inadequate’ to the task of coming to embody the knowledge of “‘what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat”’ (*Lives* 31; Nagel 169).

Narrative, to borrow from Heidegger just a couple of pages back, is the dwelling place of Joyce, Coetzee, and, yes, Costello: more intimately so than it is Wittgenstein's. Despite her 'hobbyhorse' choice of address to the Appleton academic community (*Lives* 16), Costello (like J.M. Coetzee) has been invited to speak because of the authority that has accrued to her, partly pursuant to Joyce, as a writer of fiction and poetry. When we meet her again in *Elizabeth Costello*, we come to register Costello as the author of nine novels, two volumes of poetry, and sundry other writings, who is traveling to receive an award for what her son John with intimate experience thinks of as an award for 'a lifetime of shaking people' with her writing (*Elizabeth* 5).

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Wittgenstein takes his hat off to the ethical effort because: 'My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language' ('Lecture on Ethics' 11-12). He repeats the definition in the exchange pursuant to and published with the lecture: 'This thrust against the limits of language is *ethics*' (13). 'Man has the urge to thrust against the limits of language. Think for instance about one's astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question and there is no answer to it' (12). The astonishment strictly speaking is unamenable to philosophical inquiry *as typically practiced* (though see Paola Cavalieri 24ff.). But it is not as obviously unamenable to music or narrative or musical narrative, which Wittgenstein himself uses: grinding his teeth, for instance, in anticipation of staging some problems presented by his peculiar woodsellers and the mysterious ways these woodsellers measure (only economic?) value.

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Although exhibiting more sympathy for Nagel than she has previously in her lecture been able to show for the founding celebrants of reason in western thought, Plato, Aquinas, and Descartes in particular ('Nagel strikes me as an intelligent and not unsympathetic man'), Costello finds the answer Nagel produces in response to his own question 'tragically limited' (31). As Stephen Mulhall has demonstrated in his scrupulously detailed reading of Costello that takes its cue from Cora Diamond's 'Difficulty of Reality', Costello's reservations about Nagel hinge on whether the limitation to which Nagel confesses is 'a reflection of the resources of the human mind as such' or of 'the mind of Thomas Nagel'; that is, if the limitation is general or particular:

Are humans as such unable to think themselves into the mind, or the perspective, or at least the position, of a bat, or are they (or at least some or most of them) unwilling? Is the nonhuman animal refusing our best imaginative efforts, or are we refusing to make our best efforts, or at least refusing to acknowledge the results of our best efforts – the efforts of the poets, for example? (Mulhall 43-44)

Or, to ask again: where and at what limits does *language* dwell? Does ethics mark some sort of linguistic limit? Is Nagel blocked by the limits of language or by *his* language? Is Coetzee reaching towards the (ethical?) linguo-boundary?

This might be the page moment (incipiently part-terminal or half-time moment for the larger essay of which this constitutes a part) to again echo the beginning or beginnings and to make explicit through repetition that we have – over the course of the already divided essay – so far more or less borne witness not only to several beginnings, but also to several thought-experiments, beginning – if one disqualifies my own – with Joyce and Wittgenstein, but also quite crucially with Funes’s experiment in numerico-linguistic arithmetic and nomenclature previously articulated or insinuated as ground or dwelling, telephone exchange, or skeleton key for, in, and to the opening part of my essay, ‘Point One’.

In the Borges story, as previously enumerated in ‘Point One’, the eponymous Funes struggles to reconcile the abstract and the particular in numeration and in linguistics to no avail, given his prodigious memory that retains particularities impervious to generalization or abstraction, and that therefore makes it impossible for him to engage in systemic abstraction (of the sort that music perhaps excels in engaging). Both the Borges narrator and J.M. Coetzee incline to dismiss Funes’s thought experiment *as thought* (in the usual sense); they both take Funes’s inability to balance memory with forgetting as an incapacity for thought: ‘To think is to forget differences, to generalize, to make abstraction. In the teeming world of Funes, there were only details’ says the Borges narrator (94; translation modified); ‘paradoxically, for a creature who is almost pure mind’ writes Coetzee, Funes ‘cannot *think*’ (*Stranger* 144). This, I suspect is only an ostensible paradox.

The remaining thought experiments are in their various ways suspect also, despite their cogent thought-credentials. The experiment by means of which McMahan “numerically” explores the advantages of infanticide is, if anything, considerably more disturbing than Funes’s thought-experiment; this McMahan experiment too is outlined in ‘Point One’. More narrato-recently, now in ‘Point Two’, there’s also Nagel’s bat-experiment, and, all-along of course, perhaps more propitiously, Coetzee’s fugal thought-experiments, in which Costello centrally participates and collaborates (with JC from *Diary*, who like Wittgenstein thinks also of limits, wondering in particular if it might not be the case that ‘all languages are, finally, foreign languages, alien to our animal being’ [*Diary* 197]).

