"Sliding through the World":

The Politics of Alterity and Displacement

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled, **"Sliding through the World": The Politics of Alterity and Displacement,** which is a study of the select fiction of J.M. Coetzee, submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bona fide research carried out by **Ms. Remya K**, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

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Declaration

I, Remya K, hereby declare that the thesis titled **"Sliding Through the World": The Politics of Alterity and Displacement,** which is a study of the select fiction of J.M. Coetzee, submitted to the University of Calicut, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide record of research carried out by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Remya K

Date :

Acknowledgement

Indeed, it has been a long journey at the end of which I pen these words as a token of gratitude to my lovely companions, who have been a part of my efforts knowingly or unknowingly and, nevertheless, without whom I would not have reached my destination.

I fondly remember my father, whose absence is the biggest loss of my life, and truly believe he is very much near me as a silent witness to the completion of my project, extremely happy and proud. I wish he were here.

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Abbreviations Used

AI	-	*Age of Iron*
D	-	*Disgrace*
DBY	-	*Diary of a Bad Year*
DL	-	*Dusklands*
IHC	-	*In the Heart of the Country*
L&T	-	*Life & Times of Michael K*
SM	-	*Slow Man*
WB	-	*Waiting for the Barbarians*

Contents

Placing the Author: An Introduction

Literature has always been a major site of critiques, which are categorised as per the critical trends pertaining to a particular period, ranging from thematic to theoretical, from material/cultural to textual. Invariably, irrespective of the zeitgeist and the strategies employed, the critics have been trying to decipher what the literary texts represent through form or content. This age-old practice of interpretation continues in the present,where the critics have assumed the role of discourse analysts as literature is now, in the Foucauldian sense, a discourse, a body of knowledge in which differential power relations intersect to determine its nature; "a broad concept that [Foucault] uses to refer to language and other forms of representation – indeed, all human mechanisms for the conveyance of meaning and value" (Donald E. Hall 91). Yet, one cannot overlook the major change that has come about in terms of approach towards literary texts in the theoretical scenario, where poststructuralism and postcolonialism conjoin to contest the reality of representations. Highlighting the constructed nature of reality, postcolonial discourses, taking cue from poststructuralist tenets of deconstruction, oppose the monolithic nature of colonial discourses by reclaiming the resistant voices in the texts – a critical approach, which, in effect, advocates plurality of meaning deferring the final signified.

The approach is far from being flawless since by assigning falsity to colonial discourses the postcolonial critics assume to occupy the realm of truth, thus problematising their position, as they situate themselves within the epistemological framework that they aim at deconstructing. The colonial discursive structures thus influence representations in postcolonial discourses that, inadvertently, end up repeating the exclusionary signs owing to an unconscious complicity with the

hegemonic ideology. In transcending such limitations that consist in insidious forms of colonialism lies the extent of the reach of a postcolonial text in bringing about aprogressive socio-political outlook, which is potent enough in effecting desirable changes in society. As Foucault says,

> discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also an hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes possible to thwart it. (*The History of Sexuality*, *Volume I* 100 – 01)

In today's postcoloniality marked by globalisation and neo-liberalism, which perpetuate colonial ideology along an invisible line, resistant postcolonial texts make serious politico-cultural interventions keeping the tentacles of neo-colonialism/imperialism at bay. In so much as the discourses can affect the cultural matrix, culture too, in turn, deeply influences the emergence of discourses as its signifiers. To quote Said, "texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (*The World, the Text and the Critic*4).

South Africa, with its cultural complexity that is structured by race, class, nation and gender, and, above all, a history of colonialism, offers better avenues for the literary imagination to exploit, especially along postcolonial lines. Like their black counterparts, the question of identity has always been problematic for white South

African writers who, being a part of the settler colony, experience the white dilemma, especially in post-apartheid South Africa where violence is unleashed in new ways, where the insecurities of the once dominant culture, now groping in the dark, are more poignant than ever.J.M. Coetzee, hailing from the privileged race, class and gender, occupies such an uncertain position in the postcolonial context of the nation. The South African socio-political matrix, which David Atwell aptly describes as "colonial postcolonialism" (6), thoroughly informs the oeuvre of J.M.Coetzee, whose literary career, apparently, has three distinctive phases characterised by the unique way in which his imagination has responded to the minutiae of the cultural milieu, pertaining to apartheid/post-apartheid eras of South Africa and his present expatriate life in Australia. This thesis, focussing on the select fiction of J.M. Coetzee, attempts to explore the nuances of subject construction in the light of the argument that in the texts, which partake of a characteristic ambivalent tone on account of authorial complicity with the oppressor's culture, alterity asserts itself, reclaiming its due space (textual/cultural/material), hitherto denied, and thus disrupts the set notion of unitary identity/subjectivity displacing the homogenous, universal self/selfhood from its pedestal of centrality assigned within the Western epistemological framework – a politics of representation, which in itself amounts not to a mere reversal of the binary, but in its stead to its collapse, allowing for the mutual oppositionality of differences, constitutive of hybridity. To probe deep into the subtleties of confronting alterity and of the consequent sense of displacement, the study situates itself within the theoretical framework of postcolonialism, which gives thrust to the chosen areas. Besides, the readings also resort to other theoretical postulations from various sources, which substantiate the central argument.

As Derek Attridge has aptly stated in the context of Coetzee's early years as a novelist, "there were few places in which the writing and reading of literature was more tested by political exigencies and expectations than South Africa" (1). Apartheid era, during which the racial conflicts have reinforced the sense of lack and distance, and post-apartheid era, during which agonies of alienation affect both the whites and the blacks alike, present two distinctive periods, which have determined the nature of literary discourses largely because of the cultural change the nation has been subject to. The sense of displacement that set in during the early decades of the seventeenth century still haunts the South African population that reels under its impact. Thus, a historicization of the colonial experience of South Africa throws light on the cultural backdrop against which emerges the "dismembered and dislocated" psyche of the present people of the nation, irrespective of their race and ethnicity (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 60).

When the yellow-skinned Hottentots and Bushmen who earlier inhabited the land were displaced in the seventeenth century, then began the colonial history of South Africa, with the arrival of the first Dutch settlers, who, with further explorations into the interiors, consolidated themselves as the Boers(farmers)/Afrikaners, expanding their colony and effecting drastic cultural changes. The arrival of the British in the Cape of Good Hope brought with it several measures of Anglicization, which intensified as the 1820 settlers landed because of the British grant for large-scale emigration to the Cape. It was not without encountering resistance that the colonial machineries could establish themselves on the land. Before conquering Cape, the British had to face hostility from the black men who belonged to Xhosa clans, whom the Boers had to confront earlier during their farmland expansions. These

blacks, who belonged to the Bantu-speaking, negroid tribe and were, thus, quite different from the race of Hottentots and Bushmen, constituted the indigenous majority who peopled the land, as far as the present Transkei, much before the white settlements happened. The British and the Dutch - two white communities differentiated by languages – English and Afrikaans - gradually prospered at the expense of the natives, as the administrative and business classes respectively, though both were in mutual opposition to each other.

Facing threats from the natives and the British alike, the Boers undertook the Great Trek, which gave them the name Voortrekkers, into the interiors with little knowledge that they were just on course to build a nation of their own in future. While the clash with the Zulu tribe known as the Battle of Blood River gave the Afrikaners a day to commemorate their victory as the Day of the Vow, the later Boer Wars, an offshoot of the discovery of mineral wealth in the interiors, provided them with a great history of resistance. These cultural markers along with Afrikaans, the language, which continued to evolve despite all political setbacks, strengthened the sense of oneness among the Afrikaners. Years after the Boer Wars, consequent upon the reconciliatory line adopted by the Afrikaners towards the British, the South Africa Act was passed and the land became a self-governing dominion within the British Empire. By exerting their socio-political control in determining the future of the nation, as Graham Leach says, "at a stroke the British government washed its hands of all responsibility for the country's non-white population" (34). South Africa later witnessed an upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism that culminated in apartheid (apartness), a policy of separate racial development, which aimed at ensuring the survival of the Afrikaners along with enshrining white supremacy. Under the brutal

system of apartheid, the non-white population, especially blacks suffered enormously at the hands of the whites as the Nationalist Party government's policies promoted racial and class divisions. Relocations of displaced people happened at large and those reserves had only tales of suffering to narrate.

The brutality associated with apartheid had deep impact on the psyche of South African population and the whites too were no exception, albeit being part of the privileged race. According to Leonard Thompson, "apartheid society was ... ridden with mental stress and violence. Suicides were ... frequent among white South Africans" (204). Quite naturally, the government policies met with resistance within and without, acquiring both active and passive dimensions. After the Second World War, the black protests intensified and the repressive measures adopted against the African National Congress, and the more militant Pan African Congress led to the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 after which both the parties were banned. Political unrest continued to brew in South Africa, which turned a Republic in 1961. The Soweto rebellion in 1976 and the killing of Steve Biko, who spread the ideology of Black Consciousness, agitated the black youth and lured them to the resistance campaigns. There came continued pressure from abroad disapproving apartheid, the crime against humanity, with the bomb explosions in Bloemfontein and Pretoria that underlined the rise of black militancy. It was not until the 90s that the government decided to give in. The year 1994 marked the end of one of the cruellest regimes in the history of humanity and thus the triumph of Black Nationalism, when the African National Congress won the General Elections under Nelson Mandela heralding the birth of a new South Africa. Reconciling the perpetrators and the victims of apartheid was the main objective of the new government, with a view to which Nelson Mandela

set up in 1995, the Truth and Reconciliation Mission that, contrary to expectations, could only intensify the racial divisions.

The political power shift has indeed brought about significant changes though the nation is still "racked by the cumulative effects of colonialism, apartheid, and urbanisation" (Thompson 265). Poverty and crime, the root cause of which is the massive black unemployment, along with racial and class divisions that determine the social relations, remain the serious concerns of the twenty first century South Africa, the country which now finds itself quite far from materialising the vision of the rainbow nation. Too vibrant a historical and political state of affairs like that of South Africa cannot but enormously impact the cultural productions in general, and literature in particular. Kenneth Parker is precise in his observation when he makes the statement that "there exists … a direct relation between political perspective and literary creation in South Africa" (2).Typical of South African politics, the literature that has emerged from the context, even Afrikaans literature is of a resistant nature.In Mehta and Narang's opinion, the long history of foreign settlement and urbanization that has led to the de-tribalization of the Africans gave rise to a protest literature than one about African values (30). South African literature in English, which began with settler records and diaries in the early decades of nineteenth century, exhibits two lines of development. "The different perspectives as between the two competing white groups are clear: while the English-speaking see their cultural heritage as being umbilically tied to that of the mother country, the Afrikaners consciously proceed to break their ties with Europe, and attempt to create an indigenous product" (Parker 5).

During its formative period in the South African literary scenario, the novel as a genre, steeped in emotionalism and sentimentalism until the 1880s, took a creative

turn only with Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*(1883); a novel that subverted the trends of pastoral fiction (*plaasroman*) in which Schreiner's contemporary, Pauline Smith excelled. Subsequent verse and prose works in the tradition, which Parker terms "liberal concerned" (7), could not avoid the trappings of racial relations as the thematic content.As Mphahlele correctly puts it, for the South African writer "the race relations are a major experience and concern.... They are his constant beat" (81). No major Black writers could stamp their mark during this period and the first novel in English, *Mhudi*, by a Black South African writer, Sol Plaatje was published only in 1930, though it was written as early as 1917. Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*(1948) set a new trend envisioning an optimistic faith in humanity, which, however, proved to be contentious in the light of the apartheid reign. With the emergence of Coloured and Black writers on to the scenario in the fifties and sixties, resistance literature acquired added dimensions, despite the adverse socio-political ambience curtailing the freedom of expression. In Mphahlele's words, "the social, political climate of South Africa has been growing viciously difficult for a non-white to write in. It requires tremendous organization of one's mental and emotional faculties before one can write a poem or a novel or a play. This has become all but impossible" (223). Repressive measures like censorship held the creative prowess of the progressive writers in check, irrespective of their race. If at all creativity crossed the limits set by the political machineries, either the works were banned or the writers were expelled from their homeland. To cite a few examples, Alex la Guma, a Coloured writer, and Black writers like Peter Abrahams, Es'kia Mphahlele and Lewis Nkosi eventually had to leave their homeland for the anti-apartheid stance explicit in their writings. Things were no different with the white liberal writers who,in particular, having had to reconcile the conflict between their

sense of complicity with the brutal regime and their ethical consciousness, made their texts critiques of the prevailing system. Andre Brink, the first white writer to be banned, and others like Nadine Gordimer, Jack Cope, Dan Jacobson et al quite often found themselves at the receiving end of the literary restraints imposed by the Afrikaner regime.

The more repressed, the more resistant the literary works tend to be and no other literature than the South African exemplifies this. Since the ban on apartheid, though discursive conditions have changed, it is the lived experience of colonialism and the violence associated with apartheid that still override all other concerns, as themes explored in literary discourses narrow down to racial dichotomy, which in itself makes South Africa a site for contests of variegated nature in the postcolonial schema. The nation in its temporal aspect always presents an ambivalent site, especially in postcolonial discourses.As the politics of decolonisation in South Africa where white settlers formed their own independent nation is in sharp contrast with the dynamics of societies where the indigenous population achieved the same, the position of whites here is as precarious as that of the blacks who constitute the marginalised majority that has come to power with the demise of apartheid in the 1990s.Set against such a dynamic backdrop of political transition, the fiction of J.M. Coetzee, a white South African writer, has as its major themes, centring on the issues related to colonialism, race, class, gender, nation and ethnicity.

John Michael Coetzee, renowned as a novelist, critic and translator, has won the Booker Prize for fiction twice in his literary career and the 2003 Nobel Prize for literature. A descendant from the early Dutch settlers, Coetzee, who also has Polish roots, was born in Cape Town in 1940 into an Afrikaner family. The semi-

autobiographical memoir *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) depicts his childhood that he spent in Cape Town and Worcester. Finishing his schooling in Worcester, Coetzee attendedthe University of Cape Town, where he received his undergraduate degrees in Mathematics and English in 1961. After having worked for IBM as a computer programmer for a brief period in London from 1962 to 1965, during which he wrote his MA dissertation on Ford Madox Ford, Coetzee moved to the United States, where he attended the University of Texas for his graduate studies in English. In 1969, he secured his PhD for his thesis on Samuel Beckett's novels. *Youth*(2002), the sequel to *Boyhood*, covers Coetzee's undergraduate life in South Africa and his years in London. From 1968 to 1971, Coetzee taught at the University of New York and returned to South Africa in 1972 to his alma mater, the University of Cape Town where he rose to the position of professor of general literature. Meanwhile, during his short stint as a teacher in the US, troubled by the Vietnam War, Coetzee wrote his first novel *Dusklands*, which was published in 1974. A literary career which began thus, flourished later, with Coetzee bagging several honours, including the Booker- McConnell prize, the Prix Etranger Femina award and the Jerusalem Prize.

The prolific writer that he is, Coetzee has to his credit, to date, thirteen novels, three fictionalised autobiographies and several essays and translated works. In *Dusklands*(1974), his first novel, Coetzee exposes the hegemonic colonial ideology juxtaposing two novellas – The Vietnam Project and The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee – set in different eras. The novel, with its self-reflexive narration, offers a break up with realism, the set trend in South African fiction, thereby making its author the pioneer of postmodernism in his homeland. Continuing the postmodernist

narrative strategies, Coetzee's second novel, *Inthe Heart of the Country*(1977), through its female protagonist, Magda explicates the dilemma of the white liberals in South Africa – a theme that underpins Coetzee's later works as well. The third work, *Waiting for the Barbarians*(1980), after the publication of which Coetzee received international recognition, falls into the realist category with its linear narration and depicts the mental agony of a magistrate, who finds himself an accomplice of the Empire that indulges in othering. In *Life & Times of Michael K*, Coetzee treads an unchartered space in making a coloured male the protagonist, whose elusiveness constitutes resistance. The novel published in 1983 charts Michael's physical and psychological journey and makes an explicit political intervention through its direct indictment of colonialism. A postcolonial reworking of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is the fifth novel, *Foe*(1986). Questioning the authority of the narrator and authorship, the text reveals the constructed nature of colonial discourses and thus undermines its credibility. Silence emerges as a powerful weapon of protest, which Friday, the Black servant makes use of against his oppressors, Cruso and Susan. By way of direct references to the socio-political situations in South Africa, the novel *Age of Iron* (1990), in effect, sets down the futility of a liberal approach to the racial discrimination prevailing in society. Mrs. Currens' acknowledgement of the same sets off the confessional strain in Coetzee's fiction and hints at the political upheaval the country is about to witness in the near future. *The Master of Petersburg*, published in 1994, marks the end of the apartheid phase of Coetzee as a novelist. With Russia as its setting, the novel deals with Dostoevsky's search for his missing son and his subsequent entanglement with the state machineries. Though not explicitly stated, the text has immense bearing on South African politics.

A semi-autobiographical memoir, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*, which came out in the year 1997, gives a glimpse of the author's childhood. *Youth*(2002), a sequel to *Boyhood*, is Coetzee's second fictionalised memoir in which his years as a student in South Africa and his life in London get a fair share of portrayal.The distanced third person narration that Coetzee deftly employs, lends the works the status of *autrebiography*. Two novels – *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals* – published in 1999 mark the beginning of the post-apartheid phase of the author. *The Lives ofAnimals* is the1997-98 Tanner Lectures delivered by the author himself, who, quite interestingly and innovatively has framed the lectures within a fictional scaffold, introducing the writer Elizabeth Costello as the narrator cum protagonist – a figure who repeatedly finds a space in the author's subsequent works. Coetzee drives home his points of view on animal rights in a metafictional framework that provides him the liberty to present arguments and counterarguments to prevent any biased reading of the text. *Disgrace* presents the life of Professor David Lurie who is caught in a sex scandal involving his student. Due to the depiction of the rape of a white woman by black men in *Disgrace,* the detractors, irked by the employment of such a trope, have even labelled Coetzee as a racist. Though a direct relation cannot be drawn, it does not seem inappropriate if one thinks that Coetzee's decision to leave his homeland for Australia is an immediate outcome of the critical attacks from within. The writer since 2002 has the status of an immigrant in Australia and presently resides in Adelaide.

The works of Coetzee's Australian phase deviate from realism and take recourse to the postmodernist trend exhibited in the writer's early fiction. *Elizabeth Costello*, published in 2003, incorporating *The Lives of Animals* as well, is a series of lectures delivered by Elizabeth Costello, the fictional alter-ego of Coetzee. The text

discusses various issues pertaining to contemporary society and highlights the author's preoccupation with otherness. Metafiction, which exposes the constructed nature of fiction, is at its peak in *Foe*, and later gives way to Coetzee's realist experiments in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* as per the socio-political exigencies, resurfacing in *Slow Man*(2005). The novel, which apparently narrates the distress of the amputated protagonist Paul Rayment, in its intricacies, discusses the issue of authorship- the relationship the author and the character share, and throws light on contemporary concerns like migrant life, displacement and economic crisis of refugees. It is in *Diary of a Bad Year*(2007) that Coetzee becomes more global placing his hands on the problems of the era like terrorism, animal rights and global warming, to name a few. The text that typographically divides the public and private space of the author, JC, makes serious political interventions in its appeal to humanity. *Summertime: Scenes from Provincial Life* (2009) completes the autobiographical series and narrates, in retrospect, the life of the late author, John Coetzee, when he was in his thirties. In the text, a young English biographer unravels the life of the author through a series of interviews he conducts with people who have donned important roles in Coetzee's life. The latest addition to Coetzee's fictional oeuvre is *The Childhood of Jesus*, published in 2013. It is the story of Simon and David who arrive at the relocation centre in Novilla, a city "run on drably utopian and vaguely socialist lines" (Markovitz, "The Childhood of Jesus"). In conjunction with the depiction of Simon's persistent efforts to obtain a mother for David, the novel deliberates upon questions connected with immigration, identity, nationalism and culture. Apart from being a successful novelist, Coetzee, in his capacity as a proficient critic, essayist and translator has published numerous works and his essays, especially, when read alongside his fiction, do indeed illuminate the latter aiding the

readers in their critical enquiries. His essay collections include *White Writing*, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, a work edited by David Attwell, *Giving Offense*, which is mainly on censorship, *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986-1999* and *Inner Workings*.

