



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Playing with the Subject:
Writing in The Pillow Book and in
In the Penal Colony

by

Jeanne-Marie Viljoen

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium (Philosophy)

in the

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

2009

Supervisor: Dr M.L Mabile

**This study is dedicated to Gerry – the sacred name of my translator –
for all our writings together
in which you have given me so much of yourself.**

'...I am waiting for you.

Meet me at the library,

Any library,

Every library,

Yours'

(Greenaway 1996:85)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people without whom this text would not have been possible. Like this topic, this list is by no means exhaustive.

My supervisor, Louise, for her constant encouragement, enthusiasm and tireless assistance, for honing my offerings, making me feel heard when I wanted to give up and for giving of herself.

My editor, Idette, for her scholarly precision, kindness and steady willingness to go the extra mile.

Gerhard, for his pervasive, solid engagement and passionate support in every aspect of this project.

Daniel, for always making me think more than I thought I could.

Isabella, for writing on and relating to everything and for carrying the name of my daughter.

Chris, for his consultations about German and making available his general brilliance.

Charl and Gene, for making debate a part of me.

and

Ricky, for suggesting writing.

Foreword

The ambivalence of writing is such that it can be considered both an act and an interpretive process that follows after an act with which it cannot coincide. As such, it both affirms and denies its own nature. (De Man, n.d.: n.p.)

The topic of writing has intrigued me ever since I can remember and continues to do so. This study is by no means exhaustive but merely represents some punctuation marks in a rich riot of meanings that may be associated with this topic. The views expressed here are my own and should not be associated with the University of Pretoria as an institution.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the nature of writing and the sorts of presence that writing gives us access to. This understanding of writing includes not only all speaking and all writing in the narrow sense of marks on a page, but goes beyond this to include the sense in which Derrida uses the term 'writing' in *Of Grammatology*, to mean a broad and complex process of the construction of textual traces or presences necessarily brought about through the structural mechanism of difference inherent in the writing process (Derrida, 1997).

This study argues that writing is a system that creates Subjects or selves as the writing happens. It suggests that writing is a remarkable site from which to explore the construction of selves, because it gives us access to (partially) identifiable presences, in the apparent absence of the writer.

It goes on to demonstrate that this identity can be distinguished through written traces of difference left for the reader to decipher, by analysing different aspects of the plot and writing devices in Peter Greenaway's film *The Pillow Book* and in Kafka's short story *In the Penal Colony*. These two texts are considered particularly relevant to this study, in that they both explicitly deal with the contradictory nature of writing and how it relates to the Being (there or the contextualised Being of *Dasein*) and being (in general), the life and death, the empowerment and destruction of the Subjects that writing sets up. Both texts explore salient aspects of writing on the human body. The study uses these texts as a platform for speculation about the kind of presence that can be traced through writing, and proposes that the written Subject is multiple, contradictory and reflexive, connected and related, and that it is impermanent and has a deferred presence.

Finally, this written Subject is also explored in the context of Foucault's expositions of the self in texts such as *Technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1994) and 'What is an Author?' (Foucault, 1977) in answer to his question

Who are we in the present, what is this fragile moment from which we
can't detach our identity and which will carry our identity away with
itself? (Foucault, 1994:xviii)

Key terms: B/being, construction, Deleuze, Derrida, difference/*differance*, Foucault, Greenaway (*The Pillow Book*), identity, Kafka (*In the Penal Colony*), naming, play, presence, repetition, sameness, self, Subject, text, trace, writing.

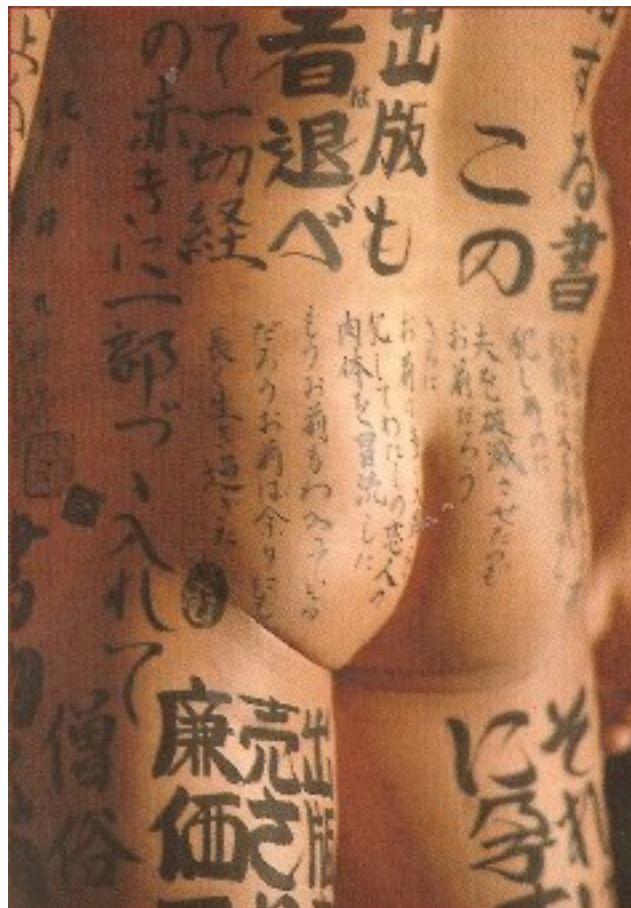
Contents

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Foreword	iii
Abstract	iv
Key terms	v
CHAPTER 1:	1
THE PROLOGUE AND THE ‘PLAYERS’ – AN INTRODUCTION	
1.1 ‘<i>Dramatis personae</i>’: the words used	1
1.1.1 List of key terms	2
1.1.2 The process of distinguishing key terms	4
1.2 The script of this ‘play’: the structure of the study	4
1.2.1 The ‘playwrights’: the texts used to construct this study	4
1.2.2 The chapters: the ‘Acts’	5
1.2.3 The metaphor of (a) play	7
1.2.4 The name of this study	8
CHAPTER 2:	11
‘ACT’ 1 – THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THIS STUDY	
2.1 Writing: the main theme	11
2.1.1 Writing is construction	11
2.1.2 Writing is <i>arche</i> writing	12
2.1.3 Writing is presence	13
2.1.4 Writing is releasing Being	14
2.1.5 Writing is self-referential	24
2.1.6 Writing as a contextualising process	25
2.1.7 Writing as naming	25
2.1.8 Writing is a trace	27
2.1.9 Writing as representation	30
2.1.10 Writing as a play of difference	31
2.1.11 Writing as <i>differance</i>	32
2.1.12 Writing as repetition	32
2.1.13 Writing is text	34



2.2	Writing the self	36
2.2.1	The modern conception of self	36
2.2.2	Writing the postmodern/multiple self	37
2.2.3	The self of the writer	40
CHAPTER 3:		42
'ACT' 2 – NAMING THE ANATOMY OF TEXTUALITY IN <i>THE PILLOW BOOK</i>		
3.1	The ritual of writing: naming what cannot be named	42
3.2	Naming the character, Writing	50
3.2.1	The author as the origin/initiator/Subject or father of the 'character' of Writing	53
3.2.2	The tablet as the incubator/object/mother of the 'character' of Writing	57
3.3	Translating the presences that writing sets up	60
3.3.1	The names of the written Presences	67
3.3.2	The name that re-presents the text	69
3.4	The writer presents the written and the written presents the writer	72
3.5	The presence in a body of writing	74
3.6	Writing and sex: the fluid(ity) of identity	79
CHAPTER 4:		83
'ACT' 3 – TRACING THE SUBJECT OF WRITING IN <i>IN THE PENAL COLONY</i>		
4.1	Writing traces	84
4.2	Following specific traces of subjects in the illustrative texts	85
4.2.1	The trace of <i>yin yang</i>	86
4.2.2	The trace of legitimacy and transgression	87
4.2.3	The trace of permanence and impermanence	87
4.2.4	The trace of justification	88
4.2.5	The trace of the writing instrument	89
4.2.6	The trace of civilization	89
4.2.7	The trace of violence	90
4.2.8	The trace of authority	91

4.2.9	The trace of the law and justice	92
4.3	Following traces of Subjects in the illustrative texts	102
4.3.1	The trace of the self	105
4.3.2	The trace of the author's name	107
4.3.3	The trace of the reader	111
4.3.4	The trace of relationships between the Subjects set up in the text	114
4.3.5	The trace of the objectification of the Subject	115
4.4	The trace of language	118
CHAPTER 5:		125
THE EPILOGUE – THE REFLEXIVE LOOP		
5.1	Introduction	125
5.2	The writer revisited	125
5.3	The implications for this writer	129
5.4	The case for the study's interpretive, literary method	132
References		135





Chapter 1:

The prologue and the 'players' – an introduction

I hold the world but as ...

A stage where every man must play a part...

(Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, I i 78-79)

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts...

(Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II vii 140-143)

1.1 '*Dramatis personae*': The words used

Derrida (1997:37)¹ claims that 'language is first...writing'. The implication of this claim is that, in studying writing, we can study some of the originary processes of being involved in language, our primary system of representation/being.

The central place that the post-structuralist paradigm of this study gives to language makes it particularly important to define terms in such a study. This is because the terms/words themselves are seen to constitute presence or as near as we can get to it. In this way, defining the terms of the study defines the nature of reality itself. Reading the words that make up this study implies engaging with the limits of what we can come to know. The study therefore resonates with a post-structuralist epistemology.

¹ Derrida's *Of Grammatology* was originally published in 1967, but I use the 1997 edition translated by Spivak. Similarly, Kafka's *In der Strafkolonie* was written in 1914, but I use the 1949 English version. In principle, I do not indicate the original dates of publication or writing for works of which I use a different edition or a translation. This is because this study takes as its point of departure the argument that there is no origin or source text. Instead, I assume that all texts are written via an intertextual process of endless authoring and re-authoring by various readers, writers and translators who encounter the text and bring other texts within their horizons to bear on the ones they have first encountered. Thus the 'dates of publication' given in the study may be considered as much original or central versions of the texts as any other.



1.1.1 List of key terms

Key terms and concepts relevant to this discussion include self, authorship, authority, text, trace, the letter, *écriture*, speech and writing, meaning, intertextuality, deferral, fixedness, inscription, originary, signification, signifier, signified, the instrumental use of language, meta language, and logocentric thinking and its erroneous assumption that imbues thinking with transcendental presence. These terms are explained later in this study, in Section 2.1, in the context of 'Writing: the main theme'.

It should be made explicit from the outset that the outcome of writing is always yet to come, deferred, changeable, and often unpredictable (Lucy, 2004:56). This is important for a study such as this, which wishes to use writing as a metaphor for the unpredictable and mutable construction of presence/reality. All interpretation constitutes such a construction:

All interpretations determine the meaning of a phenomenon. Meaning consists of a relation of forces in which some act and others react in a complex and hierarchized whole. (Deleuze, 2001:73)

From the above list of terms, it is evident that this study uses a post-structuralist approach. For the purposes of the study, Derrida is regarded as the principal proponent of this paradigm. The paradigm emphasizes 'the *instability of meanings*' and the dissolving of 'the *fixed binary oppositions* of structuralist thought, including those between language and meta language' (Baldick, 2004:202; my emphases).

The metaphor of '*dramatis personae*' can be applied to the terms focused on in the study, because they can be regarded as characters written into the script of this study.² They constitute the 'substance' out of which the study is constructed and at times seem to assume a life of their own, running away with the meaning they compose, much as characters in a play might do. The act of naming them implicitly draws attention to the writing process involved in this study itself and thus serves to

² The working title of this study was *The Ruse of Writing: A Play about Presence*. This title was abandoned in favour of the present title which is clearer and less ambiguous and thus makes it more accessible and accurate in its description of the study. The new title makes precise use of writing as a system of classificatory difference that is especially useful when a text must be filed in a library shelf or categorised by an academic department. However, this study did not metamorphise away from the ambiguity inherent in the working title which still has substantial bearing on its contents and, for this reason, it is also referred to.



emphasize the main topic of this study, namely, playing with the Subject³ through the vehicle of writing in particular instances.

The original working title of this study, *The Ruse of Writing: A Play about Presence*, also used the elusiveness associated with the word 'ruse' to refer to a subterfuge or a deception, which might suggest that one is not always entirely sure what is written about and what Subject one might meet, since one is not sure where the writing process stops and starts. This was a deliberate attempt to show that the subject that seems to be present in writing, and which writing seems to promise to deliver up to the reader, is constantly deferred.

It is distinctly problematic to present this study in words or in writing, because, as Spivak (1997:xx) claims, ' "[w]riting" is the name of what is never named' and '[g]iven difference... it is a violence even to name it thus'. The problem is that this study is using words and is naming writing (with more – written – words). This implies that everything that the study claims about the shifty/ing nature of writing can in fact be applied to the written words of this study itself, making this very study uncertain and sometimes indecipherable in the web of traces that it leaves. Meanings are glimpsed for a moment and then changed; tensions and contradictions constantly appear and reappear as the words play themselves out in an ever-expanding (re)arrangement of difference.

Derrida refers to the common process of using nomenclature, namely, classifying and fixing meaning with words, as *naming*. Hence, this study names things that, when they are named, cease to be the things they were when they were unnamed. In committing these named things to writing, they are renamed again and again, by the ever-changing horizons of the readers/'playwrights' in the study. In naming things to begin with, this study is forcibly excluding other meanings that may have been there before (and are perhaps still there). But this seems the only option when one writes a study in words.

In defining terms I am creating a kind of preface for this study, reminiscent of Spivak's (1997) preface in *Of Grammatology*, where she states that 'Derrida's

³ *Subject* is sometimes capitalised in this study to distinguish it as a noun applied to a person, such as a reader, writer, publisher or translator. However, the term Subject should not be read as referring to a unitary, singular and reified self such as the Subject of Modernism. It is not capitalised in the text when it is merely used to refer to a part of speech, in an attempt to distinguish it from the human Subjects established by a text.



vocabulary is forever on the move' and that indeed this goes for anyone who employs language in the way that he does, including Spivak herself, Foucault, Deleuze and the author of this study. So words such as 'arche-writing' and 'trace', which are important words in *Of Grammatology* and the following chapter/'act' of this study, 'do not remain consistently important conceptual master-words in subsequent texts' and constantly take on new complications, sparkles and shadows throughout the chapters/'acts' to follow (Spivak, 1997:xxi). But if, as Derrida argues, all we have is language from which to write ourselves, then it is of some importance that we reflect on what we are doing when we employ language itself to this end.

1.1.2 The process of distinguishing key terms

It is precisely the apparent opposition between concepts such as the instrumental use and meta-use of language, subject and object, self and other, fixing and flowing, worded and wordless, inside and outside, the thought and the unthought (Deleuze, 1988:97) with which I attempt to engage in this analysis. In engaging with the tensions in these concepts, I try to address the question of the role that writing, as an example of a process that allows for both fixing and flowing, in some senses, can play in the construction of presence.

1.2 The script of this 'play': the structure of the study

1.2.1 The 'playwrights': the texts used to construct this study

This study undertakes an analysis of the meaning and function of writing in the process of constructing presence or s/Subjects. This is done with specific close reference to particular works by Derrida, and to a lesser extent by Deleuze and Foucault. Thinkers such as Nancy, Lacoue Labarthes, Lyotard, De Certeau, Benveniste, Levinas, Agamben and a myriad of others are not the focus in this study. I decided that they lie outside the scope of the study because, pragmatically, they are less useful than Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault for the particular argument that this study wishes to pursue and also because their perspective may sometimes be described as more political than textual.

Traditionally, the main texts that influence a study would be referred to as the primary texts. However, in this study, the authors of these primary texts are referred to as 'playwrights' in order to establish their authority as co-authors/constructors of



this text, in some sense. The underlying claim is that all texts function in this way, as multiple-authored webs of meaning that provide their own context for constructions of their coherence or truth. This choice is also associated with the word 'playing' in the title of the study, since these authors or 'playwrights' also become written Subjects who are playing in the field that is analysed in this study.

You, as a reader of this study, may also be addressed as a 'playwright' according to this approach, because in reading this study, you are seen to constitute a new text's coming into being when your own horizons of meaning meld with those in the text. Thus you become an author of this slippery text, whose meaning cannot be fixed. This study represents an instance in the continuous process of deferral – hence, it is an attempt to fix the writing process, which is, in fact, mutable and continuous.

You already have noticed that I, as the author of this study, sometimes even venture to use the first person pronoun to refer to *myself* as author and the second person to refer to *you* as reader. This is deliberate and consistent with the way that subjectivity, selves, readers, writers and ensuing texts are constructed and deconstructed in this study. This is done to complicate traditional notions of objectivity, originality, authorship and truth and add to them post-structuralist notions of multiple authorship, blurred boundaries between us and a deconstruction of the traditional hierarchies of knowledge.

1.2.2 *The chapters: the 'Acts'*

The study is structured as follows, in line with the metaphor of a play:

Chapter 1: The prologue and the 'players' – an introduction

Chapter 2: 'Act' 1 – The theoretical basis for this study

Chapter 3: 'Act' 2 – Naming the anatomy of textuality in *The Pillow Book*

Chapter 4: 'Act' 3 – Tracing the Subject of writing in *In the Penal Colony*

Chapter 5: The epilogue – the reflexive loop.

The prologue and epilogue represent, amongst other things, the traditional introduction and conclusion to any study. In this sense, they are performed/take place in the usual setting of academic discourse.



Chapter 2 or 'Act' 1 expands on the introduction and surveys the field of theoretical concepts used in the subsequent chapters or 'acts' and explains them, their sources and contexts.

Chapter 3 or 'Act' 2 and Chapter 4 or 'Act' 3 deal with the concepts of the study as identified in Chapter 2 or 'Act' 1, as applied to the particular contexts of two external, illustrative texts. In Chapter 3 ('Act' 2), the focus is primarily on Greenaway's film, *The Pillow Book*. In Chapter 4 ('Act' 3), the main focus is on Kafka's short story entitled *In the Penal Colony*. However, in both chapters, some comparison to the other illustrative text is included. Chapter 3 ('Act' 2) mainly demonstrates the way in which the theoretical concepts of naming and presence operate in *The Pillow Book* as a text, as well as discussing various entities that names refer to and what these re-present, such as the particular relationships that the written text sets up, the bodies that are written on, as well as a comparison between the writing process and sex. Chapter 4 ('Act' 3) mainly demonstrates the way that the theoretical concept of trace operates in setting up Subjects within the boundaries of the law of language in *In the Penal Colony* as a text. Similar conclusions about the nature of writing and the specific Subjects that this process necessarily constructs (namely reader, writer, author, translator and publisher) are reached in both chapters. Some similarities and differences are traced in the context of each illustrative text to build an impression of a complex web of sameness and difference. Sometimes this parallel tracing leads to the extension of or a proliferation of meanings around these concepts. In keeping with the theatrical metaphors I have chosen for this study, I refer to these two 'acts' or chapters as being performed off stage from where the prologue and epilogue take place.

In the conclusion of this study, called the epilogue, the Derridean notions of the letter and naming, presence and being and trace are applied to the study itself to (re)kindle conjectures about what key terms such as 'present' and 'deferred' construct in this study.

The implications of authorship in this study are also explored in accordance with the development of this concept in previous chapters or 'acts'. A case is made for the soundness of the use of the post-structuralist method of examining literary texts in a philosophical context as demonstrated throughout the study, because the study lies on the margin between the study of literature and of philosophy. The conclusion also



clarifies the central issues of this study and deliberately emphasizes the writing process of the study itself and the author's experience of this process in relation to the theoretical concepts, instead of focusing on the content of the study in isolation.

This structure of the study is used to imply a meta-strategy that demonstrates intertextual manoeuvres and the implications of such manoeuvres for the study's own truth and validity claims. A web of coherence and intertextuality is set up to illustrate the concepts used in this study and to show that truth and meaning do not happen externally to textual (and contextual) relations.

1.2.3 *The metaphor of (a) play*

This study is *writing* about writing, where writing is understood as a process in which realities constitute themselves and gain only the ever-deferring presence that is possible. Writing this study in a way that sometimes suggests the form of a 'play' is a further strategy to illuminate what writing is/does. The metaphor of a play and of playing or performing and the significance of this for the concept of presence is that often a drama script is seen as an instance where the written word can actually conjure up the presence of the players in a way that is even more immediate than if it were only another kind of written text. This phenomenon arises because of the implied direct relationship between the written script of a play and the expression/spectacle of the players.

Thus a play may be seen as an arena in which language itself is sharply performed, and in a way, this is as present as we will ever get. Yet, this study functions on the meta-level of a play within a play. It also implies that even this kind of performance of presence in language that seems so immediate is, in fact, also written and thus deferred once more. The term *play* (as opposed to drama) is also deliberately referred to in the title of this study as an intertextual device reminiscent of Derrida's notion of play and the (limits of) spontaneity that this suggests.

As mentioned previously in this chapter/prologue, the terms in the study are referred to as '*dramatis personae*', to further enhance the appearance of this study as a 'play' and thus of writing too, as a performance. Although a play may seem to be a direct representation of expression, a script also suggests scriptedness or the idea of having been written/contrived as artifice. This is in keeping with Barthes's (1977)



notion of the death of the author and the notion that although the author is dead he/she lives as an intersection of texts/studies/plays/informing authors.

Heidegger (cited in Craig, 1998:702) claims that what it is for an entity of some type to be varies as a function of the structure of the intentions directed towards entities of that type. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger argues that this intentionality on which being depends is more a matter of action than of consciousness. The association that Heidegger suggests between action and being or presence is challenged by Derrida, who claims that the only presence that we can have is the ever-deferring presence of writing, and that this type of presence is what is present in spoken words too, even though spoken words may seem more immediate.

According to Craig (1998:898), Derrida calls into question the metaphysics of presence, namely the valuing of truth as a self-identical immediacy – a notion that has been sustained by traditional attempts to demonstrate the ontological priority of speech over writing: 'Speech too... is structured as writing...in this general sense, there is "writing in speech"' (Spivak, 1997:xx). In this way, writing becomes a metaphor for the way in which reality, in general, is constructed (through the play of difference). What is written is read as the surrogate of speech. In support of this Derridean notion then, the chapters of this study are called 'acts'. This is an attempt to suggest that boundaries between immediate performance/action/speech and written texts are broken down in the study itself.

1.2.4 *The name of this study*

This study came to be named 'Playing with the Subject: Writing in *The Pillow Book* and in *In the Penal Colony*'. The first word indicates a game and perhaps an element of chance and unpredictability. It may perhaps even be associated with something unscientific. This might be considered somewhat unexpected for a serious piece of writing produced within the academy, such as a Master's study. If we plumb the depths of the meanings of the word 'play' further, we may argue that it also suggests a game, something recreational and amusing, done for its own sake or for the sake of participating with others. Once one reads this study and comes to understand that it claims that writing itself, the tool through which it presents itself, cannot offer clear and singular truth claims, it should become apparent why this word has been chosen to name what happens in this piece of writing. This may also point to the fact that this study has not been done to reach conclusions and



contribute to a lasting edifice of knowledge in the traditional sense, but rather to collaborate in continuing ever more complex conversations with its readers. The epilogue of this study attempts to make a case for the importance of more playful methods of enquiry and the implications that this has for knowledge.

The use of the word 'play' deserves further comment. 'Play' as Derrida uses the term means a tolerance of difference (like the give in a rope) (Lucy, 2004:95). This word suggests that far from being grounded in presence, identity is grounded in a tolerance for or play of differences. Thus playing with a written subject as this study claims to do, according to its title, underlines the fact that since play 'is the disruption of presence' (Derrida, 2001:292), writing, as an instance of the play of a system of differences/signs, is in fact itself a site for demonstrating the disruption of presence and an affirmation of the tolerance for differences from which we construct identity. It is also the name of a real written study, this one, which names what cannot be named, tolerates difference and affirms the disruption of presence through playfulness and a continuous deferral of meaning.

The obvious gap between the written word (as used in the title of the study) and its referent/reality/presence emphasizes its uncontrollable, unpredictable effects (Lucy, 2004:156). The advantage of celebrating this gap is that it allows us to construct and reconstruct reality endlessly and thus to be open to thinking and rethinking in new ways about realities in the hope of finding ever more complex and contextually appropriate 'answers'. The disadvantage of this approach is that it undermines the claims of texts (such as some traditional philosophical ones) that purport to be working with Truth. This notion is further complicated by Derrida's affirmation that there is only a dreamy distinction between literary and other texts (Lucy, 2004:157), since the obvious corollary to this is that no texts can really make truth claims, because the gap between all texts and reality cannot be bridged from outside a system of language.

As mentioned previously, further analysis of the word 'play' also presents the possibility of something other than what is written, namely something that is performed. This in itself demonstrates, in deconstructionist fashion, that as soon as we name something it ceases to be what we name it, and thus meaning is always ambiguous and multiplying.



In using a title that draws attention to the form of production of the knowledge (through writing/performing/playing), the study draws attention to itself as *writing* about the written, to its writer/s and its referents. In doing so, it follows a literary or Derridean method and as such aligns itself with a mode of thinking that denies that any texts (such as this study itself) can make enduring truth claims. In following this literary method and employing literary texts such as *In the Penal Colony* and *The Pillow Book* to explore ideas via intertextual methods, this study is flying in the face of traditional notions of writing, happening in the absence (rather than the presence) of a Subject or the ones who write. Indeed, the title of this study implies that this study is engaged in playing with these Subjects, thus suggesting that they are present and alive in the writing. The suggestion is that, in fact, when we draw attention to the study itself as written, we as readers begin to realize that we are in the presence of the written Subject and that this is the only kind of presence we can hope to access.

Neither philosophy nor literature nor this study can get away from the 'persistence of the signifier in writing'. This is also an issue within philosophy, 'dividing philosophy itself from the absolute other of [literary] writing' (Lucy, 2004:158). It is philosophy's difference from literary writing, expressed in a non-oppositional way – as itself a philosophical issue – that gives philosophy its identity.



Chapter 2:

'Act' 1 – the theoretical basis for this study

'...ordinary words exist only to perish as soon as they are uttered, for they serve only the moment of communication...'
(Kundera, 1986:59)

2.1 Writing: the main theme

This study explores the problem of the role that writing plays in the construction of presence, or, stated differently, the role that language plays in fixing presence.

The study begins by describing Derrida's notion of language as *arche* writing. It illuminates writing as described in Derrida's early work, *Of Grammatology* (1997), which is discussed in some detail. In this study, writing is considered in terms of the following notions:

- writing is construction;
- writing is *arche* writing;
- writing is presence;
- writing is releasing Being;
- writing is self-referential;
- writing is a contextualising process;
- writing is a trace;
- writing is naming;
- writing is representation;
- writing is a play of difference;
- writing is *differance*; and
- writing is repetition.

These notions are discussed in detail in this chapter.

2.1.1 *Writing is construction*

In this study, writing is defined in a very specific way. It is understood not only as an activity that constitutes a representation or expression of presence (in other words,



as an instrumental use of language), but primarily as a systematic process of *constructing* a presence.

Derrida (1997:19) follows Nietzsche in alleging that reading and writing are originary operations, that is, they do not first have to transcribe/translate/discover some truth already there, but they themselves create/constitute truth in their moment of coming into being. We might take issue with the term 'originary' for being too essentialising, but if we substitute this term with the perhaps more acceptable term 'constellating/constellatory' then the point seems well made. Nietzsche proposes that ultimately, 'man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them' (Nietzsche, cited in Selden, 1989:100). This is also true of writing. Writing is a system that creates (or organises into constellations) selves as writing happens. Thus it is a useful site in which to study self-construction.

2.1.2 *Writing is arche writing*

I believe that the Derridean notion of writing as an instance of the trace of difference and as such, '*arche* writing', as he calls it (Spivak, 1997:lxix), provides a useful theoretical basis for exploring writing as a necessary part of the construction of presence. This is because both writing and self presence in the post-structuralist paradigm are ambivalent and slippery qualities, fraught with oppositions and contradictions. For Derrida, the concept of writing is opposed to the concept of the 'Letter', which is the term he uses for writing in the narrow (and more usual) sense of graphic notation on tangible material (Derrida, 1997). *Arche* writing then does not mean the Letter or the inscribing of letters in this narrow sense. *Arche* writing seems to be a metaphor for something like constructing or constellating:

...the name "writing" is given here to an entire structure of investigation, not merely to "writing in the narrow sense", graphic notation on tangible material. (Spivak, 1997:lxix)

But it is also important to note that

no rigorous distinction between writing in the narrow and the general senses can be made. One slips into the other, putting the distinction under erasure. (Spivak, 1997:lxix)



~~Erasure~~, graphically illustrated by Spivak in her Translator's Preface to *Of Grammatology*, is represented by the drawing of crossed lines over a word to indicate not merely its negativity but the trace that it leaves of the absence of a presence, since its meaning is constantly deferred as it is written down and in being written down ceases to be what it is (Spivak, 1997:xiv-xvii).

2.1.3 *Writing is ~~presence~~*⁴

The relationship of life and being, or how being is (or is not) inscribed into selves through writing is explored in this study. This is done with close reference to the Derridean notion that although writing constitutes some sort of life presence, it also removes us from life:

...the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a *being* – is always *deferred*. This is always deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces.

(Derrida, 1996:203, my emphases)

This paradoxical notion can also be stated as the claim that there is some vestige of this spontaneous life or presence that constitutes writing itself. Derrida emphasises this by stating that being is manifest, above all, in words and that words are closest to the self when they do not borrow from outside the self any substance of expression foreign to the self's own spontaneity (Derrida, 1997:20).

The illusion of the effacement of the signifier in words may lead one to conclude that words carry the following important delusion: words seem to be a manifestation of being; the voice of words calls forth being; the possibility of a transcendental expression is promised by words. This is the illusion of being and is what we take as truth (Derrida, 1997:20). Another relevant issue might be that of time and the notion that a description is always historical in some sense, or of an experience that is not actually happening at that moment, despite the fact that the writing is a present experience in itself. One might explore what the characteristics of written traces should be to keep up the illusion of presence in a written narrative.

⁴ See also the next section, Section 2.1.4, entitled 'Writing is releasing Being'



Derrida also expresses his understanding of writing as chains of differential marks (including those which are oral marks and each of which can be endlessly substituted for other such marks) most cogently in the extended comment cited below. He makes the important statement that experience in general is not an experience of presence but merely of chains of differential marks such as writing.

...[The] unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of ...the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its “referent”...but ...of a determinate signified, ...And I shall even extend this law to all experience if it is conceded that there is no experience consisting of *pure* presence but only of chains of differential marks.

(Derrida, cited in Mooney, 1999:52; Mooney’s emphasis)

For this reason I have considered writing as an important arena in which to study the process of constructing reality/meaning/experience, which is the subject of this study.

However, it is important to stress that presence in this context is never *full* presence. Derrida does not consider the full presence that Hegel and others hanker after to be accessible, either in writing or otherwise. Presence, according to Hegel, ‘the self-proximity of infinite subjectivity’ (Derrida, 1997:24) lies outside of the ambit of what it is possible to capture in (alphabetic) writing. According to Hegel, writing is a forgetting of the self, an exteriorisation, a re-presenting (Derrida, 1997:25).

But for Derrida, even speaking is writing in some sense and, so, even the presence that we think we have access to in the immediacy of speech is only a representation of presence.