At the current participation-point in Costello’s discourse, the point where she reminds us that for Nagel a bat is ““a fundamentally *alien* form of life”” (*Lives* 31), a form of life situated somewhere (for Nagel) on an apparently continuous line stretching *back* towards the most alien possibility of a being from Mars, Costello articulates a most interesting sense of a more or less mathematical ‘continuum’ which exhibits some striking discontinuities, and which links or connects her – as if by party line – first to JC, and, by way of increasing discontinuity (the farm way down the road), to Nagel and beyond Nagel to those (for her) less sympathetic figures, Plato, Aquinas, and Descartes, all sharing an oddly impossible local party line.

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On the last page of *Diary* that precedes the ‘Notes’ mostly listing works cited, JC says of Tolstoy and ‘of the master Dostoevsky’ that ‘By their example one becomes a better artist; and by better I do not mean more skillful but ethically better. They annihilate one’s impurer pretensions; they clear one’s eyesight; they fortify one’s arm’ (227). These are some under whom master Coetzee served his apprenticeship.

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A peculiar mystery still lingering at the moment, more or less a shaking problem, bigger than the still unresolved origin of ‘musemathematics’ in my essay title, more urgently an aesthetic and perhaps even an ethical problem, is: how does an assortment of collected alphabet letters even come to sing a siren-song-narrative?

The song and the singing are effects and affects of that act of composition whereby Joyce – with Coetzee in pursuit – strategically exploits from the vantage point of exile the sonorous and sometimes risibly humorous potential inherent in some letter combinations; the song and the singing are also effects and affects of linguistic experience: provenance of affect and effect more or less shared by writer and reader, even as the experience of language in the act of reading Joyce and Coetzee, and in the act of Joyce and Coetzee writing, also approaches what in the ‘Lecture on Ethics’ Wittgenstein calls the ‘boundaries of language’ (12), permeable borderlines or “no man’s land” – Costello is female – between and among languages and music(s), ‘nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal’ state of exile (Said 186), and difficult terrain of justice. So this is also the estranging terrain of aesthetic estrangement – *ostranenie*, the sometime-exiled Shklovsky called it – defamiliarization: the strangeness of the familiar and the dissimilarity of the similar that might be more easily recognizable to one out of place as an exile, or to one led into fugal reading, and so exiled from more familiar patterns of narrative life and reading behaviour.

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This is another and the same mystery only so far – now twice so far – broached: exploration to be pursued again, again as fugally as possible, in a Track Two. And so, once again, ‘To be continued’ as was once quite commonly said.

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## **Muzimatematica fugii banda unu, punctul doi: J.M. Coetzee, etica, și contrapunctul joycean**

Acest eseu multipartit, care ajunge la cea de-a doua parte în acest număr ('Punctul doi'), urmărește ca set de relații ale contrapunctului anumite puncte de contact, de suprapunere sau sincronie dintre diverse voci învecinate: cea literară, cea lingvistică, muzicală, autobiografică, matematică și etică. Tehnica sa de control e noțiunea – inevitabil abstractă și generală – de fugă, mai precis axată în sensul etimologic al fugii derivat din *fugere* și *fugare* – a fugi și a urmări. Ceea ce urmărește 'Punctul doi' al eseului de față, cu ajutorul unei tehnici asemănătoare chemării și răspunsului din timpul vânătorii, caracteristice texturii fugii, este desigur în primul rând prima sa parte; dar, mai exact, eseul continuă sub forma fugii lectura modului în care emigrantul nomad J. M. Coetzee a introdus în 'Punctul unu'. În ficțiunea sa recentă, J. M. Coetzee îi urmează în exil exercițiului fugii din cântecul de sirenă joycean care începe, așa cum a prima parte a eseului ilustrează, cu aranjamentul contrapunctic din *Diary of a Bad Year*. (*Word and Text* 4.1, 158-175).

Migrând de-a lungul rândurilor de pe pagină și, de asemenea, migrând către și dinspre diversele segmente ale acestui eseu multipartit, lectura mea articulează o performanță întotdeauna cel puțin dublă: o lectură și o scriere în cheia fugii, care, mai întâi, imită practica lingvistică a lui Coetzee aflat în urmărirea lui Joyce, dar care, de asemenea, – cum se întâmplă și la Coetzee – încearcă apoi să și bulverseze Similaritatea perfectă a imitației prin surpriza contrapunctică ce însoțește survenirea mereu unică a exilului individual, a expatrierii, sau sosirea neașteptată a Celuilalt – toate indicii posibile ale eticului. Pentru a-și urmări prada, acest eseu a ales el însuși

exilul, fugind de domeniul nobil al argumentării convenționale și riscând aproape inadmisibilul: ca formă, el evită sistemul de citare Chicago Style deși se conformează în alte privințe protocolului stilistic al revistei *Word and Text*.