In his writing, Coetzee deals with diverse postcolonial themes, the source of which is primarily his native land, with its violent history and politics.Through his inimitable style, Coetzee has emerged as a powerful figure in the South African literary scenario as his "works present a sophisticated intellectual challenge to the particular form of colonial violence embodied in apartheid", thus putting the nation on the world stage in the postcolonial arena (Head, *J.M. Coetzee* 1). It is quite befitting then that J.M. Coetzee enjoys a pride of place in the postcolonial critics' engagement with literary texts. One of the Holy Trinity of postcolonial theory Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her reading of the novel, *Foe* presents how Coetzee has drawn the reader's attention to the limitations of postcolonial representation in effecting desirable social and political changes. An analysis of speech and silence in Coetzee's fiction has made Benita Parry enquire into the possibility of the works replicating the exclusionary colonialist policies. Teresa Dovey has attempted in her study a theoretical reading of Coetzee's novels, exploring the images of Lacanian notions of self. In the South African critic David Attwell's observations, Coetzee emerges as a writer who has subverted the dominant culture around him, addressing "the ethical and political stresses of living in, and with, a particular historical locale, that of contemporary South Africa"(1). Dominic Head, a British academic, has done anexhaustive study of Coetzee's fiction, in which he has dealt with the author as a postmodern writer who, enriched by the awareness of a wider literary tradition,writes overtly self-conscious

fiction, albeit garnering criticism for want of explicit political commitment. Head focuses, in particular, on Coetzee's handling of history and the use of formal devices like allegory and parody. Critics like Derek Wright and Laura Wright engage themselves with the narrative style of Coetzee; the latter in her work qualifies Coetzee's narratives as performative, displacing the narrative as well as the authoritative voice. Linking aesthetics and politics, Derek Attridge and Carrol Clarkson have enquired into the ethics of reading Coetzee's texts. Jane Poyner, in her comprehensive analysis of the author, is inquisitive of the problematic paradox of the postcolonial authorship of Coetzee as a white writer in South Africa. Apart from Kafka, Samuel Beckett has been a major influence in Coetzee's literary enterprise and Patrick Hayes has given these towering influences its due importance while foregrounding Coetzee's prose style. Coetzee's corpus of fiction still lures the critical brains as his texts defy any kind of closure in terms of interpretation and being so demand, to use Dominic Head's phrase, "resisting readers" (*J.M. Coetzee* 3).

Coetzee is aware of the wobbly position he occupies as a white writer in the South African context. As he says, "white writing is white only insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African" (*White Writing* 11). The risk involved in attempting a postcolonial stance from such an in-between space is what Jane Poyner emphasizes when she makes the comment that "whilst striving symbolically to bring the stories of the marginal and the oppressed to light, stories that heretofore have been suppressed or silenced by oppressive regimes, writers of conscience or conscience-stricken writers risk re-imposing the very authority they seek to challenge" (2). Earlier, Benita Parry too has made a similar observation that "despite the fictions' disruptions of colonialist modes, the social

authority on which the rhetoric relies and which it exerts is grounded in the cognitive systems of the West" ("Speech and Silence" 150). But, being neither an Afrikaner nor a person with strong English affiliations, what Coetzee, typical of his postcolonial leanings, aims at is to reinscribe the position of the other through his postmodern/postcolonial narratives – an attempt that is a direct outcome of Coetzee's sense of complicity, which in Head's opinion is "a tempered complicity" of a "post-colonizer" (*J.M. Coetzee* 17), who, according to Simon During, if not able to "identify with imperialism, at least cannot jettison the culture and tongues of the imperialist nations." ("Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today" 127) To stave off the limitations associated with his sense of complicity, Coetzee resorts to "a non-realistic, self-referential fiction that constantly highlights its own unreliability" (Gallagher 44), – a self-reflexive approach, which Head terms as a "writing-against-itself" that "leads [Coetzee] to gesture beyond the late-colonial situation of South Africa under apartheid"(*J.M. Coetzee* 13). Within this self-reflexive structure, how Coetzee's texts achieve a subversion of colonial dichotomies in its representation of alterity is of paramount significance.

Chapter One, 'Of Diverse Subjects and Spaces', which provides the theoretical background to the thesis, explicates the essential tenets of postcolonialism on subjectivity, exploring the role of otherness, which, hitherto marginalised, reasserts itself through postcolonial critical interventions. It also traces the major theoretical postulations on space/ place, in the main, its relation with subjectivity as per the requirements for the analysis. The second chapter, 'Beginnings- Split in the Dialectical Realm' throws light on the initial phase of Coetzee as a novelist and, as a matter of convenience, covers the period from 1974 to 1980, during which he has

published three novels. A dialectical sense of identity regulates the structure of the early opus, which augurs Coetzee's final stance on alterity and presents how his own split self is manifest in the portrayal of his protagonists who in the face of otherness, struggle to hold on to their sense of unitary self. Incidentally, so to speak, Coetzee's initial characters are prototypes of the latter ones figuring in his oeuvre. The next two chapters form the crux of the study in which J.M. Coetzee's five novels – *Life & Times of Michael K*(1983),*Age of Iron*(1990), *Disgrace*(1999), *Slow Man*(2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year*(2007) – are picked for an in-depth analysis, which is done in a chronological order. Also, the thesis refers to Coetzee's much acclaimed novel, *Foe* (1986), without which a postcolonial analysis of his fiction would seem curtailed. The third chapter titled, 'Negotiating the Other within' deals with how the chosen texts assert the looming presence of otherness hitherto disavowed in the hegemonic discursive structures of western epistemology, and in the process, how it carves a niche for alterity through the subversion of the polarised notions of self and other. The fourth chapter, '(Dis)Placed In-Between', takes this transcendence to the realm of place/space and enquires into the sense of displacement that pervades Coetzee's fiction. The thesis thus attempts to explicate the theoretical notions of the hybrid self in the third space which Coetzee's novels foreground in its representation of space and subjectivity.

Chapter 1

Of Diverse Subjects and Spaces

Philosophical enquiry, which, according to Plato and Aristotle, begins with wonder, constitutes in "the study of wisdom and truth", a gradual mastery of experience with intellect (Berkeley 7). In Deleuze and Guattari's formulation, philosophy is "the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts ... the discipline that involves *creating* concepts" (5). With such variegated definitions spanning centuries, the probable conclusion that this entails is that philosophy, invariably, is an inquiry into knowledge, into being, into belief that characterises human existence in this world, and being so, philosophical thinking aims at achieving a *Weltanschauung* or world view – the way in which the world(space) and the individuals (subjects) inhabiting the world are understood. As such, the concept of subjectivity has been of major concern to thinkers and critics alike who have grappled with the issue since the Pre-Socratic days and have not been able to arrive at a definitive conclusion yet. The influx of theory in the twentieth century has made the relation between space and subjectivity, identity and alterity inclusive, all the more contentious, and theoretical ramifications concerning the same are not uncommon in the present postcolonial age in which exclusionary socio-cultural, political, economic and geographical barriers that categorise the individuals as selves/others andinsiders/outsiders effecting physical and psychological displacement, still hold sway in identity politics.

Identity and alterity are related as the construction of the subject involves the construction of its others; the self-identity of the colonising subject is inextricable from the alterity of the colonised others. The term 'alterity' derived from the Latin 'alteritas' means the state of being different with an implicit connotation of otherness.

It is also constitutive of the sense of the other located in a political, cultural, linguistic or religious context. In postcolonial theory, 'alterity' suggesting otherness and difference is inclusive of the variables like gender, race, class and culture, to name a few. The internalisation of otherness leads to displacement, which refers to the sense of being out of place and the related experiences effected by imperial invasion. The term echoes Heidegger's term '*unheimlich*' or '*unheimlichkit*' meaning 'unhousedness' or 'not-at-home-ness' (Ashcroft et al.,*Post-Colonial Studies* 73). It forms a major characteristic of all invaded colonies where indigenous or original cultures are moved from their original place. Metaphorically, the term suggests of their being placed into a hierarchy that devalues their culture in favour of Western epistemology. Postcolonialism constitutes a struggle against the psychological and geographical displacement that results from the cultural denigration at the hands of a dominant culture. Postcolonial studies, subverting the colonial myths and strategies, have, nevertheless, shown the process of attaining an identity of one's own and a sense of belonging to be a one of negotiation, through which is exposed the fluidic nature of identity/alterity and space/place.

The ambiguous relationship between space and subjectivity has vexed philosophers eternally. Stephen Trombley in *A Short History of Western Thought* refers to the ancient philosophers, Heraclitus and Parmenides who, questioning the nature of being, vouched for its change and fixity respectively. When Heraclitus identifies "human existence as taking place in a world of constant flux", Parmenides defines "being as homogenous, unchanging and enduring through space and time" (Trombley 21-23). For Plato, body and soul are separate entities – a dualism which is later explored by the French philosopher Rene Descartes – and Plato's pupil Aristotle,

inquiring into being, stresses its substance or essence. Nonetheless, at the peak of dominance of Christianity, it is with *Confessions*, the first autobiography, by St. Augustine of Hippo that the 'I', the subject, the first person singular voice resorted to by Montaigne as well, gains prominence in Western thought, which saw path-breaking shifts influenced by further socio-political and scientific developments like the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Copernican revolution, to name a few. Commenting upon the influential structures in the construction of identities, Stephen Greenblatt says, "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2). With Descartes' famous dictum, cogito ergo sum – "I think, therefore I am" – in *Discourse on Method* (1637), the human subject occupies the centre of the world as the active agent, the creator of meanings, announcing alongside the birth of the Enlightenment period in which rationality dominates (54).

The cogito, despite Cartesian dualism of mind and body, gives the sense of a unified subject and hence of a stable authority with the power of a thinking self that in John Locke's theory, "reflects an ideal of independence and self-responsibility" (Taylor 167). Such a notion of human agency is manifest in the speculations of English, French and German Enlightenment thinkers like David Hume, Diderot, Voltaire, Christian Wolff et al. whose line of thought finds its culmination in Immanuel Kant. Though the Kantian concept of self also stresses autonomy like the Cartesian one, it serves as a critique of the latter in terms of ethics, thus being a precursor of the concept of intersubjectivity. A new liberated self comes into being as the thought of freedom and independence predominates French Enlightenment with Rousseau's emphasis on the self and the individual. Later, in *Foundations of Natural*

Right (1796), J.G. Fichte gives new dimension to selfhood postulating the ethical intersubjectivity sans any solipsistic attitude accommodating the other selves. While Fichte "conceives the 'I' ... as an embodied presence in the world" his successor Friedrich W.J. Schelling posits 'I' as a "more complicated and obscure construction" (Trombley 146-147).

Despite such numerous theories of self/subjectivity it is the historical phenomenon of colonialism and related issues like slavery that have determined to a large extent the concept of selfhood in Western epistemology. In attempting a philosophical critique of identity, Linda Martin Alcoff finds its "fundamental basis not actually in the Western concept of rationality but in the modern Western treatments of the Other in the context of European colonialism" (49). To be more precise, the dialectics of self and other underlies any construction of identity. Here, Hegel, who, disapproves of the total disengagement from culture or history – a disengagement that is characteristic of Cartesian and Kantian philosophy – is of relevance as his work focuses on the nature of consciousness as one of becoming, as a process constituted through the master – slave dialectics involving simultaneous denial and assertion of the other–a relationship that is based on recognition or dependence but that resists reciprocation at the same time. In his words, the self proceeds "to supercede the *other* independent being in order thereby to become certain of *itself* as the essential being; secondly, in so doing it proceeds to supercede its *own* self, for this other is itself" (*Phenomenology*111, emphasis in original). In his later work, *Philosophy of Right* (1820), Hegel acknowledges the ethical, reciprocal relation of self and other, the acceptance of the other within the self, and incidentally, the future postulations on identity, not least by postcolonial theorists who look for

agency, centre on the Hegelian idea of intersubjective interdependence of self and other that is contingent upon the socio-political upheavals in society.

Inspired by Hegelian dialectics and a sense of history, Karl Marx in his works explicates the class struggle involving the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat, and the manner in which it influences individual and/or group consciousness. In his "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx suggests, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (21). Simultaneously, he also implies how one becomes aware of the ideological elements at work that put man unconsciously in chains – an awareness that accounts for activism. His theories thus suggest the possibility of socio-political revolution as a result of human agency. According to Donald E. Hall, "the possibility that one can gain control over that which has controlled one's consciousness by becoming conscious of that dynamic of control is the premise of most twentieth – century theories of politicised subjectivity..." (55). Even Marxian ideas, in spite of polarising the world into self and other, retain the freedom and rational control guaranteed by Enlightenment.

Like class theories of subjectivity, the ones centring on race and gender too focus on the human agency in terms of self and other, the extent to which it is possible in bringing about desirable social changes. Analysing the practice of many Enlightenment thinkers like Kant and Hume as exhibiting racist ideology, Henry Louis Gates comments that their works reveal "the remarkable capacity of European philosophers to conceive of 'humanity' in ideal terms (white, male) yet despise, abhor, colonize, or exploit human beings who are not 'ideal'" (408). The emergence of the voices of the oppressed slaves begins with Ignatius Sancho, an educated slave,

who gives an insight into the deformed subjectivity of the slaves at the hands of the colonisers, in one of his letters that prefigure the twentieth-century constructionist approach towards identity and alterity. In the context of slavery and racism, one cannot miss the voice of W. E. B. Du Bois who probes deep the psychological effects of oppression and ends up with the idea of "double consciousness", the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others (3), which underlies the modern theories on subjectivity in postcolonial contexts. A likeminded representative of the oppressed gender is Mary Wollstonecraft, who embodies in her *AVindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a vehement protest against the societal gender norms, mainly as a response to Rousseau's conservative attitude towards women. What she demands is a revision of the subjectivity theories which grant selfhood and agency to man, denying the same to woman. Her liberal feminist perspective on subjectivity has many followers, and yet, inevitably, faces major challenges when intersected by the variable race in postcolonial scenario.

There is a major paradigmatic shift in the realm of subjectivity with Sigmund Freud's idea of the unconscious that challenges the notion of a rational, free and autonomous self. Freud identifies three different agencies of human psyche – id, ego and superego. The ego represents the conscious life, with the id and the superego forming the repository of repressed impulses and the moral authority respectively. As Alcoff remarks, "the ego develops through negotiations between multiple, conflicting inner drives on the one hand and the outpouring of stimuli from the external world on the other" (63). Such a notion of a realm of the human mind as beyond one's rational control, as inaccessible to thought, limits, in Donald E. Hall's words, "our subjectivity, our knowledge of individual selfhood and our degree of agency over that

selfhood" (62). Quite contrary to this is the existentialist stance that stresses the conscious exercise of human will.

Challenging the deterministic aspect of the preceding theories, existentialists like Sartre and Camus, influenced by Nietzsche, "explored the necessity of always working consciously and honestly on one's selfhood" (Donald E. Hall 67). Though Sartre's work, in his early phase in particular, places the self within constraints in exercising freedom against the presence of the other, which effects a sense of alienation, his later works portray the self as endowed with the will to negate the other's power/desire to constitute itself as subject. The other has access to not the real self, but to the past, already alienated self. Drawing on Sartre, Alcoff says, "the excess that escapes all representation is, fundamentally, one's real self, one's capacity to negate, and the seat of purposeful action and choice. It is the only excess that is undetermined by external forces, and therefore free, uncontainable, indeterminate, too fluid to be characterised in substantive terms" (69). Sartre himself defines subjectivity thus: "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism. And this is what people call its "subjectivity" ... (349-50)

Invariably, all theoretical postulations on subjectivity take up the concept of human agency that acquires added dimension in an age of postcoloniality marked by the socio-political, economic and psychological repercussions of European colonialism. Psychoanalysis, especially the improvisation of Freudian theory by Jacques Lacan, poststructuralism and postmodernism have influenced postcolonial reworkings on subjectivities that aim at exposing the colonial constructions of the same. It is Lacan's notion of split subjectivity that postcolonial theorists like Homi K.

Bhabha appropriate while critiquing colonial discourses. In the wake of poststructuralist/postmodernist tenets, the constructed nature of truth as consequential of language, discourse and ideology serves as the lynchpin of postcolonial theorisation as regards the other whose alterity demands recognition on par with that of the self.

To Lacan, "psycho-analysis ... is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject" (*The Seminar* 77). His postulations that concern the mirror phase in infancy put subjectivity in a new perspective. The infant gains a sense of identity in the gaze of its mother, who is its first other. According to Lacan, when the infant confronts its image in the mirror, an imaginary identification with a complete and unified being is initiated, which entails a sense of alienation as well due to the infant's simultaneous realization of its dependence on the other, owing to its experience of its body as fragmented and incomplete. Hence, a human subject is split in the early phase itself and the disjointed self continually strives for the imaginary or originary identity, a quest manifest in its desire of/for the other. Once it enters the symbolic phase of language, the law of the father, the tension between the desire for self-sufficiency and the sense of powerlessness continues. In Lacan's point of view, "the unconscious is structured like language", and self and other are purely constructs of language. As he states, "the symbolic function presents itself as a double movement within the subject: man makes an object of his action, but only in order to restore to this action in due time its place as a grounding. In this equivocation, operating at every instant, lies the whole process of a function in which action and knowledge alternate" (*Ecrits* 73). Due to the slippery nature of language, it is difficult for the subject to attain a sense of unified

selfhood, to fulfil its desire, and so, the subject forever remains the split self, unable to fill the lack, which, according to Ernesto Laclau is "at the root of any identity; ... an originary and insurmountable lack..." (3). Lacanian theories, incorporating the dialectics of self and other, suggest the impossibility of a coherent identity, and thereby, probably, hint at a fluidity of subjectivity.

Lacan's contemporary in the Marxist field of thought, Louis Althusser, distinguishes between the role of ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses in framing subjectivity. These apparatuses force the people into a submissive existence, conforming to the norms of the dominant ideology, through cajoling and repression. Althusser uses the term, interpellation to denote the subjects' unconscious internalisation of cultural values and beliefs that the oppressive/dominant class project as the norm to continue their, to use Antonio Gramsci's term, cultural hegemony. When it comes to Michel Foucault, the subject is interpellated within discourses, which, subject to power relations, concern themselves mainly with representation. In Tony Davies' opinion,

> Discourse for Foucault is what the relations of production are for Marx, the unconscious for Freud, the impersonal laws of language for Saussure, ideology for Althusser: the capillary structure of social cohesion and conformity. It situates us as individuals, and silently legislates the boundaries of what is possible for us to think and say. Above all, it is normative: ... because they too are "grammatical," already anticipated and positioned in the hegemonic syntax of discursive power. (70)

The subject is constructed discursively and being so, is always in the state of becoming. As Judith Butler says, "for Foucault, the subject who is produced through subjection is ... in the process of being produced, it is repeatedly produced" (*The Psychic*93). Discourse being a function of power/knowledge, it determines what is to be normative as per the dominant ideology at work. The powerful oppressors control discourses that construct subjectivities. Nevertheless, Foucault acknowledges the possibility of "a "reverse" discourse" within the dominant discursive framework (*History of Sexuality* 101).

Foucault subtly suggests the potential of human agency to push further the boundaries set by dominant discourses:

> Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are... The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the types of individualization which is linked to the state.("The Subject and Power" 336)

The possibility of human agency is implicit in Lacan's and Althusser's theories as well: while the former locates it in the realization on the part of the subject of the absence of a unified whole, for the latter it lies in the awareness of the interpellative strategies of the dominant discourses. Judith Butler has worded it in the apt manner:

> For the "I" to launch its critique, it must first understand that the "I" itself is dependent upon its complicitous desire for the law to make possible its own existence. A critical view of the law will not, therefore,

> undo the force of conscience unless the one who offers that critique is willing, as it were, to be undone by the critique that he or she performs. (*The Psychic*106)

It is no different with feminist subjectivity either, or to be more precise, when gender intersects the variables like class and race. Simone de Beauvoir highlights the cultural construction of female subjectivity in her assertive statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (*The Second Sex*301). Woman is constructed as man's other and is made to internalise the patriarchal roles and values ascribed to them: "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other (xix). Poststructuralists like Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous reject the essentialist approach and embrace the elusive and fluidic nature of gendered subjectivity while Judith Butler goes a step further to denaturalize normative sexual subjectivities. In postcolonial contexts what comes to the fore as regards doubly marginalised subjectivity, is the idea of hybrid identities that challenge the essentialist divisions among women themselves. All invariably stress the critical consciousness of the subject in their call to activism, as in being aware of the ways in which subjectivities are constructed, lies the potential for agency, for resistance.