2.1.4 *Writing is releasing Being*

The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Craig, 1998:699) describes ‘being’ as a term that has not been reserved for a property or any special entity. Therefore questions of being are not questions of the character of some property or the nature of some object. Questions about being are questions about which sorts of entity there are, what it means to say that an entity is, and the necessary conditions for thinking of an entity as something which is. These may be summarised into four questions:

- Which things are there?



- What is it to be?
- Is existence a property?
- How is an understanding of being possible? (an epistemological question)

The fourth question is what Heidegger and the German tradition have traditionally focused on. With their linguistic turn, French thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze became the heirs of this German tradition and began to exert their influence across the continental academy. This gave rise to an understanding of the construction of the world in terms of language and a particular focus on epistemology and how we come to know as an integral part of being itself. Another way of putting this is to say that the significance of the relationship between beings and Being is what concerns Derrida and the Heideggerian tradition from which he comes (Lucy, 2004:7). This study too focuses on this issue, and, in particular, on written language and the influence of writing on our construction of knowledge and the limits that writing presents for what we can come to know as human beings.

For Heidegger (Craig, 1998:701), 'being' is not a name for anything and it is not a property. Heidegger wants to understand Being outside of concepts such as subjectivity and consciousness that presuppose being as essence and having the quality of a property or thing (Lucy, 2004:7). Heidegger hopes to answer the question of what it is to be by answering the question of how it is possible to intend things that are as they are. He thinks this question can be answered by coming to an understanding of how being itself is possible. This is a phenomenological statement that claims that the intention to see things illuminates the knowledge of them in the consciousness. The problem with this way of seeing being is that we must also be able to resolve the problem of what we should base decisions on about which entities are candidates for descriptions of things that are as they are. In this way of seeing being, context becomes important as a way of generating criteria against which to measure being. In that case, a web theory of truth seems to make most sense.

Kant (Craig, 1998:700) holds that recognising that being is not a property leaves serious issues unresolved, namely what the *a priori* constraints on the range of possible entities which we can come to know are. Kant's answer is that our sentences can only be true of an object if that object is a possible object of experience. This implies that our sentences do not refer to the 'truth', but only to our



possible experiences; and it is possible to experience an object only if we can perceive it.

According to Heidegger (Craig, 1998:701), Husserl developed Kant's thought. Husserl asks how it is possible for a Subject to intend something distinct from its own mental states. According to Husserl (Craig, 1998:701), we 'intend' a variety of entities, which include physical objects, numbers and norms. It is puzzling how a Subject can intend such independent entities. To solve this puzzle, Husserl proposes the generalised notion of linguistic meaning. According to him, each conscious act involves a meaning which is distinct from the act itself and it is through *this* meaning that the act is related to the object. The meaning of an act depends upon its being placed within the temporal horizon of past and possible future apprehensions (Craig, 1998:702). This way of seeing being must allow for intertextuality, since it draws on a contextual theory of truth that in turn depends on the Subject's contingent horizons/contexts. It seems that in terms of this way of seeing being, it would be possible to see meaning as constituted in relationship/context.

This way of thinking about being – one that wishes to circumvent the reduction of being to the essential quality of something (for example, God, man or nature) – cannot simply be applied to all classes of pronouns (Lucy, 2004:7). This kind of being refers specifically to things such as human beings or Subjects with reflexive consciousness, who change in substance/being as they reflect. Heidegger (Craig, 1998:702) calls these kinds of beings *Dasein* (meaning being-there, contextualised) or beings like us. This is because intending a being like us means intending a being that is itself capable of intentionality and of questioning Being. Thus this kind of being necessarily incorporates the temporal dimensions of the past on the future which are also necessarily linked to intentionality. Our world is not simply reducible to what is immediately present to us, but exists rather as the possibility that things can come into presence. For Heidegger (Craig, 1998:702) then, the meaning of being like us is necessarily linked to temporality. Our being and self-reflexivity is thus of necessity linked to temporality and our context. A distinctive feature of our being in particular as instances of *Dasein* is the capacity to reflect on Being in its specific temporal contexts. '*Dasein*'s being is given, then, in its relations with the world as a total context, including its relations to others' (Lucy, 2004:8).



Heidegger (Craig, 1998:702) also argues that philosophy has always answered the question of being by claiming that being is constant presence, always available to interaction. But he contends that this is only one part of presence. No exploration of presence or being is complete without an investigation into the character of the horizon or relationships (context) which make(s) the encounter with presence possible. Derrida (Craig, 1998:702) picks up on this and explores in detail the 'relationship between an object and the horizon in which it is encountered'.

Derrida calls into question the metaphysics of presence. He tries to move away from what he describes as Husserl's commitment to truth as self-presence, namely the valuing of truth as self-identical immediacy, which has been sustained by traditional attempts to demonstrate the ontological priority of speech over writing (Craig, 1998:898). He argues that this distinction between speech and writing can only be upheld through a 'violent' exclusion of otherness. Taking this view further, Derrida posits that language begins from the irreducibility of difference and having to take each entity into account on its own terms. For Derrida, deconstruction is less a reading technique than it is a way of approaching the wholly other, recognising its own terms, through language (Craig, 1998:897). This attempt to recognise the other on its own terms conjures an experience of the impossible. But it should also be noted that 'in order to let the other be, being cannot be understood as presence' (Lucy, 2004:9). For others to be unknowably other, I cannot think of them as mere beings gathered together harmoniously in an instance of Being. I must think of their differences as inappropriable to sameness, fraught with ever deferred traces of difference.

However, for Derrida (1997), experience is limited by the fact that self-presence, a necessary part of experience according to western metaphysics, is never wholly achieved, because of the mediation of language. Derrida is against the repeated attempts of western metaphysics to affirm self-presence as the paradigm of truth:

Writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body...external to the spirit...and to the *logos*. (Derrida, 1997:35)

In adopting this view, western metaphysics repeatedly tries to ignore the fact that thought depends on language. At the heart of this western metaphysical tradition is the assumption that humans are beings that can signal their self-presence to



themselves by means of language. Derrida (1997) argues that no thought, even the thought 'I am', can be immediately present to itself, because to be recognised as a thought it must be reflected upon.

According to Heidegger (2007), humans belong to language more than language belongs to humans. This suggests that if the beings that comprise the world only manifest themselves by means of language, then language is that which opens up the world to them (Craig, 1998:897). But Derrida is drawn away from the concept of language and towards writing. Some prominent Romantic thinkers, such as Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (West, 2007), have postulated a causative relationship between the progress of a society and the development of language, thus suggesting that thought and progress are in a sense dependent on language; and in order to deal with this they used the idea of an ideal versus a secondary language. In ideal language, thought would be immediately transparent to itself; and in secondary language, the original and ideal language of thought could be translated.

To further complicate the traditional distinctions between speech and writing, language and thought, the body and the mind, consider that spoken words seem to carry the Subject in them and thus provide the illusion of some direct access to presence. Spoken words seem to express/embody thought directly, because spoken words are only available at the moment of speech. Written words that function in the absence of the producer seem to be exterior to thought. Writing seems merely a sign of speech. However, the materiality of signification and the written word, so graphically illustrated in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* and in Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* (to be discussed in detail later in this study) suggests that the written word may itself be embodied and related to presence in the direct way that western philosophy reserves for speech. This implies that the binary opposition generally claimed to exist between speech and writing can be broken down and that both speech and writing are seen as deferred ways of communicating meaning, both sometimes embodied and sometimes not, but both always a representation/signification of meaning.

Derrida (1997) advises that we cannot even make sense of the claim/ideal that there is a purely expressive language, because all language must make use of signifiers, which are non-expressive. So, according to him, there is simply no basis for drawing



a rigorous distinction between speech and language (Derrida, 1997). Derrida does not aim to proclaim the priority of writing over speech, but claims to deconstruct the very logic of such privileging. He proposes that such privileging of necessity leads to exclusions. He prefers non-hierarchical notions such as difference, which attempt to approach the other on its own terms. Thus writing is just as suspect as a carrier of direct expression as the concept of speech is. It can be said that writing directly expresses thought, just as much as speech does. This archetypal character and seeming lack of an origin of a thought is expressed by Derrida as *arche* writing. *Arche* writing, although it represents thought, has no origin; it can only represent difference, since it is impossible to get to the origin, and only difference can be captured. For Derrida, every origin is thought of in terms of an ideal moment of presence without difference (Derrida, 1997:215). And there is no origin except originary difference, which says without saying, and writes what cannot be written (Lucy, 2004:88).

But writing still continues to function as an exemplary figure of otherness, of excluding. For this reason, it is necessary to free up writing (speech and language) from its pretensions to self-presence/meaning/truth so that we can approach the other on its own terms and stop thinking metaphysically. Derrida wishes to exploit the subversive potential of the marginal space/term, without reifying the logic/structure of marginalising.

There are a number of strategies that can be employed in writing to free it from any pretensions to self-presence, such as producing irreducibly multiple and fragmentary texts which resist being read as unified books; or producing textual marks that are designed to render problematic the traditional concept of a signifier, such as in *differance* (see Section 2.1.11). They are meant to call attention to their own (un)intelligibility and resistance; calling attention to different writing styles in one text/author and so undermining a traditional concept of a universal truth or meaning to decipher, and a unitary identity of one single thing impossible to discern since marks/signatures/traces of a person can function in their absence.

In order to question the assumption that language (written or spoken) can pretend self-presence, these textual strategies are highlighted again and again in this study. They are highlighted in the various intertexts that make up this study and the narrative of the study itself. For example, the origins of texts and the Derridean



notion of texts constantly referring to other texts is also explored in the next chapter, which focuses on *The Pillow Book*. This is done with reference to the film's investigation of issues such as who the parents of a book are, texts begetting other texts and writing as an activity that is of necessity relational. The writer in the film writes on the fingers of a young monk that 'the [writer's] hand cannot write ...itself' (Greenaway, 1996:110). This suggests that writing is always a relational activity, an active process of engaging the self in a web of shared constructing and constructions. This is reminiscent of Foucault's statement (discussed further in the next section of this study) that the 'search should not be for the secret of one's identity but for how to invent new modes of relationship and a new way of life' (Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1994:xxvii). These new modes of relationship that come to define the Subject can be brought about by the process of writing and so construct a self-reflective, yet relational self. Indeed, Foucault declares that *the subject is not a substance: 'It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself'* (Foucault, 1994:290; my emphasis).

The notion of presence in language is complicated further by considering the seemingly converse – the Derridean notion that, at the same time, 'every experience is structured by an undeconstructible messianic promise' of immediate presence and direct meaning 'which [ironically] interrupts the presence of the here-and-now without being reducible to the prophecy of a determinate future' (Craig, 1998:899). Derrida uses the word 'messiah' to mean the unpredictable coming of the other (Lucy, 2004:74). Thus, for Derrida, every experience carries in itself this unpredictability and the possibility of an encounter with some/one/thing wholly other and the present carries with it always the never-ending and erratic future to come, based on an inherited past of suffering by others to achieve what is now our present. In this sense, every moment of our present remains open to the spectres of others (who make up our past and our future) and to whom we are responsible for making good on their efforts and in turn leaving a legacy of good effort too (Lucy, 2004:75).

Derrida recalls Heidegger as stating that being is not merely the word 'being' or the concept of being. (This would be to reduce being ~~being~~ unbearably). But yet, being is nothing outside language. Being is tied, not to a particular word or concept or system of language, but to the possibility of words and language/expression in general (that is, being is the possibility of expressing and relating to another) (Derrida, 1997:21). In this sense, the voice of being is silent/mute/wordless, even



although it is constituted by the word 'being'. Being is simultaneously contained within the word 'being' and transgresses it. Derrida explains that Heidegger (in *Zur Seinsfrage*) lets us read the word being only when it is crossed out. Under the strokes of this cross, the transcendental signified is effaced, but still legible; it is destroyed while 'making visible the very idea of the sign' (Derrida, 1997:23). Being is still rooted in a system of languages and in an historically determined significance. This means that in this sense, *being escapes the movement of the sign and there is no difference between the signifier and the signified* (although, in another sense, nothing escapes this movement). Thus we must be cautious about the metaphysical theory invoked in the theory of signification. Talking of transcending in this theory (as in 'transcendental signified') should not be read as fundamental or primary, but can be nothing more than provisional moments. We should ask what produced this transcendentality itself.

Presence is the occultation of being; an occultation necessary to construct a history of being (Derrida, 1997:22/3). The term 'occultation' (Merriam Webster, n.d.:n.p.) suggests that being can be usefully eclipsed, obscured, hidden or at least limited by the concept of presence, in order to demonstrate the concept of being as it occurs in time, bounded by a temporal and historiographic horizon. Presence is a result of the term *being's* being continually under erasure. As time moves on, so presence changes, all the time, and so continually reconstitutes being. According to Heidegger (Derrida, 1997:22), being is produced as history only through the word/*logos* and is nothing outside of it. This implies that, in this sense, nothing escapes the movement of the signifier, not even being. The sense of being is not the transcendental signified, but is (in a truly unheard of sense, that is, the sense of the possible) a determined signifying trace which cannot be thought of all at once. In the realm of the possible, this determination of difference is erased. Entity (substance) and being (process) are derivative with regard to difference and *differance* (words in the realm of the determined/discriminable). This difference is not absolutely originary. It is the trick of writing that allows meaning to pass through the erased determination (Derrida, 1997:24). According to Derrida, the notion that being is equated with presence is an error that can be traced back to logocentric thinking. In fact, the Living Present is always inhabited by difference. Therefore the measure of *presence is difference* (Spivak, 1997:xviii).



The postmodern critique of the Subject is treated in this study as an issue related to presence in writing and it is discussed at various appropriate points throughout this study (with reference to the main thinkers/ 'playwrights' involved). This critique, led by such thinkers as Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze, questions the Subject's ability to declare itself self-evidently independent of the external conditions of its own possibility – a language in which it expresses clear and distinct ideas, the body whose deceptions it fears, and the historical or cultural conditions in which it perceives reason or tyranny (Craig, 1998:197). Moreover, these thinkers assert that the ethical price to be paid for hanging on to a conception of the modern Subject is allowing oppression of others/marginal social groups, whose supposed savagery and irrationality represent the self's own rejected possibilities for change and (self) discovery. (They are steeped in the Marxist, Freudian, Nietzschean tradition concerning the dependence of consciousness on material conditions, unconscious roots or the outside.) They have taken account of Freud's clinical discoveries that undermined the concept of the Subject as purely rational and transparent. They are sceptical about our ability to know the self and its motivations as objects in themselves, but adopt and adapt Kant's notion of finding the conditions of possibility underlying subjective experience (Craig, 1998:197). Kant also claims that the self as a thing in itself remained ignorant of its own nature and motivations, unlike Hegel, who argues that the self is capable of thorough self knowledge and conscious freedom and that historical structures mediate the relationship between the self as a thing in itself and consciousness (Craig, 1998:197).

Their critiques of the Subject are an attack on the notion of the universal, humanist Subject, whose reason is reflected in the thoughts of civilised cultures. They mean to undermine dichotomies such as civilization and madness and consciousness and embodiment (speech and writing, present and absent). They constantly question the claim that a Subject can be self-present and act freely. In doing so, they call into question how philosophers can make sense of their own historical and psychological experience. Heidegger and the thinkers who pursue his line of thought to critique the modern Subject, namely Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault, claim that the human 'being-there' (*Dasein*) can only be understood from within its involvement with the world/projects/meanings through an investigation of the Being of both subject and object. Language indicates the various ways in which Being occurs in the world of human involvements (Craig, 1998:197).



Deleuze combines Derrida's emphasis on difference and differentiation with Foucault's conception of power in the social field and the psychoanalytic idea of desire to create a Subject as a multiplicity of forces (Craig, 1998:199). Strikingly, for Deleuze, subjectivity is only one aspect of multiplicity. He disagrees with both psychoanalysis's notion of the split Subject and with the traditional transparent Subject as being the most useful and liberating way to conceive of the Subject, who must be simultaneously desiring, productive and multiple.

Another interesting point that Deleuze (1994:269) makes is that in terms of an analogical view of the world, difference depends entirely on representation. Being a S/subject is entirely dependent on difference (Derrida, 1996:202-3). *Therefore being a S/subject is entirely dependent on representation.* In fact, because (according to Derrida) the Subject that studies itself cannot be a Subject, perhaps it is this necessity of representation that makes the Subject a split Subject. If being can only occur on condition that one perceives one's own determination, as Kant proposes, then one can only *be* (not necessarily exist) in the form of a split subjectivity. This phrase would suggest that to integrate, one necessarily splits. This shows up the slippery nature of language in its (in)ability to describe and represent reality, since language uses binary differences in its representations, whilst at the same time undermining them and insisting on apparently contradictory differences, both being true at the same time. For Deleuze, then, there is an immanence/(objective) presence in non-being/unrepresented activities of subjectivity that is absent from being, because non-being omits the self-conscious element of being (Deleuze: 2001). To him, non-being seems to mean a kind of pure determination/existence, unfettered by the perception or self-awareness inherent in the Derridean concept of being.

Foucault (Craig, 1998:198) also questions the ontological unity of the literary author, exploring the way in which the agency and consciousness attributed by readers to authors depends on social and academic conventions about the relations between types of texts. He pleads for an understanding of an authoring/writing subject as multiple. Foucault even notes that there is a trend to try to 'normalize' those who will not or cannot apprehend themselves as (multiple) Subjects.

He argues for a distinction between writer and author (Foucault, 1977): a writer writes private texts and an author writes texts for a wider readership, thus rendering



him/herself vulnerable to re-reading and the death of his/her meaning – this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 ('Act' 2) and Chapter 4 ('Act' 3). In this, he draws attention to the different ways in which the concept of truth has established criteria for the assignment of agency and consciousness to particular actors, writers and processes. This study also follows this line of thinking in calling the authors of the texts that informed the study fellow 'playwrights'. Another issue that this study explores (one which is informed by Foucault's thinking on the ontological unity of the literary author) is that of the authority of the truth claims that an author makes.

Foucault's conceptualisation of being or presence expresses the difference between his conceptualisation and Derrida's, of the self as a mere effect: 'For Foucault "being" is given *through* problematizations and practices; it is not prior to them' (Rabinow, 1994:xxxvi) and it is also not an effect of them. As mentioned above, he states that the 'search should not be for the secret of one's identity but for how to invent new modes of relationship and a new way of life' (Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1994:xxxvi). This view seems to move away from Cartesian rationalism through action.

Here we see that the self is a useful concept to Foucault, in so far as it suggests more than mere effect or agency. Who one is, is a transforming self (one that is both transforming him/herself and being transformed him/herself by the social order). One is a self by virtue of the constant transformation of practices (including writing) and transformation of relationships that one engages in. 'What was needed was not a means of making everyone the same but of creating new modes of being together' (Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1994:xxxvi, xxxvii). The act of engaging in new modes of being together creates selves who are, by this definition, always Subjects with agency (although this changes and is re-constituted in a number of complex ways all the time).

2.1.5 *Writing is self-referential*

Foucault argues that our understanding of writing today has been transformed into an understanding of writing as an interplay of signs regulated less by the content they signify than by the very nature of the signifier itself:

It does not contain a finished expression/product of interiority, but rather *it refers to its own deployment* and thus foregrounds the very act of construction itself. (Foucault, 1977:116; my emphasis)



This is what makes writing a good site from which to study the construction of the postmodern Subject, since it gives us a window onto the construction process involved when a multiple, self-referential, related self is constructed.

2.1.6 *Writing as a contextualising process*

Foucault's understanding of writing or *écriture*, as he calls it, is similar to Derrida's conceptualisation of writing as *arche* writing. Foucault elaborates his view as set out below. According to him, writing or *écriture* is

...concerned with neither the act of writing nor the ...signs within a text of an author's meaning; rather, it stands for...an attempt to elaborate the [including spatial and temporal] conditions of any text.

(Foucault, 1977:119)

In this spirit, writing is understood in this study as a remarkable metaphor for something like construction; and what it constructs or constellates is subjectivity/ a subjective presence itself. The metaphor of writing understood in this way is remarkable because the process of construction is inscribed into the act of writing in a way that we can (at least to some extent) decipher from the context of the writing process itself.

2.1.7 *Writing as naming*

Derrida refers to writing as a process of constantly naming or classifying by violently disrupting the endless proliferation of deferred meanings in a futile attempt to fix presence. "To name... is the originary violence of language which consists in inscribing within difference, in classifying" (Derrida, 1997:112).

Naming is

the gesture of arche-writing... loss of... a self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance.

(Derrida, 1997:112)

If deferral and repetition convey an endless circular proliferation of meaning in a play of difference and sameness, then the Derridean notion of the Letter (Derrida: 1997)



may be seen as a disruptive occurrence in the general flow of meaning and possibility. If this arresting occurrence itself is seen as an instance of Deleuzian repetition, then the Letter/writing may be viewed as a moment of 'stability' or even rigidity amidst the flux of potential meanings. The Letter/writing thus seems 'stable', but not fixed in an extremely static sense. This illustrates the contradictory nature of writing as both stable and in flux or as a moment of 'stability' in a dynamic and changing system. Writing, understood in this way, as an instance of Deleuzian repetition, may thus be said to link us with 'a language [of contradictions] which speaks before words' (Deleuze, 1994:10) and thus with the life presence/signified/'the moment of the impossible representation', 'where the source is held within itself' (Derrida, 1997:297). This means that writing a narrative that makes use of repetition in this way creates the illusion that writing is not merely representative of life, but is alive itself.

The phrase 'proper name' signifies a classification, an institution carrying the trace of history, into which a certain sort of sign is made to fit. Thus the proper name, as soon as it is understood as such, is no longer fully unique and proper to the holder, in that it no longer distinguishes the holder as its own. 'The proper name is always already common by virtue of belonging to the category "proper". It is always already under erasure' (Spivak, 1997:lxxxiii). Writing is already present in all the ramifications of the 'proper', the own, the distinguishing characteristic (Spivak, 1997:lxxxiv). This leads us to the words of Spivak (1997:lxx)

"Writing" is the name of what is never named. Given differance,
however, it is a violence even to name it thus, or name it with a *proper*
name. (Spivak's emphasis)

However, none of Derrida's statements about the way that naming functions in natural language necessarily 'entails presence or identity being reducible solely to naming and predication' (Mooney, 1999:42). The notion of writing as naming is investigated further in this study as it is applied to an analysis of *In the Penal Colony* and *The Pillow Book* in subsequent chapters.



2.1.8 *Writing is a trace*

In response to the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Derrida wishes to question the assumed unit of the sign and carve out a place for the sign's necessary relationship to something outside of itself but always inextricably joined to it (Lucy, 2004:144). This notion of the relationships that writing – as an example of a system of signs – sets up is explored in some detail in Chapter 4 ('Act' 3), when *In The Penal Colony* is considered. Derrida's term 'trace' is used to unsettle the presumption of the metaphysical unity of the sign that we may find in semiotics and introduce the play of difference as a necessary part of the way in which signs operate, making them ultimately indeterminable.

According to Derrida (Spivak, 1997:xvii), a 'trace' is the structure of a sign, a privileged *presence*, close to the *logos*, but never contemporary in time with the signified. It is not dependent on the *logos* or the truth or the primary signified. This is why reading and therefore writing are 'originary' operations. For Derrida, the present aspect is the signifier; so what better way to manifest presence itself (granted that presence is never full presence) than through the signifying process of writing words? Words do not first have to discover/*transcribe* divine understanding or necessity (Derrida, 1997:18,19). Insofar as words carry presence, presence is the self-proximity of infinite subjectivity. However, presence in this sense is not a transcendental signified; rather it is itself a determined signifying trace. A trace suggests incompleteness and that '*all is not to be thought at one go*' (Derrida, 1997:23; Derrida's emphasis). Thus writing, and indeed even writing in the particular sense of an original inscription, is still only a trace of presence. The trace itself is primary and should not be thought of as suggesting some origin (Spivak, 1997:xxxi). Spivak (1997:xxv) also cautions that, although we think that writing represents the Subject in the absence of the Subject,

...the implied presence in this belief does not equate to full presence,
which is never accessible, but only to the trace of presence.

The concept of trace seems to span the realm of possibility and the realm of limits (that is, the realm of words). Derrida suggests that it is possible to retrieve the determinable trace from the realm of limitless possibility and express/manifest it in the realm of the representable/the limited; that is, the realm of writing. And thus it seems that, for Derrida, to be is to express/relate. Being (see Section 2.1.4 on



releasing Being in this chapter) also bridges both realms, since being is the possibility of expression. Thus the written trace/writing⁵ is also essential to being.

Trace or *arche* writing or *differance* are words that Derrida uses to describe something, just as Heidegger uses the word ~~Being~~ (written under erasure) to describe (see Section 2.1.4 on 'Writing is releasing Being'). For Derrida, a trace seems to be an aspect of all perception indicating the indefinite chain of retentions carried in every present moment of awareness, but which cannot be brought into the light of presence. Trace is the imprint of an unconscious past that has never been present. Trace is neither in this world nor in another world; it is not an entity and no concept in metaphysics is capable of describing it (Mooney, 1999:50).

Trace (and so writing/presence/meaning and being) appears to be a shifting concept that is very slippery to access in words. Indeed it seems to be there and not there at the same time and give our experience a deferred quality:

Derrida's trace is the mark of ... an always already absent present, of the lack *at* the origin that is the condition of thought and experience.

(Spivak, 1997:xvii; my emphasis)

Even Derrida acknowledges that trace is a slippery term; the meaning of trace itself is continually slipping out beyond the reaches of the logic of identity (Spivak, 1997:xviii). Derrida uses the word 'trace' to distinguish traces (inscriptions) from representations such as copies. This might suggest that somehow traces are closer to being constitutive of reality itself than mere representations are. Yet he also uses the term 'trace' to undermine the authority of the text and make it provisional. He suggests that the origin is (*only*) a trace (*not a real presence*); contradicting logic, we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time (Spivak, 1997:xviii).

Writing is explored in terms of this mutating notion of trace as set out above. Following the line of thought of these thinkers, in this study the written trace is taken to suggest a momentarily privileged *presence* caught up in an instance of writing. From this perspective, a written trace is regarded as ephemeral, living and in touch with the *logos* (Derrida, 1997). Indeed, according to Derrida (1996:202-3),

...language, and every semiotic code... are therefore effects, but their cause is not a subject, a substance, or a being somewhere present

⁵ or representation



and outside the movement of *differance*. Since there is no presence outside of semiological *differance*. ...There is no subject who is agent, author, and master of *differance* ... Subjectivity – like objectivity – is an effect of *differance*, an effect inscribed into a system of *differance*.

This fluid process of self and of writing or presence and the relationship between them leads back to Derrida (1997) and the notion of 'trace' and what can be 'traced' or momentarily fixed in writing. The sense of being is not a transcendental signified; rather, it is itself a determined signifying trace. As mentioned previously in this section, a trace suggests incompleteness and that '*all is not to be thought at one go*' (Derrida, 1997:23; Derrida's emphasis). Here I also refer to the wordless/unwritten, the unsigned signified, 'the moment of the impossible representation, in its sovereignty', 'where the source is held within itself' and there is no point of origin (Derrida, 1997:297).

According to Derrida, western thought is logocentric; that is, it has developed innumerable terms which operate as centring principles, for example, being, essence, substance, truth, consciousness, man and God. People desire a centre because it guarantees *being as presence*. In logocentric thinking, the *logos* underwrites the full presence of the world and everything is the effect of this one cause. In other words, before everything, there is presence (Lucy, 2004:71). In logocentric thinking, speech is valued over writing because presence is attributed to speech as opposed to writing, which does not require the writer's presence. The West is logocentric because it wants to preserve presence. However, we may consider that both speech and writing have writerly features: we may see both as signifying processes which lack presence. If this deduction is accurate, then not even valuing one over the other can preserve presence, which, by this account, is inaccessible through language (Selden, 1989:87-89).

However, Derrida also confirms that a written trace is ephemeral, living and in touch with the *logos*, without privileging writing over speech. Instead, he declares that writing is a conflicting process that brings to life whilst also destroying:

Writing betrays life when it cuts breath short on the repetition of the letter, it ends and paralyzes life by fixing it in this way.

(Derrida, 1997:25)



Describing writing as a trace is a contradictory notion, perhaps even a ruse, a trick that encourages the illusion of self-presence, whilst at the same time cutting us off from it. It is an attempt to describe in words something which is not quite accessible to language. Although our words about it hold a limited presence, they also fix our notions in such a way that we are cut off from life and what we might really mean.

The word 'play' in the title of this study is meant to suggest the meaning of both a staged performance or a fabrication of presence and also a game, something for the audience to enter into and play with for a while, as if it is true, as if there were rules of the game that brought ways of being into existence. This study follows apparently paradoxical traces as a record of a written inscription on a Subject, which somehow captures both the fleeting breath of life and the seemingly staid fixedness of writings. This notion is illustrated in an analysis of *In the Penal Colony* and *The Pillow Book* in subsequent chapters/'acts'.

2.1.9 *Writing as representation*

Derrida uses the word 'trace' to distinguish traces (inscriptions) from representations such as copies. The important point here seems to be that representations represent (and may be substituted for, since they stand apart from) existing things, whereas traces are effects marking differences in a system of expression, implying that they do not exist apart from the process of the play of difference and that they do not stand *for* things. This view is different from a logocentric approach, which holds that speech (which a logocentric approach values as the primary conduit of presence, and so, of meaning) must represent in order to mean anything at all (Selden, 1989:91).

In this study, the term 'representation', like each of the other terms discussed in this chapter/'act' is itself a trace and does not stand outside the debate on what terms may or not mean, on whether they represent anything or not. The term's meaning needs to be reflected on while it is used, which implies that it is impossible to pin it down. This makes differentiation in a final sense impossible, and may create the possibility of representing the infinite only as a completely undifferentiated abyss.

Deleuze (1994:300) states that the presuppositions of actually representing something – when there is a one-to-one relationship between the thing represented and its representative – are sameness and similarity. In this sense, writing does not



really represent anything, since the mechanism by which we access the limited presence that we are able to access is writing; and the mechanism that writing works on is difference and not sameness. The sameness, the supposed one-to-one relationship between the represented and the representative is forever decentred, and effectively turns on difference (Deleuze, 1994:301).

2.1.10 *Writing as a play of difference*

For Derrida *writing* or *arche* writing refers to ‘*the actual structure of the relation of difference... that is spatial and/or temporal intervals between the relevant elements*’ (Mooney, 1999:41; my emphasis). *Arche* writing precedes writing in the merely graphic sense. Graphic writing is merely one of its instantiations and occurs only in certain societies. This is unlike *arche* writing or the process of indicating the structure of difference between elements, which occurs in all societies. Thus there is not just literal/graphic writing, but also choreographic writing, sculptural writing/drawing and so on, when writing is understood as the play of spatial and temporal difference between elements.

For Derrida, difference refers to

the relation between the present and absent elements in a sign system.... This term indicates that an element can be meaningfully present only by virtue of its relations to absent ones which cannot themselves be brought to complete presence. (Mooney, 1999:41)

Thus meaning always involves differences, and its co-incidence with presence is perpetually deferred.

