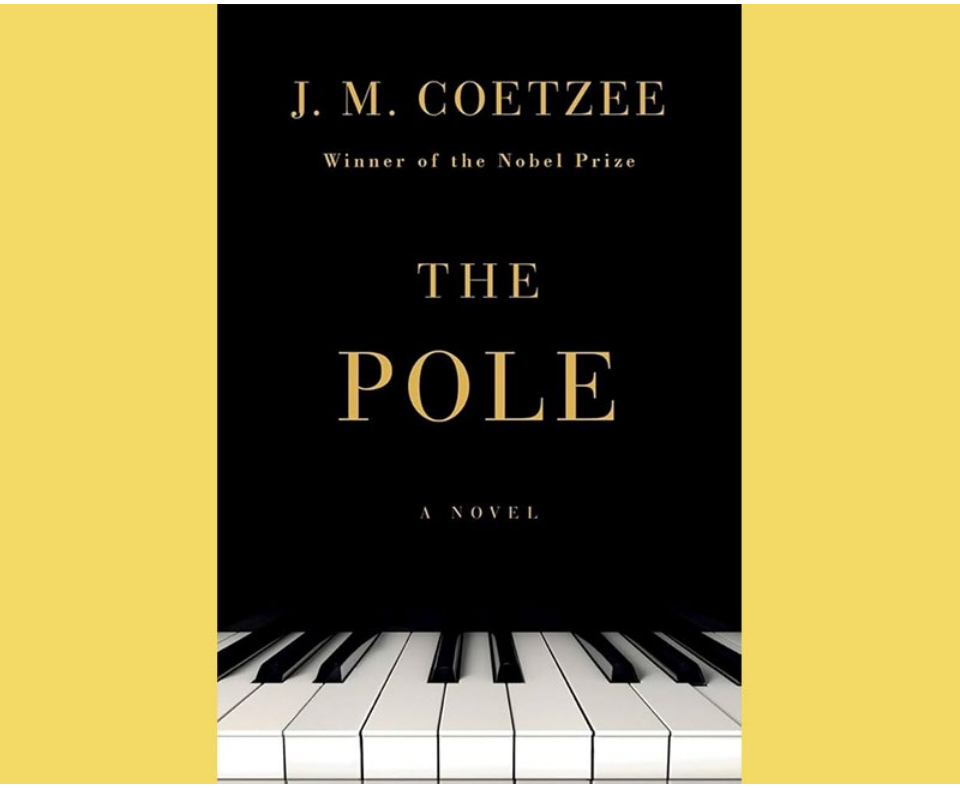
Writing & Society Research Centre Seminar Program
'Writing by the River'

Erotics and Language in J. M. Coetzee's *The Pole*

Arka Chattopadhyay



This talk traces the relation between erotics and language in J.M. Coetzee's novella *The Pole* (2023)—a 2nd language romance between a Spanish (Beatriz) and a Polish speaker (Witold) of the English language. The novella shows how erotics is blocked by 2nd language English, but how does this reflect on the dialectical link between erotics as a psycho-amorous dimension of human sexuality and language as lacking expressive apparatus for the erotic affect? The problem of erotics here does not concern language in general or a particular (2nd) language. As we shall see, it ontologically intertwines the generic (language) and the specific (a language). I name this formation '(a)-language.' By mobilizing the psychoanalytic thesis about eros as hesitation between 'one' and 'not-one' from Freud to Lacan, the talk shows how Coetzee's 2nd language romance engages with erotics and language in the novelistic form. Though fundamentally resistant to language, erotics in the novella emerges as a narrative—a poetic-mnemonic construction through language. How does erotics

translate into a language (English) that hides the ghost of another (Spanish or Polish) and how does it problematize both love and sexuality as a relation? Can language express the erotic affect and how does the erotic creation have its afterlife beyond mortality? The talk addresses these questions and demonstrates how *The Pole* finally makes room for an exception to its own thesis that erotics is blocked by 2nd language English. It is through this exception that a fragment of eros can finally be expressed in '(a)-language.'

DATE: TUESDAY 17 November
TIME: 12:00pm - 1:30pm
VENUE: Western Sydney Uni, Parramatta South Campus (Cnr of James Ruse Drive and Victoria Rd, Rydalmere), Level 1, Geoffrey Robertson Board Room, AND online on zoom.
RSVP: for F2F attendance rsvp via Humanitix. For online attendance register through zoom and a link will be sent to you.
ALL WELCOME!



ARKA CHATTOPADHYAY is Associate Professor in the department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar, India. He has published academic work in multiple edited volumes including *Frontiers of South Asian Culture*, *Routledge Companion to Absurdist Literature* and in journals like *Textual Practice, Interventions, Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui, Sound Studies, Critique, Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society, Journal of World Literature, Filozofski Vestnik* etc. Arka is the founding co-editor of *Sanglap* and Anthem Book Series Co-editor for *Freudian-Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Philosophy*. He is the author of *Beckett, Lacan and the Mathematical Writing of the Real* (Bloomsbury UK, 2019) and *Posthumanism: Politics of Subjectivity* (Orient Black Swan, 2025). He has co-edited *Samuel Beckett and the Encounter of Philosophy and Literature* (2013, Roman), *Samuel Beckett and the Extensions of the Mind* (2017, Brill), *Nabarun Bhattacharya: Aesthetics and Politics in a World after Ethics* (Bloomsbury India, 2020) *Ecological Entanglements* (Orient BlackSwan 2023) and *Understanding Badiou, Understanding Modernism* (Bloomsbury US, 2024). He has been awarded the Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship 2022-2023 & Harry Ransom Centre Fellowship 2023-2024. He has guest-edited an issue of *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* (2025) on the plastic turn in the humanities.