The theories of ideology, language and discourse endow the human subject, a linguistic construct with a disruptive/ subversive potential. Subjectivity is no more coherent, but fractured and indefinite. Drawing on these theories that mark the surfacing of postmodernist scenario, has emerged postcolonialism as a school of thought in the 1990s, questioning the colonial constructs of subjectivities and perspectives with a view to undermining them. Postcoloniality is a condition in which the replication of colonial values has no place in the politics of representation, for

decolonising the mind and the imagination is its hallmark feature that partakes of a challenge to the prevailing worldview. Owing to its diverse and interdisciplinary nature, postcolonialism has become a major critical discourse in literature. In it is embedded a theoretical resistance to colonialism, its values and practices, a resistance which is exemplified in the urge to revisit, remember and interrogate the past. As Lois Tyson has remarked, "a good deal of postcolonial criticism analyzes the ideological forces that, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers' values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppressors, a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself" (418). Emphasizing the human agency that is operative in anti-colonial resistances, postcolonial critique, in the main, concerns itself with the nature of colonial subjectivity. The critical approach involves a re-reading of the texts, an inquiry into the power/knowledge equation in the representation of colonised subject, a process of reading against the grain to discover the voices of resistance and an analysis of the appropriation of language. The theoretical framework is founded on the colonial discourse analyses of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said who have had as their major preoccupation the nature of colonised subjectivity that postcolonial theorists continue to grapple with, more or less coming to terms with the irreducibility of colonial subjectivity to any definitive framework.

Colonialism with its imperialist ideology has been instrumental in constructing in the colonies unequal power relations that have had adverse impact on the indigenous culture, land and people. No wonder the colonial regimes have met with resistance that ultimately has led to the processes of decolonisation, which is still in progress. In aiding decolonisation, the spread of nationalist sentiment has played a

major role. Negritude, associated with Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor, was one influential concept at work during the time to raise national consciousness. When Cesaire stresses the essential qualities of being black, what interests Senghor is the shared sense of oppression. As for Negritude, the myth of the nation has proved a potent one for similar anti-colonial resistances, which, according to Amilcar Cabral, typify "national liberation in opposition to imperialist domination" ("National Liberation and Culture" 54 -55).Though it has strengthened anti-colonial movements, Negritude as a thought is rooted in essentialism promoting blackness, for which it has come in for criticism. Ania Loomba voices her disregard for essentialist thought when she says, "anti-colonial positions are embedded in specific histories, and cannot be collapsed into some pure oppositional essence" (19). Also, "the essential flaw of Negritudinist thought ... is that its structure is derivative and replicatory, asserting not its difference, as it would claim, but rather its dependence on the categories and features of the colonising culture" (Ashcroft et al., *The EmpireWrites Back*123). Nevertheless, Negritude embodies a resistance to colonial representations, especially that of Africa.

Bogged down by the issues of racism and colonialism and at the same time inspired by the Algerian independence struggle that turned violent, Frantz Fanon, a Martinique based psychiatrist, speaks at length on national culture in his much-acclaimed work, *The Wretched of the Earth*. In colonial contexts, Fanon highlights the idea of the nation as a necessary condition of indigenous culture and thereby of anti-colonial resistance. According to him the attempt on the part of the colonised to reclaim their nation "constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists" (*The Wretched* 197). However, he challenges the "uncritical notion of an

African past, the universal idea of the 'Negro', and the pan-national aspirations of Negritude" (Barry 84). To Fanon, culture is the index of national consciousness at the heart of which "international consciousness lives and grows" (*The Wretched* 199)

As Fanon himself says, national consciousness is not without its pitfalls. Hinting at neo-colonialism, Fanon speaks of the possibility of the indigenous middle class, which comes into power after political decolonisation, perpetuating the colonial interests and values for their own benefits. "The national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement" replicating the colonial structure which makes the nation economically subservient to neo-imperial powers (*The Wretched* 122). In his point of view,

> In an under developed country an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through colonial universities. But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path; rather, it disappears with its soul set at peace into the shocking ways – shocking because anti-national – of a traditional bourgeoisie, of a bourgeoisie which is stupidly, contemptibly, cynically bourgeois. (*The Wretched* 120-121)

Calling for economic freedom Fanon stresses true decolonisation – a decolonisation of the minds effecting a complete liberation from the fetters of colonial dominance.

The perpetuation of colonial values and ideals has been through cultural discourses effecting a colonisation of the minds. What colonial discourse theory attempts to achieve is a thorough explication of the functional aspect of the power/knowledge equation that underlies colonial ideology. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, published in 1952, analysing the psychological damage that colonialism does to the colonised minds, throws light on colonial subjectivity and human agency. In McLeod's opinion, "in a literary context, Fanon's work has been used as a means of conceptualising the construction of identity under colonialism ..." (84). Fanon gives a poignant account of an instance of interpellation in his life, when in France the whites passed derogatory remarks like 'dirty nigger!' and 'look, a Negro', solely on account of his blackness:

> On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help it build together. (*Black Skin*85)

The subjects impose the racial otherness onto the objects/others, simultaneously asserting and denying the difference of the colonised and exploited people, against whom they consolidate their superior selfhood. What such interpellation effects is a split sense of self due to the internalisation of the self as other on the part of the colonised. To overcome the traumatic experience is an attempt at assimilation, which,

in its true sense, never happens or rather, is never allowed to happen. Fanon's call is to resist the attempt at assimilation, to challenge the imposition of any kind of identity, "to maintain their alterity. Alterity of rupture, of conflict, of battle" (*Black Skin*173).

Identity and alterity are not mutually exclusive as the construction of subject entails the process of othering. Ever since the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, the dichotomy between 'self' and 'other' focussing on the power relations has raised challenging questions among the critics, as Edward Said has exposed Orientalism as a Western way of constructing the Orient as the other. Drawing on Gramsci and Foucault, Said explicates how the Western conceptions of the Orient aided the colonial interests in justifying the concept of the white man's burden. The power/knowledge dynamics implicit in colonialism continually generates the colonial stereotypes that ensure the superior selfhood of the colonisers.

> Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things as either completely novel or as completely well-known: a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things for the firsttime, as version of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a wayof receiving new information as it is a methodof controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things . . . The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves. and in the end the mind reduces the pressure uponit by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetitious" . . . The Orient at large, therefore,

> vacillates between the West's contempt for what isfamiliar and its shivers of delight in - or fear of – novelty. (*Orientalism* 58-59*).*

Said exposes the constructed nature of such discourses, which reiterate through cultural representations the degenerate image of the colonies. The objectification of the Orient is conspicuous in the way it is made "suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national religious character" (*Orientalism*7-8).

Unlike Fanon, Said's focus is on the coloniser, but the homogenising nature of his work has come in for scathing remarks, let alone the exclusion of the scope of resistance on the part of the colonised. In silencing the voice of the oppressed, according to critics like Aijaz Ahmed, the text divests the colonised of any possible human agency. Said attributes a totalising nature to his concept of orientalism which certainly overlooks gender differences and subtler resistances within the colonisers themselves, and thereby in all, the ambivalent nature of colonial discourses. However, to Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia,

> Said's intention ... is ... to articulate the potential to resist and recreate.... For Said, the power of the Orientalists lay in their 'knowing' the Orient, which in itself constituted power and yet also was an exercise in power. Hence, for him, resistance is twofold: to know the Orient outside the

> discourse of Orientalism, and to represent and present this knowledge to the Orientalists – to write back to them. (68)

Said himself makes his position very clear in his Afterword to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism*: "My objection to what I have called Orientalism is ... that as a system of thought it approaches a heterogenous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint ... [- a] false position [that] hides historical change" (333). Advocating an anti-essentialist stance, Said reiterates,

> The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, *is* finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us". Each age and society re-creates its "Others". Far from a static thing then, identity of self and "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies. (*Orientalism*332, emphasis in original)

In his later work, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said makes up for most of the flaws in *Orientalism*, which, despite its drawbacks, continues to enjoy the status of a seminal text in postcolonial studies for having instigated the analysis of colonial discourses in terms of Western representations of the others. Spivak's words that describe the text as "the source book in our discipline," testify to this fact (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 56).

In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, a collection of theoretical essays, which throw better light on his works, Said stresses the worldliness of the critic and the text. He sees any literary act as one rooted in the world and thus counters the postmodernist/poststructuralist assumptions that, being caught in the "labyrinth of 'textuality'", dissociate the texts from its cultural and historical elements in which are manifest the existing power structures/relations of power (3). Providing material cultural contexts for texts, Said says, "far from being an exchange between equals, the discursive situation is more like the relationship between coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 24). What Said tries to foreground is the socio-political importance of the world from which literature emerges as a cultural artefact. In such a world, he ascribes an in-between position to the intellectual and the critic, whose worldly functions Said asserts in one of his later works, "speaking the truth to power is no panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 75). Also, "Said sees culture as that which fixes the range of meanings of "home," "belonging," and "community"; beyond this is anarchy and homelessness" (Habib 746). Said identifies a powerful in-between cultural space with a potential for resistance – a space of exiles, of ambivalences, a space with a capacity to undermine dominant cultural values and practices.

Edward Said draws a connection between culture, which, according to him, denotes "all those practices, like the arts of description, communication and representation, which have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms, and which often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is

pleasure" (*Culture and Imperialism* xii) and imperialism that "lingers where it always has been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices" (8). To reveal how imperialist ideology works being embedded in literary subtexts that are cultural productions, Said suggests contrapuntal reading, a way of reading back from the perspective of the oppressed. It reveals "the massively knotted and complex histories of special but, nevertheless, overlapping and interconnected experiences – of women, of Westerners, of Blacks, of national states and cultures" that are, in Said's opinion, "radically, quintessentially hybrid" (*Culture and Imperialism* 36, 68). Such a strategy of resistance undermines the reductive nature of colonial discourses and enables the colonised to write back to the empire, to undertake "the voyage in," to use Said's phrase, with a view to breaking down the essentialist binaries of self and other (261).

It is with the works of Edward Said that the much disavowed relation between space and subjectivity garners critical attention in postcolonial literary scenario and thus time comes to prove Foucault's words true: "the present epoch will perhaps be above all else the epoch of space" ("Of Other Spaces" 22). Foucault has reflected upon space as early as 1960s in his notion of heterotopia, the other space, which, being simultaneously real and imagined poses a difference and challenge to the illusory notion of space as a homely place and reveals the nexus of power/knowledge. In his later writings, he negates the attitudinal reflections on space "as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, [and] the immobile" (*Power/Knowledge* 70). Colonialism with its appropriation of territories has culminated in the generation of colonial spaces as fixed and homogenous through its narratives or discourses. In postcolonial times the monolithic nature of colonial discourses is problematised as such narratives justify

the vested interests of colonialism through the process of othering, which constructs the colonial powers and the colonised as culturally homogenous groups caught in a hierarchical structure, the former superior to the latter, thereby according a fixity to both. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, which marks, in Edward Soja's words, the "spatial turn" in literary analyses (*Postmodern Geographies* 50), spatial aspects of colonial othering have failed to get critical attention. Since then, "place is extremely important ... and epistemologies have developed which privilege space over time as the most important ordering concept of reality" (Ashcroft et al., *TheEmpire* 35).

According to Said, "Imperialism, after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control" (*Culture and Imperialism* 271). In his work *Orientalism*, Said explores how the Oriental space is viewed as an exotic other (locale) by the colonial powers, "as a geographical space to be cultivated, harvested and guarded" and how "the space of the weaker" is appropriated to suit their whims and fancies - "the geographical space of the Orient was penetrated, worked over, taken hold of ... turn[ing] the Orient from alien to colonial space." (219). To Said, it is the geographical element that distinguishes anti-imperialist/ anti-colonialist imagination. What in postcoloniality the subjects try to achieve is to restore geographical identity, an imaginative attempt of which has been done through anti/postcolonial discourses, as "for the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of the locality to the outsider" (*Culture and Imperialism* 271).

Like Said and Fanon, the propositions of Homi K. Bhabha too support a view of otherness as "an arrested fixated form of representation" (*The Location* 75). However, to

Said such a representation denies the play of difference while Fanon and Bhabha bring to light the subtleties of differences in colonial discourses.Fanon's is an early voice against the universalising nature of Marxist humanism, which with its class character overlooks other differences/aspects of race and gender. "What? I have barely opened my eyes that had been blind-folded, and someone already wants to drown me in the universal? What about the others? Those who 'have no voice,' those who 'have no spokesman'"(*Black Skin* 144). It is of no less importance that Fanon too restricts the voice of others to that of the oppressed black males, silencing the female voices. Nevertheless, Bhabha, in his analysis of *Black Skin, White Masks*, locates Fanon as speaking from "the uncertain interstices of historical change" (*The Location* 40), and in his readings of Fanon as well as of J.S. Mill, Bhabha identifies a constructed subject that is split in itself, and so ambivalent by nature. To him "identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (73).To put across his vision of a hybridised society, Bhabha appropriates the works of major poststructuralist thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, Lacan et al. who ascribe an inherent subversiveness to the other.

In the context of analysing Fanon, Bhabha draws on Lacan to theorise his views on identity/identification. Echoing the Lacanian postulations on the psychic conflicts of desire/fear and narcissism/aggressivity in the imaginary phase of development, Bhabha says:

> the image – as point of identification- marks the site of an ambivalence. Its representation is always spatially split – it makes *present* something that is *absent*- and temporally deferred....

> The image is only an *appurtenance* to authority and identity; it must never be read mimetically as the appearance of a reality. The access to the image of identity is only ever possible in the *negation* of any sense of originality or plenitude; the process of displacement and differentiation (absence/ presence, representation/ repetition) renders it a liminal reality. The image is at once a metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence ... a metonym, a sign of its absence and loss. (*The Location* 73)

Bhabha thus conflates the spatial and the temporal to bring out the "edge of meaning and being ... the shifting boundary of otherness within identity" (73). The oppressor and the oppressed are nothing but split selves and it is this awareness that gives rise to the agency on the part of the exploited to overcome their subjugation. For, "the ambivalent identification of the racist world ... turns on the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" (62-63). Bhabha puts forth the concept of an in-between space, a zone of cultural contacts, as the site of human subjectivity which is, as typical of such a space, in constant flux, and therefore, fluidic by nature. Differences give rise to fluidity that undermines the essential identities of self and other. The hybrids of the third space thus form a function of the resistance to the dominant power relations that characterise colonial and postcolonial societies.

It is the colonial ambivalence overlooked by Said that Bhabha's theory foregrounds filling in the gaps left by *Orientalism*. Homi K. Bhabha, qualifying the otherness further, challenging the fixity of the polarities of self and other, has put forth the concept of in-between space as the locus of identity formation, or rather

hybrid selves. Bhabha comes up with two valid questionsin his Foreword to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, for the people to ponder: "How can the human world live its difference? how can a human being live Other-wise?" (xxxvi) From the in-between space emerges hybridity, a site that has the potential to assert differences, enabling human beings to live "Other-wise." In his words:

> Hybridity is the sign of ... shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity ... displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (*The Location* 159)

Bhabha's discourses on colonialism, culture and nationalism centre on hybridity, challenging the notion of fixed identity and subverting the binary oppositions. *The Empire Writes Back*effectively argues, "to move towards a genuine affirmation of ... 'difference', we must recognize that this hybridity will inevitably continue" (Ashcroft et al. 178).

Unravelling the underlying ambivalence of colonial discourses that thrives on the generation of derogatory images of the other,Bhabha contests the notion of stability associated with stereotypes. Colonial discourse, in his view,

> is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a 'subject people' through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a

> complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. It seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledges of colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. (*The Location*100-101)

As it is "always in relation to the Other that colonial desire is articulated" (63),it is the need of the whites to have black presence to assert their superiority and so "in order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 102). Though the other thus constructed has the power to constitute the self, it continues to be a disturbing presence, if not assigned fixity and permanence. Hence, the stereotyping, which simultaneously disavows/ negates the presence of the other - a process that is not without the space for resistance. The fact that stereotypical discourses force repetitions does indeed expose the inherent ambivalence, as the desired fixity remains unattainable. Stereotypes give "access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it" (*The Location* 107). Until such ambivalence becomes apparent through postcolonial criticism, which, in itself, qualifies as mimicry, a strategy of doubling or repetition with difference, the colonialist ideology successfully masks the constructed nature of superior selfhood.Hence

> [t]he critique of whiteness ... attempts to displace the normativity of the white position by seeing it as a strategy of authority rather than an authentic or essential "identity." Since "whiteness" naturalizes the claim to social power and epistemological privilege, displacing its position cannot be achieved by raising the "gaze of the other" or by provoking the "return" of the repressed or the oppressed. The subversive move is to reveal within the very integuments of "whiteness" the agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of authority that it is - the incommensurable "differences" that it must surmount; the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetrate and from which it must protect itself; the amnesia it imposes on itself; the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority. (“The White Stuff” 21)

A recognition of heterogeneity that Bhabha proposes has Levinasian undertones like that of Derrida whose work, in Young’s words, “can be affiliated to Levinas’ attempt to shift the relation to alterity from an appropriation by the same into totality to a respect for the other’s heterogeneity” (*White Mythologies* 48).

As in the case of subjectivity/identity, Bhabha’s theories expose the ambivalence in the colonial spatial ordering which aims at homogenising the diverse, heterogenous space. Derrida states, “doubtless it is more necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations (*Positions* 24). Strictly following the suggestion, Bhabha has appropriated Derrida’s notions of alterity and

spacing in his own terrain of colonial discourse analyses. Incorporating the temporal and the spatial in his coinage 'differance', which connotes the other through deferral and differentiation, Derrida emphasizes spac*ing* as "a movement, a displacement that indicates an irreducible alterity" (*Positions*81), as also inseparable from temporalization and differance : "Spacing is a concept which ... carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force. Like *dissemination*, like *differance* it carries along with it a *genetic* motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things ... but also spac*ing*, the operation" (106-107). The resistance potential of Derrida's spacing is what Bhabha takes on board in formulating his notion of agency.

Through his colonial discourse analyses, Bhabha puts forth the notion of a fluid and abstract space in the conceptualisation of thirdspace. Such a hybrid space exposes the constructed nature of places as sites of colonial power relations rooted in a hierarchy, which postcolonial criticism aims at disrupting. A reimagining ofspace as "spaces no longer blanked out by that ruthless whiteness" (Young, *White Mythologies* 24),is at the heart of postcolonial interventions that break down polarities and fixities associated with the notion of space and the subsequent subversions achieve a reclamation of the differences/diversities once disavowed in the name of a fixed, homogenous temporal locale. Like Lefebvre, whostates, "abstract space is not homogenous" (*The Production* 287), Bhabha too aligns his thirdspace along heterogeneity and diversity. Acknowledging fluidity, which fosters disruptive actions against the colonial absolutes, thirdspace offers potential resistance to imposing fixed identity, which furthers imperial interests, allowing mutability in its stead.