As already stated in Section 2.1.8, on writing as a trace, language is an effect of semiological difference and there is no presence outside of the mechanism of difference (Derrida, 1996:202-203). Both subjectivity and objectivity are effects of this difference. This can be linked to Deleuze’s notion of identity as being constituted through difference rather than sameness. The subordination of difference to the illusion of sameness, as Deleuze points out, leads to a conception of a S/subject that is erroneously conceived of as self-identical. Deleuze (1994:266) declares that ‘difference in thought’ is “‘that profound fracture of the I’”. In order to avoid this disappearance of the subject (conceived of as self-identical), we need to stop



thinking of the thinking Subject as self-identical, but should rather see it as split and fraught with difference.

Writing as a system of semiological difference, which indicates the spatial and temporal differences between elements, is most suitable to represent this split Subject, because it is loaded with fixing and flowing, and because it calls attention to its own construction.

2.1.11 Writing as difference

The concept of the play of differences itself is not to be understood outside of the play of differences and '[w]hile subjectivity requires difference it cannot exist through difference alone' (Mooney, 1999:44; my emphasis). This suggests that the elements of a sign system cannot be simply reduced to difference; all that difference suggests is the bare exteriority of an interval or spatial relation between elements. For this reason, Derrida recommends the further notion of *differance*. Derrida insists that *differance* does not fall outside of the play of differences itself: "'*Differance*⁶ is neither a word nor a concept..." ...our language has no name for such difference... Not even the name "difference" which ... continually breaks up in a chain of different [*différentes*] substitutions' (Spivak, 1997:lxix; Spivak's/Derrida's emphases). Derrida indicates that for him writing is another name for this structure of supplementarity (Spivak, 1997:xxxiv). *Trace/disseminations/differance* are all synonyms for the same process. They form a chain where each may be substituted for the other, but not exactly (Spivak, 1997:xx). This is also a good example of the Deleuzian understanding of repetition.

2.1.12 Writing as repetition

According to Derrida, repetition (along with the ability of the written sign to break with its 'real context'; the fact that the written sign is subject to being separated from other signs in a particular chain and that it only refers to something that is not present in it) is a distinguishing feature of writing, as opposed to speech (Selden, 1989:90). It is repetition (amongst other things) that causes Derrida to see writing

⁶ Spivak quotes Derrida's use of his master concept *differance*, which he claims to borrow from Nietzsche and by which he means "deferment-difference" or "differing from the sensible" (Spivak, 1997:xxix) and in another place, an essay of Derrida's entitled "La Différance" Derrida himself explains this concept of *differance* as "'difference" spelled with an "a" [without an accent]... as ' "differing", "deferring" and "detour"' (Spivak, 1997:xlili). In this study, Spivak's spelling is adopted.



and *arche* writing as preceding speech. Thus, for Derrida, repetition is a fundamental characteristic of the kind of construction process that constitutes writing.

Deleuze (1994) suggests that we should be thinking or actualizing ideas in terms of 'nomadic distributions'. In other words, thoughts should be and are actualized via words, which are fluid in that they acquire new histories as they are used as references in different contexts. Thoughts are not merely represented by words as distributions of representations. According to Deleuze (1994:278), repetition (and thus difference and meaning) occur across systems of simulacra which

affirm divergence and decentring: the only unity, the only convergence of all the series, is an informal chaos in which they are all included. No series enjoys a privilege over others; *none possesses the identity of a model, none the resemblance of a copy*. None is either opposed or analogous to another. *Each is constituted by differences*, and communicates with the others through differences of differences. Crowned anarchies are substituted for the hierarchies of representation. (my emphases)

The Merriam Webster (n.d.:n.p.) online dictionary defines a 'simulacrum' as an image or representation, an insubstantial form or semblance of something, a trace. Also, according to Deleuze (1994:299), systems of representation or simulacra 'are those systems in which different relates to different *by means* of difference itself' (my emphasis). In these systems, there is no prior identity or internal resemblance. In such series, there are disguised and displaced areas which cannot be identified, but which differentiate difference. Repetition and meaning flow from this play of difference (Deleuze, 1994:300). Thus Deleuze gives the disguised and displaced a pivotal role in the generation of repetition and meaning, just as Derrida makes a point of focusing our attention on the role of the absent and the margins in generating difference, and thus meaning.

The experience described above is the experience of the illusion of the effacement of the signifier in the voice of words that leads us to being seduced by the illusion of being as expressed in words (as previously described in Section 2.1.3).



For Derrida (Nethersole, 2005: pers. comm), 'presence' is suggested by the copula verb 'is'. In other words, because language has the facility to say 'the tree is green', philosophers have assumed that the tree (due to its ascribed quality – 'green') must be a 'presence', forgetting that language is nothing but a convention (made up of a series of differences) that we use in order to communicate with each other. This forgetfulness also does violence to the parts or qualities of the tree that are not visible (Deleuze) or not green (Derrida), in absencing them and relegating them to the margins. It is within this convention or the particular system of signs that is in place at any one time that we try to 'fix' presence. It is this 'fixing' operation that creates, on the one hand (for Derrida) the supplement (the need to say things over and over again) and, on the other, for Deleuze, the need for repetition.

The notion of writing as repetition is applied in my analysis of *In the Penal Colony* and *The Pillow Book* in subsequent chapters.

2.1.13 Writing is text

In a broad sense, text can be conceived of as something that has been made and that does not just exist without ever having been made (for example, unlike truth or being). The world can be thought of as consisting of the represented (the mediated or the textual) and the present (the real) (Lucy, 2004:142). For Derrida (Lucy, 2004:142), *text* can 'denote a certain context or segment of the world or the world as a general text'. Derrida (Lucy, 2004:142) claims that for him text is context and that it includes all the structures called real, economic, historical, socio-institutional – in short, all possible referents: '...every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and ...one cannot refer to this "real" except in an interpretive experience'. Thus textuality is not merely applicable in terms of natural (vernacular) language (Derrida, cited in Mooney, 1999:42).

Derrida (1997:158) proclaims '*Il n'ya pas hors-texte*'. He adds: 'There is nothing before the text: there is no pretext that is not already a text' (Derrida, cited in Mooney, 1999:40). There is no origin prior to textuality; and therefore there is nothing like representation. Text does not imitate presence; instead, presence is the effect of textuality (Lucy, 2004:143). This implies that presence cannot be pure presence, but is a textual (and intertextual) play of ever-deferred differences from which identity is derived. This is why for Derrida reality/presence has a trace structure and one cannot refer to anything as real or present, except in interpretative



experience. The only way that we can know that something exists is to *refer* to it. It is this reference – this place within a system – that posits reality/presence.

But then *text is not language*; text is a complex concept that combines referents and elements of language that relate to one another in complicated ways. As indicated in the previous paragraph, Derrida also explicitly states that there is nothing outside text. I interpret this to mean that there is nothing outside context (Derrida, cited in Mooney, 1999:42). But this idea may be more complex than it seems at first glance, since Derrida explicitly claims that there is *not* nothing outside language. And indeed it seems that the concept ‘text’ may also encapsulate precisely what is outside language. Deconstruction of language into its play of differences shows that the question of reference is much more complex and problematic than traditional theories supposed. However, to complicate our understandings of reference ‘does not [necessarily] amount to saying that there is *nothing* beyond language’ (Derrida, cited in Mooney, 1999:40; my emphasis).

Liotard's (cited in Mooney, 1999:40-1) criticism of the world as text is often cited to bolster the argument that there is more to experience than the concept ‘text’ can hold. Lyotard's (cited in Mooney, 1999:40) argument is that

...whilst the perceived world may indeed have the structure of a text,
the relations between perceived objects do not possess the
interchangeable relations of linguistic ones...

Liotard (cited in Mooney, 1999:41) goes on to contend that although everything is sayable

what is not true is that the signification of discourse can gather up all
the sense of the sayable.

This leaves us with no neat final answer on what text, language, the written or the sayable are and where each ends or overlaps with another similar term. Perhaps this is precisely because this discussion must take place in language and so of necessity has to abide by its limits.



2.2 Writing the self

2.2.1 *The modern conception of self*

As stated previously, according to Derrida, western thought is logocentric. It uses sets of terms that are held in binary opposition to each other, one of which is always privileged in order to assign power to it in the systematic hierarchy of knowledge that is constructed with the terms concerned. Meta-narratives such as Science, Christianity, Psychoanalysis or Analytical Philosophy cluster around such centring principles. These meta-narratives tend to eradicate difference and impose lifeless uniformity and thus non-identity, which can be seen as a way to come to understand or gain knowledge (Heartfield, 2002). Insofar as these meta-narratives ever reflected on the language from which they were constructed, before the linguistic turn, such narratives often viewed language as a vehicle for conveying unchanging truths, answers to lifelong questions that had been arrived at through careful observation or had been given by those in authority, those who 'knew better'. Sometimes the clamour of critical voices at the margins of these meta-narratives that wished to communicate that some parts of the tree could not be seen or were not green were declared backward, heretical, insane or speculative, in an attempt to silence the voices of difference and allow for the manifestation of 'universally acknowledged' truths.

The modernist conception of the self in the West has traditionally been constructed in accordance with this logocentric view. The self was seen as a unitary being, present, essential, conscious and true, a man created in the image of God, fixed and immutable. It has become clear that the implications of post-structuralism are not hostile to subjectivity as such (Heartfield, 2002), but hostile primarily to the kind of subjectivity inherent in the modernist notion of subjectivity as essential, absolute, singular, true, individual and male.



2.2.2 *Writing the postmodern/multiple self*

Derrida conceives of a plural self that is forever changing. He always implies a singular notion of self when he declares 'What can look at itself is not one' (Derrida, 1997:36). This suggests that the very fact that the Subject can contemplate itself shows that it is fractured. 'What is affirmed is the One of multiplicity, the Being of becoming. Or, as Nietzsche puts it, one affirms the necessity of chance', thus affirming the fragments rather than the whole (Deleuze, 2001:86).

Thus difference is represented precisely through the identity of the thinking Subject. In this way, studying writing, understood in this deconstructive sense, becomes a useful site for studying the way that reality is constituted and thus the way that specific writings about/upon selves constitute the particular reality of the multiple Subject. Indeed, Derrida (1997:25) affirms that phonetic writing is 'the infinite spirit relating to itself in its discourse and its culture'.

Deleuze (1994:304) takes this even further by asserting that even the distinction between the bodies of individuals is merely formal and 'not a real distinction', because in spite of this, individuals are intimately implicated in each other's outcomes and combinations. This implies that the thinking Subject is not only multiple and self-reflexive but also intimately related to other such Subjects from which it is not clearly distinguishable. Thus, in a sense, conceiving of the Subject in this way as multiple, self-reflexive, related and indistinguishable from other selves, the S/subject (as we know it) is constantly disappearing and re-constellated in new relations of difference and similarity. Foucault (1977:116) puts this as follows when he says of the writing Subject that

it implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotion related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into a language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating and opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears.



Taking this argument to its logical conclusion implies an understanding of *writing as the construction of the self* (a full discussion of this notion falls beyond the scope of this study, however). Writing represents the self's relationship with itself and as such gives a glimpse of what the self-construction process might look like. According to Foucault (1994), writing constitutes an essential stage in the process of the *self* coming to act. He claims that there is a long history of writing being used in this way in the western world. Indeed, certain writings of the self – *hupomnemata* – form a guide for conduct, and as such they 'must form part of ourselves: in short, the soul must make them not merely its own but itself' (Foucault, 1994:210).

Foucault (1994) sees the self as the ability to constantly engage in the activities of change. For him, subjectivity is the self's involvement with truth, which is best played out in the ethical arena: 'I would like it [change] to be an elaboration of the self by the self, a studious transformation through a constant care for truth' (Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1994:xxxix). Unlike Derrida, Foucault suggests no longer describing the self as an effect of discourse/truth games/text, and so on. Instead, Foucault proposes the idea of *the care of the self*.⁷ With this notion he wishes to place the emphasis back on the agency of the self, '[t]o make the self a continuous creative task, a social experience' (Rabinow, 1994:xxxvii), without making the self a totalizing and homogenous monolithic concept. He wishes to see the self as a continually self-creating Subject, itself involved in creating the effects of truth.

Foucault locates experience and the Subject 'within a complex site comprising a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity (perhaps akin to Derrida's conception of language), and a mode of relation to the self' (Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1994:xxxiv). A Subject that is comprised within a mode of relating to itself is a particular kind of Subject. This kind of Subject would be self-reflective and therefore multiple, and thus well-represented by writing, understood in the sense that I have been elaborating on. At the same time, a Foucauldian Subject would also have to be constantly transforming itself, as an active agent. It is as if Foucault suggests that the existence of a self is something that is chosen by the self. The body/trace that is constituted without the self's being in direct and deliberate relationship to itself is merely some kind of being, it is not a self in this sense. Thus he addresses

⁷ This is a range of activities that involve various deliberate attempts to enact the agency of the self and cultivate the relationship with oneself. Many of these activities are written, for example, writing letters, writing for a mentor-reader, keeping a journal (Foucault, 1994:223-253).



experience as a historical product that emerges within a 'field of knowledge... a collection of social rules... and a mode of relation between the individual and himself [sic]' (Rabinow, 1994:xxxiv).

Perhaps at this point it would be prudent to recall the critical voice of Lacoue-Labarthe, who, according to Heartfield (2002:4), is scathing about attempts to reify self-creation above the equally true socially constructed self, likening them to fascism and describing them as a kind of modernist backlash. Ambiguity in describing the self is important. One has to guard against stylising or idealising the self to the extent that one allows a clear, stable and narcissistic self-concept to emerge. Derrida seems to support the idea that it is dangerous to think of the self as fixed unless one realizes that the very notion of self we thought was fixed is in fact shot through with dynamic and mutable concepts, all of which are complicit in its web of meanings. He pronounces that there should be

... an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split in itself and the origin of the speculation becomes a difference.

(Derrida, 1997:36)

The source of this kind of self is in the traces of difference left by different selves that it *interacts* with. Thus it is the vigour and active aspect of this concept that keeps the self alive and the moment that its meaning becomes fixed/stylized/idealized, such a self would in fact wither away.

This seems to be in keeping with Foucault's description of the self as a process of constantly transforming. He states that '[o]ne's way of no longer remaining the same... is by definition the most singular part of who I am' (Foucault, cited in Rabinow, 1994:xix). For both Derrida and Foucault, the self is dynamic, unstable, self-reflective and multiple. However, Derrida's account of the self and Foucault's account of the self appear to differ in terms of the system in which the self is located and through which it is constituted. Derrida (1997, 2001) seems to describe the self as being at the mercy of the cause-and-effect relations of the system of language and the complex system of traces of difference or play of substitutions that this system of language sets up. Derrida (2001:369) claims that the 'origin' of the self is difference and difference is an effect of language:



Being must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play⁸... [and....] The presence of an element [or self] is always a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain.

By contrast, Foucault (1994) argues that the self is the transformation process, the constant creating of the self by the self as an agent and a Subject within a historical system of social rules and relations. In other words, Foucault commits himself to a definition of a self as necessarily empowered and able to effect deliberate choices in his/her own creation. Although it seems that Derrida does not directly reject this, he describes the self in a far less empowered way, where the self and its constant deferral seem to be something that selves have little control over.

2.2.3 *The self of the writer*

Another interesting take on the notion of effect and of S/subject as being an effect of difference is that of Benveniste. In *Problems in General Linguistics* (Benveniste, 1971), he explains that something that is affected by something else does not necessarily depart from its cause. This suggests that a person does not accomplish an effect solely from without and that it does not itself remain unaffected by the process. This would mean that the S/subject or self is not merely an effect, but an effect whose existence intimately affects/constitutes the being of the system that caused it. This suggests that difference does not pre-exist presence. Difference is not apart from what makes it possible. But it might still be seen as a necessary and sufficient condition for presence (Mooney, 1999:44). This suggests that if the writer is seen as the cause of the writing, he/she can still not be seen as apart from it, but is only constituted as a writer by the text he/she has written. It seems that there must be some dynamic interplay (perhaps a play of differences) between the writer and what is written that constitutes them both. As has been previously stated, writing brings to life, whilst also destroying, through the operation of the violence of the Letter and naming and the arresting effect that these have on the play of differences. This tension is perhaps not adequately captured in the confines of a causal relationship.

⁸ 'Play in the disruption of presence' (Derrida, 2001:369).



Foucault (1977:117) also addresses this notion when he argues that writing is ‘a voluntary obliteration of the self’ that actually takes place in the everyday life of the writer. Authors no longer obtain immortality through their writing, but are killed by it instead⁹ (Foucault, 1977). We are reminded of Barthes’s (1977) notion of the death of the author when Foucault (1977:117) states:

If we wish to know the writer in our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into a victim of his own writing.

This argument questions the concept of the authority of the author over his/her own text or as the sole cause of his/her own text, revealing the author to be impotent. The effect of the impotence or death of the author is that it alters not only what is written, but also the task of the reader/audience. According to Derrida, this task seems to be

... to dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in the text, not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe [write] them in another way. (Derrida cited by Spivak, 1997:lxv)

The suggestion is thus that the distinctions between author, the writer, the written and the reader become curiously unclear, again subsumed into the system of language and the relations of difference that constitute that system.

⁹ It is relevant to note that Foucault singles out the author Kafka (along with Proust and Flaubert) among his examples of authors whose work, instead of creating immortality, ‘attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author’. This is because their works form part of what he refers to as contemporary writing or ‘the writing of our day’. Such writing, rather than according a writer a privileged position of authority, links writing and death as ‘manifested in the total effacement of the individual characteristics of the writer’ (Foucault, 1977:116 & 117).

Chapter 3:

'Act' 2 – Naming the anatomy of textuality in *The Pillow Book*

I am sure that there are two things in life which are always... dependable... the pleasures and excitements of the flesh and the pleasures and excitements of literature. The body... and text... I have had the good fortune to experience them both... at one and the same time.

(Greenaway, 1996:76, my emphasis)

3.1 The ritual of writing: naming what cannot be named

In this section, I explore the Derridean notion of the written trace as suggesting a privileged *presence* caught up in writing. So far in this study, writing has already been characterised in many different ways in an attempt to suggest the indecipherable complexities that it seems to capture. In this chapter, writing is also explored as a *ritual*. When this word is applied to writing, it suggests that the process of writing may be regarded as a formal procedure or convention of constructing that is both the same (since a ritual is repeated) and different (a ritual can never be an exact repetition), and as what was previously constructed as a shared meaning. Because of the nature of writing, it tends to construct the names of disparate aspects of meaning as it operates, of necessity calling a plurality of meanings into being each time a sign is written. In this chapter, I discuss inscriptions/written traces of and on selves as capturing all of these aspects of meaning at once as they occur in particular instances in the text of *The Pillow Book*, a film by Peter Greenaway.

The Pillow Book captured my attention as a site for the study of writing. The film tells the story of a writer, Nagiko, who writes books in calligraphy on the bodies of her lovers. The 1996 film was inspired by Greenaway's reading of a book by a Japanese lady-in-waiting, Sei Shonagon, most of which was written around 994 AD (Morris, 1991:9). Sei Shonagon's book is an intricate trace of herself. It is a vast collection of

personal notes that cover the period of about ten years during which she served at court. It reveals (in writing) a complicated, intelligent, well-informed woman who was keenly observant of detail (Morris, 1991:10). The pillow book was a genre of writing that flourished in the Heian period of Japanese literature (approximately 1 000 years ago). The genre contains works of prose fiction in a type of informal book of notes which men and women composed in private when they retired to their rooms in the evening and which they kept near their sleeping place, possibly in the drawers of their wooden pillows, so that they might record stray impressions for themselves (Morris, 1991:11).

The type of writing in the pillow book genre recalls Foucault's (1994) descriptions in *Technologies of the Self* of ancient Greek and Greco-Roman writings written to effect the care of the self. Such writings include personal letters to friends to help the writer, dialogues, taking notes on the self to be re-read and keeping notebooks to re-activate for the writer the truths that the writer needed to effect. Some of this writing 'presents a description of everyday life. All the details of taking care of oneself are here, all the unimportant things...' (Foucault, 1994:233). These 'unimportant things' are captured in detail, much like the lists of everyday likes and dislikes that characterize Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book* (1991). Based on these ancient eastern and western examples, one could argue that the care of the self involves leaving written traces or self-constructions for oneself to refer back to and reflect on. This suggests that writing may be seen as intimately implicated in the construction of the self or the S/subject whose absence it traces.

In Greenaway's film, the main protagonist is a writer. The audience is given the unusual perspective of the construction of writing as graphic notation in excruciating detail. One of the central themes in the film may be said to be the process of the writer's being named and her naming herself. When the theme of naming was introduced in Chapter 2 ('Act' 1), I proposed the notion of naming things that, when named, cease to be the things they were when they were unnamed (hence the reference in the title of this section to writing as naming what cannot be named). In committing these named things to writing as a process of constructing shared meaning, they are of necessity renamed repeatedly, by the ever-changing horizons of the readers, writer/s and textual conditions. In naming things, any writing/writer (or constructor of text in the broad sense that would include filmmakers such as Greenaway) is also violently excluding other meanings that may have been there

before the act of naming (and are perhaps still there). Derrida claims that the first act of violence is the process of naming that happens with writing because it constitutes the loss of self-presence (Derrida,1997:112).

The Pillow Book opens with a statement about the centrality of names and writing. We are shown the first of six annual Japanese naming rituals undergone by the protagonist, Nagiko, on her birthdays. In the first instance of this ritual, her father names her by performing the ritual and he writes her name on her body. The ritual involves a declaration by the calligrapher/father:

When God made the first clay model of a human being, He painted in [wrote in calligraphy] the eyes [associated with the ability to perceive]...

and the lips [associated with the voice, words and wordlessness]...

and the sex...And then He painted in each person's name lest the person should ever forget it...If God approved of His creation, He breathed the painted clay-model into life by signing His [the Author's] own name. (Greenaway, 1996:31)



Later on, Nagiko unsuccessfully attempts to get a substitute (her husband) to carry on the annual ritual. Eventually she is shown to continue the ritual herself. This is an important part of the film's depiction of her becoming a writer, and a wielder of the pen/brush herself. Although this is clearly an evolutionary process, it is *simultaneously* a conspicuous example of attempting to fix identity in writing.

Interestingly, the naming ritual takes place in two distinct types of relationships: the relationship between a parent and a child, and the relationship between lovers. In the parent-child relationship, the naming seems to form part of a nurturing and supportive process of development. In the relationship between lovers, the possibility of the threat of passion or violence is suggested. Naming (and so writing) is shown to take place in both kinds of relationship and thus *simultaneously* seems to capture the potential for growth and empowerment and that for violence or destruction.

The naming ritual in the film is also a salient example of how naming in language and identity of self through the self-construction in writing may be linked:

...man...has received from God the power and the mission to name, to give a name to his own kind and to give a name to things. To name is not to represent, it is not to communicate by signs....(Derrida, 1992:61)

Derrida adds that to name is to commit the violence of limiting what is undecidable by applying the law of language. In the film, this is done through the mechanism of the repetition of difference in the naming ritual (the ritual is the same, but it is performed on a Subject who, although similar, is clearly growing and evolving and changing her relationship to writing year by year). The naming ritual in the film is thus a vivid picture of how *differance* (difference and deferral) may work to name and not merely to represent. It can also be linked to the Deleuzian notion of repetition – in emphasizing the repeated anniversaries of birth – the ultimate bodily construction of a subjectivity/sexual encounters and, in the case of the film, writings. As has already been suggested, this study follows Derrida's view of the use of proper names and nouns in language to provide distinction, recognition and difference to single out particular meanings from a sea of possibilities. Writing in the broad sense, as discussed in Chapter 1 ('Act' 1), as a universal human characteristic, of necessity brings into play a system of classificatory difference, one

that fixes identity through the use, absence and repetition of proper names (Derrida, 1997).

According to Derrida, a deconstruction of the tradition of writing shows that fixing meaning through language is an exclusionary and violent process. The violence of fixing the flow of life with writing does not befall an innocent language, which, were it not for the constraining effects of written words, would be a direct expression of the pulses of life itself. It is not simply a matter of protecting 'spontaneous life' from the violent ravages of writing (Derrida, 1997:38), because language is not a means of expressing something that springs directly from the fount of meaning. It is the fount (the origin itself) that Derrida calls into question and calls deferred:

The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference which opens appearance and signification. (Derrida, 1997:65, Derrida's emphasis)

However, the construction of language always betrays presence, since it always necessarily defers meaning. The traces apparent in writing are merely left by the movements of words within language, a social system that constantly defers presence. Language is, in another sense, never fixed; and presence is thus nothing other than this constant deferral by the system. Writing, in the concrete sense of graphic notation on a page, defers and so betrays life:

What writing itself...betrays is life. It menaces...the spirit...as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, and their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter. (Derrida, 1997:25)

This notion can be linked to what Deleuze proposes about repetition and difference. According to Deleuze (1994), a repetition of something is never exactly the same; it never substitutes terms that resemble one another or are equivalent to one another. The terms involved in repetition are singular (be they echoes, reflections or doubles, they cannot be generalised) and non-substitutable. Both absolute repetition and change, as *general states*, are therefore impossible. Both are only meaningful when they are used to describe particular instances in a continuous process. When they are used thus, they punctuate nodes of meaning or presence in the only sense that meaning and presence are accessible to us.

According to Deleuze (1994:295), to become similar or equal (as Nagiko becomes to her father when she becomes a writer) is always to become similar or equal to “something that is supposed to be identical to itself ...[that has] an originary identity...” and this something is the ‘I’. In this sense, even repetition (and thus sameness and difference) is about the relation of the self to a seemingly stable other. In the case of Nagiko, her other is her father. Although he is seemingly endowed with the authority and agency of an author, he must repeatedly endure sexual violation by his publisher to get his works published. This undermines him as a figure of authority, even in Nagiko’s eyes, as it suggests that he is not infallible. So, for Nagiko, her father is simultaneously a figure of authority, a source of inspiration and a victim and impetus to violence. His identity too is in flux. Since he is Nagiko’s father and an obvious part of her own identity construction, her identity is also, by implication, in flux, even when she seems to manage to fix it eventually by writing her own name on herself and presenting her own name to this very publisher on her books.

If we consider that Nagiko’s father is the carrier of her proper/family name we have to recognise that Nagiko’s father’s name would function as the name of an author (rather than merely a writer). However, we never actually discover Nagiko’s father’s name, because *The Pillow Book* constantly refers to him merely as ‘Nagiko’s father’. This seems most unusual, since it is often the wife or daughter that is named (or remains only functionally named) in this fashion. Paradoxically, although Nagiko wishes to emulate him as a writer and he writes her name on her in the annual naming ritual, he is never named himself, except through his daughter and her writings. Furthermore, his authorial sovereignty is undermined by his relationship with his publisher, who exploits him sexually. In the light of this, the following words of Derrida (1997:113) seem particularly apposite:

Violence appears only at the moment when the intimacy of proper names [Nagiko’s father] can be opened to forced entry [by the publisher]. And that is possible only at the moment when the space is shaped and reoriented by the glance of the foreigner [or writer – Nagiko, who watches the sexually exploitative relationship between her father and his publisher as she grows up]. The eye of the other calls out the proper names, spells them out, and removes the prohibition that covered them.

By spelling out her father's relationship to his publisher in the film and expressing her abhorrence of it, Nagiko removes the prohibition that covered it for so many years. This also frees her to build on her father's identity as a writer for herself and to carry on the writing tradition through a repetition of writing, with one important difference – the removal of the publisher. This suggests that when the identity/naming mechanism of writing is violently exposed through writing and reflecting on it momentarily, new meanings are called to life. In fact, writing may be said itself to become a character in the film. Writing thus becomes an empowering substitute for Nagiko's relationship with her father, whom she cannot unreservedly admire.

Words such as writing, author, writer, reader, publisher, translator, Nagiko, Derrida, and Nietzsche are all names. But when Gadamer and Derrida discuss the way that naming in language operates, Gadamer correctly points out that a person/entity or process never bears a single name, as shown in 'What is that we call Nietzsche?' (Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989:63-4):

Neither do we ...want to know who Nietzsche is, if we have in mind only the personality, the historical figure, and the psychological object and its products... the marking out of the boundaries of the biographical and of the proper name opens up the general space in whose interior the interpretation of the biological occurs.

(Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989:65).

Likewise, who decides that there is something such as a western metaphysics, a literary/philosophical tradition which would be capable of being gathered up under this singular name only? What is it – the oneness of a name, the assembled unity of western metaphysics or a literary tradition? Is it anything more or less than the desire for a proper name, for a single unique name and a thinkable genealogy? Gadamer asks whether, aside from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche was not one of the greatest thinkers who multiplied his names and played with signatures and masks, who named himself more than once, with several names. The relevance of this discussion for this study is that 'writing' (or Derrida, or the author, or Nagiko) 'is the name of what is never named' or what cannot be named with one singular name only (Spivak, 1997:xx), because writing and writers have many names and meanings that constantly proliferate. Derrida goes on to make further remarks about the naming process at work when an author writes his/her signature.

Significantly, Nietzsche names himself with many names. Thus his name denotes his thoughts at a particular time and in a certain context (which produces his name) and stands for a series of masks and multiple identities. In a circular fashion, these names cause Nietzsche's thoughts as his own. Thus the name is the cause of his thoughts and Nietzsche's thoughts are caused by naming them Nietzsche's. This is because, although the name is not prior to thought, it is produced/determined by it. This means that the name is the name of a conglomeration of contextualised thoughts, rather than of an individual entity. A signature is then fraught with a conglomeration of possible contradictory meanings, for example, a signature is an 'evaluative' and 'prescriptive' sign and it can only mark a certain instance in time as belonging to that signature, and then becomes dated (Gadamer and Derrida, cited in Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989:58-71).

According to Deleuze (2001:66-7), Nietzsche himself affirms the complex unity between thought and life in which life activates thought and thought affirms life. Modes of life inspire ways of thinking; and modes of thinking create ways of living. In order to account for the complex unity between the thoughts and life of a writer constructed through language, it is important to analyse the relationship between a writer's work and his/her life. For example, it is important to analyse the relationship between Derrida's early work in *Of Grammatology* and his life and Foucault's later work in *The Technologies of the Self* and his life and Nagiko's later work after she begins to write and is no longer just written on and her life. Even though these works are each fixed as such when they are named and when they are identified under the names of each of their authors, they go on admitting of changes (to the transforming identity of the writer) even after they are written.

Derrida points out that the logic of signs such as the names of works is akin to scientific objectification (Derrida, 1992:57). Nonetheless, we allow this objectification because we assume that a signature is an enduring mark of a unique and singular identity that does not change over time. In other words, the very signs that we thought gave us access to self-representation or expression (or Truth, as in the case of science) actually operate on us by subjecting us (and thus grant us object status) to the law (of language). The law of language necessarily fixes our meanings and identities in ways that do not accord with the flux of who we are. This fixing quality that the law of language carries with it is the death knell for personal expression or presence. It invalidates testimony, interpretation and responsibility (all concepts that

cannot be tied to a singular name or meaning) in necessarily subjecting subjects to fixed structures and laws. This is also true of Derrida, Foucault and Nagiko's work in that their works are artificially fixed when they are named and when the works are identified as the works of these authors. They then no longer represent the personal expressions of these authors but rather are artificially fixed as records of once-off statements that can rather be associated with the absence of their authors/Subjects than their presence.

However, a signature is also an instance of writing that emphasizes the fact that it is the iterability of the construction that gives something its identity/presence. This means that the repeatability of something as a different instance from what it was before, and not its sameness to the thing itself, is what gives something identity/presence (Lucy, 2004:101). Therefore, since expressions and interpretations cannot be named as singular entities, they lend themselves to naming in this sense – a process of naming that is repeatable within a series of different instances.

3.2 Naming the character, Writing

The character named Writing, in *The Pillow Book*, is also a character in the 'play' that is suggested by this study. Using writing as the name of a character in this way suggests that it is a living entity with a life of its own, and that it may slip in and out of what we as an 'audience' find predictable.

Indeed, the character of writing itself may be seen as a system of a play of ambiguities, an ongoing process of fabrication, a ritual of repeated attempts to capture presence and stability. Providing a way of calling into being through naming allows Subjects to reflect on their own necessarily multiple and complex relations and construction for an elusive moment.

The Pillow Book is filled with many striking examples of the contrast between the fixing and flow of writing. In the film, the concentration of images of the construction of calligraphy visually emphasizes the theme of graphic notation or writing in its fixed/instrumental form and shows how even this seemingly stable example of writing is mutable. Perhaps the most extraordinary example of all is the fixed nature of Nagiko's writings on the corpse of her favourite lover. The skin covered in these writings is then grotesquely peeled off and made into 'The Pillow Book of Jerome' by Nagiko's father's publisher. Throughout the film, Nagiko experiments with different

types of ink, both indelible ink (fixed) and ink that can be easily washed off (flowing ink), endlessly exploring the fixing/naming and erasing effects of writing.

The idea of imprinting traces that are half fixed and half erased is also clearly apparent in the image of Nagiko's white bed sheets, which she often uses to absorb imprints of the black calligraphy on the bodies of her lovers, in a mirror image. This is a vivid example of how writing is used to construct and leave traces of selves that change and are rewritten and re-imprinted upon. The idea seems to be that multiple selves trace themselves on their environment through multiple transcriptions onto the bodies of others, sheets and paper, in both public and private traces – selves that can write and can be written on, selves that can read and be read, selves that are fixed in some moments and fluid in others and are involved in a continual re-presentation and re-representation of themselves to others through written text.

This process is also an example of another repetition or ritual of writing that is demonstrated in the film, namely Nagiko's continuous search for the ultimate lover-calligrapher. In taking numerous lovers and performing a similar ritual with each of them, she measures them both for their ability to impart sexual pleasure to her and for the pleasure of their skins' providing good quality parchment for her writings. Despite the similarity in her sexual/writing rituals, all her lovers vary in their abilities to some extent, making each part of a series, yet different. It is this process of exploring new lover-calligraphers that she writes her own story as a writer, through difference and repetition, the fixing and flow of ink (and bodily fluids).

It may be asserted that the kind of self that is constituted through the process of writing is a multiple self, a self in whom it is only the body that makes numerical/formal distinctions between otherwise indistinct selves. This reminds us that Derrida (1997:36) claims that the self which can reflect on itself is not one self (see Section 2.2.2). Similarly, Deleuze (1994:304) claims that the distinction between the bodies of individuals is merely formal and 'not a real distinction (first mentioned in Chapter 2/ 'Act' 1), because in spite of this apparent distinction, individuals are intimately implicated in each other's outcomes and combinations.

This ambiguity in describing the self is important. One has to guard against stylising or idealising the self to the extent that one allows a clear, stable and narcissistic self-concept to emerge. Derrida warns of the dangerous relationship that the fixed (yet

still self-reflective) notion of a self may have with itself, until one realizes that the self is a dynamic and mutable concept. He speaks of

[a] dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected, which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation the point of origin becomes ungraspable.... For what is reflected is split in itself and the origin of the speculation becomes a difference. (Derrida, 1997:36)

This unpredictable aspect of writing is encapsulated by the numerous paradoxes and disparate traits which writing holds and which are emphasized at different moments in the illustrative texts of this study, *The Pillow Book* and *In the Penal Colony*. One such paradox which seems to be encapsulated by the character of writing which Foucault (1994:212) points out, is the paradox of power and death:

Writing as a personal exercise done by and for oneself [as it is in *The Pillow Book*, and as it is not in *In the Penal Colony*, as discussed in Chapter 4 ('Act' 3) of this study] is an art of disparate truth – or, more exactly, a purposeful way of combining the traditional authority of the already said with the singularity of the truth that is affirmed therein and the particularity of the circumstances that determine its use.

As Foucault (1994) conceives of it, writing is an act for and by oneself (as a writer). When this argument is applied to writing as if it is the name of a living character in a 'play' such as this study, this is in some sense an empowering act. It is a way of calling into being the traditional authority of the writer (or a character in a play as an entity with a life of its own) and the objectivity that is associated with this kind of expression; and combining this with the subjectivity of the writer and the particular conditions of that written text. If we recall the notion from Chapter 2 ('Act' 1) that both subjectivity and objectivity are effects of difference, then one might say that writing (as a system of representing the play of difference) is a way of combining the fixity of supposed authorial objectivity with the peculiarities of the flow of the subjectivity of the writer and the structural complexities of the written text.

According to Foucault, writing may be seen as empowering the Subject, but one must be careful not to see writing as in some way reifying subjectivity on the one hand, and authorial authority on the other. After all, Foucault also says of the Subject that is engaged in writing that, for him/her, writing

implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotion related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into a language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating and opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears. (Foucault, 1977:116)

3.2.1 *The author as the origin/initiator/Subject or father of the 'character' of Writing*

Foucault also mentions the kinship between writing and death. Writing, instead of immortalising a hero or Subject, becomes 'the voluntary obliteration of the self that does not require representation in books because it takes place in the everyday existence of the writer' (Foucault, 1977:117). Instead of immortalising its author, writing now kills its author (and leaves merely a writer behind). This is done through the effacement of the individual characteristics of the author and, in *The Pillow Book*, the blurring of the boundaries between the author (Nagiko and her own father), the translator and the publisher, who are locked into a web of writing relationships. In *The Pillow Book*, authors also become victims of their own writing. Because of this death of the author, it seems to make sense for this study to concern itself with the structures of texts, rather than the author's personal experiences.

According to Foucault (1977), the author's name does not belong to a real person, nor is it fictional. It belongs to the space in between such concepts, which in turn gives rise to new discourses. Yet there seems to be a link, even in death, between an author and his/her work. In acknowledgement of this link, which he muses on particularly in his essay 'What is an Author?', Foucault (1977) is led sometimes to note the distinction between a writer and an author. I use this distinction in this study and suggest that the writer is the best way to describe the parent of any writing that is understood as impermanent, and without a sole origin, because the concept of the writer is closely and of necessity connected to the concept of a reader and an inscriptive surface in a way that the concept of an author is not.

As I have already pointed out, Nagiko's father is both the author of Nagiko (in one sense) and of writings that he wishes his publisher to publish. But whilst this accords him some authority and influence in Nagiko's eyes, he is also an impotent and powerless character/writer. I will bear this in mind as we consider some more of Foucault's musings on the subject of the author's name. In his essay 'What is an Author?', Foucault (1977) points out that using the name of the author is obviously not a pure and simple reference. It is more like a description. The proper name and the name of the author both describe and designate meanings, but neither is wholly determined by either of these two functions on its own or taken together. Foucault (1977) also argues that the author's name functions slightly differently to other proper names. The author's name is not simply an element of speech that could be replaced by another subject or pronoun. An author's name also serves as a broad means of classification. It groups texts together and differentiates them from others; it establishes intertextual relationships. An author's name also points out a particular kind of existence of a discourse that gives rise to the name, whilst also being produced by it (see the discussion of the name of Nietzsche earlier in this chapter/'act' in Section 3.1, where the name is presented as not representing a psychological or biographical unity). A text that bears an author's name cannot easily be consumed and forgotten; the author's name actually regulates the manner in which the written circulates in the discourse. This is epitomised by Nagiko's name, signed on Jerome's naked body, as he displays her writings to the publisher. This is a striking example of how the name of Nagiko, the name of the author, regulates the circulation of the written text.

In this sense, a writer writes private texts such as letters and contracts, whereas an author is published and his/her writing seen by society. An author cannot be anonymous. The implication seems to be that an author is particularly vulnerable to the death of his/her meaning through being exposed to many readers who may keep re-reading (and thus re-writing) his/her text, whereas the writer is only vulnerable to his/her multiple self re-reading and thus re-writing his/her text.

In keeping with his distinction between a writer and an author, Foucault also distinguishes writings from work. For Foucault, work is used to distinguish a specific body of writings 'from the millions of traces left by an individual after his [sic] death' (Foucault, 1977:119). The name 'work' is meant to evoke the phrase 'body of work' and thus to imply the link between the bodily existence of the author and his/her

work. This is an interesting link to make – if we recall Deleuze’s (1994:304) claim that bodies do not really distinguish individuals, as first mentioned in Chapter 2 (‘Act’ 1), then implying a link between the author’s physical body and his/her work still does not enable us to get away from the conceptual death and vulnerability of an author in relationship to the readings of the author’s work by others. However, linking the author’s body to her work seems to be a line of thinking that is suitable for the analysis of a work such as *The Pillow Book*, which is a text that is primarily concerned with writing and flesh.

According to Foucault (1977), if one wishes to talk of writing without reference to a distinct individual author, one should use the word *écriture* to refer to writing, where one attempts to elaborate on the conditions of a text rather than the author’s meaning. However, he cautions that the way this term is used has often meant that our traditional understanding of an author has merely been transposed into a ‘transcendental anonymity’ (Foucault, 1977:120). This transcendental anonymity is precisely what he wishes to get away from in recalling the link between the author and his/her body. He cautions us not to use this notion of writing and authorship as a way of ensuring the immortality of an author through his/her works in a traditional sense. Hence, the conceptual link between the author and death is particularly useful to counteract the notion of the author as a real presence in a text and rather to emphasize the absence of a traditional S/subject or presence in writing.

Once we understand the death of the author as the fixed and sole origin of the character, *Writing*, we can contemplate the empty space left by the death of the author for writing; we should ‘await the fluid functions released by this disappearing’ (Foucault, 1977:121). It is this fluid-filled and empty space that is left by the death of a sole author that is also part of the writer (as distinct from the author) and the ‘origin’ of the ‘character’ of *Writing*. A writer is not an author; a writer is also a reader and a writing tablet. It is these fluid functions of writing that are so clearly depicted in *The Pillow Book* with the numerous images of washing off the calligraphy and ink from various writing tablets/pads/skins as the scribes in the film bath together.

A Freudian reading of Nagiko’s father’s relationship with the publisher also yields intriguing insights about the father of the ‘character’ of *Writing* and the control and possession sometimes associated with the author/the origin of writing in the traditional sense. In these terms, I would suggest that the publisher writes on the

body of the author with his instrument of authority – his penis (or pen), leaving Nagiko's father exploited and very much the possession of his publisher. One might argue that the publisher is only able to have sex with Nagiko's father insofar as he subjugates Nagiko's father. Thus one might speculate that perhaps the author is authored by the social conventions of publishing and exposing him/herself to the world as a naked vulnerable identity to be read and thus re-written, to be killed and resurrected in some form. The authority vested in authorship is thus a social construct that lies outside of the control of the author. In *Life is Elsewhere*, Kundera (1986:60) asserts that

if a poem is to be a true poem, it must be read by somebody else besides the author; only then can it prove that it is not merely a disguised diary and that it is capable of living its own life.

It thus seems that the mere act of writing requires this control to be relinquished and the author to submit him/herself to inevitable death. The question becomes to whom the writing belongs and who can exercise control and authority over it. This also suggests the converse, that if a poem can have a life of its own, then the textual quality of a poem can be bestowed on a life. This then is the sort of Subject that is constituted and comes alive through writing.

The difference between writing (constructing/empowering) and cutting (destroying and disconnecting) is only a matter of depth. Indeed, writing, like any word, holds both of these possibilities within itself simultaneously; and the presence that it can offer up to us is the constant interplay of these tensions.

It seems that when Nagiko picks up the calligraphic¹⁰ pen/brush and herself becomes a writer, she is in fact appropriating the phallus and the symbolic order in which it reigns. Not only does she subvert traditional authority in doing so, but she wields the phallus/pen/brush more effectively than many of the other writers in *The Pillow Book*. This is evidenced especially by the fact that she eventually kills the parasitic publisher with her last written tablet, the skin of her knife-wielding lover. In this, we can see that violence becomes a substitute expression for writing, which is always cathartic in the film.

¹⁰ 'Beautiful lettering' from the Greek *kalli*, meaning beautiful (Merriam Webster, n.d.:n.p.).

In the English translation of Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, the author¹¹ ostensibly uses the word *penal* to name his story and to indicate that it discusses the punitive. However, the association with the word penis also seems clear. If we follow this meaning, then the author explicitly names the story as male, whilst simultaneously associating this maleness with punishment, permanence and pain. We might compare this to Greenaway's story of the author/writer Nagiko in *The Pillow Book*. In the latter, the protagonist is a woman who is developing her sense of agency through writing, in comparison to Kafka's text in which the Condemned Man is being written on and destroyed by another man through writing.

Kafka's text is clearly devoid of any female characters or influence; and it is renowned for the sense of powerlessness, impotence and destruction that it projects. By contrast, Greenaway's text is full of passion and potency, and although destruction and revenge are also explored, they are explored in the context of creation and life. The contrast between the destructive power of being written on and the constructive power of writing (on) yourself is clearly visible in a comparison of these texts. But whereas Nagiko co-opts the pen/phallus as an instrument of power and naming for herself, Kafka seems to reveal it as something associated with torture and destruction. The sexual relationship and the mingling of bodies is explored back and forth in *The Pillow Book*, whereas in Kafka's text the suggestion of the relationships between the characters is often incidental and disconnected, as if the pen/phallus, naming and writing, and even the relationships that this sets up are not in any way associated with growth, intimacy or vibrant presence, but rather are alienated and lifeless. The suggestion is that perhaps writing and naming are not such meaningful activities at all. In Kafka's text, writing cannot even destroy its intended victim, let alone construct authority or selfhood.

3.2.2 *The tablet as the incubator/object/mother of the 'character' of Writing*

The empty space left by the death of the author that releases fluids (Foucault, 1977:121) is reminiscent of a female or mother space and leads one to postulate a mother for the 'character' of Writing (if the author/writer can be conceived of as the father). The suggestion in *The Pillow Book* is that the mother is the part of the writer

¹¹ The language editor of this study points out that the German title does nothing of the kind, *Die Strafkolonie* (a feminine noun) does not contain these associations, thus implying that the translator as reader/author is adding such a layer to the text, once again making meaning proliferate richly.

that is the tablet or space that is written on, also by the writer, who incubates the 'character' of Writing. The death of the author discussed previously is the concept of the death of a sole author. This death leaves a fluid-filled space that is dynamic and multiplicitous from which to give birth to writing and the proliferation of meanings associated with writing. The father or mother figures of the 'character' of writing (the writer and the tablet) cannot be conceived of as the parents of the 'character' of Writing in isolation. It is only in a dynamic combination that, together, they can give rise to writing. It is also interesting to note that in *The Pillow Book* the mother and father of writing (tablet and writer) both occur as aspects of the same empowered writing Subject Nagiko, whereas in *In the Penal Colony*, the tablet is separated from the writer (who is the Commandant or the writing device). The writing in *In the Penal Colony* is a condemning, unjust and torturous process rather than an empowering act. This suggests that the shifting perspectives within one and the same writer encapsulate both the subject and object of writing in a fluid, impermanent process and is perhaps what gives rise to the empowering presence possible through writing.

When Nagiko starts to write (on) herself, inspired to do so by her favourite lover – Jerome – she first writes a series of *antonyms* (further emphasizing the ambiguity and difference inherent in the writing process) on the parts of her body that she can reach (Greenaway, 1996:68). This illustrates the discriminating way in which writing and naming works. But when she stands up after writing these antonyms, and begins to read them off the tablet of her own skin, her perspective on the words she has written changes and she sees that all the words are upside down, thus shifted and meaningless. It is as if in the naming, the constructions of writing come momentarily into view and are then lost again, so that meaning is deferred.

In Derrida's (1987) book, *The Post Card*, where he is described as more of a *writer* than a philosopher, he points to the idea of Plato as the tablet and Socrates as the scriptor who writes on the tablet – thus subjugating the traditional notion of Plato writing and Socrates as being transcribed by Plato.



This is the same way in which Nagiko, the writing Subject, becomes the tablet and thus the object of her own writings, and in which the process of writing palpably merges the concepts of subject and object.

So far in this section of this chapter/'act', I have suggested that it is the intimate combination of a writer and a space to write on/(in) that gives birth to writing (understood as *écriture*). Since writing is the name of what cannot be named, I started this chapter/'act' with an extensive discussion of how the process of naming through writing operates. So the child of the writer (who is also the writing pad) is named Writing in a similar naming ritual to the one that Nagiko uses in naming her own daughter. The parallel between what writing brings into being and the birth of the daughter of Nagiko and Jerome, where Nagiko is the writer and Jerome is the writing pad,¹² is an obvious subtext in this chapter/'act'. Nagiko seems to gain distinct satisfaction from painting the naming ritual onto her own daughter by Jerome. This is the tangible writing presence that she is left with when Jerome dies.

It now seems appropriate to continue this chapter/'act' by exploring the bodies (seen as a kind of representation of immanence) of these parents of Writing. But before we can get to that point, it is necessary to consider to what extent writing is able to capture the presence that seems to be in the bodies of these parents, namely the writer and her translator, and also what the affiliation is between presence and the relationships that writing sets up. This chapter/'act' ends with an exploration of the association between writing and sex as a way of examining the way that the writing

¹² Or vice versa, since Jerome uses his pen/is to write his semen into Nagiko's uterus as the writing pad.

process works in terms of what it sets up and how these constructs relate to each other in more detail.

3.3 Translating the presences that writing sets up

There seems to be a notion that there is some vestige of spontaneous life or presence that constitutes writing itself. Derrida (1997:20) stresses this notion when he states that being is manifest above all in words and that words are closest to the self when they do not borrow from outside the self any substance of expression foreign to the self's own spontaneity. But this notion holds, even within itself, the problem of deferral in that the self is nothing other than the signified concept, always deferred, always signified, always borrowing from outside itself:

It is the unique experience of the signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self, and nevertheless, as a signified concept. (Derrida, 1997:20)

This suggests that the expression of presence contains the illusion of the effacement of the signifier, which is the condition of truth (Derrida, 1997:20). This means that one can only have truth in the apparent absence of a signifier. Under this illusion, the word is lived as the truth, which comes to mean the unity of the signified and the expression (the concept and the substance of expression). This also suggests that the self's own spontaneity or presence comes down to the self's own constant deferral, the self that constantly produces traces and cannot be named, the self which signifies something other than itself and is thus a living example of the fluidity of construction.

Foucault (1977) suggests that the writing of our day has managed to free itself from the necessity of expression or presence and now only refers to itself. This may be linked to Derrida's (1997) notion of traces always referring to other traces. Such writing is regulated more by the nature of the signifier than by the content that is signified. Hence, it is a site where the Subject continuously disappears, even as it is constructed through writing. By constantly drawing attention to the artifice of the writing process that Nagiko engages in on the bodies of her lovers, *The Pillow Book* focuses on her subjectivity as a writer and the way it keeps disappearing with what she writes. In this way, she becomes less important than the process by which she writes, since it is the writing process itself that paradoxically carries her presence

forward by leaving constantly deferred traces and being involved in the same naming ritual over and over again in different contexts throughout the film.

This trace of the presence of the self (understood as a constantly deferred presence) can be discerned through the self's relationship to others or through the relationships that writing perforce sets up in the text. The apparent need for writing to be deciphered or translated demonstrates the inevitability of writing's setting up a series of relationships and thus being a rich site for discerning traces of the self's constantly deferred presence. It is thus in their writing and translating and the concomitant sexual relating of their bodies that we can discern Nagiko and Jerome's presence as the parents of the writing process.

Although Nagiko writes on bodies, she also writes another, still more private, text, namely personal diaries. These different kinds of text that Nagiko writes reveal that she, as a writer and parent of writing, is made up of different writing selves. To name but a few of these selves, we notice that she is made up of a self that writes only for herself in her diary, a self that wants to become an author who is published and known all over the world, and who thus writes on a variety of other people, a self that wants to be related exclusively to Jerome and a self that wants to have the anonymous text of the naming ritual repeatedly written on herself.

In being made up of all of these selves, she seems to be haunted by the relational nature of writing. She greatly admires Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*, which is a personal diary. This private text gives Nagiko much inspiration as a writer, but she initially seems to turn to her own personal diary writing as an unhealthy, isolated activity, whereas her writings on bodies are open to access by others. When Nagiko's husband refuses to continue the birthday face painting ritual, 'Nagiko retreats into a diary obsessed identification with Sei Shonagon' (Greenaway, 1996:99) until her husband finally burns her diaries in the first of two major fires that change the direction of Nagiko's life. Nagiko herself as a writer seems plagued by the notion that writing is a relational activity that gives her access to the presences of others and inevitably sets up relationships between readers, writers, translators and publishers. Even when the reader of her writings is herself, she seems to keep on suggesting that this self is inextricably involved in multiple relationships both with itself and with others. Nagiko, in her 'Book of Secrets', written on another lover's body, declares that 'the [writer's] hand cannot write ...itself' (Greenaway, 1996:110).

This again suggests that writing is always a relational activity, an active process of engaging the self in a web of shared constructing and constructions.

Nagiko spends much of the film trying to get her writings to be published and indeed goes to inordinate lengths to connect herself (sexually) with the presences of others and get her thirteen books to be read by her chosen publisher. Yet she also tries to keep the face painting ritual (and an example of an anonymous text without an author) alive throughout her life. She seems ardently to desire to identify herself as a writer with an anonymous text and also simultaneously to become a published author, both of which she sees as naming vital parts of her identity. In one sense, she seems less successful at transforming herself into an author through her writings than a published author might be, since in the end she opts to kill her publisher rather than be published by him. This is an attempt to take revenge on him because he took possession of her lover Jerome, the presence that she privileged through her writing.

Eventually the face painting ritual comes to mark some of her own major writings and she ends the film by painting the same greeting on her daughter's face. She seems to feel that writing on her own body, like writing a private diary, is not an entirely satisfying expression of herself (she expresses this by remarking that the writing is always upside down). She suggests that very private writing does not exemplify the sort of self-construction/expression that she is seeking, but that in experimenting with writing on bodies and for another reader, she is tapping into her own desire to be read (Greenaway, 1996:110).

Nagiko has an ambivalent relationship with private texts and expressions or names of herself. Her last diary entry, a note addressed to her publisher on 31 December 1999 reads:

This is the writing of Nagiko Kiyohara, and I know you to have blackmailed, violated and humiliated my father. I suspect you also of ruining my husband. You have now committed the greatest crime – you have desecrated the body of my lover. You and I now know that you have lived long enough. (Greenaway, 1996:116)

This writing is not only her last diary entry, but she also transcribes it onto the skin of her thirteenth book, 'The Book of the Dead', that she delivers to the publisher, just

before she has him killed by the person on whose skin these sentences appear. Thus these private writings become public and are publicly translated into action or presence in a most dramatic way (Greenaway, 1996:107).

I have already mentioned that in the film of *The Pillow Book*, Nagiko's preferred lover, Jerome, becomes her translator. It is Nagiko who first tries to seduce Jerome, expressly in order to appeal to the publisher who used to be Jerome's lover. Later, when Jerome and Nagiko become lovers, Jerome expresses his desire to make Nagiko's writings known all over the world by becoming a translator of her writings and her expressions of herself as a writer. Foucault (1994:324) believes we suffer from 'a deep-seated anxiety that [we] will not be heard or read. Hence, too, the fantastic phobia for power: anybody who writes exerts a disturbing power ...'. Nagiko seems to express this anxiety when she first approaches Jerome to get to the publisher. But later, Jerome becomes Nagiko's favourite lover and helps her to give birth to writing herself and her power as a writer. He comes to personify a vehicle for her presence and identity construction itself. The relationship between Nagiko (the writer becoming author) and Jerome (the translator) is thus central to the themes of this study and is examined more closely to illustrate some more of the complexities that the writing process sets up as it constructs, defers, names and gives birth to new meanings.

Jerome and Nagiko's relationship is satisfying and nurturing when Jerome encourages Nagiko to become a writer (and indeed when he names her as such through the naming ritual). In this relationship between the writer and the translator, the writings that these two identities produce as each other's lovers on each other's bodies maintain elements of both fixing and flowing – being written, washed off and re-written. Their relationship becomes unsatisfactory when Jerome wishes to change Nagiko from a writer into an author, to be known all over the world. For in this role, the writings of the author are fixed by the publisher and just as they became fixed, so they have to cease to be the intimate deferrals of her presence.

Let us consider the satisfying part of Jerome and Nagiko's relationship, when Jerome encourages Nagiko to become a writer in the sense meant by Foucault in his *Technologies of the self*, a writer for herself. In the film, Nagiko needs Jerome to make her into a writer. It is Jerome who encourages Nagiko to begin writing, rather

than just being written on. This moment is described in the screenplay of the film as follows:

Jerome takes her hand and opening her fingers, puts the felt-tipped pen into her grasp. He closes her fingers around the pen... he holds the pen in her hand against his chest... she is caught in great hesitation – a turning point. (Greenaway, 1996:67)

In this moment, Jerome, the translator, becomes the page of Nagiko, the writer. Prior to this, Nagiko asked Jerome (and indeed all her lover-calligraphers) to write on her own body. Thus the moment when Nagiko writes on Jerome marks a swapping of roles. It thus seems that the boundaries between writing and translating (and being written on) become blurred and we are able to see writing and translation as two inextricably linked parts of the same process of writing meaning, mutually bound. Writing necessarily demands translation and translation necessarily demands writing. The qualities of translation may thus be transposed onto writing and we may concur with Spivak, Derrida's approved translator, (1997) that all writing involves translation (or transformation, as she calls it):

If there are no unique words, if, as soon as a privileged concept-word emerges, it must be given over to the chain of substitutions and to the "common language," why should that act of substitution that is translation be [more] suspect? It must now be evident that, desiring to conserve the "original"... and seduced by the freedom of the absence of a sovereign text...translation itself is in a double bind [just the same as any language/writing is]. (Spivak, 1997:lxxxvi)

In this sense, translation, language and writing function in a similar way. They all try to display a more or less decipherable meaning to others, trying to substitute one sense for another and keeping some vestige of 'meaning' intact. But in the end nothing is able to do so and each betrays presence, since neither translation, nor language nor writing is able to capture that presence. This echoes the Romantic notion of the linguistic sublime (Baldick, 2004:248), Nietzsche's fusion of the Apollonian and Dionysian concepts (Nietzsche, 1993) and some forms of psychoanalytic theory (Culler, 2003), where the apparently paradoxical notions of dread and desire are deliberately combined to suggest ambiguity and the life-seeking self's inevitable complicity in its own destruction. It is as if the self/written

word stands on the edge of the chasm of meaninglessness, simultaneously drawn to the deferral and flux lurking on the edges of the linguistic system, that it knows will mean its own destruction. It is the same problem that our analysis of naming revealed earlier, namely that once something is named, it ceases to be that thing because it is named. In desiring to name it, we are perforce dooming it to destruction; and we seem continuously caught in this conundrum in our attempts to construct meaning.

The narrative writings on bodies in the film can be described as an example of how written narrative can commit violence and can 'kill' presence/life by attempting to transcribe it into a fixed form:

Writing is the dissimulation of the natural, primary, and immediate presence of sense to the soul within the *logos*. (Derrida, 1997:37)

Writing in the sense of the violent Letter, limits history and the life of the spirit as self-presence. This 'writing breaks the noun apart' (Derrida, 1997:26). In this sense, translation (represented by Jerome) and the language of the writer (represented by Nagiko) each becomes a vehicle for transforming one text into another, creating something new and altering itself in the process. This is cogently expressed in Jerome's statement to Nagiko on her birthday, after Nagiko has expressed the wish to become a writer:

I could learn new languages (kissing her)... *to make you understood*
(kissing her again) ...*all over the world*. (Greenaway, 1996:76)

And later,

'I could be your messenger' to the publisher. (Greenaway, 1996:77)

Nagiko and Jerome (writing and translation) become involved with each other in a violent and passionate betrayal of presence and meaning, in which they are seduced into believing that they will satisfy the demands of being vehicles for true and pure presence. But presence is constantly deferred, only to leave continuous, messy traces of difference. As Spivak (1997) argues in her translation of Derrida,

translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But, if the difference is never pure, translation is even less so, and a notion of *transformation* must be substituted for the notion of translation: a

regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. (Spivak: 1997:lxxxvii; Spivak's emphasis)

It is this regulated transformation of each other that Nagiko and Jerome undergo in relation to each other. This transformation of each towards the other is an effect of difference and the constant deferral of meaning. This leaves traces of presence of supposed origins. But in the end, these traces of traces are all we have to follow in our elusive and illusive quest for truth/being/presence/origin/transcendental expression, something that language as a socially constructed system of signs does not offer us.

Further evidence that the transformative act of translation may be deemed intertextual is gleaned from Spivak (1997:lxxxvi), who remarks that any act of reading is besieged and delivered by the precariousness of intertextuality: 'And translation is, after all, one version of intertextuality.' Intertextuality encapsulates the various relationships that 'a given text may have with other texts' (Baldick, 2004:128). These relationships may include allusion, adaptation, translation, parody, imitation 'and other kinds of *transformation*' (Baldick, 2004:128, my emphasis). It is intended that all of these relationships are inherent in this study and the texts such as the film of *The Pillow Book*, to which it is related.

The relationship between Nagiko and Jerome in the film is intimate, passionate and violent. It is temporary and yet also leaves a lasting impression in naming for a moment, what cannot be named forever (rather like the relationship between meaning/presence and expression/writing). At times, it reaches heights of expressive ecstasy, but in the end, it is frustrating, painful, destructive and lonely, leaving the writer and translator who are involved in it both irrevocably changed (or re-written) and dissatisfied. Yet it leaves behind it a child, a trace of itself, a life of its own that is named through this writing relationship.

The apparent need that writing always has for translation is also emphasized in this relationship. This resonates with Derrida's remarks that the writer is always a foreigner in the language that he/she uses to write in, because the writer must approach the other in the language of the other that is not his/her own (Derrida, 1992). This will be discussed further in the next chapter/'act'.

The notion that writing is in some sense always also a betrayal or falsification of presence even though it carries deferred presences is poignantly portrayed in the film, in the relationship between Nagiko and her translator-lover. What destroys the creative relationship between Nagiko and Jerome is Nagiko's request to Jerome that he display her writings to the publisher on his own naked body. He does this and then also enters a sexual relationship with the publisher as Jerome is read by the publisher. Through this, the film suggests that there is a conduit between the private and the public self, the writer and publisher, in the person of Jerome, an English translator. This seems to suggest the possibility that an inscribed narrative of the self may be transmitted to others through some vehicle that simultaneously fixes and betrays it. It seems as if, through a writer's becoming fixed as an author (known to others in translation), the intimate relationship that writing sets up between writer and reader (where the writer can be rewritten by the reader and vice versa) is somehow betrayed and the knowledge of the writer-author by the wider readership becomes fixed or named, which then, in turn, destroys the knowledge that has been constructed.