Bhabha expounds his concept of thirdspace in the context of nation/nationalism, which is the first thing that the term space connotes to him,

resonating what Massey says, "the spatial is political" (*For Space* 9). He counters the notion of nation as "an imagined political community that is limited and sovereign," rooted in homogenous empty time, put forth by Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities* 7). Though Bhabha gives credit to the exposition of the constructed image of nation by Anderson, he criticises the notion of a homogenous time that discredits the contemporaneity/disruptive temporality of the present. In place of a homogenous, serial time, what Bhabha proposes is a "discontinuous time of translation and negotiation" (*The Location* 55). He formulates a thirdspace as a result of the pedagogical and performative aspects of the nation, a hybrid space which disrupts the homogenous narrative of nation rooted in the past, giving rise to national identity as "out of many one", subsuming the differences within. It is the past being re-inscribed in the present "as a contingent 'in-between' space" incorporating the differences due to socio-political and cultural exigencies (10). Bhabha tries to focus on the intrinsic otherness rejecting the exclusionary nature of national narratives that locate the other outside/without. As he says,

> the split-space of enunciation may open the way conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based ... on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. ... [I]t is the 'inter'- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space [that] ... carries the burden of meaning of culture ... And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (*The Location* 56)

The epistemological boundaries erected by many variables like race, class, gender and nation within colonial structuresare the enunciative sites of reinscription from where

'presencing' begins, from which emerge other voices (13). These voices are suppressed through an enunciatory act that disavows cultural difference "to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy" (51). Bhabha contends that the disavowal or forgetting of difference creates an ambivalence, which in itself contests the claim to superiority. When as an act of resistance the disavowed differences become visible it instils a sense of unhomeliness in the colonial subjects and the only alternative to survive such an existence is living through difference.

Implicating the dangers in situating critiques within Eurocentric theoretical framework, which possibly reinforces the binaries, Bhabha asks, "must we always polarize in order to polemicize? (*The Location* 28) It is not the mere reversal of the dichotomy that interests Bhabha;instead, it is the complete dissolution of it. He suggests the construction of subjectivity to be contingent upon the conditions from which it emerges, and always the subjects are marked by hybridity and ambivalence. In his own words,

> the language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and slave ... but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (*The Location* 37)

In his article, “The White Stuff” Bhabha explains what he considers as the ideal critical strategy:“What we need is a way of looking that restores a third dimension to hard-set profiles; a way of writing that makes black and white come alive in a shared text; a way of talking, of moving back and forth along the tongue, to bring language to a space of community and conversation that is never simply white and never simply black” (24).

Bhabha defies all conceptual categories which lead to polarisation and advocates a renegotiation of the variables “in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion”as “our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the ‘present’” (*The Location*2, 1). Using the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, liminality, interstices and ambivalence Bhabhaunravels the sites of cultural differences negated by the imperial powers who promoted homogenising narratives to secure their sense of superior selfhood and, in so doing he stresses the possibilities that the ‘beyond’, which signifies spatiality, has to offer in the renegotiation of subjectivities. Bhabha thus has “asserted that the ‘subaltern’ people can speak, and that a native voice can be recovered” (Ashcroft et al., *TheEmpire* 175). In his Afterword to the 1995 edition of Orientalism, Said too speaks about the subaltern agency that intrigued many a scholar in the 80s and 90s: “... if you feel you have been denied the chance to speak your piece, you will try extremely hard to get that chance. For indeed, the subaltern can speak, as the history of liberation movements in the twentieth century eloquently attests” (335).

Antonio Gramsci's term subaltern, which he used to refer to the subordinate peasantry class in Italy, has gained wider/deeper connotations in postcolonial contexts

with the Subaltern historians using the term to denote subordination “in terms of class, caste, gender, and office or in any other way” (Guha, “On Some Aspects” 35). In Gayatri Spivak’s words, "[the] word ... has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis .... it has no theoretical rigor" (*The Post-Colonial Critic* 141). She ascribes a gendered dimension to the term, subalternity. According to her,

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labour, for both of which there is ‘evidence’. It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 287)

Spivak, in her critique of the subaltern studies’ attempts to retrieve an originary subaltern consciousness, assigns the term subaltern to different subject positions, especially that of women, that are marginalised by dominant discursive practices. In Young’s opinion, “[her] emphasis on subject-positions draws attention to the way in which the factors of class and, particularly, gender, create a heterogenous field that problematizes the general notion of an undifferentiated colonial subject or subaltern – as indeed of a monolithic colonizing power” (*White Mythologies* 203).

It is her allegiance as a critic to deconstruction, under the influence of Derrida and de Man, which comes under the scanner, as the deferral of meaning that has been attributed an unstable and indeterminate status makes any serious socio-political intervention quite doubtful. Her works bring forth her dilemma as a Western educated intellectual trying to articulate the voices of the oppressed. In Parry's opinion, "Spivak in her own writings severely restricts ... the space in which the colonized can be written back into history, even when the "interventionist possibilities" are exploited through the deconstructive strategies devised by the post-colonial intellectual" ("Problems" 39). Nevertheless, deconstruction, mainlythe Derridean sense of *differance*, which incorporates the traces of the old with the new, suggesting the play of endless signification, provides Spivak with the necessary platform to contest the Eurocentric assumptions, and thereby undermine the binary divisions that characterize the oppressive discourses.

In a paper titled, 'The Rani of Sirmur' presented at the 1984 Essex conference, 'Europe and its Others', Spivak uses the term "worlding" to suggest colonial spatialisation, through which the Third World comes into being. What she refers to is the underlying principle of colonial othering as regards space, that "the necessary yet contradictory assumption of an uninscribed earth which is the condition of possibility of the worlding of a world generates the force to make the 'native' see himself as 'other'" ("The Rani of Sirmur" 247, 254). Like Bhabha, Spivak too asserts the heterogeneity of colonised individuals and spaces that the imperial project attempted at homogenising. In her own words,

> It is possible that it is not only "the relationship between the three domination systems [class, racial/ethnic, and sex/gender]" that is

> "dialectical" but that in the theatres of decolonization, the relationship between indigenous and imperialist systems of domination are also "dialectical," even when they are variously related to the Big Three Systems cited above. Indeed, the relationship may not be "dialectical" at all but discontinuous, "interruptive." (*In Other Worlds* 347)

According to Spivak, the process of othering that postcolonial criticism attempts to decipher determines alterity, which, nevertheless, with the diversity of lived experiences, has the power to resist any kind of homogenisation, and that explains her critique of western feminism that overlooks differences that cut across race, class, gender and nation. Spivak has displaced the binary, as Stephen Morton says, "in favour of an ethical response to lives and struggles of oppressed people in the 'Third World'" (38). Hence the importance of strategic essentialism, a context-specific critical strategy proposed by Spivak who defines it as a "*strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (*In Other Worlds* 281). Lived material realities mould postcolonial subjectivities and so, as the editors of *The Empire Writes Back* put it, " the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being [in] the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (8).

In the wake of cultural reformations that entail globalisation, travel, migration and diaspora, the sense of displacement/ dislocation has only intensified eroding the selfhood. Quite interestingly, "the energizing feature of this displacement is its capacity to interrogate and subvert the imperial cultural formations" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 11). There is little debate concerning the disruptive potential of diasporic spaces, as the most effective theoretical postulations that challenged the monolithic

Eurocentric assumptions have come from the Holy Trinity of postcolonialism – Said, Bhabha and Spivak, who are indeed diasporic intellectuals. Ashcroft succinctly states that "the place of a diasporic person's 'belonging' may have little to do with spatial location,but be situated in family, community, in those symbolic features which constitute ashared culture, a shared ethnicity or system of belief, including nostalgia for a distanthomeland. It is when place is least spatial, perhaps, that it becomes most identifying" (*Postcolonial Transformation* 125). In effectively challenging the monolithic notions of western epistemology from the in-between places they are rooted in, postcolonial thinkers have opened up a new space of interrogation for alterity to emerge pushing the boundaries.

The relation between space and subjectivity has been overlooked due to the focus on historical and temporal analyses until the twentieth century when a sudden upsurge of interest in the spatial influence happened because of postcolonial theoretical postulations that analysed colonial discourses from the spatial perspective as well. As a result of which, at present

> [a]n articulation of cultural differences results in reimagining spaces and subjectivities giving rise to new possibilities celebratory of multiculturalism/cross-cultural humanity. So complete has been the reorganization of the 'lived place' of many ethnic groups into the political, economic and cultural boundaries of colonial space that the concept and experience of 'place' could be the one discourse of post-colonial life most resistant to transformation. Yet, as significant as the engagement with history might be, it is in the creative reconstruction of the lived environment, the reassertion of place in language and

> textuality, that the key to a deep-seated cultural transformation may be found. (Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformation* 124)

An understanding of such a shift to the politics of representation in relation to space and subjectivity is manifest in Stuart Hall's essay, "New Ethnicities" – an attempt to analyze the trends in black cultural politics. The essay, dissociating ethnicity from the exclusionary narratives of nation and race, foregrounds "the ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery… predicated on difference and diversity" and posits the subjects as "*ethnically* located" as "all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position…" (227). Though Hall stresses the formative influence of ethnic identities in one's sense of selfhood, he sees"identity as a 'production',which is never complete, always in process, and always constitutedwithin, not outside, representation"("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 222). Foregrounding the diasporic experience and its narratives of displacement, Hall claims cultural identity to be one of becoming as well as of being, of future as well as of the past, subject to "the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (225).

To Stuart Hall, "the diaspora experience ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 235). Diaspora as a concept, which signifies the presence/absence of nation, according to Paul Gilroy, "should be cherished for its ability to pose the relationship between ethnic sameness and differentiation: a

changing same" (*The Black Atlantic* xi). He further laysemphasis on the influence of roots and routes in identity formation disrupting any notions of pure and originary identity. In promoting the intercultural and the transnational Gilroy is in tune with his contemporary, Stuart Hall, in whose words,

> questions of hybridity, syncretism, of cultural undecidability and the complexities of diasporic identification … interrupt any 'return' to ethnically closed and 'centred' original histories. Understood in its global and transcultural context, colonization has made ethnic absolutism an increasingly untenable cultural strategy. It made the 'colonies' themselves, and even more, large tracts of the 'post-colonial' world, always-already 'diasporic' in relation to what might be thought of as their cultures of origin. ("When was 'the Post-Colonial'? 250)

Unlike the theories of Bhabha and Spivak that get often reduced to discursive/textual abstractions, those of cultural theoreticians like Gilroy and Hall stress the real effects and existence of conditions outside the discursive spaces. A more concrete conceptualization of an in-between space is in the theories of geographers like Edward Soja and Doreen Massey. Drawing on Foucault and Lefebevre, Soja puts forth the notion of thirdspace as "a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange" (*Thirdspace* 5), in juxtaposition with the firstspace that is the real, material, lived space and the secondspace, which is the imagined realm where discourse, ideology and knowledge come to play. In his words, thirdspaces are "vitally filled with politics and ideology, with the real and the imagined intertwined, and with capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and other material practices that concretize the social relations of production, reproduction, exploitation,

domination, and subjection…. They are the chosen spaces for struggle, liberation, emancipation" (68). Closely allied to Bhabha's thirdspace, Soja's in-between space is where binaries/dichotomies dissolve and new subjectivities emerge out of resistance from the margins. Massey gives an added dimension to the conceptualization of space when she says,

> space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them … are gendered through and through. Moreover they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both reflects *and has effects back on* the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live. (*Space, Place and Gender* 186)

In relation to the politics of difference, to her, for any recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity, a recognition of spatiality, its inherent dynamism is essential. Her theoretical premises, in the dissolution of the binaries, augur a coeval existence of others. All said, indeed, "the post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms", to a transnational, a cross-cultural poetics (*TheEmpire* 35).

Nevertheless, the textual/abstract nature of the in-between spaces and hybridity is not beyond any criticism. In her critique of Bhabha's theories, Benita Parry accuses him of an elitist approach. To her what Bhabha foregrounds is "'the poetics of relocation and reinscription' … known by the cosmopolitan artist, writer, intellectual, professional, financier and entrepreneur in the metropolis, rather than the 'grim prose' of low-waged workers in western capitals and contract labourers in the

Gulf states or other centres of capitalist growth within the Third World" (*Postcolonial Studies* 70). Parry also ascribes a homogenizing aspect to the in-betweenness, which subsumes differences, especially those of class, rather than articulating it. In her opinion, "to speak … of metropolis and colony as inhabiting the same in-between, interstitial ground ignores that this territory was differentially occupied, and that it was contested space, being the site of coercion and resistance, and not of civil negotiation between evenly placed contenders" (69). A similar opinion Arif Dirlik voices when he says,

> the complicity of postcolonialin hegemony lies in postcolonialism's diversion of attention fromcontemporary problems of social, political, and cultural domination, andin its obfuscation of its own relationship to what is but a condition of itsemergence, that is, to a global capitalism that, however fragmented inappearance, serves as the structuring principle of global relations (331).

In the wake of such arguments questioning the veracity of its claim to being the voice of the oppressed/marginalised, the task of postcolonial criticism lies in dissociating itself from elitism as well as in associating itself with diverse modalities of existence.

Amidst these theoretical stances centring on space and subjectivity, the question posed by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* is intriguing: ...why should the free settler, formally unconstrained, and theoretically free to continue in the possession and practice of 'Englishness', also show clear signs of alienation ... and manifest a tendency to seek an alternative, differentiated identity? (9). The concept of free settler is evocative of the colonial assumption of spaces as vast and empty devoid

of its original inhabitants. No other place better exemplifies the erasure of the other through the colonial appropriation of spaces than South Africa where the policies of segregation with the legal backing of apartheid from 1948 to 1994 have resulted in massive displacement of the indigenous people. Coupled with cultural denigration, spatial segregation too has had psychological repercussions creating a sense of subjugated/submissive existence among the natives. The settlers too experience the repercussions of colonisation in that

> the conquerors themselves, the present controllers of the means of communication, those who have subjugated or annihilated the original occupants could not feel at home in the *place* colonized. Out of this sense of displacement emerges the discourse of place which informs the post-colonial condition. This *Unheimlichkeit* ... or 'not-at-homeness' motivates the reconstruction of the social and imaginative world in post-colonial writing. Such *Unheimlichkeit* is experienced not only by the residents of the settler colonies but by all people situated at the ambi/valent site of interpretation itself. (Ashcroft et al.,*TheEmpire* 81-82)

Even after the transition to democracy in the 1990s under the influence of Black nationalism, South Africa "remains a space subject to contesting ideologies as it was in the 1970s" for which Graham situates the reason in the unchanged ownership of the land (*Land and Nationalism* 136). Despite the possession of the land, the sense of belonging eludes the whites in the new South Africa and as such, an ambivalence marks the settler narratives especially of postcolonial times. Owing to the peculiar socio-political scenario in South Africa, its literature has more or less centred on

mostly one variable, race, subsuming all other, let alone that of space/place/land. Rightly, so, in South African novels, which focus on race relations in its attempt to contest the hegemonic colonial ideology, as Sarah Nuttall (1996) says, "space remains, as yet, largely unwritten" (228).

In an age marked by the pros and cons of scientific and technological developments, socio-cultural and economic policies like globalisation and neoliberalism, with its insidious effects of neo-imperialism/neo-colonialism, the theoretical framework of postcolonialism has only gained prominence with its "autocritical" aspect (Spivak, Foreword xv).South Africa presents a curious case with the nation's population irrespective of its racial lineage, whites and blacks alike, experiencing unhomeliness. The dreadful "secondariness", a term used by Said, is highly suggestive of the dilemma, which forces the colonial subjects to grapple with the problems of identity, alterity and the sense of displacement consequent upon it *(Culture and Imperialism*70*).* In settler narratives, become visible the absent presences as "it is in the translation from experience to its textual representation that the settler subject can be seen working out a complicated politics of representation, working through the settler's anxieties and obsessions in textual form" (Johnston and Lawson 363).In the politics of alterity and displacement, characteristic of liminal sites, is implicit, especially, the nature of settler colonies where the settlers, in their efforts to naturalize their claim to the land and assert their superior selfhood to that of the indigenous people, in effect, disavowing their own otherness and a sense of non-belonging, inadvertently, end up occupying an in-between position, which is a site of renegotiation for space and subjectivity, generating a fluidic sense as regards both.

Chapter 2

Beginnings – Split in the Dialectical Realm

As Mark Currie states in *Difference*, "the identity of things, people, places, groups, nations and cultures is constituted by the logics of both sameness and difference"(3). In colonial ideology, which disavows the unique racial and cultural differences in order to perpetuate the colonisers' cultural hegemony, sameness and difference determine the differential power relations which categorise human beings in relation to the binary of self/other, which adversely impact the psyche of the powerless others, relegated to the status of denigrated selves. The framework of sameness and difference cuts across race, class, gender and nation in assigning a fixed status to the individual. Postcolonial discourses, in their attempt to reassert the renounced alterity, deconstruct the fixity of self and other entrenched through discourses complicit with colonial mechanism. Nevertheless, the fact of having to work against the very same framework within which these discourses fall raises contentious questions as regards the credibility of the texts. The early works of Coetzee, known for his postcolonial stance, present such a paradox as a dialectical notion of identity structures the narratives, which, in its attempt to question the authority of history, truth and the centrality of authorial voice, try to achieve a disruption of the western epistemological metanarratives.

Serving as powerful allegories of the oppressor and the oppressed, the narratives focus on the ethical dilemma of the whites, who constitute the privileged power group in South Africa. Coetzee's early protagonists are all whites, who, allegorically hint at the position of white liberals in South Africa torn by apartheid conflicts. They exhibit an ambivalent approach when they simultaneously try to latch

onto their sense of unitary self and reconcile with otherness. Historical consciousness plays a major role in the mental makeup of the whites, who experience complicity in the crime of their colonial predecessors; a crime, which is perpetrated in the name of politically legitimised apartheid. Eric Gans defines white guilt as the culpability "experienced by whites over the unfair advantages they owe to racism" ("White Guilt, Past and Future"). The sense of white guilt permeates the texts, which exemplify a cathartic way of expiating the sin that consists itself in a self-assertion effected through the process of othering at the expense of the natives/blacks. Such a psychological denigration, let alone physical oppression epitomised in slavery, has led the natives/blacks of the colonial regimes to negate their selves accepting the otherness imposed on them, thus losing their identity and integrity along with their place and culture. Figures of alterity in Coetzee's early novels have limited textual space, are more or less passive in their resistance, yet, do account for a presence in their absence itself, unsettling the protagonists' sense of self .

Coetzee, in his analysis of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* states, "the notion of personal identity has dramatically narrowed in our times. Identity has become in the first place a matter of group identification: of claiming membership of a group, or being claimed by a group" (*Stranger Shores* 200). No other authorial statement than this throws better light on the root cause of the existential crisis that the lead characters of Coetzee's early fiction – *Dusklands*(1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) – experience. Nevertheless, the texts, in effect, prove to be much more than an explication of identity in a narrowing sense, acquiring postcolonial dimensions and making political interventions of serious concern as regards identity politics. Offering an engaging

read, the novels explore the psychic struggle of the divisive colonial minds caught up in the dialectics of identity, as their desperate quest for a pure identity ends either in a nostalgic lament for a long lost idyllic colonial/pastoral past that, to their chagrin, proves to be irretrievable, or in an acknowledgement of otherness, embracing the world of differences. The texts, thus, differ from each other in the way it represents alterity with *Waiting for the Barbarians* marking a major shift in the early phase.

In the novel, *Dusklands* J.M. Coetzee exposes the dynamics of colonialism, not least, the violence associated with it through the protagonists'- Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee's -encounter with alterity. Of the two novellas, The Vietnam Project, unravels against the backdrop of the US- Vietnam war in the twentieth century, the life of Eugene Dawn, a mythographer in the US Defence Department busily aiding in improvising the strategies of the psychological warfare in Vietnam to reinforce the US dominance of the nation and The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee, with the eighteenth century South Africa as its setting, a time when colonialism was making its inroads into the land, deals with Jacobus Coetzee's journey into the interiors of the land. As Dominic Head observes, the structure of the novel "invites us to draw parallels between a moment of contemporary imperialism and the origins of Afrikaner domination and to examine the question of authorial complicity..." (*J.M. Coetzee* 29). Both Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee are representatives of colonial ideology, but the similarity ends there due to the marked difference in the way in which both handle the pressure of otherness in their attempts to achieve an ontological assurance. While Jacobus, after shortly being on the brink of madness, succeeds in reinstating the dichotomy of self and other, Eugene wilts under pressure, breaks down and goes insane failing pathetically in overpowering the other. The novel, *In the Heart of the*

Country has striking parallels with *Dusklands* with the protagonists being representatives of colonialism/imperialism. Allegorically, the novel, like *Dusklands,* makes "implicit connections between historical Afrikaner identity and the contemporary situation in South Africa" (Head, *J.M. Coetzee*51).

Not unlike Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee, Magda too falters when she confronts otherness, giving rise to a situation fraught with her meaningless attempts at communicating with the other, and mostly at restoring the old order.The central narrative constitutes an act of parricide by the protagonist and her subsequent relationship with the servants on the farm. As a settler novel, *In the Heart of the Country* "depicts a failing ... a most unsettling settler experience" (Lopez 43). Nevertheless, what comes to the forefront in comparison is the pattern of madnessrealizedin the looming presence of alterity, a madness that erupts from the site/space of otherness.*Waiting for the Barbarians,* in which the setting is a frontier post of settlement, depicts the moral dilemma of the Magistrate, the central character, who, going against the Empire, undertakes a journey to return the Barbarian girl to her tribes. Signalling a deviation from the previous works, the text deploys through the "man of intelligence and conscience" -the Magistrate, a position of hybridity, which accounts for the prophetic appeal of the novel, to interrogate the self-other polarities (*Doubling the Point* 369). The text is the entry point to the realm of splitting/doubling, superseding the dialectical one.

The underlying principle of the narratives is the dialectics of self and other. Dawn's musings on his strained relationship with his project supervisor Coetzee since the submission of his introduction to the New Life for Vietnam Project serve as the connecting link between the two novellas of *Dusklands,* making Dawn a direct

twentieth century replacement for the eighteenth century explorer, Jacobus Coetzee: "Had I lived two hundred years ago I would have had a continent to explore, to map, to open to colonization. In that vertiginous freedom I might have expanded to my true potential. If I feel cramped nowadays it is because I have no space to beat my wings" (*DL* 31-32). Being thorough representatives of colonial psyche marked by inquisitiveness and desire, Eugene and Jacobus differ in the freedom they enjoy – while subordination to Coetzee adversely affects Eugene's psyche, Jacobus secures his role as the master in all his endeavours. The above passage is highly suggestive of the fact that the work has taken its toll on Eugene, yet the reason for his psychological breakdown lies less in the stress related to work than in the self-other dialectics he partakes of in the public and private spheres of his life.

As Magda describes herself on one occasion as a "monologue moving through time" (*IHC* 68), the novel, *In the Heart of the Country* is in itself a lengthy monologue of Magda, the narrator, numbering two hundred and sixty-six sections through which the author takes us into the inner recesses of the character, offering an imaginary flight of an unprecedented kind. The delusional nature of the narrative confuses the readers as the drifting consciousness of the narrator blurs the thin line between the happenings and imagination. No sooner do the readers come to grip facts than they realize that it is Magda's flight of fancy. The absence of dialogue reveals the solipsistic nature of the narrator and her narrative, which, characterized by a criss-cross pattern of time, unravels before us the life of Magda, spinster-daughter of the lonely sheep farmer, Johannes. In her variegated responses to the patriarchal Afrikaner culture and colonial South Africa, Magda emerges as a complex figure as she is at once, a true representative of feminism in resisting patriarchy, resisting

oppression and a pro-nationalist, exhibiting her misgivings about transgressing the boundaries marked by the epidermal schema of racism. Both positions manifest itself in the act of parricide she commits, or rather, gives the impression of having committed.

Waiting for the Barbarians presents signs of transcending the dialectical realm of identity, albeit its similarities with the previous novels of Coetzee. The text endows the site of hybridity with an agency, which acquires added dimensions in the later works. "A go-between, a Jackal of Empire in sheep's clothing" (*WB* 79) – The Magistrate, who is the narrator cum protagonist of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, describes himself thus. He occupies an in-between place, the site of hybridity, which, with its access to the colonial system exposes its power structures. As Bhabha says, "the contingent and the liminal become the times and spaces for the historical representation of the subjects of cultural difference in a postcolonial criticism" (*The Location*256). Being a site for "a resistance from within", to use Attwell's phrase, the Magistrate's position validates postcolonial formulation of colonial ambivalence (82). The novel, like the former ones, renders colonial violence in its brutal form, and also the extent to which the oppressors go in justifying their *mission civilisatrice*through othering. Like Eugene Dawn, Jacobus Coetzee and Magda, here too, the protagonist hails from the powerful social stratum of that of whites, taking the theme of complicity that pervades Coetzee's novels, to the next level. If through Magda Coetzee has put forth the problematic position of white liberal writers in settler nations, the Magistrate too exemplifies the same, if not, to be more particular, the moral dilemma of the complicit whites, in so much as the generic status attributed to the Magistrate without naming him testifying to the same fact. While Magda is a

failure in grasping the political significance of her self-discovery, the Magistrate, though in full possession of the implied meaning, which emerges along with his ethical stance, is a tragic figure of helplessness in the face of humanity.

What prevent the characters from approving of the proximity of 'others', closing in on the differences, are their typical colonisers' ethnocentric assumptions. At the professional level as a mythographer, Eugene represents the imperial power of US trying to reduce the Vietnamese as the other. "My name is Eugene Dawn. I cannot help that"(*DL* 1). – Thus begins Eugene's narrative marked by a tone of resignation, which resonates with the burden of complicity, with the historical sense of guilt borne by the coloniser. Coupled with this burden comes the psychological impact which Eugene suffers from his subordination to his master Coetzee in the office and makes him drown himself in "reveries of love and hatred for that self of mine". Things are not rosy for Eugene in his marital relationship as well, as hinted at the outset when he ponders, "Married life has taught me that all concessions are mistakes" (*DL* 7, 2). He feels insecure in his ties with Marilyn, his wife, as is revealed from the way he suspects her fidelity. Torn between these conflicts, Eugene desperately tries to confirm his selfhood through the Vietnam Project, which demands the assertion of racial and cultural differences in advancing military aggression, but in the end yields to the otherness that he happens to face.

Dawn's narrative on the psychological war in Vietnam has an underlying tone of imperial authority. As Dominic Head avers,

> Eugene Dawn's inability to participate in a community... produces a solipsism which governs his narrative. Inextricably tied to this

> solipsism is a pervasive brutality, a consequence of the inability to perceive the Other as human. The result is that all self-expression (like all colonial self-interest) is something that is enacted upon the Other: dehumanized, and rendered a fitting object for violence, willed or actual. (*J.M. Coetzee* 30-31)

Exemplifying the fact that "the nexus between language and power lies in the ability to control the means of communication" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire*88), Dawn chooses to construct Vietnam relying on his whims and fancies and so refuses a familiarization tour of the place - a method which, in accord with that of colonial discourses where the other is constructed based on mere assumptions, reveals the power invested with the fabricated knowledge irrespective of its reality/truth as he says, "When these are transposed into print their authority will be binding" (*DL* 15).

Magda too is the epitome of such psychic bends. When her father, Johannes takes a liking for their black maid Klein-Anna, it instils a sense of shame and insecurity in Magda as the act pricks her sense of racial pride. Also, desire and need lock horns here, as her relationship with her father is replete with Freudian overtones: "When the desire for the other mutates into the need to deny the other, to destroy the object of desire in a doomed attempt to eradicate the vulnerability desire itself entails, the metaphysical schema resurrected by such repression creates violence – often physical – in its wake" (Jolly, "Writing Desire Responsibly" 96). To maintain the distance between her'self' and 'others', in which she has been successful until the arrival of Klein-Anna, Magda shoots her father whom she considers responsible for transgressing the boundaries.Ever since the murder, Magda assumes the authoritarian

stance in her interactions with Hendrik and Anna whose help she seeks to bury the corpse of her father.

The desire of the other underpins the efforts of Col. Joll in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Drawing on the Greek poet C.P.Cavafy's poem, into the novel, which too depicts the motif of the existence of other for self-assertion, Coetzee weaves layers of othering, the major case in point being what Empire does to the barbarians through Col. Joll and his team in the name of tireless pursuit of 'truth'. To make a non-existent threat seem real, Col. Joll resorts to torture to make the prisoners speak the truth; the truth being only what the officers want to hear. The authors of *Post-Colonial Studies* cite the Colonel's act as an instance of othering:

> For the Colonel is in the business of *creating* the enemy, of delineating that opposition that *must* exist, in order that the empire might define itself by its geographical and racial others.... It locates its others by this process in the pursuit of that power within which its own subjectivity is established. (Ashcroft et al., 173)

Extraction of truth in the desired format is reminiscent of the contemporary war on terrorism targeting a particular community, legitimising the exclusionary policies of the neo-colonial/neo-imperial powers as suggested by the Guantanamo Bay revelations. Despite the setback of the primary efforts of the interrogators to achieve their objective, Empire continually engages itself in its mission launching a campaign against the barbarians, at the end of which twelve barbarians are brought in as prisoners, whose treatment reveals the brutality of colonial violence constituted in the writing of "ENEMY"on their backs using charcoal and the severe measures like

flogging, and thrashing until the barbarians' blood wipes out the inscription – all suggestive of the interpellation of the subjects as others.

In being a critique of imperial othering, the text invests the Magistrate's hybrid position with the power of intervention. Though the Magistrate sympathises with the victims brought in by Col. Joll initially, he is hesitant to compromise his sense of superiority that surges forth in his dealings with the barbarians, the blind girl in particular, making him an accomplice of the colonial mechanism. His observations of the fisher folk detained as prisoners convey his inclination to reduce them as others:

> And in a day or two these savages seem to forget they ever had another home. Seduced utterly by the free and plentiful food ... they relax ... move about ... doze and wake, grow excited as mealtimes approach. Their habits are frank and filthy.... But I hope too that memories of the town, with its easy life and exotic foods, are not strong enough to lure them back. I do not want a race of beggars on my hands. (*WB* 20)

The narrative, abounding in such polarised images of master/slave or self/other, inadvertently reproduces the same power structure on which colonialism bases itself. It is nothing but for self-assertion that the Magistrate calls in the cook's grandson to do the menial jobs (*WB* 37). Moreover, at one stage he reminisces the early period of his tenure at the frontier- a place of "easy morals of the oases, the long scented summer evenings, [and] the complaisant sloe-eyed women"- enjoying all the privileges of being a part of the oppressor regime (*WB* 48).

In Dawn's case, the point of departure in his attempt to seek an ontological assurance comes when the photographs Dawn carries in his briefcase - the first one in which a sergeant is seen copulating with a Vietnamese woman, quite suggestively titled as "Father Makes Merry with Children", the second one which portrays two sergeants brandishing the severed heads of Vietnamese and the third, that of caged prisoners – spell his doom. Eugene keeps exploring the images hoping it may yield to his desire for control, the desire that is "palpably at one with the desire for colonial domination" (Head, *J.M. Coetzee* 33).

> I close my eyes and pass my fingertips over the cool odourless surface of the print.... The glint in the eye, which in a moment luckily never to arrive will through the camera look into my eyes, is bland and opaque under my fingers, yielding no passage into the interior of this obscure but indubitable man, I keep exploring. Under the persistent pressure of my imagination, acute and morbid in the night, it may yield. (*DL* 16-17)

Contrary to his expectations, the images prove to be more exerting than he is and ironically, Dawn, who in his introduction to the Project has advised the military to be more incisive in their strategy, finally yields to the gaze of the other. He laments in his report which cracks in between, "it is his poison which is eating me" and struggles in vain to pull himself together (*DL* 27). It is the sense of guilt that resurfaces that overpowers Dawn as he identifies himself with the class responsible for the brutality and violence depicted in the photographs.The Vietnamese resistance - characteristic of postcoloniality - to the imperial violence of the US to confirm their existence, leads to the devastating war, which people like Eugene, being "unable to move beyond the

"Western" discourse in which he is entrenched," find difficult to come to terms with as they expect an easy compliance on the part of the other (Poyner 19).Succumbing to insanity, Eugene elopes with his son, stabs the child during his encounter with Marilyn and the two court officers, and ends up in a mental institution where he tries to defend himself against the images which still haunt him: "While I am behind these walls with my doctors at hand I am strong as a fortress and they know they cannot penetrate me" (*DL*48). The irony is that 'they', the Vietnamese, the others, have already done the damage as Dawn's mental disequilibrium suggests.

A familiar and much contested trope of rape becomes the pivotal point in Magda's confrontation of otherness. In Magda's reign, the farm turns out to be chaotic and she ends up not paying the servants. An enraged Hendrik rapes Magda - an act, which she considers as retribution and which, Attwell feels, is a "colonial fantasy on Magda's part," owing to its different narrated versions (67). In Patrick Hayes' opinion, "this bodily encounter ... brings about a process of rupture with Magda's solipsistic ... self-consciousness" (*J.M. Coetzee*58-59). The consequent relationship between Hendrik and Magda highlights the irony that the daughter who could not tolerate the sight of her father in the arms of a black concubine, turns a white concubine of a black servant - a transformation/transgression that serves as a revelation to Magda, who desperately tries to maintain good ties with Hendrik and Anna, who, without paying heed to Magda's efforts desert her in the end on the farm, leaving her to fend for herself. Towards the end, Magda is an "old woman with knobbly fingers" conversing in Spanish, a language unknown and unfamiliar to her, with the machines flying above her, in an attempt to communicate with the world outside (*IHC*135).

With the entry of the Barbarian girl into his life, the ambivalent, split self of the Magistrate comes to terms with its otherness. He shudders at the thought of the negligible distance between himself and her torturers, and so indulges in giving her utmost care; an act which is, nevertheless, seen as a manifestation of his selfish desires: "I feed her, shelter her, use her body, if that is what I am doing, in this foreign way" (*WB* 32). "Here, the fetishistic desire in colonial discourse ... the desire to be recognized by the other in order to clarify one's sense of self, emerges in the Magistrate's concern for the girl" (Poyner 60). The Magistrate's way of subjugating the barbarian girl's body sexually is, in terms of motives, no different from that of Col.Joll's, who resorts to violence: "I behave in some ways like a lover - I undress her, I bathe her, I stroke her, I sleep beside her – but I might equally well tie her to a chair and beat her, it would be no less intimate" (*WB* 46). Patrick Hayes has put forth the same argument (*J.M. Coetzee*67). In both sex and violence is manifest, the desire of/for the other – a revelation, which links the Magistrate with Col.Joll as the answer to the Magistrate's question reveals: "'Does no one move you?'; and with a shift of horror I behold the answer that has been waiting all the time offer itself to me in the image of a face masked by two black glassy insect eyes from which there comes no reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me" (*W*B 47). Laura Wright's metaphorical analysis proposes that the Magistrate, in his act of attending to the Barbarian girl, tries to wash himself clean of his association with Joll "through the intellectualization of his ambivalent position as a champion of anachronistic imperialism" (74). Nothing but his sense of complicity compels the Magistrate to take the girl back to her tribes, since the confrontation with the inherent otherness urges him to assert his distance from Col. Joll in order not to suffer for the latter's crimes (*WB* 48). It is beyond his grasp then as he says, "I am with her not for whatever

raptures she may promise or yield but for other reasons, which remain as obscure to me as ever"(*WB* 70). Head comments that "the magistrate's treatment of the young barbarian [has been] consequently ambivalent throughout, since his desire for, and control of, her links him, in particular, to the torturers he struggles to understand" (83). The consummation of their relationship happens during the journey, which is, in effect, a "journey of self-discovery", and it underscores the Magistrate's acknowledgement of otherness that he resists at the outset (Head, *J.M. Coetzee* 74).

Whether "hidden in the labyrinth of the memory lies an explanation for the haphazard present"? (*DL*10) The second novella of *Dusklands* ,'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee', which unfolds the violence associated with colonialism in its years of inception, in its juxtaposition with a twentieth century narrative serves as the answer sought by Eugene whose account ends with him pinning hopes on finding whose victim he is : That his fate, and so that of the successors of whites, is determined by his colonial predecessors, who are solely responsible for the inscription of colonial violence as well its seeds of resistance into history.Jacobus' narrative explicates the process of colonialism in its entirety as it happened in the eighteenth century South Africa. Jacobus Coetzee and the editor of his narrative, Dr. S. J. Coetzee, truly stand for the colonial enterprise eulogizing the explorers while the translator cum author J.M. Coetzee chooses to differ. Though the Coetzees in the text hint at the author's sense of complicity which, in Head's judgement, has "to do with his historical affiliation, the ancestry that implicates him in the early colonial discourse of the Cape" (*The Cambridge Introduction* 42), the metafictional strategies, which the texts make use of as exemplified in the liberty taken to accord the Introduction of S.J. Coetzee, the status of an Afterword, calling for the readers'

unbiased judgements, equip the novel to contest the Eurocentric notions of truth and value unravelling the constructed nature of history as a western metanarrative.

Replete with the images of self and other, the novella at the outset enumerates the traits of the Hottentots and Bushmen, expressing disgust at the sameness which the natives may achieve in no time with the whites citing the example of Adam Wijnand, a Hottentot who got filthy rich after his trek to Korana country: "Everywhere differences grow smaller as they come up and we go down" (*DL* 57). The narrative of Jacobus' exploration, his encounter with the wild Hottentots follows the anecdote. Jacobus' eagerness to negate the difference/alterity of the natives, who, in settlers' point of view, are in want of a civilization, lends the narrative a tone of authority. Jacobus' encounter with the natives proves to be a sojourn in whichhe fails to experience his sense of superiority as the Namaqua tribes belittle him. In Head's point of view "the ironic undercutting of Jacobus is at its most effective in the discrepancy that emerges between his perception of himself as heroic, god-like explorer, and the dismissive way he is treated by the Namaquas" (*J.M. Coetzee* 38). Accentuating his sense of insecurity are the changes that his Hottentot servants start to exhibit following which Jacobus seeks refuge in his past "meditating upon his life as tamer of the wild"; in the metaphor of the gun, a metaphor for liberation, exploration and mastery of space; of the other: "The instrument for survival in the wild is the gun, but the need for it is metaphysical than physical" (*DL* 77, 80). Jacobus clings to his selfhood desperately lest his fears of being reduced to leading a white Bushman's life should come true.

Adding to his chagrin Jacobus realizes that his servants have turned against him – an instance of signs of resistance - and in his desperate attempt to flee from the

place confronts the Hottentot boys and attacks them, biting off one's ear. Here, as Loomba says, Jacobus Coetzee, the individual European subject, "transgresses the boundary between 'self' and 'other' and regresses into primitive behaviour, into madness" (118). His insane act parallels that of Eugene who too attacks his own child - Head asserts this point (*J.M. Coetzee* 40). Jacobus is in turn struck by the adults who eventually let him go, wounding his pride. He rightly says, "I am nothing to them, nothing but an occasion." In the return journey, only Klawer accompanies Jacobus as the others showing signs of resistance choose to stay back. Jacobus feels quite relieved as he is about to leave the wilderness as the same old self: "I am among you but I am not of you. I felt calm and exhilarated. I was leaving. I had not failed, I had not died, therefore I had won" (*DL* 91, 92). After Klawer's death due to unforeseen circumstances Jacobus, all alone and delirious, adheres to his whiteness like never before, with a narcissistic bent of mind: "I hugged my white shoulders. I stroked my white buttocks. I longed for a mirror" (*DL* 97).

Jacobus' ponderings on the treatment meted out to him by the Hottentots and his consequent urge to show them that he is something, aid him in making up his mind for a brutal second coming. The Hottentots' act of letting him go is quite contrary to the assumptions the whites had of the former and cuts him to the quick. Little or no relevance given to him irks the white male ego of Jacobus who senses the need for othering. By the time Jacobus reaches his own land, he is on the verge of madness, but, quite unlike Eugene, pulls himself together in time.

> A thin figment of my earlier fat self, I plodded on, searching diligently for food and drink, devouring the miles, rubbing my skin

> with the body fat of dead beasts against a sun which humoured me to pink and red but would not bring me to brown.
>
> Only on the borders of settlement did I revive. (*DL* 99)

Now it narrows down to the taskmaster's task. In order to assert his reality , to carve the Hottentots in his history, to avoid getting reduced to a white-skinned Bushman- a transformation he fears the most- Jacobus retraces his steps and returns once more to the land of Namaqua as a ruthless destroyer erasing the Hottentots through slaughter and rape.