3.3.1 *The names of the written Presences*

Interestingly, in both the film of *The Pillow Book* and in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, there are very few proper names. There are none in *In the Penal Colony* and only two in *The Pillow Book*, namely those of Nagiko and Jerome. This further emphasizes their relationship as a vehicle for representing each other's presence to each other and its apparently personal and distinctive nature. The effect of not naming the other characters in these works (except to refer to them as 'the publisher', 'the exhibitionist', 'Nagiko's father' or 'Nagiko's husband' in *The Pillow Book*, and the 'Traveller', the 'Commandant' or the 'Condemned Man' in *In the Penal Colony*), draws the reader's attention to the fact that they cannot be fully distinguished or deciphered, just as writing cannot ever completely reveal presence. In one sense, this is just the opposite of what Jerome wishes for Nagiko, and so their relationship is doomed by their unrealistic expectations of the kind of connection to presence that writing can offer.

Jerome's name is interesting too – it means 'sacred name' (Jerome, n.d.:n.p.). Jerome is considered a saint by the Roman Catholic and eastern orthodox churches. Saint Jerome is credited with translating the Latin Vulgate version of the

Bible and thus making this text more available to a wider readership. He is also known for spending his days in incessant literary production and biblical translation (Wikipedia, *Jerome*, n.d.:n.p.). All of these qualities (except possibly sainthood) resonate with the Jerome of *The Pillow Book*. This highlights the naming process described by Derrida, where the system of proper names as a system of classification is explored as a way of possibly gaining access to pure presence that seems to be promised by writing, but is in fact not delivered upon because of eternal deferral. Nonetheless, this messianic promise (Spivak, 1997:xxxi) of presence in writing is reminiscent of the meaning of Jerome's name and Jerome's quest in *The Pillow Book* to make Nagiko's meaning known to the whole world and thus deliver on the apparent messianic promise of writing to give access to pure presence.

In his essay 'What is an Author?', Foucault (1977) names Saint Jerome and his particular significance for a discussion of authorship. In Saint Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus* (Catholic Encyclopedia, n.d.:n.p.), translated as *On Illustrious Men*, and in which Jerome himself appears as an example of an illustrious man in the last chapter, he maintains that homonymy is not proof of the common authorship of several works, since many individuals may have the same name. He uses this to argue that the name of an author as an individual mark (or signature) is not sufficient, because it relates to a whole textual tradition rather than a person, just as *The Pillow Book's* Jerome relates to a whole sexual and textual tradition for the budding author Nagiko and not just to one special encounter.

According to Saint Jerome, there are four criteria necessary to ascribe a text to an individual author (Foucault, 1977:128). According to Foucault, each of these criteria tells us something about what extrapolating an author's name from a text might mean. It might mean that the author is defined as

- a standard of quality;
- a field of conceptual coherence;
- a stylistic uniformity; and/or
- a historical figure in which a series of events converge.

Modern criticism seems to follow this quite closely. As an author, Nagiko seems to conform to these characteristics of an author: she explains the presence of certain events in the text and she constitutes some kind of principle of unity in writing even in the midst of various flows.

Yet it seems that Nagiko's name, insofar as it represents her as an author, calls into question the notion of an author as someone who neutralizes contradictions in a series of texts and brings with her a uniform style and identity. For example, her desire to present her writing to the publisher (even on the naked body of her favourite lover) seems to contradict her enormous love of Jerome and her jealousy over him when, at her request, he involves himself in a sexual relationship with her publisher.

In contrast to the meaning of Jerome's name and its associations with the sacred, Nagiko's name means popularity (Nagiko, n.d.:n.p.). Sacredness is associated with holiness or being set apart and as such can be pitted against its opposite, namely popularity and being the same. For Nagiko, Jerome is set apart from her other lovers as her favourite. For Jerome, Nagiko is a project to make writing popular or available to many readers. Ironically, Nagiko is incensed by the fact that Jerome is not set apart as her lover only when he becomes sexually involved with the publisher, and Jerome never manages to make Nagiko popular. This suggests that the meaning of names/naming is not necessarily an indication of truth or direct relationship to the presence of the name bearer in terms of what the name promises to deliver.

3.3.2 *The name that re-presents the text*

Intertextuality implies the endless proliferation of meaning in a text, since any writing is necessarily related to other writings because of the (intertextual) relationships that the writing process sets up. Intertextuality is evident in *The Pillow Book* in the way the text presents its own name. The Greenaway film, the screen play and the Sei Shonagon book on which the film is based, and Nagiko's own diary writings, all go by the same name, namely, that of *The Pillow Book*. This tells us about the written S/subject. This demonstrates how naming, narration, translation, writing, tracing and inscribing function intertextually in the context of a specific writing self, namely, Nagiko. Some of these texts written by and to and about Nagiko include the already existing 'classical' *Pillow Book* of Sei Shonagon (1991), the written document that inspired the film, and the books that we see the film's protagonist write on the bodies of her lovers, namely the books of 'The Exhibitionist', 'Innocence', 'The Idiot', 'Impotence', 'The Lover', 'Death', 'Secrets', 'Silence', 'Betrayal', 'False Starts' and 'Youth'. In trying to decipher what the name of *The Pillow Book* refers to, we follow

traces of traces, making the initial gesture of differentiation, not from the origin but from a different constellation of the same always dynamic intertextual system. The distinct Pillow Book texts all become complexly interwoven in Greenaway's film. The intertwining and intertextuality of these texts occurs at many levels and via many associations.

In the introduction to the screenplay, Greenaway, the author of the film, explains the intimate relationship between his film and Sei Shonagon's text, so interwoven yet apparently still distinguishable:

It must be said straight away for those who have not read Sei Shonagon, that she certainly would not have recognised the narrative of this film or its characters, though. I had hopes that she might recognise many of the sentiments she had expressed, and much of her own excitement in literature and the physical world. I would also like to think that she would have recognised *the quotations we made of her quotations*.
(Greenaway, 1996:5, my emphasis)

Nagiko overtly models herself on Sei Shonagon, she even signs her final writing in the film Nagiko Kiohara no Motosuke *Sei Shonagon* (Greenaway, 1996:112) and the film continuously strengthens this association between these two writers. For example, during one of Nagiko's writing/sexual encounters there is an insert frame of Nagiko as a tenth century Heian courtier and a voice-over from Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book* entitled 'Things that are Unpleasant to See'. Parts of the Sei Shonagon *Pillow Book* are continuously and explicitly woven into the text of the film until they form an integral part of its character.

Many parts of Nagiko's own pillow book diary are also used to construct the text¹³ of the film. The third appendix of the Greenaway screenplay details excerpts from Nagiko's diary, which we often see her composing in the film. The other pillow books that Nagiko writes in the film are the thirteen books that she writes on various bodies and sends to the publisher. The last of these books, written on the body of a man whom she has sent to kill the publisher, is in fact an excerpt from her diary, her last

¹³ In this case, the text of the film is taken to be the screenplay of the film, although there are obviously many ways in which the film's 'text' could be interpreted/read. Greenaway's pertinent comment in the introduction to the screenplay that 'it is this very intimidating gap between text and image which is, in many ways, the subject and substance of the film' (Greenaway, 1996:12) also comments on this, but any fuller exploration of this comment falls beyond the scope of this study.

diary entry of 31 December 1999, in which she names herself as the writer of these books and declares her intentions to have the publisher murdered by this last 'book', aptly named 'The Book of the Dead'. It is almost as if the suggestion is that this proliferation of intertexts undermines the traditional notion of publication, predicated as it is upon identifiable authorship of original works to such an extent as to destroy the publisher and the way that the copyright law operates to enforce ownership of texts by singular authors.

Through this intertextuality, the boundaries between all of these pillow books become blurred in a way that reminds us not only of Derrida's (1997) questioning of the origin, but also of his declaration of the split origin and the mechanism of difference. This difference is reflected in the patterns of repetition and difference between all the *Pillow Book* texts and we see that the 'original' text, like all the others, is merely a reflection; and a trace of difference between all the texts becomes apparent.

This impression of an indistinct origin is intensified by the fact that the boundaries between the authors of the texts also seem to blur. This causes us to question the boundaries of selves, which also seem to be unoriginal, consisting merely of a trace pattern of differences and likenesses. We recall the questions of Nagiko (or is it Greenaway or Shonagon?) about who a book's parents are. Can a book be born inside another book? And where is the parent book of books? (Greenaway, 1996:108).

This intertextuality also serves as a pertinent example of how the writers – Greenaway, Sei Shonagon and Nagiko, are conflated and thus *The Pillow Book* is written by all of them and not by a singular author. This is a model for the way intertextuality more broadly – in this study and beyond – may be said to operate. It is also a model for the way in which naming functions. We may recall what was said about this earlier in this chapter when Gadamer and Derrida's discussion of the way that naming in language operates was presented and the claim that a person/entity or process never bears a single name (Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989).

3.4 The writer presents the written and the written presents the writer

The Pillow Book describes the relationship between writers and texts. In it, the relationship that writing sets up between writers and texts is often described as an intimate relationship between lovers, much like the relationships that we see unfolding between Nagiko and the lovers that she writes on. In Nagiko's sixth book, 'The Book of the Lover', which she writes on Jerome's corpse, the body of her favourite lover and translator, she declares

This is a book *and* a body
That is so warm to touch
My touch...
This book and I have become indivisible....
May I keep this book forever
May this book and this body outlast my love.

(Greenaway, 1996:107; my emphasis)

The suggestion is that in fusing the horizons of the writer and the written – both exist independently – the writer and what is written become so intimately implicated in each other's existence that they have become one (intertextual) text.

Another important relationship that writing sets up is a triangular relationship between the reader, the written and the writer, since the notion of writing is always understood to be for reader(s), even if the author of private writing in some sense doubles as the reader of that writing. The point is that the reader, the writer and the written all act on and are affected by each other, being transformed in the writing/reading process. In this regard, Foucault (1994:214) mentions that

the letter one writes acts, through the very action of writing, upon the one who addresses it, just as it acts through reading and rereading on the one who receives it.

When Nagiko mentions that she and her book have become indivisible (Greenaway, 1996:107), she is making a declaration both as the writer of 'The Book of the Lover' and the first reader thereof. In this sense, having read and written this book and literally infused herself with its contents (by having sex with Jerome), she has become one with the written through the writing process.

Whilst 'The Book of the Lover' means one thing in the context of this declaration by Nagiko as the epitaph to her most significant lover, it means something different to the publisher when he reads it after having skinned Jerome and crafted a book out of Nagiko's writings on his body. The publisher has also been Jerome's lover and as such he has also become one with Jerome (the publisher has melded with translator). The publisher has been the reader of Jerome's text, which has affected him deeply and transformed his reading of the text of the book of the lover. This is in keeping with the notion that the text goes on to be transformed itself again and again with each new reading.

This suggests that if we see writing and reading as inseparable processes and acknowledge the constant and necessary movement from writer to reader and back again by the writing-reading self, then writing necessarily constitutes the kind of self/Subject that is related to others whilst at the same time being in relationship to itself:

It is in this sense that writing does not describe substance, it describes relations of construction. (Derrida, 1997:26)

Foucault's (1994) view of the relationship between the body and text asserts the inextricable link between writing and reading. Indeed, he declares that the role of writing is to transcribe the readings of the writer and then appropriate these into his/her own self and transform him/herself continuously through the process of writing:

[T]he role of writing is to constitute, along with all that reading has constituted, a "body"...And this body should be understood not as a body of doctrine but, rather...as the very body of the one who, by transcribing his readings, has appropriated them and made their truth his own: writing transforms the thing seen or heard "into tissue or blood". (Foucault, 1994:213)

Nagiko (the writer) also sends the publisher (the reader of her text) her writings to read, written on the body of Jerome (the translator). When she does this, she wishes to send the publisher a message about the fact that she expects him to be accountable for his exploitation of her father (another writer with whom he has become one sexually). Thus the writing process is shown to set up a web of intriguing and intimate relationships amongst entities that are all implicated in the

process of expressing/sharing and continuously reconstituting meaning (namely, reading, writing, publishing and translating).

3.5 The presence in a body of writing

The interface between the body and modern subjectivity is vividly interrogated in *In the Penal Colony* discussed in detail later in this study and in *The Pillow Book*.

Michel Foucault calls the body the “inscribed surface of events” (Foucault, 1984:83) and Elizabeth Grosz argues that the “female (or male) body can no longer be regarded as a fixed, concrete substance, a pre-cultural given. It has a determinate form only by being socially inscribed” (Grosz, 1987:2). The body becomes plastic, inscribed with gender and cultural standards. While Foucault assumes the existence of a pre-inscriptive body, many theorists reject that idea and argue that “there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings” (Butler, 1990:8). The constitution of the body rests in its inscription; the body becomes the text which is written upon it and from which it is indistinguishable.

(Brush, 1998:22)

As you may already have noticed, in the film of *The Pillow Book*, not only is attention drawn to the intertextual relationships that writing necessarily sets up but also to the bodiliness of the writing process. Nagiko herself is made up of the writing/inscriptions on her body; she is not just a writer. She herself is written into existence by her father and her lovers (and later, by herself, when she becomes a writer and writes on her own body and the bodies of others).

Jerome as Nagiko’s preferred lover has access to Nagiko’s writings, in fact, they construct him in certain ways, since they are on his body, not only is he her translator to make her understood all over the world, but he is the substance of her written text. We have already said how this emphasizes the indivisibility of the written and the writer in the instant of writing (although each new reading is itself a writing where the text is once again reconstituted). With Jerome, we see how, if the written is the translated, then the writing and the translating process become one. This suggests that writing is the same transformative process as translation; and

that it is as if writing a text is always transforming one text into another, for a moment translating its meaning into a different context or, like an alchemist, changing the body of its very substance.

What is interesting in the Greenaway film is that through writing on the body, the word/*logos*/reason is no longer to be considered external to writing – it is in the kind of writing on bodies that we see in the film that the *writing comes to represent the coming together of the body and the mind in a very vivid way*, a way that counters what Derrida (1997:35) has referred to as the West's insistence on the privilege of *logos* and thus of speech over writing.

Greenaway (1996) seems to present a deliberate visual challenge to the traditional western way of *seeing* writing, namely that writing is from the mind and speaking is from the body, and the associated split between the body and the mind/reason, by making us look at eastern (Japanese and Cantonese) writing inscribed on bodies. Although the scenes of writing on the body depicted in the film focus our attention on writing in the narrow sense – what Derrida (1997) calls the Letter – the striking visual images of writing on bodies depicted in the film bring the body and the mind together in a novel way and thus also address writing in the broad sense – what Derrida (1997) calls *arche* writing.

If writing in the broad sense is a metaphorical site for investigating the construction of subjectivity, as I suggest, then this film helps us to see that this kind of subjectivity may also refer to a bringing together of the body and the mind (although as we have already seen, this in no way implies a unitary self that is not still split through having a reflective consciousness).

However, according to Deleuze,¹⁴ the occurrence of individual bodies is merely a formal/modal distinction and not a real individuating fact. According to Foucault (1977:153),

[n]othing in man [woman] – not even his [her] body – is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis of self-recognition or for understanding of other men [women].

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari (1987:74) also follow Spinoza's conception of the body and affirm the body as neither a locus of consciousness nor organically determined, but as something understood in terms of what it can do and perform, how it can link, transform, become, proliferate and have connections with other bodies.

If this is so, then bringing body and mind together in this way means that individual bodies and minds cannot be clearly distinguished from each other either, and are all part of the same ever-deferring process. This can be illustrated in the series of lovers that Nagiko continues to take in her search for the perfect lover-calligrapher, in an endless process of attempting to establish and differentiate herself as someone who is named by others, then someone who names herself as a writer, then someone who is acknowledged as an author, then someone who names others, in an endless chain of deferred becoming.

This coming together of body and mind (represented by the book) is strikingly captured in the first book. Nagiko writes on Jerome's skin:

I want to describe the Body as a Book
A Book as a Body
And this Body and this Book
Will be the first volume...

The first bulk of the book...pumps the ink
That is always red
Before it is black...

No function of book or body is singular
If a multiple service can be performed.
So the inspirational air
Shares the same passageway
With salts, words, Sentences, Sweeteners, Paragraphs.
They all come tumbling down to flutter onto the ruminating page...

(Greenaway, 1996:102)

The film's depiction of writing as an intensely bodily and sensual experience follows the traces of the metaphor of the book as a body or the text as flesh (see the epigraph to this chapter/'act' as an example) and produces a vivid tale of how the play of *differance* may work to imbue language and life with presence. If we see Jerome and Nagiko's love play as a visual representation of difference then we may see that the one writes on the other and then washes off his/her writing over and over again in an endless play of difference and repetition that never arrives at an end point (even after the death of Jerome). This difference is, amongst other things,

seen in the contrast of the black ink on the white skin of the lovers, the explicit focus on the sexual difference between the lovers and the different languages that they write in.

But no function of book or body is singular and if we continue to tease out the comparison we are confronted with a seemingly endless play of meanings within the metaphor itself. The metaphor of the book as a body is further explored in the film in relation to origins or lineage. In Nagiko's seventh of thirteen books, 'The Book of Youth', the first book she writes after Jerome's death, she writes:

Where is a book before it is born?...Who are a book's parents?¹⁵ Does a book need two parents – a mother and a father? Can a book be born inside another book? And where is the parent book of books? How old does a book have to be before it can give birth to another? Do young books cry and scream if they are not read or fed? Do they pass words with incontinent abandon? Do they force every random found sentence into their mouths? (Greenaway, 1996:108)

Many of these sentences suggest that it is not clear where one book starts and another stops and that the origin of writing, books and selves is also not clear. This may be extrapolated to the written self. It then becomes apparent that the boundaries of a 'single self' are not clearly self-contained. The self is necessarily reflected in its relations to other. This is in keeping with Deleuze's (1994) idea that the body is not a 'real' individuating category but is, in fact, a site on which we may read the traces of its relations with others from which it fuses and differentiates. We are reminded of Derrida's (1997) notion that all we carry are the traces of the other within us and that writing is the name of the structure that carries these traces.

There are many different examples of *The Pillow Book's* coupling of the body and the written, some more and some less pleasurable. In the fifth book, Nagiko's love of books and of bodies is complicated when 'The Book of the Exhibitionist' is written on the body of a fat American. This is a less affectionate description of a book as overweight and greasy, 'full of fat words' (Greenaway, 1996:106). In the fourth book, 'The Book of Impotence', written on an elderly scholar by Nagiko for the publisher to read, the relationships between book and reader and words and meaning are

¹⁵Here we recall the metaphor used previously in this chapter/'act' that Jerome and Nagiko as writer and writing pad were depicted as the parents of the character of writing.

questioned, even as the metaphor comparing books to bodies is played out. The words of 'The Book of Impotence' ask:

Is this book exhausted from too much reading? [and an implied association of sex and reading is established]

Or too little reading?

...the pages

Are marked with the stains of use.

Or mis-use.

Better that the words had been read

Off the page.

Do the words still signify?

Is there still a space

Between chapters [or between the concepts of body and text, sex and reading/writing] *or have all matters blurred?...*

The major sweep of this book's living is too often marred by qualifying...

(Greenaway, 1996:105; my emphasis)

The suggestion is that writing gets in the way of life, even though simultaneously the film depicts that for Nagiko writing and her sexual or relational life cannot be separated.

Similar sentiments are again expressed in the third book, 'The Book of the Idiot':

This is a sad cage of a book *full of words*

But little meaning.

It rings hollow when tapped for sense...on one page

It speaks gibberish and loud nonsense on the next...

Between loud noise and vacant silence there is nothing

Substantial.

How do you read such a book?

Perhaps you do not or you cannot.

Perhaps at best- it can be re-used, re-written.

(Greenaway, 1996:104; my emphasis)

Here there is also a suggestion that because meaning or presence cannot be captured in a written book, the best one can do is to keep writing and reading and so reconstituting what meaning is available, in the continuous play of deferral that Derrida speaks of. This is because writing wants to keep meaninglessness at bay.

The desire to capture presence in relationship to another in writing is constantly revisited in the film. Following this metaphor of the book as the body and the body as the book leads us to insights about the relationships that writing sets up. In the film, we begin to perceive that the hope of fixing presence in writing, so as to be read by another and perhaps connect with the other in some transcendental way, is at best impossible and at worst damaging to the self that writing constructs. We begin to perceive the danger that there is a price that a writer has to pay when transforming him/herself from a writer into an author, moving from being read in the private sphere to being read in public and by the public. In the film, this pursuit of Nagiko's leaves all her significant others dead (except for her daughter). By way of illustration, consider that her origin (symbolized by her father), her social respectability (symbolized by her husband) and her meaning (symbolized by her translator, Jerome) all end up dead and desecrated. This is because once writings are taken into the public sphere, they are especially subject to reading and re-reading and thus reconstitution into something else by others who are its readers and thus also its writers. Just as the self of the writer is constituted in the public sphere as the author of a work, so the work is read and, in this process, re-written. Thus the writer is effaced or made impotent. This seems to be a clear example of Derrida's ideas of the constant deferral of meaning in a chain of substitutions (Spivak, 1997:lxxxvi) referred to in the first chapter.

3.6 Writing and sex: the fluid(ity) of identity

Within Merleau-Ponty's affective ontology of the flesh, writing is implicitly erotic, if "erotic" is taken in the sense of sensually and affectively connective and implicitly signifiatory of fundamental vitalities. (Mehuron, 1989:77)

It seems that the connection between writing and the body has been made by a number of thinkers. It is interesting to explore why this is so. Seeing writing (or

reading) as sex suggests that the constructive process in writing simultaneously has the potential both for creating new and invigorating life and meanings, and for setting up new possibilities for relationship, for pleasure, ecstasy and violence, shame and death of the self and others. This suggests that although writing (like sex) is in some sense a necessity and a valuable process in constituting identity, it is also dangerous and full of possible betrayals and deceptions and barriers to identity, such as impotence and potency, exhibitionism and privacy, clean and dirty secrets, gentility and violences, love and punishment, bodies and minds, some of which are present, and others which are only possibilities. Sex, like writing, is the ultimate coming together of life and death in an endless, necessary, creative and destructive (reconstructive and deconstructive) cycle.

As we have seen, in Greenaway's *The Pillow Book*, the skin is frequently used as the pages of a book. Initially, Nagiko searches for a perfect lover-calligrapher to write on the skin of her body with his quill and her hymen with his penis. The coupling of sex and writing (and sex and reading, since reading and writing are inevitably linked) in the film is further strengthened by its exploration of various bodily fluids. Blood and semen are likened to ink in the film; ink which is used to write letters, which fixes things, is actually a *fluid*, suggesting that, as in the case of sex, the writing process is not only about fixing, but also about what cannot be fixed and about a fluid, ever-changing process of construction, differentiation, connection and reconnection.

In the 'Book of the Innocent', Nagiko's second book, written on the skin of the first Jerome substitute for the publisher to read, the book is described as being still unread. The book is described as a female virgin calling to be ravished by an expectant reader. Nagiko writes this tantalising account:

The pages taste sweet – like milk awaiting the
spike of a pen,
the dirtying ink,
and the prying hairs of the brush,
all seeking to invade the
intricate spaces of the book's virginity
The moistened thumb of the
Expectant reader has not yet marked the
Soft tissues of this lean clean smiling volume.

Spread me,
And break me open,
For pleasure. (Greenaway, 1996:103)

The script of *The Pillow Book* draws our attention to the similarities between Nagiko (the writer) and the written book, being read or having intercourse with the reader. It also draws our attention to the similarities between the possible penetration of the written by the writer or the reader (who as we have seen is also, in turn, a writer). Again we see a web of relationships that is set up by this piece of writing from *The Pillow Book's* script. But this time, the relationships that are set up are still more explicitly sexual. This has the effect of emphasizing the association that the film (and Derrida) draws between writing and sex. Spivak (1997:xxvi) notes that, in speaking of the hymen, Derrida

emphasizes the role of the blank spaces of the page in the play of meaning... Derrida himself often devotes his attention to ...the minute particulars of an undecidable moment, nearly imperceptible displacements that might otherwise escape the reader's eye.

(my emphasis)

If writing is sex in *The Pillow Book*, then the phallus or quill can be thought of as writing of Nagiko's identity as a lover-writer.¹⁶ These writings may give rise to unknown, unpredictable new lives,¹⁷ which are always deferred constructions. In the case of the flesh and sex, the writings that are given rise to may be children that simultaneously fix and defer the identity of their parents throughout each subsequent generation. In this way, sex actually 'writes' subjectivities into bodies, identities which are unpredictable, fluid and always deferred to the next generation. This happens during sex when semen is disseminated through the torn hymen and then spreads into the woman's body. Thus, writing, the Letter, comes to represent the ravaging of the virgin hymen by the penetrating writer. In this way, the book, the product and the absence, the hymen, are coupled in a way that overthrows a phallogocentric view of sex and gives credence to absence and its role in producing a text.

¹⁶ This would suggest that Nagiko's self is the result of her own agency both as a writer and wielder of the quill and as the paper/hymen that the phallus 'writes' on.

¹⁷ Be they the lives of books or children.

Derrida emphasizes the blank spaces in the margins of a text that might escape the reader and then likens these to a woman's body, which is often seen as a blank space or page waiting to be written on/in by a penis. It is part of a broader political project of Derrida's to give voice to the margins (Spivak, 1997:xxvi) or to those aspects of binary thinking that are undervalued (for example, body in the body-mind binary, writing in the writing-speaking binary, words in the words-wordlessness binary and absence in the absence-presence binary). In blurring the boundaries between reader and writer, male and female, Nagiko allows us to re-examine these very binaries. Nagiko as the lover-writer is thus both penetrated as a woman during sex, and penetrator (since she wields the pen/brush during writing). Writing thus provides her penetrated self with an agency and initiating quality absent in her sexual identity when she is viewed merely as the blank parchment, the absence of words, the space in the margins. By endowing Nagiko, as a very obvious woman, with a marked sense of sexuality,¹⁸ with the identity of agent and initiator¹⁹ as well as absent and permeable, the film overthrows the hegemonic phallogocentric view of sex and gives a credence to absence and its role in producing/re-producing the product.²⁰ In this way, Nagiko becomes present as a woman writer and a creator in her own right. This resonates with some aspects of some feminisms in so far as

[b]ecoming-woman involves a series of processes and movements beyond the fixity of [western, logocentric] subjectivity and the structure of stable unities. It is an escape from the systems of binary polarization of unities that privilege men at the expense of women ... Becoming-woman means going beyond identity and subjectivity, fragmenting and freeing up lines of flight, 'liberating' multiplicities, corporeal and otherwise, that [phallogocentric visions of] identity subsumes under one.

(Grosz, 1994:177-8)

¹⁸ Grosz (1994), a feminist writer, notes that for Foucault sexuality is nothing other than the effect of wielding (or not wielding) power and that sex itself is a product of the deployment of sexuality. This suggests that sex is not a pure spontaneous presence that is tamed by power, rather, sexuality is deployed by power to gain a grip on life (and the living) itself (themselves).

¹⁹ Nagiko as an agent or initiator of sex overthrows the phallogocentric view of sex. This may be linked to the logocentrism of the patriarchal epistemologies in the west that valorize mind over body. The association of men with mind and women with body within logocentric western epistemologies, devalues women, as they are associated with the less valuable term in the mind-body binary, namely body (Grosz, 1994). In this way Derrida's subversion of logocentrism and valorization of writing is also a subversion of phallogocentrism. In a sense, this study echoes the same sentiments in emphasizing writing and acknowledging the female subjectivity of the writer of this study in this footnote.

²⁰ Be it text or children.

Seeing writing as sex in *The Pillow Book* is also remarkable in that it draws our attention to what writing is not, or to communication in the absence of writing/words. (Obviously in emphasizing writing, one is excluding and thus doing violence to what is not writing or words and so, in freeing one meaning, one is perforce destroying another. This is an inevitable consequence of using the language of words.) This 'wordless' communication is also exemplified in the film in various depictions of the sexual act, and in visual yet wordless moments in the creative process, particularly between Nagiko and Jerome. Such wordless communication eventually produces a child, Nagiko's daughter, and demonstrates Nagiko's ability to name (what cannot be named). This is set in contrast to the communication via reading inscriptions and performing the naming ritual that produces interaction/relatedness between people, sometime for better but very often for worse.

Chapter 4: 'Act' 3 – tracing the Subject of writing in *In the Penal Colony*

... watch the inscription taking form on the body. Wouldn't you care to come a little nearer and have a look at the needles?... The long needle does the writing and the short needle sprays a jet of water to wash away the blood and keep the inscription clear. (Kafka, 1949:147)

4.1 Writing traces

In Chapter 2 ('Act' 1), I asserted that we may imagine that our relationship to presence is always deferred and we have access to presence only through a series of traces of meaning. I also suggested that words can be seen to carry such traces of presence. In such a trace structure

everything [is] always already inhabited by the track of something that is not itself, [and this] questions presence structure. (Spivak, 1997:xix)

Derrida (Lawlor & Direk, 2002:142) uses a lucid metaphor to describe what he means by trace. Following Freud, he compares the unconscious mind to a mystic writing pad (Spivak, 1997:xxxix). In using this metaphor, he refers to a wax device that has writing scratched upon it by a stylus in order to preserve the graphic notation in the wax temporarily. This mystic writing pad is the device that captures the language of traces (Lawlor & Direk, 2002:142). Each time it needs to be cleared for more writing, the wax on the pad is melted and the traces of what was previously written are smoothed away, until it is ready to be used again. This metaphor is intended to draw attention to the impermanence and mutability that writing accommodates and indeed sets up. It is as if with this metaphor Derrida wishes to express the argument that the mind/writing pad could not be said to exist at all if it is not written on/constructed by readers and writers – hence its mystical and insubstantial quality. This primacy of writing inherent in the metaphor of the mystic writing pad is in keeping with Derrida's exposition of the concept of *arche* writing, discussed in Section 2.1.2 of this study. The obvious link between *In the Penal*

Colony and *The Pillow Book* is the writing of texts that use the skin/body (rather than the mind) as an inscriptive surface or writing pad. *In the Penal Colony* initially seems to stand in contrast to *The Pillow Book* in terms of the permanence of the inscription on the skin as the pad.

This image of the mystic writing pad contrasts with the more traditional metaphor for the mind, the *tabula rasa*, which draws attention to the assumption that the substance of the mind pre-exists whatever is written on the mind. A conception of the mind is better suited to the mystic writing pad metaphor, since we have no direct access to the mind – all we know about it (or indeed anything) is predicated upon memories (which can be seen as endless traces of reality) and not on an original fully present experience. We have no access to the origin, but only to these traces. This suggests that the concept of the origin is problematic (not reality). In terms of the metaphor of the mystic writing pad, each new instance of writing is in itself a new reality or starting point.