> I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring to light what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way....
>
> Through their deaths I, who after they had expelled me had wandered the desert like a pallid symbol, again asserted my reality. (*DL* 106)

While Jacobus is a figure of assertion, Eugene, Magda and the Magistrate are figures of ambivalence.

Typical of patriarchal Afrikaner societies, Magda is no less than an absent presence, "a zero, null, [and] a vacuum" in her father's life. When she says, "I live, I suffer.... I fight against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history" it is her urge to resist the conventional norms of the society that comes to light (*IHC* 2, 4). Magda

owes the society her uneasy consciousness for having locked her into the role of a spinster on account of her physical features, having denigrated her status as a woman to that of "a hole with a body draped around it ... crying to be whole", having tried to impose on her the belief "that if only I had a good man to sleep at my side, and give me babies, all would be well ..." (*IHC* 44, 45). Occasionally mulling over, "where does this power end?" Magda fulfils her yearning for an act of liberation in parricide (*IHC* 39). A conflict of interests characterises Magda's resistance against oppression as revealed in her attitude towards Hendrik and Anna after her father's murder. She remains in restraints in terms of racial divide thus being complicit with the colonial structure. What she craves is the identity of a liberated woman without a compromise on racial purity (*IHC* 43). Her relationship with Hendrik has always been in terms of 'station' and 'distance':

> I know nothing of Hendrik. The reason for this is that in all our years together on the farm he has kept his station while I have kept my distance; and the combination of the two, the station and the distance, has ensured that my gaze falling on him, his gaze falling on me, have remained kindly, incurious, remote. (*IHC* 27)

Magda believes in the feudal order of the past, reminiscent of white superiority, where, "we have our places, Hendrik and I, in an old, old code" (*IHC* 27). The illicit relationship of her father with Klein-Anna unsettles Magda as she fears it might affect her as well, narrowing the much preferred distance between herself and her others. She comments on her father's heinous act in despair: "He believes that he and she can choose their words and make a private language, with an *I* and *you* and *here* and *now* of their own. But there can be no private language. Their intimate *you* is my *you* too....

How can I speak to Hendrik as before when they corrupt my speech? How do I speak to them?"(*IHC* 39) For Magda who is a conserver than a destroyer, who would not be herself if she did not "feel the seductions of the cool stone house, the comfortable old ways, the antique feudal language", her father's liaison is too condescending to be approved of (*IHC* 47). Like Poyner says, "transgression in the context of Boer cultural history threatened the limits of Boer identity and was to be guarded at all costs" (36). Magda envisions herself in the role of Klein-Anna, of that of a servant/slave and recoils at the thought. Insulted and outraged she pulls the trigger twice to avenge her father's folly and delays not in assuming the role of the mistress with a view to asserting her racial superiority and thereby her identity as evident in the verbal abuse directed against Hendrik and Anna at the time of burial: "You damned hotnot, it's all your fault, you and your whore! ... Filth! Coward!"(*IHC* 99)

Quite ironically, Magda proves to be the target of the very same colonial order that she tries to carry out as she continually fails in the role of mistress, surfacing as an insignificant, incapable woman- a total ignoramus- having been kept out of the economic sphere by the patriarchal power structures.The ambivalence in Magda consists in her dual role as both the perpetrator and victim of the colonial order, an ambivalence that accounts for the discrepancies in her narrative as well. Head substantiates this point of view when he comments that she "is obliged to support a hierarchical system not of her own devising, to which her own identity must be subordinate" (*J.M. Coetzee* 55). In her interactions with Hendrik, Magda realises that "the language that should pass between myself and these people was subverted by my father and cannot be recovered" (*IHC* 106). The impending disaster, the sense of which Magda has with the arrival of Klein-Anna, soon befalls her as Hendrik rapes

her in a rage, effecting an inversion of master/slave relationship, an inversion which, seemingly portentous/ominous, allegorically suggests that "South Africa is on the brink of [a] revolution" (Head, *J.M. Coetzee* 52). This exactly is what Magda fears the most – a new world where identities merge and are as diverse as dispersed, threatening the binary of self and other. Her anxieties as regards pure identity prove to be out of place as Magda realizes the nature of her predicament as both victim and perpetrator of colonial power structure, which she tries to subvert as an Afrikaner woman, when the same entraps her with Hendrik's requisition of power.

Solemnly witnessing the narrowing gap between the master and the servant, Magda tries to establish rapport with Hendrik and Anna, aiming at a peaceful coexistence: "In the heart of nowhere, in this dead place, I am making a start; or, if not that, making a gesture" (*IHC* 120). What she has in return is a humiliating existence in which, cutting across gender and race, she identifies with Klein-Anna in a state of oppression/victimhood, being women, the subjugated race: "Must she be the one who keeps the house shining or must I, while she watches? Must we kneel and polish together, servitors of a domestic ideal?" (*IHC* 122-123) All her pleas go unheard and she hears only a voice of hatred in the non-reciprocal stance of her black servants who fear the societal response to the fraternal existence that Magda proposes: "one of these days they will be back, sooner than you think, along with other people, all the other farmers! Then they will see that you are living with the servants in the big house. Then *we* will be the ones to suffer not you she and I!" (*IHC* 127) Eventually, when her lone companions get stalked and driven away from her by the society of which she is a part, though only metaphorically, Magda, the sole learner of the worthlessness of the inessential determinants of identity, is all alone on the farm

coping with her isolated existence as she grows into an old mad woman who hears strange voices occasionally.

Analysing the Magistrate's psyche Jane Poyner observes, "In *Barbarians,* the binaries of reason/unreason and mad/not-mad, are exposed in the context of Enlightenment thinking as constructions that serve to maintain Empire's power" (54). However, it is not until he becomes a victim of the same system he perpetrates, that the Magistrate's resistance to it becomes perceptible, a resistance which arises from his own ambivalence. On his return, only after the reversal of roles that happens, with the Magistrate finding himself at the receiving end, does the gravity of his insight becomes apparent as and when he openly objects to the brutality of Empire, of which he himself is an agent, and so are Col. Joll and the officer, Mandel. The prison life, which, though a pitiable existence, the Magistrate describes as "the liberation of confinement" in opposition to Empire's "oppression of freedom", presents before him the images of the torturers and the victims, and so changes him for the better (*WB* 86). It is an instance of white resistance, when the Magistrate, unable to bear the sight of torture doled out to the Barbarian prisoners brought in by the expedition army, intervenes at the site of flogging. Pointing a finger at Joll, at his otherness, the Magistrate shouts, "You! ...You are depraving these people!" for which he receives severe blows (*WB* 116).

The Magistrate's resistance reaches its peak when he is asked to interpret the wooden slips he has collected, and does so in his own way, laying bare the cruelty of Empire engrossed in self-confirmation. According to Poyner, the Magistrate's act of reading, apart from launching a covert attack on Joll, "also calls into question the Manichean allegory employed by Empire to police its authority" (57). Being a

thorough critique of colonialism in itself, the interpretation serves as a harbinger of the resistance of the Barbarians deprived of justice. In Magistrate's view, "It is the barbarian character *war*, but it has other senses too. It can stand for *vengeance*, and, if you turn it upside down like this, it can be made to read *justice* (*WB* 122). The Magistrate undergoes further torture, which include physical atrocities and a mock hanging, at the hands of the warrant officer Mandel for having turned against Empire, but not before dealing out a jolt to the colonel: "*You* are the enemy, Colonel! ... *You* are the enemy, *you* have made the war, and *you* have given them all the martyrs they need – starting not now but a year ago when you committed your first filthy barbarities here!" (*WB* 125) To Dominic Head it seems that "the uncovering of the Magistrate's own complicity helps him to a deep understanding of the nature of Empire's imperialism, and to a burgeoning ethical stance" (*J.M. Coetzee* 73).

True to the prophecy of the Magistrate, life at the frontier becomes difficult with the resistance of the Barbarians coupled with the tyranny of the army. The innate otherness, to which the Magistrate has been alluding, comes to the forefront in the soldiers' dealings with the townspeople, who, in turn exhibit their savagery towards the fisher folk who take refuge in town fearing the attack of the barbarians. Othering is a failure here as the fall of Empire is imminent. As Head says:

> Joll, in investigating the slips as a possible arcane barbarian code, misreads their potential much as the Empire is eventually undone by failing to recognize the nature of the 'barbarians' as Other: the imposition of a false template of warfare means that the Empire forces are depleted without ever facing their designated enemy face to face. (*J.M. Coetzee* 87)

Exodus of townspeople happens with the withdrawal of the army, as the soldiers of the expedition force come dead suggesting the victory of the Barbarians. Amidst the chaos, the Magistrate becomes a free man and the fisher folk meet with no resistance, thus proving that the Magistrate's vision of decolonisation, of the Barbarians' arrival to "topple the globe surmounted by the tiger rampant that symbolizes eternal dominion" is not a distant future.Incidentally, though the fishermen occupy the place once inaccessible to them, their fear and anxiety as regards the barbarians is indeed a signifier to internal colonisation echoing Fanon that decolonisation never is complete and out of danger. For Col. Joll who comes in the end without his dark lenses, the Magistrate has a lesson that he has long meditated: "The crime that is latent in us we must inflict on ourselves.... Not on others" (*WB* 146, 160).

The characterisation of Eugene, Magda and the Magistrate falls in line with Leela Gandhi's statement made in the context of an analysis of Ashis Nandy and Fanon: "[The] emphasis on the victimisation of the victor is not intended to elide the palpable suffering of those directly oppressed by colonialism. Rather its objective is to facilitate a complex system of cross-identification – of ethical hybridity – connecting former political antagonists" (138). Divested of their power to infiltrate in a state of postcoloniality the colonisers find in their stead the colonised, who are now "almost the same, but not quite", penetrating the psyche of the colonisers, forcing them to accept the disavowed differences which unsettle them forever (Bhabha, *The Location* 122). As Dominic Head suggests both Jacobus Coetzee and Eugene Dawn justify "the colonial project as a need for ontological assurance," but while the former succeeds in confirming his selfhood, Eugene miserably fails in the face of splitting

(*J.M. Coetzee* 40). The portrayal of the coloniser as suffering from the psychological impact of the historical sense of guilt reveals the ambivalence of colonial ideology as it threatens the existence of its perpetrators. Magda's ambivalence, which is clear in the way she mirrors her split self in her responses to the messages from the sky-gods, provides her with a vision of the inevitable future, a clear understanding of the nature of identity when she laments, "The medium, the median – that is what I wanted to be! Neither master nor slave, neither parent nor child, but the bridge between, so that in me the contraries should be reconciled!", yet, having failed to grasp the political significance of her transformation, Magda still clings on to the idyllic white supremacy/independence expressing the truth that she "never wanted to fly away with the sky-gods" whose appearance heralds the dawn of a postcolonial era (*IHC* 145, 151). She defies her own thought processes through which glimpse Coetzee's foresight of a hybrid world, which exists beyond the "elementary relations of contestation, domination and subjugation" (*Doubling the Point* 98). It allegorically suggests the white dilemma in settler nations like South Africa to which Dominic Head sees Magda's withdrawal into an independent rural existence as a pastoral resolution (*J.M. Coetzee* 61). Maria Lopez too echoes the same idea when she remarks that in the text "unequal power relations with the Hottentots are seen as a fundamental aspect of Afrikaner (anti)pastoral experience" (43).

In Hayes' observation, "The Magistrate can be read as a liberal-minded person, who understands politics chiefly in terms of equal dignity and the extension of sympathy" (*J.M. Coetzee*63). From his earlier stance of resisting otherness to accommodating the same and thereby questioning the power structures, the Magistrate emerges as the prototype of the Coetzean hybrids-in-between, who,

subverting the existing dichotomies, shape up his vision of the future world, beyond all categorisations and polarities. In Brain W. Shaffer's opinion, "the magistrate's grasp of alterity is intersubjective: self and other are for him inseparable if distinct categories" (133). The setting of the novel is in itself a space in-between, a frontier post of settlement where the Magistrate has been donning the role for quite a long time serving Empire (a deliberate omission of the definite article by the author suggesting the allegorical overtones of the critique that refers to empires in general, devoid of any spatio-temporal specificity; in which the self-other binary determines the power relations); and this "contradictory and ambivalent space" determines the cultural identity of the Magistrate and "makes the hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable" (Ashcroft et al.,*Post-Colonial Studies* 118). A new era is in the offing with the restoration of the Magistrate to his apartment, yet, the desolate nature of the town adds to the scepticism, with the Magistrate "feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere" (*WB* 170).The text, which, in effect, is the culminating point of Coetzee's early phase of writing, proves as the launch pad from which surfaces the themes and characters of his latter works centring on his prophetic vision of a hybrid world, which postcolonial theorists have put forth as the inevitable outcome of colonial/neo-colonial-postcolonial dialectics; a hybrid world which, negates a higher unified sense, having as its hallmark the oppositionality of differences.Acknowledging otherness, the Magistrate reincsribes a space for alterity, a space, where, in Bhabha's words, "the otherness of identity is the anguished presence within the Self of an existentialist agony that emerges when you look perilously through a glass darkly" (*The Location* 68). Implicating the colonizer and the colonized alike, Bhabha comments in his Foreword to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*: The mere presence of the other "splits his presence, distorts his outline,

breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being" (xxvii). It is this place of splitting/doubling that Coetzean texts explore/exploit in contesting the Western universals/Eurocentric notions of subjectivity and nothing but the ambivalence characteristic of this space of reinscription makes the texts self-reflexive to its core.

Chapter 3

Negotiating the Other within

"It is the otherness that is the challenge", says Elizabeth Costello to Susan Moebius, her interviewer (*Elizabeth Costello* 12). Taking cue from Michael Bell who refers to Elizabeth Costello as Coetzee's "alter ego" (174), one can draw parallels between J.M. Coetzee and the fictional writers he has invented like Elizabeth Costello and JC and also draw the conclusion that the author's preoccupation with otherness in his fiction stands testimony to the statement made by the titular Australian writer in the novel *Elizabeth Costello* published in 2003. In retrospect, one can infer that Coetzee's early novels too engage with alterity and thus reinscribe an in-between space that enables the narratives to accommodate difference/ otherness. Such a concern with alterity, that Attridge terms as "the powerful other-directedness of the writing" (92), pervades Coetzee's oeuvre and calls for particular attention in the context of South Africa, the only nation to legalise racial discrimination to secure the selfhood of the Afrikaners.

In one of his interviews with David Attwell, Coetzee voices his stance on writing:

> Writing is not free expression. There is a true sense in which writing is dialogic: a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them. It is some measure of a writer's seriousness whether he does evoke/invoke those countervoices in himself, that is, step down from the position of what Lacan calls "the subject supposed to know. (*Doubling the Point* 65)

In light of the authorial statement, an analysis of his novels published since 1980 and covering up to the present – *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace*, *Slow Man* and *The Diary of a Bad Year* –shows how Coetzean texts have taken up the 'challenge' otherness holds out; whether the texts have lived up to it exploiting the place/space of splitting or doubling, and thus providing otherness its due space concomitant with the dissolution of the binary power structures. In making the dissenting voices of the others heard, Coetzee seems to prove a point through his narratives, which are in themselves of a subversive nature, that the notion of identity is, as a matter of fact, illusory and always subject to change, and therefore fluidic. *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Age of Iron* have as the setting apartheid South Africa, with the latter work depicting the violence resorted to by the marginalised during the closing years of the racial regime. *Disgrace* is Coetzee's first post-apartheid work that has its plot unravelling against the new South Africa. *Slow Man* and *The Diary of a Bad Year* are set in Australia, the writer's new abode. Thematically, the works, which cover the periods of transition with respect to the personal and public life of the author and his nation, seemingly follow a trajectory in the encounter with the other enabling the self to transcend the Manichaean polarities.

The plot of *Life & Times of Michael K*, published in 1983, begins when Michael's ailing mother, Anna K, the house cleaner of the Buhrmanns in Cape Town, expresses her wish to return to the farm in Prince Albert where she had grown up. Michael K, obliging his mother, resigns his post as the Gardener Grade I, and without waiting for the permits, they set out for the Karoo, during the course of which Anna dies in a hospital in Stellenbosch. Though left alone, Michael continues the journey carrying the ashes of his mother and eventually reaches the farm escaping from the

railway workers' camp to which the soldiers assign him, when they catch him without the permit. On reaching the Visagies' farm Michael begins his life as a cultivator, but soon abandons the farm with the arrival of the owner's grandson. After a brief stint on the mountains and in caves, Michael once again faces the wrath of the soldiers who transport him to Jakkalsdrif camp, where he befriends an inmate, Robert, a black. Fleeing from there, Michael returns to the Visagies' farm and this time digs a burrow to live in, cultivating pumpkins and melons. The visit of the rebels from the mountains to the farm makes Michael too a suspect, for which the soldiers relocate him to the Kenilworth camp blowing up the farm. Typical of his free spirit, Michael refuses to yield to the attempts of the Medical Officer and major Noel at the camp and sets himself free for the onward journey to Cape Town where he accosts December and two women who show him how Sea Point lives, helping Michael in their own way. The novel ends with Michael K's monologue on his perspective on human existence. In *Age of Iron*(1990), Mrs. Curren, who is in the last phase of her life due to a terminal illness, bone cancer, has the same social status as that of the author, in society; as a white, as a professor. The novel has an epistolary form, as the narrative constitutes a letter written by the protagonist to her daughter, who has chosen to be an exile in America being disgusted with the socio-political circumstances in her native land. She represents those whites who shirk from the burden of living in complicity with the atrocities meted out to the blacks. With no one around, the task of giving a companionship to Mrs.Curren lies with a vagrant, Vercueil, who ends up being a confessor and so, aids Mrs. Curren in attempting a self-introspection. A woman with a liberal perspective, Mrs Curren happens to be a witness to the brutalities of the apartheid regime during her journey to Guguletu, a journey, which she undertakes in search of her maid Florence's son, Bheki, and which eventually effects her

transformation. The perfectly historicized novel in the end has Mrs. Curren accommodating Vercueil into her own private space, accepting the otherness he embodies. Both the novels employ the metaphor of journey, a metaphor that recurs in Coetzee's succeeding works as well.

Disgrace, published in 1999,traces the life of David Lurie, a professor of classics, who experiences a disgraceful fall, owing to a sex scandal involving his student, Melanie Isaacs- an illicit affair that tarnishes his image as an individual. After a trial, which dislodges him from the position of a professor at the university, David moves to the countryside, Grahamstown, where tragedy befalls him as he witnesses the rape of his daughter Lucy by black men. Lurie who objects to Lucy's decision to marry her aid, Petrus, a black, and not to register a formal complaint with the police, spends the remainder of his life assisting Bev Shaw, whom he earlier despised on account of her physical appearance, at her dogs' clinic. In this post-apartheid text, too, features a journey into the interiors/outskirts and, as a matter of fact, it prefigures the psychological journey of the protagonists of the novels in the next phase as well, into the dark, hitherto untrodden areas of their souls where they come to terms with the disavowed truth of alterity.