This process of conceiving of writing as leaving traces has implications for both the writing process (what it is and what it can accommodate) and the Subject of the writer that a writing process understood in this way gives rise to. This chapter/’act’ therefore examines the sort of presence that is established through writing both in terms of the traces of the subjects of writing and the writer (or writing Subject made up of the writer, the reader and the translator and the relationships between them). Writing is shown to set up certain kinds of s/Subjects via trace structures that are shifting and inclusive. This argument is examined in the light of the context of the operations of language in which the writing process takes place and the possible objectification of s/Subjects that this may imply.

4.2 Following specific traces of subjects in the illustrative texts

The writing process shares marked similarities and differences in the way it is expounded in the illustrative texts in this study. In comparing the way the writing process is depicted in both texts, we may gain a more complex understanding of the differential traces held within the concept of writing itself and we are once again reminded that the writing or construction process is itself fraught with tensions and, contradictions and displays rich complexities.

The metaphor of the mystic writing pad, with its association with the wax tablet and the stylus, can be extended to the illustrative texts examined in this study. The needle in Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* and the pen/brush in Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* can be likened to the stylus in this metaphor, whilst the skin in both texts can be likened to the smooth wax pad that is written on. Viewing texts thus, in terms of traces left over and over again on a mystic writing pad, allows us to analyse the apparently striking difference between *The Pillow Book* text and *In the Penal Colony*. Although both are about writing on the body and power, to put it simply, *The Pillow Book* seems far more aesthetic and edifying in the traditional sense, whereas *In the Penal Colony* seems dark and disturbing. When applied to the writing process, this suggests that writing is edifying, beautiful and creative, as well as dangerous, violent and disturbing.

In *The Pillow Book*, Greenaway (1996:79) describes Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* as 'the story of the possibility of a man's crimes being written on his body by a writing-torture machine'. There are only four characters in *In the Penal Colony*, each named only according to his role in the story. The Officer or the Commandant is the writing machine's operator and author, the Condemned Man is the one who is to endure inscription by the device, the Soldier is responsible for guarding the Condemned Man, and the Traveller (also translated as the researcher) is a dignitary and foreign visitor. The story is told from the point of view of the Traveller, who – like the reader – is encountering this brutal machine for the first time. Everything about the machine and its purpose is told to him by the Commandant, while the Soldier and the Condemned Man (who is unaware that he has been sentenced to die) placidly watch nearby. The Commandant tells of the meaningful epiphany of understanding that he expects those about to be executed to experience in their last six hours of experiencing the machine's inscribing/writing.

4.2.1 *The trace of yin yang*

The process of leaving traces in writing differs greatly in *The Pillow Book* and in *In the Penal Colony*, which suggests that the trace of *writing* holds disparate aspects within itself. In *In the Penal Colony*, the person who is responsible for the writing is the Commandant. He writes on the skin of the Condemned Man by means of a torture or writing machine that scratches its sentences deeply and permanently into the skin of its victim by means of a kind of needle. By contrast, in *The Pillow Book*,

the author, Nagiko, paints beautiful calligraphy onto the bodies of her lovers in her search for the perfect confluence of loving and calligraphy. In a sense, the more disturbing process of writing apparent in *In the Penal Colony* and the more enriching process of writing and leaving traces apparent in *The Pillow Book* can be likened to the *yin yang* concept of Chinese philosophy. According to this concept, these two aspects are complementary parts of the same whole. This is a way of conceiving of difference; and many dualities such as male and female and hard and soft are thought of in terms of the *yin yang* concept (Wikipedia, *Yin and yang*, n.d.:n.p.). In this sense, these two texts may be thought of as the *yin* and *yang* of the writing concept, where sometimes *The Pillow Book* reveals the more female aspects of the writing process and *In the Penal Colony* reveals the more male aspects.

4.2.2 *The trace of legitimacy and transgression*

In *The Pillow Book*, the principal writer is Nagiko, who writes on the surface of her lover's pale skin in inky brush strokes of black calligraphy. In *In the Penal Colony*, the Commandant inscribes his victims' sentences onto their flesh with a machine. Nagiko seems more in touch with her writing instrument than the Commandant, who uses a more distanced and mechanized instrument. The sort of writing in *In the Penal Colony* in its attempt to fix a sentence or a trace and its meaning seems to be breaking a law (which is linked to our common sense of justice) in a dangerous way because it causes unjustified pain to its Subjects. This element is absent in *The Pillow Book*. The violence that is apparent in *The Pillow Book* seems more legitimate and in keeping with a classical law of retributive justice (Wikipedia, *Justice*, n.d.:n.p.). This is clear when Nagiko has her revenge on the publisher and takes his life for Jerome's (who kills himself when he thinks that Nagiko will not forgive him for having sex with the publisher). As readers we feel that the publisher deserves this death and not that he is a victim of the writing process, condemned to endure a writer's obsession to capture presence (as we might feel in the case of the Condemned Man in *In the Penal Colony*). When applied to the writing process, this suggests that writing can be just and legitimate, but also unjust and transgressive.

4.2.3 *The trace of permanence and impermanence*

In *The Pillow Book*, the writer Nagiko also attempts to capture presence through her writing. This is clearly depicted in the book made out of Jerome's skin that she sends to the publisher. But the cardinal difference between *In the Penal Colony* and

The Pillow Book on this point is that the writer in *In the Penal Colony* attempts to capture this presence in writing on his Subject whilst that Subject is alive – without seeming to care that it will kill the Subject. The writer in *The Pillow Book* is aware that this kind of presence/absence can only be captured in living writing, for example, when Nagiko inscribes her daughter's name ritualistically on the girl's face. When applied to the writing process, this suggests that writing is both unbearably constraining and murderous, whilst also being life-affirming and immortalizing. It seems that *In the Penal Colony* embodies our traditional view of writing in the West (in line with Derrida's view of western phonocentrism) as an attempt to fix presence, an attempt that must fail because of the violence it does to the S/subject. This is in contrast to *The Pillow Book*, which embodies an alternative view of writing, as something which does not attempt to and cannot capture the presence of life, but in fact celebrates impermanence, changing relationships, continual repetition and deferral, ironically the stuff of life itself. This is in line with the meta-argument offered in this study that writing is a concept that holds many disparate and contradictory aspects within itself, making it changeable, continually deferred and lively.

4.2.4 *The trace of justification*

In *In the Penal Colony*, the Commandant eventually commits suicide by submitting himself to his own lacerating torture device, because the judicial process on which his sentencing and torture of prisoners is predicated is on the point of being cancelled (Kafka, 1949). In *The Pillow Book*, Jerome too kills himself. Both are naked (writers of sorts) and both submit to death by their own hands because they feel they have lost their reason for being. For the Commandant/writer, it is the written code that justifies his writing via the machine and that he has lost; for Jerome/the translator, it is the source of his inspirations and translations, his writer, Nagiko. Both Jerome and the Commandant find themselves in the position of having either transgressed the law that governs what they have done or having no law to justify what they have done; and thus they can only write their own sentences or stories about death and destruction through the loss of self-justification/inspiration or an origin for their writings. When the Commandant realizes that he will fall outside of the system that justifies his writing device, and when Jerome realizes that he has overstepped the bounds of the interpersonal laws governing his relationship with Nagiko (according to Nagiko), neither of them can remain inside their system. In distinguishing themselves from these systems, they cease, their lives/meanings are

deferred. In being identified as unjustified transgressors without origins, they differentiate themselves from the systems of relations that justified them and gave rise to their writings; and we can identify them (for a moment) for who they are. They thus become free-floating signifiers whose meaning (and relatedness) cannot be deciphered, and therefore their traces fade and they die. When applied to the writing process, this suggests (amongst other things) that outside of the law of language that constrains and gives rise to it, writing cannot be deciphered, because its traces cannot be distinguished.

4.2.5 *The trace of the writing instrument*

Again it is fruitful to compare and contrast the writing instruments used by the writers in *In the Penal Colony* and in *The Pillow Book*. I have claimed that Nagiko is more in touch with her gentle, aesthetic writing instrument (one that imbues the writer with agency) than the commandant is with his industrialized, functional, punishing device. Yet, in both texts, the writing instruments are clearly very sophisticated, technologically advanced and civilized,²¹ as writing itself is often considered. Moreover, if we consider how the characters of the publisher in *The Pillow Book* and the Commandant in *In the Penal Colony* intend to use the process of writing, it is revealed as anything but elegant and civilized. The publisher and the Commandant reveal how the horrific and base aspects of the writing process begin to gain authority.

4.2.6 *The trace of civilization*

Both the Commandant and the publisher expose the dark side of writing and of civilization to the reader. In both cases, the law is seen to protect and veil the basic sinister impulses lurking under the veneer of civilization and the code of order. In *In the Penal Colony* this code is the penal code and in *The Pillow Book* this code is represented by the law of copyright, both of which may be seen as specific manifestations of the law of language. Writing thus becomes a view into the concept of the uncanny (Wikipedia, *Uncanny*, n.d.:n.p.), breaking down the boundaries between regular binary definitions and making the familiar seem strange, because, in this example, civilization itself may come to seem horrifying as it cannot protect us from the darkness within ourselves.

²¹ Even though unsophisticated cavemen also used forms of brushes to paint with, these are not the same as the refined brushes used to perform the art of calligraphy in Japan.

4.2.7 *The trace of violence*

Each of the illustrative texts used in this study to illuminate the concept of writing depicts a complex psychic economy that is best described in Derrida's own language as a language of traces (Lawlor & Direk, 2002:142). For the sake of argument, let us place two more of these conceptions of writing in opposition for a moment. Unlike the cuts made by the Commandant's mechanized instrument of torture, Nagiko's brush strokes with delible ink on skin seem to embody a gentler quality of writing that expresses its impermanence and its ability to accommodate others (such as lovers, readers, translators and publishers) and their interpretations. This expresses the quality of this kind of writing that enables it to house deferred presence and thus not break its law. This also means that Nagiko seems to be a less violent writer than the Commandant.

The Commandant's writing tries to fix a sentence that is immutable and does not allow for interpretation and a proliferation of meanings. This is expressed by the following words 'You may want to scream out: but a lady's hand will close your lips' (Kafka, 1949:156). This is what the Traveller imagines he will utter when he is arrested for providing an alternative view to the torture that the Commandant has prescribed. Also, although the writing on the skin in *In the Penal Colony* is indelible, there is the likelihood that the body may decompose after death, which will not preserve the text, in which case, whether his sentence is preserved or not is inconsequential. In *The Pillow Book*, there is an attempt to preserve and record, either through making a book out of inscribed skin or by writing the same words on another skin (as when Nagiko performs the writing in the naming ritual on her daughter). In *In the Penal Colony*, writing is indelible, but the slate is impermanent, while in *The Pillow Book* the writing might be delible, but once it is published, it assumes a fixedness (of sorts).

Conversely, although Nagiko writes with a soft brush and delible ink and the Commandant's torture device writes by scratching with piercing permanence into flesh, there is a sense in which Nagiko's writing seems to leave a more permanent trace. In *In the Penal Colony*, one might imagine that once the unfortunate bodies of the victims have been written on by the torture device, they are left to die or be thrown away. But the bodies that Nagiko writes on are still entwined with life, even after she leaves them. They go on, sometimes constellating themselves with new

writings, readings and sexual relations after their encounter/s with Nagiko. Consider too Nagiko's writing of her daughter's name on her tiny face when she performs the writing of the naming ritual on her. There is a sense in which, although the graphic notation itself is fleeting each time it is drawn, it keeps coming back and reconstituting itself in a kind of permanence or at least a more settled and enduring signifying process of signification. This illustrates the complex relationship of writing to presence and permanence.

4.2.8 *The trace of authority*

A comparison between the two authoritarian, exploitative, male characters of the publisher in *The Pillow Book* and the Commandant in *In the Penal Colony* also seems fruitful here. If one examines these two characters in the light of the notion of the mystic writing pad, where writing is seen as an act that keeps repeating and constituting and reconstituting its users and consumers, in a continual, changing flow of multiplicity, then it seems that both these characters reject the notion of writing understood in this way. Neither of them treats the mystic writing pad as a mystic writing pad capable of being melted down to use again: they both seem to prefer to keep the writing on the skin permanent. On further inspection, one might even remark that these two characters seem to be distinguished by a desire to make a permanent mark on the other of some kind (be it with his own penis or with the printed body of work of another author, as in the case of the publisher, or a device of torture, as in the case of the Commandant).

Perhaps the desire of each of these characters is to leave behind him permanent evidence of his authority (which is validated by a law) and this is the reason he employs writing in a colonizing, destructive, violent and unjust manner. Through his relationship with writing, the publisher becomes the gatekeeper of the law of language and its users' access to readership by virtue of his profession and relationship to the copyright law. The Commandant is the keeper of the Condemned Man's guilt and sentencing by virtue of his position as a representative of the penal code which justifies his actions. This illustrates that writing construed as a way of leaving a permanent mark can be used as a way to colonize and subjugate others.

In contrast to the Commandant and the publisher, Nagiko's daughter in *The Pillow Book* and the Traveller in *In the Penal Colony* provide examples of writing on the perfect mystic writing pad. In the case of the Traveller, he never really takes part or

pleasure in the Commandant's writing activities in the way that the Commandant would have found satisfying and he leaves the story at the end without leaving much of a trace on the plot himself. These characters seem to be written (on) in a way that does not leave a permanent trace, but rather brings them only into the writer's/reader's circle for long enough for them to momentarily carry a trace of his/her meaning. In the case of Nagiko, she writes her daughter's name on the girl's face in indelible ink. But it seems clear that she expects her daughter to grow up thereafter and write her own story. This way of construing writing as a process that celebrates impermanence and supports agency and creativity is in stark contrast to the way of construing writing as a process that leaves a permanent mark.

It seems that the authors of both *The Pillow Book* (Greenaway) and *In the Penal Colony* (Kafka) are suspicious of the characters in their stories that ostensibly carry the most authority, namely the publisher and the Commandant. In the end, both these characters seem to be left unsatisfied in their desires (whether it be for permanence, sex, torture or power). It seems that both Greenaway and Kafka may want to show that writing, at least in these stories about writing, exceeds the desires of the colonizing S/subject and acquires a life of its own, perhaps wreaking its own revenge on its subjects either through subjecting their meanings to the law of language, which must necessarily make all its users its victims and subject to death, or through subjecting the meanings of its users to the continual (and in turn torturous or celebratory) deferral of meaning.

4.2.9 *The trace of the law and justice*

The related notions of justice, the law and violence are interesting to consider in the light of the law as a codified subtext that operates to direct the plot in *In the Penal Colony* and the law of language/writing as it operates on a theoretical level. Linking the notions of writing/language to justice and the law follows much the same theoretical purpose as linking writing to the concepts of infinite deferred presence and the finite limits of language (respectively) – both of which operate in the realm of writing and make writing what it is.

To link the notions of writing/language to justice and the law it is important first to explore Derrida's position on justice, violence and the law. I now examine Derrida's essay entitled 'Force of Law: The "Mystical" Foundation of Authority' (Derrida, 1992). In this text and others, Derrida describes language as operating on those who use it

through a law that language users are all subject to and on whose meanings this law enforces itself violently by necessarily fixing what cannot be fixed and naming that which, in naming, ceases to be what it is:

Whoever traces it [the foundation of authority – in this case language]
to its source annihilates it. (Derrida, 1992:10)

In this essay, Derrida uses the angle of his position of writing in a language not his own (that is English) when the law of this language then operates in an accentuated way on the user. Indeed, addressing oneself to the other in the language of the other – a language not one's own – is a necessary condition of justice (justice as distinct from the law). This argument introduces Derrida's paradoxical notion that one must *of necessity* submit oneself to the confines of the law of language if one wishes to even begin to approach justice and the freedom it offers (Derrida, 1992).

Although Kafka is not writing in a language foreign to him, he is also interpreted by Deleuze and Guattari (1986) to be in this position. According to these critics, this position establishes for Kafka the platform of a *minor literature* from which to write, as discussed in Section 4.4 of this chapter/‘act’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). This position of being a stranger within the language that one is using and having to submit oneself to these foreign laws in order to express oneself to the other is also the position that Nagiko finds herself in when she employs the prowess of an English translator to make her understood all over the world. The suggestion is that authors who address themselves to readers in a language that is foreign to them are always relegated to the margins of the language game and that they are there because they are allowed (by those others whom they are addressing) to assume the position of a speaker of that language, for a moment.

The implied parallel is that all writers are relegated to the margins of expression when they write to others, because they are always in some sense foreign to those whom they address, through the imperfect or mutable medium of language. Derrida (1992) also mentions that in exposing oneself to this law of language and the limits that it necessarily sets on presence and expression, one must perforce risk violence and the death of meaning. In other words, one can only believe the messianic promises of such constructs as justice and presence that writing offers by accepting that the law of language and the violences and limitations associated with that are operating simultaneously. Messianic constructs of language such as justice and

presence are thus impossible and inassimilable ideals which can paradoxically only be accessed through the law of language – which is calculable and reductionistic.

One can also infer from Jerome's impossible mission as Nagiko's English translator to make her understood all over the world that their relationship is doomed to failure from the start, since this goal of being perfectly understood by everyone is made always impossible through the law of language (even English, which operates across many speech communities as a *lingua franca*). The desire to use writing to construct a one-to-one relationship between the signifier and the signified is doomed from the outset, and thus another purpose for the inevitable process of writing must be sought.

In his essay, Derrida remarks that any law is always authorized or legitimized by a force that is enacted on someone (often by a colonizing S/subject) (Derrida, 1992). This is clearly seen in *The Pillow Book* where, in terms of the law legitimizing Nagiko's father's writings, the publisher 'authorizes' them through the publisher's forcing Nagiko's father to have sex with the publisher in exchange for publishing Nagiko's father's works. This is also strikingly apparent in *In the Penal Colony* when the Commandant claims to be using the law of guilt as a justification to sentence and torture the Condemned Man. This seems to illustrate clearly Derrida's thesis on the law of language, which is predicated on the fact that when writing occurs and something is named, violence must necessarily accompany it.

This is an unusual thesis since it assumes that the exclusionary process of naming that is writing is necessarily violent. This suggests that the process of excluding one meaning from another – the mechanism of difference – is necessarily violent and leads to a loss of self-presence (Derrida, 1997:112). Yet, on the contrary, it is sometimes imagined that exclusion need not necessarily be violent in itself, but that it is the asymmetrical power relationships that often ensue from exclusion that cause this violence. However if one meaning is chosen over others for a moment, as could be described as a moment of Deleuzian repetition in flux, perhaps this kind of exclusion since it is itself not fixed need not be so violent as Derrida asserts (Deleuze, 1994:10).

Yet, Derrida uses biblical language fraught with the overtones of law and authority when he asserts the inextricable link between the notions of language and the *logos*. He claims that in the beginning there was language and language was enforced by

the *logos*. 'At the beginning of justice there was *logos*, speech or language...In the beginning there will have been force' (Derrida, 1992:10). The reason why the instances of the law's being enforced violently in *The Pillow Book* and *In the Penal Colony* seem to fly in the face of our sense of justice should become apparent when Derrida's corresponding concept of justice unfolds further.

After establishing the link between the law and violence, Derrida goes on to examine the articulation of these concepts with justice (Derrida, 1992). He remarks that justice (which he distinguishes carefully from law) is something ideal and impossible in practice, but is something which we all have a sense of, and that justice is only possible (in theory) when we have a choice to be just in the presence of the threat of violence, or to be unjust, a choice that the law does not necessarily grant us. Derrida also describes justice as the justifying moment of performing interpretation (such as writing), which exceeds the oppositions of language (thus making it impossible to access its meaning in practice). But in theory, the possibility of an interpretive act such as writing also includes within itself the mystical silence captured in language itself and not only in its laws: 'Here [in writing] a silence is walled up in the violent structure of the founding act' (Derrida, 1992:14).

Derrida (1992) goes on to assert that law itself (and remember he is writing in the context of the operation of the law of language on his ability to articulate his infinite expressions to the other) can be deconstructed, interpreted and thus changed, whereas justice is essentially not deconstructable, impossible, infinite, not knowable and thus in one sense also unchanging and fixed:

The structure I am describing here is a structure in which the law is essentially deconstructable, whether because it is founded ...on interpretable and transformable textual strata...or because its ultimate foundation [origin] is by definition unfounded. (Derrida, 1992:14)

This raises the radical suggestion that the law itself – with all its seeming limits – is deconstructable, decentred and without origin, continually giving rise to new 'original' interpretations as its presence in writing is continually deferred.

However, law (as evidenced by the Commandant's law in *In the Penal Colony* and the law of copyright in *The Pillow Book*) also represents what is stable and legitimate, a code of regulated and ordered prescriptions that does not permit

limitless interpretations, and operates via the mechanism of singularity and sameness. Law is something that can be accounted for and explained, whereas justice is described by Derrida (1992) as an experience of the impossible. When applied to writing, this argument implies the prescriptive nature of writing.

Justice is also incalculable, rebellious to rule, mystical, heterogeneous, fluid, infinite. It operates through the mechanism of *difference* (Derrida, 1992). Justice presupposes freedom to consider options and the ability to take responsibility for one's own actions rather than merely unthinkingly obeying the given law. When this argument is applied to writing, it implies the creative and infinite nature of writing. But justice also presupposes exposing oneself to the risks of violence associated with being punished for breaking the law. When this argument is applied to writing, this implies that there is a price to pay for constructing through writing and that that price is the exposure of one's infinite meanings to the violent limitations of the law of language.

This also suggests that not only is writing always linked to the violence of the Letter because it is inescapably embedded in the structure of the law of language, but that writing is always also linked to our sense of justice, which is our idealised sense of being able to choose to find more meaning than the law of language can allow within its confines for our hankering after the messianic promise of presence. But even though the concept of justice is rebellious to the rule of law, it is still, like all our conceptions, *subject* to the law of language and the violences that this implies. This makes our glimpse of the concept of justice through writing (and other messianic concepts that writing may promise) fleeting.

In *The Pillow Book*, when Jerome's plans to make Nagiko understood all over the world are thwarted when he breaks the intrapersonal law between them and resumes his sexual relationship with the publisher, he dies, and their relationship ends violently and abruptly. This shows that despite his temporary sense of justice and rebelling against the rules of relationship, he is still inextricably caught up in the law and its violence and is exposed to punishment and death for being a lawbreaker.

In *In the Penal Colony*, the Commandant eventually also dies. However, this happens when he takes his own life when he hears that the law governing his sentencing of the Condemned Man is about to be cancelled. This would render his

actions devoid of justification. In his case, it seems he is not able to hold onto a sense of justice apart from the law. For him, either justice and the law are indistinct, or he has no sense of justice and only a sense of the law. For this reason, it seems just to him that the law which governed the sentences that he scratched out on the body of his victim wreaks its violence on him, once it can no longer provide him with a justification/legitimately limit his actions. This makes it all the more ironic that, at his suicide, he attempts to get the machine to inscribe the exhortation words 'be just' onto his body in a vain attempt to fill him with a sense of justice that he does not have (Kafka, 1949:161). This looks like an attempt to circumscribe justice by subjecting it to the same limiting process of inscribing graphic notation (writing in the narrow sense) that the law prescribes. If writing were only meant in this limited sense, then it could not account for our infinite sense of justice, limiting its use as a concept. We need a concept of writing that can include both the confines of the law as we experience it and the infinite promises of presence that we idealise.

Based on these examples, it seems that ultimately it is the legal aspect of writing and not the just aspect of writing that gives writing its apparent permanence. However, as writers, we are subject to both these aspects of writing. That is why writing is such a tricky concept – one which seems to exceed binary oppositions such as law and justice, calculable and incalculable, female and male, immortalising and deathly, mystic and knowable, permanent and transitory, present and absent, finite and infinite.

Derrida (1992) argues that it is unjust to judge someone who does not understand the law of language that is used. Yet this is precisely what the Commandant does (and expects the Traveller to do too) in *In the Penal Colony*. The Commandant not only judges the Condemned Man, but fixes his guilt and sentences him to violent death. *In the Penal Colony* provides a vivid illustration of how the *law* (of language) can be *enforced unjustly* on someone (by someone with a strict sense of the law but no sense of justice), leaving a permanent meaning to have been written violently upon him in a way that actually ends the flux of his life. This is a striking example of what Derrida calls 'being the victim of the language's injustice' (Derrida, 1992:18). Justice (and the choices and adjustments that this implies) is conspicuously impossible in *In the Penal Colony*, whilst the law (of language and the literal death sentence that this carries for the meaning of its users) of necessity operates in a calculable, set and violent way.

There are many references to the relationship between 'language' or 'words' and 'understanding' and the law *In the Penal Colony* (Kafka, 1949). The gist of these is that the law makes understanding inaccessible (which is why the words etched by the machine only become 'understood' after six hours). But not only does the law make understanding inaccessible, but so does the continuous proliferation of meanings. This is because the destruction of the law of language would leave us only with constantly deferred meanings. One can also imagine that if meaning is only constantly deferred, without being subject to any fixing, it could act like a sensory deprivation technique of torture for a prisoner and that the anxiety caused by the uncertainty thereof might become excruciating, unbearable, until it causes the breakdown of writing/constructing meaning. This is the reason for Agamben's radical critique of language itself (Clemens, Heron & Murray 2009:66-68), when he declares that the actual torture mechanism of expression and understanding is language itself, and redemption can only be found in the destruction of language.

Grosz (1994:135) describes the way in which the writing machine in *In the Penal Colony* makes the law of language incarnate as follows:

The punishment machine is basically a system of writing: it is not a creative system...the machine blindly executes the sentence that has been decided elsewhere. The punishment machine is simultaneously a machine which executes a sentence by inscribing it on the body of the prisoner and a system of textualisation, a system which brings...meaning. It executes a sentence in both senses of the word. The condemned individual is part of the writing system: his body is the parchment on which the text is written, and his blood provides the ink to write the message.

Grosz (1994) goes on to make the point that inscribing the body in this way actually changes the consciousness of the individual who is being inscribed and in this way writing is shown to construct the Subject in a very lurid way.

Obviously this exposes a seemingly untenable problem for writing, in that, in using language to write in, we are doomed forever to defer or limit understanding to such an extent that we must keep on writing forever, in forever fallible attempts to put down what we want to express. This understanding of writing also suggests that by performing writing, we are forever changing our consciousness. It is for this reason

that writers such as Kafka are drawn to explore (precisely through their writing) the operations of what we consider to be fixed laws, so that we can complicate the interface of settled and ephemeral meanings that we apply to ourselves and our expressions.

The law that is exposed in *In the Penal Colony* is in exact opposition to such constructions of readings and writings that are constructed out of a sea of possible perspectives. The law the Commandant claims that the Condemned Man has transgressed is expressed as a written sentence on the body of the Condemned Man. It is a law of obedience to one's superiors (a law about which little else is known) which the Commandant regards as so self-evident and unchallengeable that when the Traveller asks whether the Condemned Man knows of his sentence or has had the chance to put up a defence, the Commandant declares unequivocally:

...he has had no chance of putting up a defence... My guiding principle is this: Guilt is never doubted. Other courts cannot follow that principle, for they consist of several opinions and have higher courts to scrutinize them. That is not the case here.... (Kafka, 1949:145)

The law that the Commandant is referring to is clearly fixed and generalisable in some sense (this is in spite of the fact that he acknowledges that his version of the law is stricter than that applied in most courts). But to the reader, the Commandant's version of the law, where the Condemned Man is not allowed any defence or opinion and is assumed to be guilty, seems unjust or even unethical. For Derrida, 'the ethical is always caught between the universality of the law and the particularity of the situation' – there is no absolute applicability of the general law to the particular situation (Stocker, 2007:268). That would not be just. There is always a *decision* to be made about justice that concerns the law and ethics, the general and the particular, for there to be the possibility of justice.

According to Derrida, justice cannot be a foregone conclusion that is a mere effect of a calculation of a law universally applied, devoid of decision-making and questioning (Lucy, 2004). For justice to enter the equation, human judgment and deliberation on questions such as the guilt and innocence of an individual must be activated and added to the consideration of what the law demands. Justice then must then simultaneously conserve and go against the law. Such decisions imply struggle and the risk of being wrong, since they incorporate the plurality of difference

in the way they operate. This kind of human struggle with pluralities of a particular situation measured against a universal law makes justice an ethical concept, one which is not present in the Commandant's fixed understanding of the law and its always universal applicability.

Given the account of Derrida's musings on justice and the law presented in this chapter/'act' and the implications that I have tried to point out for the traces that these musings leave in language, it follows that *In the Penal Colony* may be interpreted as an account of the law of language/sentencing that is devoid of justice. In other words, because the law, according to the Commandant, admits of no decisions or alternative perspectives and is perfectly calculable, based on the unequivocal presence of guilt, there can be no admittance of the impossible, infinite, incalculable and rebellious, which justice represents. If this argument is applied to the law of language, it provides a further illustration of the immutability, necessity and injustice of this law and the fact that it functions through replicating sameness (and thus the death of meaning) rather than proliferating meanings through allowing traces of difference and alternative understandings to be distinguished.

It seems that the Commandant wants to go even further than to flout ethics by not taking difference and plurality into account. He seems to want to fix this law in the flesh of the Condemned Man. He states that there would be no point in telling the Condemned Man his sentence orally, but that he will learn it on his body (Kafka, 1949). This draws our attention to the fact that the written law seems permanent and incontrovertible. In contrast to this, had the Condemned Man in *In the Penal Colony* had a chance to defend himself in an ordinary court of law, he would have made oral representations of his perspective, as many witnesses have done who would have attested to the evidence/reality of the matter in their opinion. In this context, the reality of oral accounts/'writings' would have been emphasized. I have already discussed Derrida's view of the West's phonocentrism in Section 2.1.8 of this study, where he claims that the West tends to privilege the reality of oral expressions over written ones, since oral expressions seem to carry with them the immediacy and presence we seek, precisely because they do not seem to fix presence in the same way that writing does. Writing seems to carry with it a death and a permanence (rather than an immanence) of presence, something which is so distinctively captured by the writing device in *In the Penal Colony*. This death sentence is brought about by the attempt to construct presence through a kind of writing that

presumes to fix meaning permanently, suggesting that presence is not the kind of thing which can be fixed if it is to remain presence.

But let us imagine that we are inside the perspective of the perpetrator in *In the Penal Colony* (another victim of the law of language) for a moment – the perspective of the Commandant. The Commandant wants to fix meaning/presence and inscribe his (and the law's) authority in the flesh of the Condemned Man. But even the harshness and pain of the torture he inflicts on the Condemned Man in an attempt to do this cannot deliver the satisfaction he desires. One might therefore imagine that when he attempts suicide, it is because he is frustrated by his dealings with language. This seems to link up with Nietzsche's (1989) conception of *ressentiment* towards language. This refers to what one feels when one's power – as a wielder of language to create meaning – fails and one seems to become a victim of its transient and deferring nature. Language then thwarts our desire for totality and self-presence (which paradoxically the law sometimes seems to offer, particularly from the perspective of the Commandant). One might assert that the entire western tradition suffers from this *ressentiment*. This is a sense of frustration and inferiority in the face of the presence we desire, which we harbour towards language because we feel it cannot make good on its messianic promise of presence. Our being is thus severely limited by having to use language.