Touching on the major issues like migration, refugee status and cultural displacement which inform postcolonial societies like that of Australia, a settler nation, against the backdrop of which the novel, *Slow Man*(2005) is set, the text centres on Paul Rayment, a migrant from France; his journey as a "crippled self" confronting others at various junctures and trying to achieve a sense of identity, which, nevertheless, is susceptible to further changes as time passes. Paul Rayment, a photographer, divorced from his wife Henriette and leading a lonely life in Australia

is thrust into "a circumscribed life" after the car accident consequent upon which he has his leg amputated (*SM* 17, 26). With no prosthesis, as he blatantly refuses it, Paul is put to further embarrassment by the nurses who come to attend on him until the arrival of Marijana Jokic, also a migrant, from Croatia, with whom Paul instantly strikes a chord. The novel depicts thereafter Paul's struggle to come to terms with his identity crisis that he experiences in his encounters with the Jokics, Elizabeth Costello, the novelist who is his alter-ego and with the new land. It is an unprecedented format that Coetzee experiments with in *The Diary of a Bad Year*, published in 2007. The text consists of three narratives – the essays of the writer JC, his diary and the female lead Anya's perspective on the happenings interspersed with her boyfriend, Alan's voice – in which fact and fiction blend forcing the readers to adopt an unusual way of reading, which, nevertheless, guarantees a fresh experience. In print, too, the novel follows the tripartite structure with the pages divided into three panels for each narrative, which in its own linear mode forms an organic whole. JC's essays, titled *Strong Opinions*, are in fact his contribution to a German publisher who has chosen JC along with five other writers to pronounce their opinions on contemporary socio-political issues. Parallel to this narrative, runs the story of JC and Anya, whom the former meets at the laundry of his apartment and later hires as his typist. The plot deals with the unusual bonding of JC and his typist, whose partner Alan formulates a plan to appropriate the wealth of the ageing author.Anya saves JC from the malicious scheming of Alan, due to which Alan grows suspicious of her. In the end, Anya leaves Alan and sees to JC's well-being entrusting him to a woman of her acquaintance, giving him the much-needed reassurance that she will be there to "hold [his] hand as far as the gate" (*DBY*226).

In Coetzee's novels, which are linked by the journey motif, the figures of alterity - Michael K, Vercueil, Lucy/Petrus, Marijana, and Anya- who coax the selves that are representatives of the oppressive ideology into acknowledging the otherness they disavow, loom large. Coetzee's Afrikaner lineage is what raises doubts in the minds of the readers and the critics alike as regards the authorial intentions in the representation of the other in the texts. It is appropriate to quote at length at this juncture from *Boyhood*, the memoir, where Coetzee narrates in the third person the childhood memories:

> Because they speak English at home, because he always comes first in English at school, he thinks of himself as English. Though his surname is Afrikaans, though his father is more Afrikaans than English, though he himself speaks Afrikaans without any English accent, he could not pass for a moment as Afrikaaner....
>
> When he speaks Afrikaans all the complications of life seem suddenly to fall away. Afrikaans is like a ghostly envelope that accompanies him everywhere, that he is free to slip into, becoming at once another person, simpler, gayer, lighter in his tread.
>
> One thing about the English that disappoints him, that he will not imitate, is their contempt for Afrikaans....
>
> There is the English language, which he commands with ease. There is England and everything that England stands for, to which he believes he is loyal. But more than that is required, clearly, before one will be

> accepted as truly English: tests to face, some of which he knows he will not pass. (124-129)

As obviously stated Coetzee lives through being the other, inhabiting an in-between position and the ambivalence distinctive of this very same liminality enables him to appreciate alterity, which his texts too manifest.

With its existential overtones, reminiscent of Kafka's *The Trial*, Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* invests the term resistance with new epistemological dimensions through the titular character Michael K, who, quite unlike Kafka's Joseph K, is devoid of any urge to belong to a community. Set against the backdrop of post-Soweto riot-ridden South Africa, Coetzee's fourth novel centres on Michael K's journey – a quest for identity – which starts from Sea Point in Cape Town and comes a full circle when Michael returns, "learning about life" (*L&T* 89). The text makes postcolonial interventions through the vignettes of Michael K's life disrupting the set notions of colonial power structures grounded on the binaries. Such revisionism makes the novel extremely political, inviting critical attention to the vision of the novelist embodied in it. In the metaphor of garden, a recurrent motif in the text, Coetzee makes a statement as regards the inevitable hybrid culture which beckons humanity to rise above all categorisations. From his marginalised existence, Michael constructs an in-between niche for himself enabling him towards the end to make a choice of his own identity rather than passively accepting the one interpellated by his oppressors.

The passive resistance on the part of Michael K, a non-white, has come in for a lot of criticism. Nadine Gordimer, in particular, accuses Coetzee of divesting

Michael's role of any revolutionary attribute. In her review of the novel she says, "the presentation of the truth and meaning of what white has done to black stands out on every page, celebrating its writer's superb, unafraid creative energy as it does; yet it denies the energy of the will to resist evil" ("The Idea of Gardening"). In her critique Gordimer seems to overlook the complexities of Michael's character and the power that Coetzee bestows upon his defiance. When traced, the root cause of Michael's passivity lies in the way he is brought up by Anna K. Michael's seclusion begins in his childhood when his mother Anna K, a house cleaner, becomes overprotective as he is born with a harelip. The schooling at Huis Norenius shapes up his reticence and taciturnity even more. Passing out of school, only after a brief spell of unemployment between his service as Gardener, grade 3(b) and as a night attendant at the public lavatories, Michael becomes Gardener grade I, with the Parks and Garden divisions of the municipal services of the City of Cape Town, from where he is soon to be laid off. A few lines sum up Michael K – his personality, his life on the periphery-before the voyage:

> Because of his face K did not have women friends. He was easiest when he was by himself. Both his jobs had given him a measure of solitariness, though down in the lavatories he had been oppressed by the brilliant neon light that shone off the white tiles and created a space without shadows. The parks he preferred were those with tall pine trees and dim agapanthus walks. Sometimes on Saturdays he failed to hear the boom of the noon gun and went on working by himself all through the afternoon. On Sunday mornings he slept late; on Sunday afternoons he visited his mother. (*L&T* 4)

The journey to the Karoo effects a transformation in him, pushing him out of the cocooned existence, if it can be called so, into the open space, into a figure of resistance, the seeds of which he has been carrying around all the while.

The first sign of resistance on the part of K comes when he defies the authorities who insist on a permit to go to Prince Albert, a resistance that makes the novel an allegory of the conflict between the individual and the oppressive state regime. As Head points out, the novel is all about "a simple, non-white South African suffering the indignities and deprivations of apartheid, hardships intensified by the social disintegration of civil war" (*J.M. Coetzee*94). He breaks away from the railway workers gang to which the soldiers hand him over, signalling his hesitancy in remaining in constraints. As the images of Huis Norenius that recur every now and then suggest, Michael K dreads any form of confinement. All camps to him are "like going back to childhood ... like a nightmare" (*L&T*77). He resists the othering attempt of the soldiers to label and contain him, and so blatantly refuses to belong to any group acquiring an identity. Thus constantly interrogating and subverting the binaries, his journey becomes one of self-discovery falling in line with that of Jacobus Coetzee and the Magistrate in *Dusklands* (1974) and *Waiting for the Barbarians*(1980) respectively. The journeys to the interior depicted in these novels are manifestations of the Afrikaner myth of *Great Trek*, with the one in *Life & Times of Michael K* effecting its reversal through a non-white hero.

According to Gallagher, the symbolic reclamation of the land by Michael at the Visagies' farm constitutes a revision of the "enduring South African myth of a return to the land" (156). In Derek Wright's reading it is less a political revision than an ecological one in that "the land is to be returned not to the blacks but to itself" (qtd

in Head, *J.M. Coetzee* 101). The text depicts a neat allegorical representation of human civilization, which progressed from hunting to cultivation through a control of space, in Michael's attempt of survival. The farm, in fact, becomes a site of postcolonial resistance when Michael makes it his own by way of cultivation. With the arrival of Visagies' grandson, Michael senses a subjugated existence. He ponders: "I let myself believe that this was one of those islands without an owner. Now I am learning the truth. Now I am learning my lesson." Nothing but his reluctance to remain subservient is the reason why Michael leaves the farm dumping his crops at a critical juncture. For Michael, "already it was hard to believe that he had known someone called the Visagie grandson who had tried to turn him into a body-servant" (*L&T* 61, 65). Eluding the grasp of the master - elusiveness highly suggestive of Derridean impossibility of definitive meanings, deferring textual closure - Michael escapes into the boundless expanse on the mountains and caves.

At the Jakkalsdrif camp to which the soldiers transport Michael, after having located him on the mountains, K chooses to stay on only to outlast the Visagie grandson. Jakkalsdrif camp life presents a sharp critique of the minority rule in South Africa. In Robert's words the motive behind the camps is "to stop people from disappearing into the mountains and then coming back one night to cut [the] fences and drive [the] stock away" (*L&T* 80), to be more precise, to contain the rebellious spirit of the majority in South Africa. The inhabitants of the camp turn into a source of labour to serve the interests of Oosthuizen, the captain, who runs the camp and sends the inmates to his brother, a farmer, for human labour free of cost. As the only beneficiaries of such a system are the railways and the farmers, it is an instance of how the state exploits the lonely and the destitute. Coetzee uses Robert to mouth the

tirade against the tyrannical system that prevails: "This guy is the brother-in-law of the captain of police, Oosthuizen. His machine breaks down, so what happens? He picks up the phone, calls the police station, and first thing in the morning he has thirty pairs of hands to cut his lucerne for him. That's how it works here, the system" (*L&T* 87).Coetzee in a way equates the torture and suffering at the Jakkalsdrif with that of the Boer concentration camp under the British rule hinting at the never-ending cycle of oppressed turning oppressors in due course. To Gallagher such a parallel seems "practically blasphemous to the Afrikaner mind" as it "elevates the suffering of the black majority to its own mythic level" questioning the Afrikaner identity (154, 156). Michael thwarts the Afrikaner way of institutionalization meant for socio-political control devising his own strategy.

Though K complies with the authorities, his compliance, which seemingly accentuates his oppression, reflects his will to resist. Masking his refusal to yield in silent obedience, Michael makes it a powerful tool to defy the oppressive regime that is bent on reducing and labelling people like him as others, scripting their story, their fate. The text too adopts, like Coetzee admits in an interview with Dick Penner, a "pointed strategy of resistance" without an "explicit racial reference"; the only hint of Michael as coloured being in an abbreviated form on the charge sheet at Jakkalsdrif (91). Michael chooses to leave the camp as and when he pleases, in truth, when he feels the Visagie grandson must have left the farm for Michael to be back alone as the master.

At a point, Michael feels that he is "becoming a different kind of man ... if there are two kinds of men" (*L&T* 67), and to Coetzee, he is "a figure of being rather than of *becoming*" (Head, *J.M. Coetzee*109). Michael actually inhabits the in-between

space from which emerges his self. While living in a burrow on the farm indulging in cultivation, Michael K, without being spotted, sees the rebels from the mountains, the tendency to join whom he represses. Despite his affinity for the rebels, Michael rejects the sense of belonging to a group and the resultant identity, once again embracing the loneliness that another Coetzean character, Magda, dreads "in the heart of the country" (*L&T* 104). Michael's elusive, unyielding nature remains the same at the hands of the Medical Officer in Kenilworth camp, where he ends up when the soldiers arrest him branding him an accomplice with the rebels. With a shift in the narration from third person to first person, where the narrator is the Medical Officer, a representative of the oppressive regime, the text attempts at closure in deciphering Michael. In the failure of the Medical Officer echoes Gayatri Spivak's enigmatic question – can the subaltern speak? - with Michael resisting any kind of interpretation, thus jeopardising even the textual representation of Michael K by a white author, who is the omniscient narrator. In effect, Michael refuses to give in to the authorial attempts to confine him to the discursive space allotted to a character, conferring a writerly status, to use Barthes' term, upon the text.

Despite the repeated attempts by the Medical Officer, which recap the persistent efforts of Col. Joll, sans torture, to extract truth from the captives, the only response he can elicit from Michael is that he is not in the war. Towards the end of the narrative, the medical officer emerges as an ambivalent figure with the likes of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, both trapped in the system, the values of which they fail to uphold. "The guilt of the Whites," says Jean Sevry, "is omnipresent even when they want to help" (28). Elevating Michael, whom he initially refers to as a

stone, to the rank of a universal soul, the Medical Officer appeals to K in a letter addressed to him:

> The laws are made of iron, Michaels, I hope you are learning that. No matter how thin you make yourself, they will not relax. There is no home left for universal souls....
>
> I am the only one who sees you for the original soul you are.... I alone see you as ... a human soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history.... (*L&T* 151)

The letter, in which the Medical Officer sticks to the negated name, Michaels, given to K by Oosthuizen, stands out as a strategy of othering, and even undermines Michael's resistance to yield, in being sceptical about his efforts. Nevertheless, it does acknowledge Michael's strategy of resistance, the interstitial space he has constructed for himself:

> We ought to value you and celebrate you ... But that is not the way it is going to be. The truth is that you are going to perish in obscurity and be buried in a nameless hole in a corner of the racecourse, transport to the acres of Woltemade being out of the question nowadays, and no one is going to remember you but me, unless you yield and at last open your mouth. I appeal to you, Michaels: *yield*! [sic] (*L&T* 152)

The pleas to yield go unheeded and Michael, remaining as obscure as ever breaks free from the Kenilworth camp, defying those who classify him as "too busy, too stupid, too absorbed to listen to the wheels of history" (*L&T* 159). Michael, as Canepari-

Labib states, “rebels against a society ... escap[es] from all the prisons ... [and] asserts his ‘difference’ ... (101).

In Head’s opinion, the medical officer’s narrative is of immense relevance to the textual meaning as “the medical officer is driven to try and interpret the elusive Michael K, to make him yield his significance, in a metafictional gesture which implicates both author and reader” (*J.M. Coetzee* 95). Such an explication of meaning has often garnered much criticism. Yet, the medical officer’s monologue with which his narrative ends, embodies the authorial vision from a liberal white writer’s perspective about the other, of the other’s resistance:

> Though this is a large country, so large that you would think there would be space for everyone, what I have learned of life tells that it is hard to keep out of the camps. Yet I am convinced that there are areas that lie between the camps and belong to no camp.... I am looking for such a place in order to settle there, perhaps only till things improve, perhaps forever. (*L&T* 162-163)

The readers find themselves ally with the medical officer when he refers to Michael’s stay at the camp as an allegory and tries to decipher the meaning of the term garden as the metaphor for every man’s land. According to Timothy Strode, “... the Medical Officer fantasizes that he too has, in a sense, escaped, left behind his job and his complicity with the state’s repression of its peoples, and is in pursuit of Michael K, whom he believes is bound for an edenic site that does not appear to exist in any real sense, but which is certainly *not* located in the camps” (186). Nonetheless, the text

withstands such attempts at closure with the final section adopting a third person narration, in which Michael's delineation resists any kind of conclusiveness.

On reaching Sea Point, Michael, who accosts December, and his two sisters, "had the feeling that something inside him had let go or was letting go. What it was letting go of he did not yet know, but he also had a feeling that what he had previously thought of in himself as tough and rope-like was becoming soggy and fibrous, and the two feelings seem to be connected" (*L&T* 177). Michael at once narrates his story to December, who is actually a pimp, and even co-operates with the woman who makes sexual advances to him. The way in which Michael yields readily to them is in sharp contrast with the resistant nature he exhibited until then, not least the manner in which he challenged the medical officer's endeavours. Being a free spirit who hates to be in chains, it is the domineering others who snub Michael. Back in the room where his mother had lived, Michael gathers that he has always been a gardener, close to the ground and chooses to retain the identity, this time not for the Council, but for himself. Revealing in his monologue in the end that "there is time enough for everything", K envisions a hybrid culture free of all polarised categorisations in the metaphor of garden, the different seeds suggesting an acknowledgement of heterogeneity (*L&T* 183). Michael K's passivity acquires a deeper meaning with *Foe*, in which Friday, the figure of alterity, registers a powerful presence through his silence.

Displacing an omniscient, powerful male subject position that characterises Daniel Defoe's realist fiction, *RobinsonCrusoe* (1719), Coetzee makes the white woman, Susan Barton, a castaway, the narrator in his widely acclaimed *Foe* (1986) – a novel that is explicitly postcolonial in being a reworking of Defoe's colonial

discourse narrative as much it is "an interrogation of authority" (*Doubling the Point* 247). In essence, Coetzee's novel, through the metafictional strategies employed, exposes the mechanism behind colonial discourses in masking the truth to construct the polarised identities of self and other to justify the mission of colonisation; also, the work allegorically hints at the manipulation of colonial discourses to meet the ulterior motives of the Westerners/colonisers in appropriating the land and the people. The text makes the most of, to quote Helen Tiffin, "a privileged position within (and between) two worlds ... to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in the colonial domination of ... the rest of the world" (95). It is through the silent resistance of Friday, the manservant of Cruso, who is the Coetzean counterpart of Defoe's Crusoe that the text attempts at interrogating the Western binaries that help in securing the superior identity of the self/coloniser.

Apart from the explicit postcolonial stance, the text boasts of a self-reflexive treatment of its themes that range from colonialism to authorship. As such, it presupposes Coetzee's later works like *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) and *Slow Man* (2005) in which the author as a character engages the readers in a gripping and twisting plot that reflects on the nature of composition and the validity of authorship along with issues related to postcolony. Incidentally, Coetzee's works, prior to *Foe*, too, deal with the themes of colonialism focussing, in particular, on unravelling the brutal side of the practice, which in itself is suggestive of the texts' self-reflexivity.

At the outset, Susan Barton arrives as a castaway on an island where she accosts the only inhabitants there – Cruso and his manservant/slave, Friday. During her sojourn there, Susan becomes the mistress of Cruso and in a year or so, a ship comes and rescues all three, though Cruso dies on the way to London. Susan, on

reaching London with Friday starts communicating with Daniel Foe, the namesake of Daniel Defoe, in order to make a novel out of her island story. Meanwhile, her efforts to send Friday back to his place see no end. When she finally meets Foe, Susan gives in to the patriarchal/colonial demands that saturate the literary world as Foe manipulates her narrative leaving Susan Barton trying her best not to let go of her grip on the plot. The novel ends with a shipwreck scene in which a metafictional narrator stumbles upon the bodies of Susan, Foe and Friday, and opens Friday's mouth from which pours forth the only sounds of life.

The novel lays bare the colonial mindset through Cruso, Susan as well as Foe who represent the privileged class. Cruso, though markedly is different from his colonial counterpart Robinson Crusoe, nevertheless engenders the same attitude towards Friday. In Cruso's dealings with Susan and Friday, the former's masterly attitude underscores the master-slave dialectics that is at work. Cruso's attitude towards Friday reveals in patches Cruso's sense of superiority, which, nevertheless, is disconcerted through Friday's determined, deliberate silence. It is not to say that Friday's silence is not problematic, as Coetzee seems to deny Friday any active agency by making him tongueless. That Friday is made tongueless does question the intentions of the author, Coetzee, in making the other silenced. The well-intentioned author actually silences the other with a definitive aim of interrogating and uncovering the colonial interests. In fact, what Coetzee does is an effective deployment of silencing the other, i.e. foregrounding silence as a resistance strategy that exposes and thereby undermines the colonial ideology. Like his predecessor Michael K, Friday too is a figure of alterity who refuses to submit to the demands of

his so-called masters. He thwarts the attempts of Cruso, Susan and Foe to naturalize his otherness and forces them into recognition of his alterity.

As Jane Poyner observes, "In *Foe* silence is Janus-faced for it not only signals Friday's oppression but also his autonomy.... Friday, as mute, not only represents the oppressed voice of the colonial other, conversely, he is also autonomous in his refusals to disclose his "self" when bidden (102). Thus, in the end, what matters is, however hard the colonial trio try to make Friday speak, he remains silent, denying them even a remote chance to decipher him. Even when Susan tries to make him comprehend a pictorial depiction of his mutilation, Friday gives her only a vacant gaze. Friday exhibits shades of his predecessor, Michael K's refusal to tell his story – the only difference being Michael's active agency in choosing not to speak, compared to which Friday's is passive. One can argue that, like Michael K, it is passivity that can be associated with Friday's resistance strategy. Nonetheless, in voicing his silence, what the text accomplishes is a revisioning of the history of the oppressed.