Derrida (1992:18) adds that injustice and justice can only operate on someone who is capable of language (and thus of choosing to subject him/herself to its law of violence and death), intention and sacrifice. Of course, this implies the inevitability of the subjection of someone capable of language to both the ravages of the infinite possibilities and the finite limitations of language. Applying this proposition to *In the Penal Colony* interrogates this concept further and demonstrates that the choice between the law and justice is not really available to us. We cannot actually choose not to be subject to the one or the other. In *In the Penal Colony*, although the Condemned Man is (theoretically at least) capable of language, he cannot choose not to be subject to its laws, even though he does not ever make use of language – not having been offered the opportunity to defend himself. Indeed, one could say that the Condemned Man rather makes use of the silence walled up in language (even though this does not seem to be a *choice*) that Derrida claims exceeds the oppositions of such constructs as justice and injustice or justice and the law. But although the silence offers the Condemned Man an opportunity to escape the

confines of language and access to the incomprehensible and emphasizes the sense of the injustice of his situation, it does *not* offer him the opportunity to escape death or the violence of its law or the torture of the constant deferral of meaning.

4.3 Following traces of Subjects in the illustrative texts

So far this chapter/‘act’ has explored numerous and varied S/subjects that have left traces within the illustrative texts for us as readers to follow. Up to now, this has primarily been done to illuminate the disparate aspects of the writing process and enrich our understanding of the process. This section of this study now begins to explore the traces of the kinds of Subject of writing (namely writers, readers and translators) that the writing process illuminated up to now has set up, and how these Subjects relate to each other both constructively and destructively within the text.

If writing is constructing the self, the *written self is not present*, it is a trace constructed through writing of ‘something’ which, because it is written, continually refers to itself, whilst simultaneously being in itself, of necessity, a contextualising and self-constructing process. Derrida carries this notion further when he integrates his concepts of *differance* and *the other* with it. He suggests that what opens the possibility of thought is not merely the question of being, but also the never-annulled difference from the *completely other* (Derrida, 1997). It is not just being or existing, but being different to another that makes traces of thoughts (and thus traces of selves) possible.

In the Penal Colony, the Commandant wants writing to obliterate all difference and give rise to sameness, most notably a sameness in an absolute interpretation of the law, justifying his judgment of the Condemned Man’s guilt for having transgressed that law and his ensuing sentence. He wants to write the Condemned Man’s sentence on him as a way of drawing attention to the fact that he is guilty of disobedience to an immutable law that allows for no difference of construal. In *The Pillow Book*, Nagiko’s writing, on the other hand, draws attention to contrast (difference) between the black ink on the white skin and white sheets and its obvious accommodation of mutability in that it is written in delible ink that is often elaborately washed off. In terms of Derrida’s argument, the Commandant’s writing would not allow for being at all, since it cannot accommodate otherness, whereas

Nagiko's writing exists precisely in the space between others and is an exploration of this very relationship. Along these lines, I regard *The Pillow Book* as a text that illuminates the quality of writing as a process of differentiation, life and relatedness and *In the Penal Colony* as a text that exposes the qualities of writing in terms of sameness, death and self-alienation.

Heartfield (2002:3) reminds us that Derrida states that 'difference is so primordial that it cannot be kept outside of the Subject, but must call into question the Subject itself'. The Subject in this sense is also a subject/construct of writing much the same as justice and the law is, only, this time, it also refers to what is also often called a 'self'. Derrida's claim that our notion of difference cannot be held outside the subject is resonant of the metaphor of the mystic writing pad that implies that the mind does not exist apart from being written. The subject does not exist apart from being distinguishable through differences (as opposed to self-identical). In other words, according to Heartfield (2002), Derrida is asserting the primacy of difference over the Subject.

If we understand the sign *Subject* in this way, then this sign carries within it the possibility of our thoughts, because it has this heterogeneous nature, this distinctive character of difference, and is always determined by 'the trace or track of that other which is forever absent' (Spivak, 1997:xvii). This suggests that the written self (understood as such a Subject) always necessarily carries within itself references to the absent other. This may be why Derrida claims that the only way to approach the other is in the language of the other, which is not one's own language (Derrida, 1992), and why all writing seems to resonate with this process of finding oneself as another (or different and a foreigner rather than a self-identical Subject) inside the language.

This other (or difference) that the self carries within itself also implies that the writing Subject/self is always split (Derrida, 1997) and always self-reflective – an aspect which the writing process lends itself to. The writing self is constituted in and through written discourse that is dependent on a 'reading' by another. This self is a plural self that is forever changing and always defers the singular notion of self.

This written Subject/split self of the foregoing argument that the writing process sets up stands in contrast to the traditional notion of an originating, singular self/Subject. Foucault (1977:137-8) states that the traditional notion of the subject

should be reconsidered to make sure that we no longer view the Subject as the originating (present) Subject. This reconsideration of the Subject should examine its

functions, its interventions in discourse, and its system of dependencies. We should suspend the typical questions: how does a free subject penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning; how does it accomplish its design by animating the rules of discourse from within? Rather, we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? In short, *the subject* (and its substitutes) *must* be stripped of its creative role and *analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse*.

(my emphasis)

This is in spite of writing always necessarily functioning in terms of the apparent absence of the Subject. Writing can be said to function in this way since a written description is always historical in some sense or of an experience that is not actually happening at that moment, despite the fact that the writing is a present experience in itself. This seems to indicate that writing is a system of signs that emerges on the cusp of presence and absence and as such always carries both of these conceptions within itself, related in complex ways.

In his last seminar, entitled *The Technologies of the Self* (Martin, Gutman & Hutton 1988), Foucault speaks of his aim to transform the self into a Subject (rather than an object of discourse). In doing this, he is careful not to reify the Subject as something that exists outside of the workings of discourse and change, or as Derrida would say, as something that is not itself caught up in 'a chain of different substitutions' (Spivak, 1997:lxix). The Subject that Foucault envisions is thus continually submitted to a radical critique, so that it keeps on changing. Deleuze (1988:96-98) also speaks of a Subject whose interiority he constantly sees as a fold of the outside, 'an interiorization of the outside...a redoubling of the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different'. This is important if one is to circumvent the scathing criticism by Lacoue-Labarthe (according to Heartfield, 2002), who warns against attempts to reify self-creation, even the creation of a multiplicitous self

created as a postmodern Subject, likening such creations to fascism and describing them as a kind of modernist transcendental backlash:

The Subject of absolute self-creation, even if it transcends all the determinations of the modern Subject in an immediately natural position...brings together and concretizes these same determinations and sets itself up as the Subject, absolutely speaking.

(Heartfield, 2002:4)

Post-structuralism claims that the Subject is also always the S/subject of deconstruction and 'the possibility that the Subject and object are not opposed, but mutually supporting [and intertwined] terms' is suggested (Heartfield, 2002:5). The fact that the written and writing self/Subject is always only a multiple split and related self that holds difference and traces of the other within itself guards against this sort of reification of singulars.

4.3.1 *The trace of the self*

But this written self, this 'I' which is not one (Derrida, 1997) is also not an object, even when some writings may attempt to objectify it. Wittgenstein (cited in Haynes, 2005:343-4) argues that Descartes and Hume were wrong to ask what the 'I' refers to, since 'The thinking subject is mere illusion... the I is not an object'.

This self that carries the other within it is a multiple subjectivity that can be represented by the complex textual devices found in texts such as those by Kafka and Greenaway. This self emerges as traces of interactions between selves and others through the relationships that such narratives or writings necessarily set up through using the logic of difference as a discriminating mechanism to make themselves perceptible and not as an abstract or transcendental presence:

The 'I' is treated as an emergent institutional fact, not inconsistent with a constructed explanation or narrative, but emerging from shared social practices rather than an abstracted agent. (Haynes, 2005:343)

An example of this notion of a S/subject as always carrying traces of another S/subject in it is evidenced in *In the Penal Colony* when one word or name always refers to another, as with the 'Condemned Man' and the 'Commandant'. To begin with, the graphic notation or the Letter (in the Derridean these) of these words is

very similar. (We recall that this study on writing is not merely about graphic notation but into the very concept of writing as investigating or constellating²²). They use almost all the same letters and thus in a concrete sense seem to carry traces of the other within themselves.²³ The Condemned Man's name in one sense does not carry any inherent meaning in it. It is a clear example of a 'name' that derives its presence/meaning from being relative to being condemned by someone and its Subject's relationship to a penal code (in this case a relationship of supposed transgression is what actually validates his limited identity and differentiation). Surprisingly, in a very real way, at the end of the story the Condemned Man is still present, and the Commandant, the upholder of the system of law that names and gives meaning to the Condemned Man, is himself condemned/killed by his own writing/device and thus the expectations that the plot sets up in the beginning are overthrown. The Commandant actually carries the Condemned Man's sentence and the Condemned Man carries the Commandant's life which he has taken (over) in opting not to save him. Thus, in a sense, the one becomes the other as the differences and boundaries between them blur. This also applies to words or writing, as one word is continually substituted for another in an attempt to get closest to its true meaning, in an endless chain of substitutions. In this sense, writing a sentence on the Condemned Man would never actually succeed in naming him or his transgression; even if it destroyed him, it would not deliver up the prize/promise of presence. And if writing or naming is not to arrest presence then every word must slip into another word in an endless proliferation of meanings and every binary must hold its opposite within itself.

In *In the Penal Colony*, the painful punishment is inflicted upon the Condemned Man because of his breaking of the law. This follows Derrida's metaphor of the act of writing as itself transgressive of the limitations set by the law of language (Derrida, 1997). (This forces one to recall the punitive consequences for other transgressive writers such as Jerome and the Commandant discussed earlier in this chapter/'act'). Breaking the law is what sets one self apart or distinguishes it from other selves and

²² For Derrida, the concept of writing is opposed to the concept of the 'Letter', and is used for an entire structure of investigation, not merely to "writing in the narrow sense" of graphic notation on tangible material. (Spivak, 1997:lxix)

²³ The same argument would not apply in the original German. See Section 4.4 of this 'act'/chapter for a further discussion of the English text versus the German text, as well as Footnote 10.

begins to set up a plurality of meanings or deferrals. Although, as in *In the Penal Colony*, this allows a sentence to be written, it does not allow the fixing of meaning on the Condemned Man's body that the Commandant seems to want to achieve. Instead, it causes great pain and suffering, *without* fixing meaning or the sentence of the victim. Thus the Letter is violent in its impetus to fix meaning and manifests itself through writing as an act of rebellion against the law of language that causes great pain to the Subject in trying to make him/her appear self-identical, whilst never really allowing the Subject anything more than access to a trace of presence/meaning. It seems that writing and construction/expression is only possible through punishment for breaking a law, since it is only by breaking the law that one can leave a trace of differential marks. Each sentence that is written necessarily carries in it the (broken) unknowable law of presence, but never delivers up fixed knowledge. Thus writing leaves writers in this position of being able to disrupt presence, yet still always haunted by the very thing that it destroys and which is what writers most desire – meaning and fixed presence.

4.3.2 *The trace of the author's name*

In the Penal Colony makes use of writing techniques that seem to distance the reader from meaning and from the author. Kafka often makes extensive use of a trait characteristic to the German language, which allows for long sentences that can sometimes span an entire page. He also intentionally uses ambiguous terms or words that have several meanings so that his sentences are difficult to decipher. As in some of Kafka's other writings, the narrator of *In the Penal Colony* also seems detached from events that one would normally expect to be registered with immanent and palpable horror. This detachment, coupled with the apparent themes of hopelessness, alienation, persecution and absurdity that seem to occupy this work, create the effect of something, although not clearly apparent, yet ominous and perhaps horrific, rendering the reader feeling anxious and quite powerless. This is much the same as one might feel as a Subject of language subjected to both its limitations and its infinite messianic promises. In this sense, one might say that Kafka wields the traditional authority of authorship most deftly. Instead of communing with his readers, he leaves them feeling distant, unsettled and powerless in the wake of his sentences. This concurs with Derrida's (1997) remarks that writing is at some level not able to deliver on the messianic promise of presence

and communion/intercourse that can sometimes be glimpsed in it or the relationships that it sets up.

However, this is only true if the traditional and simplified conceptualisation of the self of the author, the self of the narrator and the self of the reader is used. This conceptualisation employs a relatively definitive, authoritative, singular, impersonal and hegemonic image which subjugates the text that is read and written. But if these entities (the author, narrator and reader) are conceived of rather as nodes of meaning constructed out of the text itself and are not quite so clearly defined apart from each other, then the realm of conceiving of multiple selves may be entered and especially the multiple selves that the writing process sets up. At this point, I recall again Derrida's (1997:36) notion that the reflective self is not one, and this time I transpose this idea onto the construction of the author (and also the reader, writer and narrator) and so conceive of an author who is not one either. This has the effect of being able to make the familiar unfamiliar and allows us to see another /new reality:

To don a mask as one writes and to mask the "subject" of one's memoirs has the effect of theatricalizing, then attacking that which has become toxic through an uncritical familiarity and the ingestion of values passively received. (Mehuron, 1989:82)

In this sense, the author's (multiple) self in the text allows him/her to reread himself/herself again and respond to things in himself/herself in a different way. I read Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* as setting up such an authorial presence. Perhaps as readers we feel we are not able to get close to the author/writer because the author is not a simple entity, who becomes apparent to us through his writing. Yet it is precisely in this way that Kafka is able to interrogate himself and the discourses around him by writing about them/authoring them as a multiplicitous author. The kind of Derridean presence (albeit always deferred) that this sets up does allow us continually to reinvent and relate (over and over again) to ourselves and others (as authors of our own constructions) in new ways, ways that would be closed to us if we were to conceive of ourselves and others as absolutely distinct and singular.

Naming in *The Pillow Book* and naming in *In the Penal Colony* is remarkably different and bears some exploration. As previously stated, the four characters in *In the Penal Colony* are named only according to their role in the story and are

therefore anonymous and depersonalised Subjects in terms of their proper names. In *The Pillow Book*, there are also some characters that are named only in terms of their role in the story or their relation to the (other) main character, namely, the publisher and Nagiko's father. The only characters that are named with proper names are Sei Shonagon – Nagiko's mentor, Jerome – Nagiko's favourite lover and Nagiko herself – the main character and writer and author in the film. Naming these characters with proper names creates the illusion of personalizing them and freeing them from anonymity – much the same as branding a written text with an author's proper name does.

But, as Foucault (1977) tells us, the S/subject disappears in writing and even using the proper name of an author does not call up the person of an author, but merely ways in which a discourse is circulated in society. According to Foucault, the author's name does not belong to a real person, nor is it fictional. It belongs to the space in between such concepts, which in turn gives rise to new discourses. Authors are victims of their own writing, as is vividly evidenced in *In the Penal Colony* by the death of the Commandant by his own cherished writing device. None of the characters are saved from death or anonymity by being called by a proper name and personalized. Calling characters by their relation to others draws attention to the fact that, as Derrida (1997) has remarked, the self carries in itself the trace or reference to the other. For example, referring to Nagiko's father only as 'Nagiko's father' underlines the fact that his identity (even as her apparent origin and inspiration as a writer) is only constituted by its reference to another and thus in a sense one is not able to capture the source of his presence any more closely than this. This is in keeping with Derrida's views on trace, origin and being as expounded in the beginning of this study.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.1 of this study, Foucault (1977) explores the idea that the name of an author does not stand for the name of a real person but the name of how a certain discourse is taken up by society. He argues for the distinction between the name of a writer and the name of an author, the latter being understood as the name for an entity whose work is exposed to a wider readership through the mechanism of publishing. He talks about the author's name as lending authority to texts and freeing them from anonymity in discourse. In trying to free texts from anonymity and to lend them some authority, Foucault tries to link the author's body and name to his/her body of work. But this link is rendered impotent if we consider

Deleuze's (1994) claim that bodies do not really distinguish individuals. Thus we are not able to get away from the conceptual death and vulnerability of an author's meaning in relation to the readings of others.

Because of the inevitable death of the author and some of the characters in the plots of the illustrative texts of this study, it makes sense to follow Foucault's (1977) notion of concerning oneself with the structures of texts, rather than the author's (or character's) personal experiences as a site in which to study subjectivity. By studying the names of the characters in *In the Penal Colony* in these terms, they are stripped of their creative roles and seen as functions or writings of a discourse. It is this kind of presence that we have access to when we talk of a constructed or written S/subject and analyse the way that the characters and authors are named. This could give us a window into what subjectivity may mean, according to Foucault (1977) and to what written traces and selves may be.

Foucault (1977) also refers to the penal code as having attained a more primary status than the works of an author. This is because the writer of the penal code is not named. The usual authority that is given by the name of an author to a text is not needed by an anonymous yet authoritative written text such as the penal code to which Subjects voluntarily submit themselves anyway, even in the absence of an originating presence. Speeches and books are assigned real authors, but not the penal code. Yet even books and speeches are assigned differentiated authors only when their authors were transgressors and are punished to the extent that their discourse is considered transgressive. This notion resonates with Derrida's (1997) view of writing as necessarily being subject to and also transgressing the law of language. Discourse was traditionally an action – lawful or unlawful, not a thing to own. But copyright and a system of ownership made the transgressive qualities of writing an imperative of all literature and revived the danger in writing. This is made particularly apparent in the person of the publisher in *The Pillow Book*.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.1 of this study, in reference to *The Pillow Book*, Foucault comments on the kinship between writing and death. I explained in Section 2.1.3 that writing, instead of immortalising a hero or Subject, has become 'the voluntary obliteration of the self that does not require representation in books because it takes place in the everyday existence of the writer' (Foucault, 1977:117). Instead of immortalising its author, writing now kills its author. This is done through

the effacement of the individual characteristics of the author. When this concept is applied to *In the Penal Colony*, it is most clearly shown in the example of the Commandant, who is only known by this depersonalised title even though he carries the ostensible authority of an author. Also, when the inscribing device malfunctions in *In the Penal Colony*, the Commandant/author is himself killed instead of the Condemned Man, who prefers not to save him, graphically illustrating the death of the author. It is significant that when the reader/traveller/explorer rescues the author's corpse, he reads on his face no visible sign of the promised redemption that the author thought that his writing offered (Kafka, 1949).

This discussion of the trace of the author's name and the trace of the self suggests that, although writing necessarily constructs a writing Subject, this writing Subject is not an author or a self-identical Subject in the traditional sense that the proper name of an author would suggest. This writing Subject is not such a singular identity, but rather a self-reflective and multiple Subject shot through by traces of the other readers and writers (perhaps even translators and publishers) it is related to. These other readers and writers are necessarily also intimately involved in the text and in the writing process, and all of them are brought into existence by the writing process itself and by the position of the textual traces that the writing process leaves within discourse.

4.3.3 *The trace of the reader*

Another Subject that writing necessarily constructs or leaves differentiating traces of in the text is the Subject of the reader. In *In the Penal Colony*, we have begun to examine how the author deliberately allows the Commandant's project of trying to enforce a fixed meaning to fail. He does this by making us as readers aware of other perspectives within the text itself, such as that of the narrator and the apparently neutral position of the Traveller – who is foreign to the process that he tries to observe with indifference. This is also true of the process of writing. The signifier is always moving into the hands of a traveller who is someone simultaneously outside of and implicated in the text itself. Despite the Traveller's efforts to remain indifferent to the horrors inflicted on the Condemned Man, he does momentarily give way to feelings of revulsion and disbelief. The Traveller may thus be said to interpret the text playing out in front of him in spite of himself. I think that the Traveller, instead of

representing the narrative objectively, is in fact implicated in the text as another S/subject and is subject to its workings of deferral and substitution.

But it may be argued that the Traveller is akin to a reader, since he is constantly appealed to by the Commandant to read what is being written and to decipher meaning (Kafka, 1949), even though the Traveller claims to have trouble doing this. The resonances between the Traveller and the reader are numerous. The reader may sometimes consider him/herself as a traveller through the unknown landscape, a foreign observer in a strange land where the text and the past are a different country. Like the reader, the Traveller is thus shown to be able to move perspectives to experience the scenes before him like the reader experiences the text, both sentences being read off a kind of skin encapsulating another world into which the Traveller/reader may choose to become more or less involved. When the Commandant shows the Traveller how the torture device works by making it write on paper, the Traveller (watching with his hands casually tucked into his pockets) replies evasively that he cannot decipher its markings. Knowing that it will be used as an instrument of torture, the narrator remarks that nonetheless the Traveller would have been happy to say something appreciative about the device. The Traveller's role of staying uninvolved despite the horror and injustice of the plot is depicted in the following quotation. The following words represent what the Traveller thinks to himself as he observes the needle of the harrow touch the Condemned Man's skin:

...it is always a ticklish matter to intervene decisively in other people's affairs. He was neither a member of the Penal Colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged. Were he to denounce this execution or actually try to stop it, they could say to him: You are a foreigner – mind your own business. He could make no answer to that, unless he were to add that he was amazed at himself in this connection, for he traveled only as an observer, with no intention at all of altering other people's methods of administering justice. Yet, here he found himself strongly tempted. The injustice of the procedure and the inhumanity of the execution were undeniable. (Kafka, 1949:151)

However, sometimes the Traveller (and thus the reader) seems to show a tinge of hesitation in choosing not to intervene in the plot, perhaps suggesting a moment of guilt. When the device begins to break, the Traveller rails against his neutrality and

wishes to intervene actively in the events. He becomes very upset for the first time when the device begins to break. For it shows him that its quiet operation in which he could remain uninvolved has been an illusion and that in fact he has to become involved, since he has been taken in by the plot.

This may be extended to readers in general too, who should not think of themselves as independent observers of a textual plot, but as co-writers who are intimately implicated in its workings. In this way, the readers' own presence is traced in the text. In the same way as the Traveller, all readers are changed by reading writing, whether they plan this or not, and it is impossible to remain uninvolved in a reading.

Sometimes it is as if the Commandant/writer anticipates the fact that his power may be encroached upon by his readers/interpreters. Then he retreats into a mystification which makes it more difficult for his readers to approach his meaning (for example, in not giving the reader any clear idea of what disobedience caused the condemnation of the guilty man). This disempowers the reader/interpreter as he/she feels about for clues in the dark.

The blurring of the boundary between the Commandant and the Condemned Man to the point where they may even be viewed as each other's alter egos (because, for example, they carry each other's sentences, as discussed earlier, in Section 4.3.1 of this chapter/'act') once again draws attention to the relationship between the author and his/her writings and the reader and writer. In this case, it is interesting that the Commandant functions as both reader and writer, because the suggestion is that these two identities may be inextricably linked through writing to the same self. They cannot exist comfortably within the same Subject for too long without one of them giving way and leading to a violent and unpredictable change (the Commandant gets caught up in his own writing device and, instead of being inscribed, he is stabbed to death by it). This is because the process by which these identities are set up, namely writing, is predicated upon the violence of the law of language and the Letter.

Along these lines, one could argue that the Commandant is just as dependent on the Traveller for acknowledging his actions as the Condemned Man is on the Commandant. It is clear that the publicity of the inscribing act is important to the Commandant (Kafka, 1949). This makes a case for the necessity of the writing act to be read and witnessed by another. By extension, this could be said to illustrate

that it is the relationship between signs and selves that gives presence and meaning and not the fact that the signs or selves may generate meaning outside of this (writing) relationship.

4.3.4 *The trace of relationships between the Subjects set up in the text*

We have examined the fact that the writing, of necessity, sets up various Subjects such as the author/writer and reader and that these Subjects are also necessarily intimately related. This is further emphasized by recalling the metaphor of the mystic writing pad as it is applied in both of the illustrative texts in this study: '[T]he spoken word, and even more, the written word, has the power to function as a skin' (Anzieu cited in Mehuron, 1989:73). This refers to the skin as a psychic envelope that protects our individuality (which leaves traces of differential marks) and is a site of interaction with others. The page of a book is such a skin, an imaginary skin that is a site of interaction with readers, and as such, it is a page that allows readers to get into/under the skin of the writer. The suggestion is that we can commune or relate or be present to each other in some way through the deciphering of sentences on the skin/pages of a book.

But what kind of communing/reading is possible? This notion is explored in *In the Penal Colony*. When the torture/writing device malfunctions at the end of the story and the Commandant is killed by it (instead of the Condemned Man), the Condemned Man finds that 'almost against his will, he had to look at the face of the corpse' of his writer/torturer (Kafka, 1949:166). This is not the sublime intercourse that it may be imagined is brought about by an ordinary reader and writer exchanging meanings as the reader deciphers the skin/page of the writer. This communion seems more about death and limitation than about life and the birth of possibilities. In performing the inscription of the surface of the skin/page, one might say that the present/presence is being ruptured and something (the writing) is being caught up on the skin/page in the past. Thus the dream of communion in the present and presence is destroyed at the very moment when the psychic envelope is opened/inscribed/ruptured. Again this recalls Derrida's (1997) notion of writing as continually deferring presence. In *In the Penal Colony*, it seems that such an inscription can only pathologically intrude on the presence of the other. This is unlike contrary examples of the images of writing on the skins of lovers discussed in the

previous chapter/'act' on *The Pillow Book*. The images of writing on skin in *In the Penal Colony* seem to me to epitomize the notion that writers may have to 'simultaneously apprehend, yet violate the present' through the process of writing which is their celebration of some funeral (Mehuron, 1989:87). In this way, writing continues the inextricably connected processes of dying and living, being present and absent, beginning and ending and subverting and perpetuating that is the stuff of life.

4.3.5 *The trace of the objectification of the Subject*

So far this chapter/'act' has traced the argument that writing is a contradictory and dynamic, lively concept which necessarily gives rise to particular Subjects as it operates. In contrast to this is an understanding of writing as a permanent and unbending process of recording a reality that must, in turn, give rise to objects or objectified Subjects.

One example of such objectification through an understanding of writing as a staid process is to be found in *In the Penal Colony*. As already mentioned, there are only four characters in *In the Penal Colony*, each named only according to his role in the story. The narrative technique of naming the characters in this way, the apparent indifference of the Traveller and the lack of any articulation of the perspective of the defenceless victim in the face of such extreme injustice are all ways in which the writing may be seen to objectify its subjects. This is co-incident with the depiction of writing as leaving a permanent scar on the face of reality, as it is in *In the Penal Colony*.

But perhaps even the construction of a written subjectivity or writing Subject that is constantly subject to an uncontrollable flux of events and to the charge of continually holding all of the traces of difference that this must leave within itself is a way to objectify a subjectivity. The self of the Condemned Man in *In the Penal Colony* is only named as a self insofar as it has been condemned (as different) from something, namely the penal code against which it has transgressed. Writing on a self as if it is merely a tablet to continually reconstruct may be seen as a way of allowing the Subject so constructed (and re-constructed) to function as an object of the writer's pleasure, a tablet, merely at the mercy of constructive (or destructive) script. The relationship of the Condemned Man to writing in *In the Penal Colony* certainly seems to exemplify this, and as such the inscriptive process in this text

seems objectifying rather than constructive. This is in contrast to similar situations of lovers' painting script on each other's bodies in *The Pillow Book*, where the inscriptive process is voluntary and often contributed to by both parties, who sometimes exchange reading and writing roles as they do this. This suggests the importance of being open to both construct and be constructed by others when we read and write in order to counteract the objectifying aspects of viewing writing as a way to fix meaning that is impermeable to the reader's substantial contributions.

The possible objectifying effects of the inscriptive process may be further illuminated by considering what Grosz (1994) notes about the similarities between *In the Penal Colony's* description of inscribing the body and Foucault's exploration of the interface between corporality and power with his graphic description of the horrifying punishment of the attempted regicide by Damiens in France . This happened in 1757, in full view of the public, in a ritualized and violent ceremony (Grosz, 1994:150). Damiens was a Frenchman who attained notoriety as a result of his unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Louis XV of France in 1757. He was the last person to be executed in France with the traditional and gruesome form of death used for regicides, which was drawing and quartering (Wikipedia, *Damiens Regicide*, n.d.:n.p.). Damiens the regicide was condemned to have his flesh

torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and, on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the winds.

(Foucault, 1977: 3-8)

Such traitors were swiftly punished by death to deter those who deliberately wanted to kill a monarch and thus flouted the rule of law and the divine right of kings to power. Drawing and quartering in public may be interpreted as a way of demonstrating vividly how an individual body is violently subjugated to abstract powers and laws of marking to which it is somehow said to be related. It is clear how this is similar to *In the Penal Colony*, where the body of the Condemned Man is subjugated to the law (and indeed objectified by it) and its violent punishment.

The implication for Foucault that we would do well to note is that by knowing about the way that discourses and tyrannies operate on bodies, individuals may transform themselves into Subjects who may thus choose to wield more power over their own bodies and not merely unconsciously internalise the tyrannies to which they are subjected by discourse (understood as a constructing process akin to writing) and which may objectify them without their even knowing it. Boesche (1996) recalls Foucault's claim that we both experience tyranny and perpetuate it; we internalise it within ourselves and force it on ourselves and others.

In *In the Penal Colony*, the machine or writing device and the nexus of power is described as 'working so silently' that it 'simply escaped one's attention' (Kafka, 1949:164), unlike Damians's execution, which took place in full view of the public. The danger is that the execution *In the Penal Colony* could go by unnoticed. The implication is that the objectification process that happens through naming/writing/sentencing the Subject in this way in the Kafka text is insidious and dangerous, because it does not draw attention to itself and create witnesses of itself. This is because of its links to writing as permanence and the violence and death that this process implies.

By contrast, the power of impermanent writing to differentiate and thus confirm subjective identity and selfhood are vividly displayed in *The Pillow Book* when readers/viewers observe Nagiko, the writer, inscribing her own body.

4.4 The trace of language

This chapter/‘act’ has explored the trace structure of writing closely through the analysis of the metaphor of the mystic writing pad and how trace structure is predicated upon signs of difference that are scattered throughout writing. This same argument was expounded in more detail by exploring the traces of selected specific binary oppositions that function within language (of which writing is sometimes a part and for which it is sometimes another name) more broadly, such as law and justice. In this sense, expressing the trace structure of language and the way that this structure functions in terms of differentiating traces and repetitions, privileged traces and marginal views is another way of examining how writing functions by leaving traces of difference. This happens within the broader arena of discourses that are continually emphasizing some traces, deferring others and omitting still others in a continuous dance of construction.

Traditional criticism of Kafka’s work has placed him in the context of a variety of literary schools, such as modernism and magical realism. The apparent hopelessness and absurdity that seem to permeate his works coupled with his repeated emphasis of the themes of alienation and persecution are sometimes considered emblematic of existentialism and form part of this criticism (Wikipedia, *Franz Kafka*, n.d.:n.p.). Deleuze and Guattari’s (1986) alternative criticism of Kafka argues that Kafka’s deliberate construction (through language) of the lonely figure writing out of anguish was a deliberately subversive tactic employed by Kafka for specific reasons and that he is thus far more ‘joyful’ than he appears to be (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986:back cover) . For the sake of their argument one must assume that the traditional criticism of Kafka relegates his traces (perhaps by virtue of their pessimism) to the margins of literary discourse and leaves space for a critical voice to work on trying to privilege his discourse – an assumption that could be challenged.

Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari (1986:back cover) claim that Kafka is ‘a man of joy, a promoter of radical politics who resisted at every turn submission to frozen hierarchies’. Their criticism challenges conventional interpretations of Kafka’s work as pessimistic and marginal and proposes the establishment of the concept of ‘minor literature’ that is based on different criteria to a major literature, but uses the same signs as the major literature, but through presenting them from a different

position, giving them a new meaning. Deleuze and Guattari (1986:back cover) contend that Kafka, writing in German, as a Jew in Prague, made German 'take flight on a line of escape' presumably by using its signs in an unusual and pessimistic way and from an unusual off-centre position that joyfully made him become a stranger within his own writing due to his location within a self-constructed critical language from where he commanded a position of criticizing the signs of the major discourse from within its own confines. Thus (momentarily at least) as a writer and wielder of signs, he escapes the confining power of the very signs he uses.

Deleuze and Guattari (1986) assert that reading Kafka as a writer of minor literature, as a stranger within his own writing, may serve as a model for understanding how all critical language may be made to operate powerfully within the confines of the dominant discourse. Indeed, this is in line with Derrida's (1992) view that all writing is an attempt to approach the other and an experience for the writer as of a foreigner using the language of the other, not his/her own. This implies that, on the one hand, a critical platform is constructed for Kafka (and perhaps we may even argue for writers more generally) that privileges his traces and makes them powerful enough to do battle against the dominant discourse(s).

If we follow Derrida's comments earlier in this chapter/'act' about the implications of addressing the other in the language of the other not one's own,²⁴ then Kafka finds himself in a unique position – one of writing in his own language (marginal discourse) whilst simultaneously addressing the other in a language not his own. This would give Kafka all the advantages of simultaneously leaving traces of the calculable law of language in his writings, offered by the infinite messianic promise of justice (or presence). This means that if we accept Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) argument for Kafka's minor literature and combine it with Derrida's argument for the implications of addressing the other in the language of the other, not one's own, then Kafka manages to achieve something quite remarkable in his writing (that may even be open to other writers writing in this way): he manages to escape the confines of language whilst wielding it. In co-opting the dominant discourse of German literature and using it as a platform to protest from, from within, Kafka

²⁴ The discussion of Derrida's comments earlier in this chapter/'act' (Section 4.2.9) centres on the necessity of subjecting oneself to the law of the language of the other when one addresses the other in his/her own language and not the writer's own. According to Derrida (1992), although this is essentially an impossible ideal, it is a necessity and a necessary condition for justice which flouts the rules and aligns itself with the operation of the structure of difference, the only way we can hope to present ourselves to the other.

creates a powerful position of agency for himself and embodies a strong protesting presence as a writer within German (and perhaps modernist/magic realist literature in general). This is unlike the Commandant and Jerome, who are victims of the law of language that confines their meanings to death, unable to leave a trace of the impossible and the ideal by using language itself. This is why it seems that Kafka paradoxically empowers himself by writing about disempowered victims.

But Kafka's writing about disempowered victims is so complex and nuanced that it bears further scrutiny for what it can reveal about the nature of language and its users. What the traditional criticism of the Commandant in *In the Penal Colony* also suggests is that power is an ambivalent quality. Although the Commandant is empowered, he causes pain and torture as a direct result of his powerful position. In spite of being horrified by the Commandant's use of power, readers nonetheless wish that the Condemned Man was more empowered. This leaves the suggestion that power is an ambivalent quality and that whilst we may seek this through writing (as the Commandant does), we are also aware on some level of its dangers when we wield it as writers (having read what happens to the Commandant).

This goes to the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) criticism of Kafka. They perhaps do not (in this case) consider that it is not necessarily only beneficial to wield power/be empowered or to be seen to subvert power. For in subverting traditional interpretations of Kafka, they are also granting Kafka's writing extraordinary authority at the centre of an influential critical discourse that is in danger of reifying his writing to such an extent that it itself becomes a tyranny. This suggests that even subversion may not always be an empowering act and thus subversion of traditional interpretations and qualities of alienation and victimization do not necessarily imply an escape from these things, but may be seen to perpetuate their workings. Such subversion may also insinuate something more sinister, such as the possibility that Kafka, as a powerful canonized/ing author, may be wielding a dark and disturbing power over his readers through his authorizing pressure. This causes us to hanker after the centre of his meaning without even realizing it and thus continues to uphold similarly hierarchized positions to the ones he seems to criticize (for example, that of male authors over female authors, European writers over African writers, serious writers over frivolous ones and philosophical writers over literary ones).

One of the main implications of admitting that holding a central position of power within a discourse is not only positive, is that it allows one to explore the notion that in exposing the horrors of power through writing, one does not escape wielding such power oneself. Although writing (such as *In the Penal Colony*) may expose the horrors of power, it too functions within the confines of language as a tyrannizing (perhaps even torturous) mechanism, as Agamben says (Clemens *et al.*, 2009). This is so because as soon as the writings about the horrors of power are identified as such, they cease to be driven by their revolutionary force, which makes them what they are. So, in a sense, the revolutionary force of the writing is negated by the constant deferral of its meaning. This continued death/deferral carried within the structure of writing may become a new tyranny and may eternally confine expression/presence to the jail house of language.

By gaining an understanding of how language and writing and their positions and operations within discourse can simultaneously empower and disempower, one can begin to understand how the writer and the reader may empower him/herself by making these understandings explicit and manipulating his/her own position within discourse. This capacity also allows one to recognize the darkness/otherness/difference in oneself and thus acknowledge (the limits of) one's own existence and influence (or the lack of it). Writers and readers *need to be open to such multiple readings and positioning of language so that they can keep shifting their allegiances within discourse*. This allows them to keep encountering themselves and each other as Subjects in new ways in the text when they exchange perspectives as the text unfolds and opens for them the capacity to accommodate the multiplicitous sea of possibilities or continually deferred and irregular tensions of presence/meaning that Derrida (1997) claims for writing.

A specific example of the way the trace of language operates can be seen in the comparative operation of two specific natural languages at play in *In the Penal Colony* text, English and German. The fact that this study is based on an English translation of the German text of *In the Penal Colony* bears closer scrutiny at this point. In the previous chapter/'act' Derrida's view of translation as a transformation was explored. Derrida claims that all writing is in fact a translation/transformation of one text into another and that

there are no unique words, if, as soon as a privileged concept-word emerges, it must be given over to the chain of substitutions.

(Spivak, 1997:lxxxvi)

and thus, as I already suggested by quoting the same point from Spivak's (1997:lxxxvi) introduction to Derrida's *Of Grammatology* in Section 3.3, it

must now be evident that, in desiring to conserve the "original"... and seduced by the freedom of the absence of a sovereign text...translation" and thus all writing itself is in a "double bind".

Following this argument, this study assumes that the German *In der Strafkolonie* (Kafka, 1966) is in fact a different and unique text from the English version *In the Penal Colony*. For this reason, making remarks about each of them is not intended to discredit or privilege one or the other but rather to illustrate and complicate our understanding of the broader process of writing (as translation) that may be observed operating in them both in similar and different ways and from similar and different positions within discourses. For the purposes of this study, I examine the use of the word *sentence* to describe the inscription on the skin of the Condemned Man in the English *In the Penal Colony* and its obvious double meaning in this context.

What is notable is that by referring to the writing of a sentence (on the Condemned Man's body), the English text of *In the Penal Colony* is suggesting the double meaning of the word 'sentence' and is drawing our attention to the way that writing operates via fixed laws in the same way that sentencing operates in courts. Indeed, sentences are governed by grammatical rules (Lucy, 2004:156) in much the same way that sentencing of criminals is governed by courts of law. Yet, in being subject to laws, the outcomes of both written sentences and legal sentences are not exactly known beforehand (or should not be if they are just). This suggests that the effects of writing of sentences that occur in writing or in courts of law are not totally under the control of the writer or representatives of the legal system.

To write (or read) or to sentence is to be open to the endless possibilities of meaning and chance effects that may or may not occur during the writing process. In this way, writing or sentencing suggests that it is possible for the written or the sentenced to be always removed from the referent that occasioned it (Lucy,

2004:156). So there may necessarily be a gap between writing/sentencing and presence, a gap that can only be bridged, according to Derrida (1992), by embracing difference or deliberating about justice and thus allowing for irregularities, infinity and variableness. Making such allowances is abhorrent to the Commandant (as a representative of the law) in both the English and the German *In the Penal Colony* texts, since he is specifically trying to limit possibilities by not even allowing a defence for the Condemned Man and directly writing his 'incontrovertible' sentence on his body. A further abstraction of the word 'sentence' as applied to the law of language is also apparent here, namely that the law of language necessarily subjects the meaning of the writer or language user to a death *sentence*, since in naming what cannot be named and artificially confining the continual proliferation of meanings to the law of language, the signified ceases to be what it is. Once again we see that writing is subject to both the confines of the law of language and the messianic promise of presence which makes it a rich and complex site for the examination of the process of construction.

In the German text of *In the Penal Colony*, there does not seem to be a direct reference to the word *sentence* (Kafka, 1966). The German sign that usually replaces *sentence* in the German text is *Satz*, *Gesetz* (or some such permutation), and sometimes *Grundsatz*. The closest equivalent English sign would seem to be *set* as in the sense of setting down something definitive, also sometimes translated as *tenet*, *maxim* or *principle*. In any case, in German a legal sentence is an *Urteil* and what is carved into the Condemned Man's skin in the German text is not his legal (or written) sentence but the commandment/*Gebot* that was broken to honour one's superiors.

What an analysis of the use of the German sign *Gebot* adds to our understanding of the English *In the Penal Colony text* is to emphasize the link between the inscription on the Condemned Man's body and the Commandant (the [broken] commandment and the commander). In this study, this emphasis might be extended to the link between the writer and his/her writings. The words 'command' and 'commandment' and 'commandant' (and even 'condemned') strongly suggest law, obedience, control and the fact that alternatives are not admitted. This draws attention the fact that one may view the link between a writer and his/her writings as one of the writer as having total control over the writings.

Of course, this illusion of control that the very signs/traces in the text itself create is shown to be insubstantial, since the Commandant is not in control of what happens to the Condemned Man in the end. Indeed the Commandant's beloved inscriptive device itself breaks down in the end and behaves unpredictably and thus the very regularity that the law provided the Commandant in justifying his sentencing, itself looks to be cancelled. This is in line with the fact that the law of language that would tie the writer to his/her writings in a relationship of authority and control has been shown to be suspect in the context of the continual deferral of meaning suggested by Derrida (1997) and deconstruction. In this sense, the commanding role of authority traditionally afforded to the author by his/her writings is undermined by the fact that the author is also a victim of the law of language in which his/her writings are presented. This undermines the logic which dictates that an author's traces should be privileged above the traces that the reader/translator or publisher may leave in the text. The author's trace on the text is just another scratch on the mystic writing pad before it is melted down once again in the heat of the reading-writing-constructing process.



Chapter 5:

The Epilogue – the reflexive loop

I am the very necessary

Coda.

The tail-piece,

the ever-reproducing

Epilogue.

The last dangling paragraph that is the reason

for the next book's

sprouting...

(Greenaway, 196:102, the part of Nagiko's first book written on Jerome's penis and scrotum)

5.1 Introduction

This is the promised concluding chapter to this study. This conclusion will deliberately emphasize and reflect on the writing process of the study itself and the author's experience of this in relation to the theoretical concepts introduced previously. In this final section, I apply some of the Derridean notions discussed previously in this study to the study itself. The implications of authorship in this study itself are also explored in accordance with the development of this concept in previous chapters/'acts'. As a final curtain, a case will be made for the soundness of the use of a post-structuralist method used in this study to examine literary texts within a philosophical milieu.

5.2 The writer revisited

Foucault's (1977) essay 'What is an Author?' has been analysed to some extent in previous chapters/'acts' of this study (see Sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1). In it, Foucault states that a text is not only a reconstruction of the S/subject of its author after the fact of writing, but that a text also carries signs of reference to its author, for example, personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place and the conjunction of verbs.



When the text that we are reading is a novel, we may all accept that, although the text may be narrated in the first person, neither the first person pronoun, present indicative tense, nor the signs of localisation, refer directly to the writer or the specific act of writing, but rather to a ‘second self’ whose similarity to the author is always uncertain and keeps changing throughout the book. According to Foucault (1977), the author’s function arises out of the schism between these two selves. However, Foucault (1977:130) also mentions another, third, self that can be discerned, namely ‘one who speaks of the goals of his investigation’.

This is reminiscent of Derrida’s reflexive and fractured ‘I’, which is also analysed in this study. It is such an author that we have been concerned with in this study. It may be argued that the author of this study is just such a plural conglomerate of readings, writings and reflections of writings and readings. Indeed, in her reflections on the writing of this study and its goals, I/she have/has defined these goals themselves as pluralistic, shifting, shared and provisional. This third author of this study has defined its goals as (amongst others) speculating and complicating some concepts and traditional assumptions that we may have held that may have been fixed in modernist philosophy – concepts such as reading, writing, authoring, S/subject and meaning, at various points throughout the study. It has been appealing for me as author of this study to experience theoretical concepts such as this one of Foucault’s coming to life in the writing of this text and I am grateful for this opportunity to complicate my own identity in this way throughout the writing process. It has been necessary for me to demonstrate this to you here, in the conclusion of this study, so that you can see that this study is not just about writing, but is being (always) written in this very moment, as you read it. This is a way to be true to the theoretical conceptions of this study even though this presentation of this study in such a fixed form has sometimes belied this.

The conception of the plurality of the author function can also be extended to instances where I talk of the works by Derrida and Foucault in service of this study. Calling these two names *authors* is also a way of saying ‘these are not just authors of books, but also sites that establish the endless possibility of discourse’ (Foucault, 1977:131). In a similar way, this study itself, in incorporating – amongst other things – these authors into its text, has also attempted to establish the endless possibility of discourse within philosophy and on a more local level within the study, at these philosophy departments and amongst us as readers.



Using the author concept in this way clears a space for the inclusion of disparate elements from multiple sources even after the initial writing of the study and carves out a space for the richness of the plurality of readings and proliferating interpretations to be traced (more formally) within the discourse (Foucault, 1977). A multiplicity of authors can make no false (or true) statements, as judged from a central and authoritative perspective. All statements have been used to establish the discourse, to explore, to transform and translate and mistranslate. However, in studying such authors, we should always return to their text

with particular attention to those things registered in the interstices of
the text, its gaps and absences. (Foucault, 1977:135)

We return to those empty spaces that have been masked by omission or concealed in a false and misleading plenitude. In these rediscoveries of an essential lack we find

that meaning is not expressed through language/writing but through
the relationship between words and the distances that separates them.
(Foucault, 1977:135)

In applying the Derridean notions discussed in the second chapter ('Act' 1) of this study – namely of the Letter, naming, presence, being and trace – to this study itself, we fuel speculations about questions such as 'what is present/deferred in this study? What is named in this study, and so, by implication, what is not named and what traces can we decipher in it?' But in opening up this study itself to this kind of method and this kind of criticism (a criticism that may render it full of gaps, omissions and lacks), this author has not only rendered her writings vulnerable but has paradoxically employed a strategy of neutralising criticism. This kind of contradictory effect is unavoidable if one employs language to make a point. However, the author of this study has invited her readers, nonetheless, to enter into such a conversation with this writing in the hope that such criticisms would be constructive in their deconstruction of this text itself and would not represent an endpoint of judgement, but rather become part of an endless discourse of shared exploration and learning such as that which she has experienced in writing this study.

Taking this argument further, we might find that it resonates with Foucault's (1977:137) suggestion that



Perhaps the time has come to study not only the expressive value and formal transformation of discourse, but its mode of existence: the modifications and variations, within culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation [themselves].

In other words, in applying this notion to this study, it has not only been important to consider what this study has written and how it has written this. It also seems vital to examine how our interpretations and evaluations of the writing in this study have come about and to interrogate the discourse that the study and our reflections on it have become part of, since these continue to reflect our selves as readers and what our interpretations have come to say about what we value, what we acknowledge, what we explore and why. In this way, this study and its interpretation form part of a discourse that itself reveals the manner in which discourse is articulated on the basis of particular social relations.

The intention in this study has not been to suggest that in engaging with a text the S/subject should be abandoned. It has, however, made a case for the reconsideration of the S/subject through writing from various angles. This study has not aimed through these reconsiderations to restore the theme of originating Subject, but to draw attention to its functions and interventions in discourse and in writing, its systems of selections, its dependencies, its omissions and emphases. This study has attempted to show that the Subject must be stripped of its 'creative' role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse. In this sense, it does not matter who is writing, but that such writing has come about in this discourse, in this discipline and at this moment. According to Foucault (1977), we should no longer ask how a free Subject can penetrate the density of things and give them meaning, but rather under what conditions and through what forms an entity such as a S/subject can appear in the order of discourse.



5.3 The implications for this writer

In the previous chapter/‘act’ of this study, I illustrated many of Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze’s theoretical statements as referred to in the second chapter (‘Act’ 1) with reference to Kafka’s *In the Penal Colony* and the written sentence that this work describes in such graphic detail. In this Kafka text, *the Traveller* is sometimes also translated as *the Researcher* (also sometimes as *the Foreigner*) and the story is told from his point of view.

At first glance he does not seem to be implicated in the horrific sentence that is carried out on the Condemned Man; yet his mostly silent detached presence validates the Commandant’s actions and is thus an assault on the Traveller’s apparent neutrality.

In similar fashion, in this study, the author has also been the researcher, one who has travelled around the concepts and perspectives offered by various texts and who has then presented them, sometimes as if she were a foreigner to them and sometimes as if they were her own subjective interpretations. At points in this study it may have seemed that the author was herself objective and omniscient and thus she may have appeared to be imbued with a traditional kind of knowledge and authority. At the same time, and perhaps unexpectedly, I learned in this study to employ the possibility of constructing the author as a coward, as someone who deliberately avoids becoming involved in sometimes unpleasant presences and sentences that seem to uphold a tense contradiction.

But in the Kafka text, the Traveller and the reader in the story are placed in the same position as the researcher/author, encountering the torture device for the first time, together. To me this suggests yet another way of seeing the author as subjective and virginal in a similar way that you may have been as a reader of this text for the first time. This may also have enabled you to travel in and out of a position of knowing and not knowing, perhaps even to have been ravaged by the workings of the different textual constructions this study has discussed.

The ferryman who ‘rescues’ the Traveller at the end of Kafka’s text also resembles the eternal ferryman, Charon, who carries the dead over the river Styx to some kind of afterlife (Wikipedia, *Styx*, n.d.:n.p.). This suggests that a researcher cannot him/herself escape death (and perhaps punishment) for his/her complicity in the



sentencing of the Condemned text/Man. This has increased my experience in writing this study of the fact that there may be no neutral or objective position within a text from which to view the text as if from the outside, because once an author and a reader, both embedded in the social context and intertexts inside a text, have constructed a study such as this, we have all become complicit Subjects within the confines of the text – subsumed by its sentences – that are nonetheless forever changing and multiple, just as the boundaries between us have become.

This study has been, in large part, based on Derrida's work *Of Grammatology*. Hence, it has implicitly but extensively considered the position of another author who finds herself on the margins of the text, Spivak, the translator of *Of Grammatology*. In that position Spivak has mirrored our own position on the margins of this study and thus provides us with another reflexive loop to draw around this study at this point. Spivak describes Derrida's role as the/an author of *Of Grammatology* as one of 'controlling subject' and director. However, she also acknowledges herself, as author of the preface of Derrida's text (in a similar way to the way in which I have identified myself as author of this study in this conclusion). Spivak expresses the hope for a reader who may fasten upon her *mistranslation* of Derrida's text in the chapters of *Of Grammatology* that follow her introduction. She goes on to state that she expects that her reader will leverage and deconstruct Derrida's text beyond what Derrida as controlling Subject has directed in it (Spivak, 1997:xxxvii). The further implication of her recognition of herself as author of the preface is that her reader may also judge her to be the director of the preface, the one who controls the way in which Derrida's text will be read in English.

In this study/'play', there has been an acknowledgment of its intertextuality and the fact that it has been written by a number of authors/'playwrights' as mentioned in the introductory section – and your complicity in its writing as reader. For

[r]eading a text is never [just] a scholarly exercise in search of what is signified... Rather, it is the productive use of the literary machine, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1986:xxii)

However, Spivak's example has also led me to acknowledge myself as director of this 'play', as to some degree controlling its meanings and perspectives, at least for a moment. In presenting the study as I did from chapter/'act' to chapter/'act', I may



have stimulated in my reader a sense of reading in anticipation for what he/she expected to find. But writing this study has heightened my awareness of the very process of writing as challenging my own expectations and cognitions, and undermining my cognitive prejudices. In the same way, I hope that this study may have challenged the way my readers have been conditioned to expect the wor(l)d to appear.

Yet at the same time, I have come to realise that once I had written this study, it is – in some sense – no longer mine, and it is redirected by each new reader in each new reading, as it will be again by me when I read it again afterwards. This is the local consequence of the whole of philosophy's being 'always already under erasure' (Spivak, 1997:xxxiii). This is the reason why it seems appropriate to address my readers directly and acknowledge this as a formal moment of handing over this text to my reader, the moment in which the text is no longer my own. It seems appropriate to me to do this in the words of Prospero in the epilogue of *The Tempest*, when he is faced with handing his performance over to the audience at the end of the play:

Dear Reader

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint. Now, 'tis true,
I must be here confined by you...
...release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands.
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails...
...Let your indulgence set me free.

(Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Epilogue ll.1-4, 9-12, 20)

As the writer of this study it strikes me that I too am writing on the bodies of work of other authors. My writings, in turn, are being read by readers who will write on them and whose comments I will subsequently read. Thus there seems to me to be an interplay between me and my reader in an infinite circle of substitution.

I have also experienced a real sense in which the writing and rereading and retracing of meanings in each new reading refuses to let me go and the palimpsest



of this text and the text of myself (to use an artificial boundary) has seemed to me to go on being forever reinscribed upon me. This is the palimpsest that Spivak (1997) speaks of in her preface and the mystic wax pad that is continually rewritten, over and over again in this study, in *In the Penal Colony*, in *The Pillow Book* and in philosophy, in literature and in life – the endless repetition of difference that Deleuze (1994) speaks about that describes us momentarily before we are subsumed once again by the endless sea of possibilities.

In one sense, a book, a study, a piece of tangible written notation on a page such as this is a most incongruous and contradictory account. Texts such as these have used writing to construct an entity that they claim is without boundaries and can only be constructed through language, which is itself endlessly constructed. Yet this study (and especially this ‘conclusion’) has defied this deferral by presenting its writing through the very definite covers/limits of a book, in inflexible sentences which carry all the associations of a death sentence for proliferating possibilities of meaning. In this sense, this study has belied writing in the sense in which it has been presented here and, in ending, it is doomed never to achieve the richness that it promised at the start, just as the individual body – in the Deleuzian sense – belies the concept of the self (which is necessarily multiple/part of others).

5.4 The case for the study’s interpretive, literary method

Nietzsche introduced two forms of expression into philosophy: ‘aphorism’ and ‘poetry’. They imply a new conception of philosophy, a new image of the thinker and of the thought. Nietzsche replaced the ideal of knowledge, the discovery of the truth, with *interpretation* and *evaluation* (Deleuze, 2001:65).

This study has claimed to present itself in terms of the interpretation and evaluation of literary and philosophical texts. In so doing, it has not claimed to discover truth, but rather to enrich and complicate our understandings of literary and philosophical texts and the affinity that the chosen texts have for developing our understandings of ourselves. This study has claimed that there is no Truth written here, indeed, there is no written Truth at all, only my interpretation and sometimes my evaluation of thinking/constructing/writing, in accordance with the relativistic truth claims of post-structuralism and deconstruction. In citing Nietzsche and Deleuze, this study has



asserted that there should be a place within philosophy for this kind of exploratory study, not because of what it comes up with or arrives at, but because of the importance of employing the speculative method itself, which demonstrates the use of tentative truth claims and reflections.

A tradition of thought upheld in parts of the western academy in the past that encompassed a philosophy of modernism with its pretentious claims of accessing the Truth means that

[i]t was therefore fated that philosophy degenerate as it developed through history, that it turn against itself and be taken in by its own mask. Instead of linking an active life and an affirmative thinking, thought gives itself the task of judging life, opposing to it supposedly higher values, measuring it against these values, restricting and condemning it. (Deleuze, 2001:68)

This has made life cease to be active and made it depreciate, with dire consequences for philosophy. The philosopher becomes merely a preserver of established values (such as seeking after Truth), a metaphysician:

He ceases to be a poet and becomes a “public professor” leaving philosophy as nothing more than the illusion of critique and the fantasy of creation without the possibility of inventing new possibilities. (Deleuze, 2001:69)

In conclusion, I feel it incumbent upon me to remark that writing is nothing if not a highly ambivalent past-time. On the one hand, it liberates subjectivities and creates new differences and repetitions that may add to the richness of our descriptions of our world (Nagiko is an example of this). On the other, writing is also bound to imprison, condemn, sentence and commit violences (the Condemned Man is an example of someone who falls victim to this).

With this in mind, I hope that where this study has veered from tradition and accepted ‘truths’ in the use of its speculative method of analysis of literary texts, it has remained true to the prospect of inventing new possibilities and affirming the complex multiplicities of our lives without holding onto these in ways that will immediately create new tyrannies. I hope that this study will follow Foucault’s (1994:323) dream:



I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgements but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms.

References

- Baldick, C. 2004. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barthes, R. 1977. *Image Music Text*. Essays selected and translated by S. Heath. London: Fontana.
- Benveniste, E. 1971. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by E. Meek. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press.
- Boesche, R. 1996. *Theories of Tyranny, from Plato to Arendt*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State Press.
- Brush, P. 1998. Metaphors of Inscription: Discipline, Plasticity and the Rhetoric of Choice. *Feminist Review*, 58, International Voices, Spring:22-43.
- Catholic Encyclopedia. n.d. *St Jerome*:
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08341a.htm>. Accessed: January 2009.
- Clemens, J., Heron, N. & Murray, A. 2009. *The Work of Giorgio Agamben – Law, Literature, Life*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Craig, E. 1998. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vols 1, 2 and 9. London/New York: Routledge.
- Culler, J.D. 2003. *Deconstruction: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. London/New York: Routledge.
- De Man, P. n.d. Bartleby. <http://www.bartleby.com/66/70/16070.html>. Accessed: January 2004.
- Deleuze, G. 1988. *Foucault*. Translated by S. Hand. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1994. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by P. Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. 2001. *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. Translated by A. Boyman. New York: Zone Books.

- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1986. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Translated by D. Polan, foreword by R Bensmaïa. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. 1987. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Translated by A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. 1989. Interpreting Signatures. (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions. In Michelfelder, D. & Palmer, R. (eds), *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer/Derrida Encounter* (pp.58-71). Albany, New York State: State University of New York Press.
- Derrida, J. 1992. Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'. In Cornell, D., Rosenfeld, M. & Carlson, D.G. (eds), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (pp. 3-63). New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. 1996. Semiology and Grammatology. In Cobley, P. (ed.) *The Communication Theory Reader* (pp. 209-224). London/New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. 1997. *Of Grammatology*. Translated and edited by G.C. Spivak. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. 2001. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by A. Bass. London/New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. *Dissemination*. Continuum Books, London and New York.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Edited by D. Bouchard, translated by D. Bouchard and S. Simon. Ithaca, New York State: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1994. *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984. Volume 1*. Edited by P. Rabinow, translated by R. Hurley. New York: New Press.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by A Sheridan. New York: Vintage.

- Greenaway, P. 1995. *The Pillow Book*. Film written and directed by P. Greenaway. Kasander & Wigman. Woodline Films. Alpha Films.
- Greenaway, P. 1996. *The Pillow Book* (screenplay). Paris: Dis Voir.
- Grosz, E. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Haynes, F. 2005. Emergencies and Emergent Selves. *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 37(3), June: 343-347.
- Heartfield, J. 2002. Postmodernism and the 'Death of the Subject'.
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/en/heartfield-james.htm>. Accessed: January 2009.
- Heidegger, M. 2007. *Contemporary Italian Philosophy – Crossing the Borders of Ethics, Politics and Religion*. Edited by S. Benso and E. Schroeder, translated by S. Benso. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Jerome. n.d. Name meaning and origin.
<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/1/Jerome>. Accessed: January 2009.
- Kafka, F. 1949. *Kafka: The complete short stories*. Edited by N.N. Glatzer. London: Minerva.
- Kafka, F. 1966. *In der Strafkolonie*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kundera, M. 1986. *Life is Elsewhere*, translated by P. Kussi. London: Faber and Faber.
- Lawlor, L & Direk, Z. 2002. *Derrida: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*. London: Routledge.
- Lucy, N. 2004. *A Derrida Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Martin, LH, Gutman, H & Hutton PH (eds). 1988. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Mehuron, K. 1989. Flesh Memory/Skin Practice.²⁵

²⁵ I have an old hard copy of this article dated 1989, without the publication details. I tried on numerous occasions to contact the author in this regard to obtain these; however, my efforts have proved fruitless. There is a newer version of this article available that has the following

- Merriam Webster. n.d. (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=simulacra>). Accessed: June 2006.
- Michelfelder, D. & Palmer, R. (eds). 1989. *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer/Derrida Encounter* (pp.58-71). Albany, New York State: State University of New York Press.
- Mooney, T. 1999. Derrida's empirical realism. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 25(5):33-56.
- Morris, I. 1991. Introduction. In *Sei Shonagon. The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (pp. 9-19). Translated and edited by I. Morris. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nagiko. n.d. Name meaning and origin. <http://www.babynology.com/meaning-nagiko-f35.html>. Accessed: January 2009.
- Nietzsche, F. 1993. *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. Translated by S. Whiteside. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Nietzsche, F. 1989. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Translated by W. Kaufmann & R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books.
- Rabinow, P. 1994. Introduction. In *Foucault. Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984. Volume 1*. Edited by P. Rabinow, translated by R. Hurley. New York: New Press.
- Sei Shonagon. 1991. *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*. Translated and edited by I. Morris. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Selden, Raman. 1989. *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. 2nd ed. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Shakespeare, W. 1980. *Shakespeare. Complete Works*. Edited by W.J. Craig. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spivak, G.C. 1997. Introduction. In *Derrida. Of Grammatology* (pp.i-lxxxvii). Translated and edited by G.C. Spivak. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Stocker, B. (ed.). 2007. *Jacques Derrida: Basic Writings*. London/New York: Routledge.

details: Mehuron, K. 1993. Flesh Memory/Skin Practice. *Research in Phenomenology*, 23 (87)(1), Fall. However, the exact quotes I used are taken from the 1989 version.

West, S. 2007. *Coleridge and Shelley – Textual Engagement*. The Nineteenth Century Series, edited by V. Newey and J. Shattock. Farnham: Ashgate.

Wikipedia, *Damiens Regicide*. n.d.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert%E2%80%93Fran%C3%A7ois_Damiens_Regicide. Accessed: June 2009.

Wikipedia, *Franz Kafka*. n.d. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Kafka. Accessed: April 2009.

Wikipedia, *Jerome*. n.d. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome>. Accessed: January 2009.

Wikipedia, *Justice*. n.d. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice>. Accessed: May 2009.

Wikipedia, *Styx*. n.d. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Styx>. Accessed: July 2009.

Wikipedia, *Uncanny*. n.d. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncanny>. Accessed: July 2009.

Wikipedia, *Yin and yang*. n.d. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang. Accessed: July 2009.