Susan, like Magda, emerges as a figure of ambivalence. What Friday evokes in her the first time they meet is fear, which abates as she comes to know of him better. Nonetheless, she harbours colonial or imperial attitude towards Friday. She readily confers upon Friday the status of the other as revealed in her suggestion to Cruso: "you might have brought home to him some of the blessings of civilization and made him a better man" (*Foe* 22). In Mark Mathuray's observation Susan is a woman who "polices class and social difference", who "establishes distinction between humans and animals" and who "identifies speech with civilization and humanity" (164). Due to Cruso's varied and contradictory versions of his and Friday's island adventures, Susan fails to get hold of the truth of incidents prior to her arrival on the

island. Even so, Susan, though she sympathises with his misfortune, finds herself repelled by the sight of black Friday, especially when she hears from Cruso of Friday's mutilated state, being tongueless. She recalls, "I caught myself flinching when he came near, or holding my breath so as not to have to smell him. Behind his back I wiped the utensils his hands had touched." Her colonial urge to fix the otherness of Friday is clear when she immediately assigns to his act of scattering the petals over the water the status of a "superstitious observance" (*Foe* 24, 31) It is only when she realises the magnitude of his act does she reflect over her assumptions about him: "This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul ... stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior" (*Foe* 32) – This also is the first sign of Susan acknowledging Friday's self.

In London, on one occasion, Susan lets him have food only when she and Foe have finished their meals. Interestingly, Susan is aware of her conflicting desires: "I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will" (*Foe* 60). It is suggestive of the way in which the construction of otherness "always contains a trace of ambivalence or anxiety about its own authority" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 102). Such ambivalence resulting from split subjectivity intensifies later when she teaches Friday to write as per Foe's instructions. Susan cannot help but wonder, "Could it be that somewhere within him he was laughing at my efforts to bring him nearer to a state of speech?... Somewhere in the deepest recesses of those black pupils was there a spark of mockery?" (*Foe* 146) Apparently, "colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and

difference" (Bhabha, *The Location* 153). Friday who remains mute and sticks to his way of life thus unsettles Susan's sense of being racially superior.

Moreover, Susan, who has been successful in resisting the domineering authoritative advances of Cruso and thus saving herself from getting othered, is a failure when she accosts Foe, the author, the grande-autre (the Other), to use a Lacanian term, in whose gaze she badly wants to exist. Determined to have her story told, Susan pursues Foe through letters and the epistolary narrative reveals the authorial interventions in the original narrative of Susan with an aim to "put in a dash of colour ... here and there", as Captain Smith has previously cautioned Susan (*Foe* 40). Susan experiences the limitations as a woman writer in conveying her story/truth in its entirety to the public. She desperately tries to convince Foe, who stands for the patriarchal literary world. In one of her letters she pleads with him:

> When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso....The island was Cruso's ... but I lived there too, I was no bird of passage, no gannet or albatross, to circle the island once and dip a wing and then fly on over the boundless ocean. Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty. (*Foe* 51)

It falls on deaf ears as Foe's attempts to reduce her to a character, "a female castaway of [their] nation [to] cause a great stir", though well resisted, get the better of Susan's efforts(*Foe* 40). She finally yields to the demands of fiction. Laura Wright likens

Susan to Magda as representatives of "women whose stories never make it to the page" (63).

The way Susan yields to the authorial demands exposes the nexus of power-knowledge equation, which characterises colonial discourses. With no other alternative, she yields to the pressure exerted by Foe: "Yet despite what I say, the story of the island was not all tedium and waiting. There were touches of mystery too, were there not?" It explicates the distortion of truth, interpolation of fictional elements with a view to achieving desirable aims. As Captain Smith says, "their trade is in books, not in truth" (*Foe* 83, 40). Susan suggests that it is "only a matter of time before the new Friday whom Cruso created is sloughed off and the old Friday of the cannibal forests returns" (95). In Patrick Hayes' point of view, Susan, "a bold, self-confident woman pursuing liberty and self-determination in unpropitious circumstances at the beginning of the text ... is deathly silent" towards the end (*J.M. Coetzee*117). At this juncture, the motive of Coetzee as a novelist comes under suspicion as he makes Susan who is very promising at the beginning, succumb to the demands of the colonial/patriarchal society.

The text charts Susan's growth as a person, her change in attitude when confronting her others. Just like Magda, Susan is the oppressor and the oppressed and this makes her an ambivalent figure who negates the disavowal of alterity. Her approach towards Friday at the outset and towards the end suggests the recognition of otherness that she abhors/disavows at the outset. On their way to Bristol with a mission to send Friday back home, she retorts at the innkeeper who looks at Friday suspiciously saying, "he is as clean as you or I." Incidentally, she refuses to send Friday away with the sailors when she sees through their plans. Yet, for a second she

does indeed doubt the cannibalistic traits of Friday when they come across the dead body of a little girl. Susan justifies her tendency to suspect Friday: "But Cruso had planted the seed in my mind, and now I could not look on Friday's lips without calling to mind what meat must once have passed them" (*Foe* 102, 106). Later, in her conversation with Foe, Susan acknowledges the constructed nature of identity/alterity: "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal; I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman" (121). Her ambivalence is suggestive of colonial complicity that has larger implications bringing within its compass the author, J.M. Coetzee as well.

At the textual level, Susan, the firsthand witness to the incidents on the island, is the female narrator whose account, in view of the public demands and, what is more, catering to the oppressive upper class male colonialists' vested interests, is contorted reducing her to a marginal status. In Foe's version the narrative ought to consist of "the loss of the daughter; the quest for the daughter in Brazil; abandonment of the quest, and the adventure of the island; assumption of the quest by the daughter; and reunion of the daughter with her mother" (*Foe*117). Susan, to her utter disappointment, sees how Foe's narrative subsumes the island story as part of a larger structure; she even realizes her powerless position as a woman writer who wants to make Friday's silence heard. She tells Foe: "if [my] story seems stupid, that is only because it so doggedly holds its silence. The shadow whose lack you feel is there: it is the loss of Friday's tongue" (117). In the end, Susan who considers herself "a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" is left to ponder, "Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking

me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong?" (*Foe* 131, 133). It, then, never goes unnoticed, that *Robinson Crusoe*, conforming to the colonial ideology, lacks a female presence, or rather, as Dominic Head puts it, "[Susan] is effaced from this text of Defoe's and placed in another (*Roxana*)" (115). Sue Kossew in her article, "Women's Words" comes up with quite an interesting observation: "Coetzee's choosing to 'write back' to Defoe is seen to relate to Defoe's tendency to exploit women's stories, so that many parallels are drawn between Susan and both Moll Flanders and Roxana"(17).

Critics are all over *Foe* varying in their opinions, especially on Friday's silence. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her article, "Theory in the Margin" qualifies Friday as "the curious guardian at the margin" who resists the colonial attempts to decipher him (172) while Benita Parry's article, "Speech and Silence" focuses on the manner in which the novel reiterates the colonial binaries denying the oppressed other a space to voice their protest against false representations (152). Mathuray comments, "Friday's mutedness disturbs and interrupts the oppressor's voice, casting its projects, in relation to the historical other, as irredeemably incomplete and as always-already unresolved" (160). Despite Cruso, Susan and Foe's continuous efforts, Friday remains adamantly silent. Susan comments under the influence of Foe, "what he is to the world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is the child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born" (*Foe* 122). Quite contrary to her statement is the nature of the text, which, simultaneously exposing the colonial ideology and proving it false, invests Friday's silence with a forcible presence in absence – a muted resistance that reiterates the unsettling colonial ambivalence; as Ashcroft suggests, he simply "refuses to be

born"("Silence as Heterotopia" 155). In fact, Susan has flashes of this recognition before she meets Foe in person: "the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!" (*Foe* 67) To Bill Ashcroft, silence, which is "the space of possibility that [Coetzee] opens up by refusing authority... is both ambivalent and real, both possibility and disruption" (145-146).

The narrative, accordingly, concludes with the entry of a narrator into the scene of a shipwreck; he descends into Cruso's sunken ship where, crossing over the dead bodies of Susan and Foe, he reaches that of Friday whose mouth he opens by force. It is from Friday's mouth that emanates sound, the only sign of life there, and it fills the region and overwhelms the narrator. As Coetzee tells David Attwell in an interview, "Friday does not disappear, because Friday is body.... [I]n South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body ... for political reasons, for reasons of power" (*Doubling the Point* 248). Friday's resistance even accounts for the textual resistance to interpretations that the readers experience on reading *Foe*. Coetzee highlights the resistant nature of his texts in a conversation with Morphet: "I hope that a certain spirit of resistance is ingrained in my books; ultimately I hope they have the strength to resist whatever readings I impose on them ..." (Morphet 464). Attempting the subversion of the binaries, *Foe* embodies ambiguity and ambivalence as strategies with potential for voicing the resistance of the oppressed. A representational shift from silence/passivity to an active resistance marks *Age of Iron*, which definitely has the right to the claim to be the transitional text in Coetzee's oeuvre, both in terms of textual strategies and worldliness of the text.

An in-depth analysis of Coetzee's novels up to *Age of Iron* unravels a particular pattern as regards the representation of otherness. The first novel *Dusklands* itself embodies Coetzee's vision of South Africa as a rainbow nation, where hybridity reigns supreme as a result of the inevitable process of decolonization that would take place at some point in future. Skepticism regarding the major issues related to colonialism broached in the earlier works finds its culmination in *Age of Iron*, a novel which portrays "apartheid's last vicious gaps" (Thornton, "Apartheid's Last Vicious Gaps"). Underlying the major trajectory of the text, which unravels the protagonist's journey into a state of awareness of alterity resulting in the dissolution of the importance of the self, are the socio-political issues that have a direct relation with colonialism and its aftermath in South Africa – apartheid. The date of setting is, as indicated in the novel, 1986-89, during which the nation witnessed widespread unrest against the apartheid government's ideological and repressive rule. White guilt/shame pervades the novel, which,according to Lawrence Thornton, "lays bare the effects of apartheid on the psyches of both the oppressor and the oppressed" throwing further light on the precarious position of whites in a land that, in the first place, is not theirs ("Apartheid's Last Vicious Gaps").

Mrs. Curren, who is in her dying phase, writes the letter, which "is a baring of something ... not of [her] heart", to her daughter, giving an account of the incidents in her life during the period. The epistolary narrative acknowledges the absent presence of the other, right from the outset and it sets forth the confessional mode in which the narrator indulges: "To whom this writing then? The answer: to you but not to you; to me; to you in me" (*AI* 15, 6). On the words of Attridge, "Mrs. Curren's words are ... fully imbued with ... the spirit of epistolarity ... in their utter dependence on and

directedness toward a single, absent, other, an other whose absence is the force which brings the word into being ...” (91). It is as if her terminal illness has set the stage for an inward journey during which she not only confronts the other, but also befriends it. The sense of white guilt triggers the transformation of Mrs. Curren, who actually takes pride in being a white woman. In Mrs. Curren’s words: “Perhaps I should simply accept that that is how one must live from now on: in a state of shame. Perhaps shame is nothing more than the name for the way I feel all the time. The name for the way in which people live who would prefer to be dead. Shame. Mortification. Death in life” [sic] (86). Her demeaning of self/colonizer happens not without her quota of reservations regarding the others/blacks. Though a vehement critic of the social curse, apartheid, she clings on to the liberal notions, an attitude in which is manifest, her fear and anxiety of the power shift that is due in South Africa.

Mrs. Curren’s confessions pour forth in the letter in which she refers to South Africa as a nation where “the reign of the locust family is the truth” and she wonders whether this truth makes her sick (*AI* 29). The metaphor of locusts reveals her contempt for the blacks whom she fears: “a locust horde, a plague of black locusts infesting the country, munching without cease, devouring lives” (28). Not surprisingly, critics vary in their opinion when the confessional mode adopted by Mrs. Curren is the topic of discussion. Jane Poyner sees Mrs.Curren’s writing as one “imbued with self-interest” (118) while Dominic Head avers that “any suspicion of self-interest may be absent in our reception of her narrative” (*The Cambridge Introduction* 68). Whether a deliberate strategy or not, the confession which Mrs. Curren indulges in presents a narrative that tracks her way of confronting otherness and what distinguishes her confessional mode is its ambivalence. The otherness of the

people amidst whom she exists does indeed disturb her sense of self that struggles to free itself from the entrenched beliefs of patriarchal colonialist politics. She laments through a powerful image signifying her individual loss: “From the cradle a theft took place: a child was taken and a doll left in its place to be nursed and reared, and that doll is what I call I.... In blood and milk I drank her body and came to life. And then was stolen, and have been lost ever since” (*AI* 109-110). In Dominic Head’s point of view, the image is also metaphorical of “a falsity and a moral vacuity in Mrs. Curren’s heritage, the legacy of the colonisers, the doll-folk” (*J.M. Coetzee* 136).The motive behind her confession is her desire to free herself from living in shame associated with this legacy; to do penance for the crimes committed by her race.

Though repeatedly Mrs. Curren voices disapproval of the racial privileges, she exercises the same rights as a white woman in her dealings with Vercueil, with her maid, Florence and her son Bheki, his uncle Thabane, and his friend John aka Johannes. When Mrs. Curren meets Vercueil for the first time, she snubs at his lassitude and expresses her disapproval of it: “How can you lie around and do nothing all day?” (*AI* 8) She tries to establish a master-slave relationship with Vercueil, who she lures into cutting the lawn for a payment. The only thought in her mind when Vercueil brings home a woman on a rainy day is to get them both out of her house. Florence, her son Bheki and his friends – all represent the marginalised community of blacks and Mrs. Curren is unable to accommodate them in her private space initially. When one of Bheki’s friends visits him at Mrs. Curren’s home and picks up a quarrel with Vercueil, she says to Bheki, “He must go home ... I can’t have brawling in my backyard. I can’t have strangers walking in and out” (*AI* 47). She later tells Florence to be careful of the carelessness of her child’s generation thereby implicating

throughher words of advice regarding parenting, the wide gap that differentiates the white civilization and the black population.

It is theresisting other in *Age of Iron* as in the previous novels of Coetzee - *Dusklands, In the Heart of the Country, Waiting for the Barbarians, Life &Times of Michael K* and *Foe* - that triggers the ambivalence that already exists, unsettling the colonial psyche with its entrenched values of Western metaphysics.The tension between the races, the bitter resentment among the blacks directed towards the age-old oppression meted out to them is clear in the conversation that takes place between Mrs. Curren and Bheki.When Mrs Curren chides them for the tussle with Vercueil, Bheki and his friend, exchanging glances, mock her in an "arrogant, combative" tone: "Must we have a pass to come in here?" (*AI* 47)Bheki's contempt for the regime reveals the extent to which racial discrimination has been institutionalised: "They work with the police .... They are all the same, the ambulances, the doctors, the police.... What is school for? It is to make us fit into the apartheid system." Florence too is quick at retaliating when Mrs Curren is into moralising: "It is the whites who made them so cruel" (67, 49). However, it is Vercueil who, with "the undefinable otherness – he embodies", forces Mrs Curren into recognition of her own alterity (*J.M. Coetzee* 130). Vercueil, who according to Attridge, is "a survivor on the fringes of South African society, living on the streets, alcohol-dependent, unaffected by the obligations of human relationship or community; a man so removed from the structures of social and political life that he even appears to have escaped the grid of racial classification on which apartheid rests", plays "a central role in Mrs. Curren's revision of her self-hood and values" (95). Like the barbarian girl, Michael K and Friday, Vercueil too is silent and so, inaccessible to the powerful who try to read

meanings into his behaviour. He is the other who elicits a confessional response from the self; who, until then confined to an inaccessible and forbidden area, actually finds its own way into the much denied space – an instance of textual decolonisation highly suggestive of what the nation is to witness in near future.

The police attack on Bheki and his friend reveals to Mrs. Curren, who "is initially only marginally aware of her role as an oppressor" (Wright 68), how apartheid system functions. She gets the feel of the "land that drinks rivers of blood and is never sated." Unable to defend the atrocities of police, she urges Bheki to stand up to the men in power: "If you don't complain they will go on behaving as they like. ...They must see you are not afraid" (*AI* 63, 66). Her attempt to see Bheki's injured friend, John shows her the deeply entrenched class and race divisions at the Woodstock hospital where she sees "no black boys ... only old white men" and the Groote Schuur hospital where, in sharp contrast with the former, "black and white, men and women ... [shuffle] about the corridors" (68-69). Mrs.Curren actually feels John's resistance in his judgemental attitude when she pays him a visit at the hospital. At her mere touch she feels him stiffen, feels "an angry electric recoil" which makes her realise how much he detests her being white: "My word fell off him like dead leaves the moment they were uttered. The words of a woman, therefore negligible; of an old woman, therefore doubly negligible; but above all of a white" [sic] (79). John's hostility towards her makes Mrs. Curren reflect on her white identity:

> I, a white. When I think of the whites, what do I see? I see a herd of sheep ... milling around on a dusty plain under the baking sun. I hear a drumming of hooves, a confusion of sound that resolves itself, when the ear grows attuned, into the same bleating call in a thousand different

> inflections: "I!" "I!" "I!" And, cruising among them, bumping them aside with their bristling flanks, lumbering, saw-toothed, red-eyed, the savage, reconstructed old boars grunting "Death!" "Death!" (*AI* 80)

She realises the solipsistic nature of western/white selfhood that she too partakes of and like John does, wishes to flinch from the white touch. Though she openly voices her protest against the regime trying to lay a charge against the two policemen, it is only after her trip to Guguletu in search of her maid Florence's son Bheki, during which she becomes a firsthand witness to the soldiers' violence that a move from being sceptical of the other to being reassuring of the other sets in in Mrs. Curren.

At Guguletu, the sense of white guilt overwhelms Mrs. Curren and she feels disturbed at the sight of the children of the violent times. The thought of her childhood of sleep, without troubles pains her and she is almost sure that "if justice reigns at all, we will find ourselves barred at the first threshold of the underworld" (*AI* 92). Bheki's tragic death really moves her and, to quote Dominic Head, as her "understanding of the evil surrounding her grows, she comes to see her own role in the political structure more clearly" (*J.M. Coetzee* 130). She pleads with Thabane that she is not indifferent to the war and she can never be as, according to her, "[white guilt] lives inside me and I live inside it." In her opinion, "we shoot these people as if they are waste, but in the end it is we whose lives are not worth living" (*AI* 103, 104). While conversing with Vercueil, Mrs. Curren comments on the pervasive nature of power and expresses her wish to wage a war against the powerful people responsible for the adverse time of the nation. Struck with guilt/complicity, Mrs. Curren tells Vercueil of having thought of giving up her life. Wallowing in shame, she comes close to her other self aided by Vercueil:

> But how hard it is to kill oneself! One clings so tight to life! It seems to me that something other than the will must come into play at the last instant, something foreign, something thoughtless, to sweep you over the brink. You have to become someone other than yourself. But who? Who is it that waits for me to step into his shadow? Where do I find him? (*AI* 119)

The otherness of people around her prompts her to confront the other within as she herself admits: "What set me off was not my own condition, my sickness, but something quite different" (123).

Yet, as revealed in her confession, her unconscious ambivalence prevents her from reaching out to others, especially John. She wants to redeem herself and knows well how to achieve redemption – by loving the unlovable. As she admits, "I want to be saved. How shall I be saved? By doing what I do not want to do. ... I must love ... this child. ... He is here for a reason. He is part of my salvation. I must love him. But I do not love him. Nor do I want to love him enough to love him despite myself" (*AI* 136). Also, it is rather difficult for Mrs. Curren to let go of her liberal concerns/values. What reflects in her words of concern to John is her steadfast belief in Western liberal humanism. She comments on John's acts to Thabane, "but as for this killing, this bloodletting in the name of comradeship, I detest with all my heart and soul. I think it is barbarous" (149). For her "comradeship is nothing but a mystique of death, of killing and dying, masquerading as ... a bond" and "is just another of those icy, exclusive, death-driven male constructions" (*AI*150). Mrs. Curren's criticism of Black youth for indulging in violence at first seems to be of an ethical concern. However, in effect, it proves to be consequential of her sheer

contempt for the lesser as she terms their acts as heinous, thus reiterating the dichotomy of being civilised/savage.

Even after witnessing the police shoot out John to death, Mrs. Curren refuses to change her mind with respect to her liberal ideals. The liberal position/stance she assumes is suggestive of her longing for a nonviolent decolonisation so as to make the position of the whites safe, denying the oppressed a deserving fight back and return to power, ensuring that power still rests safe in the hands of the whites. One wonders whether it is not the author's own self-interest of a peaceful decolonisation, with no bloodshed, denying at least a sense of justice to the oppressed that reflects in Mrs. Curren's act of confession. Accordingly Sue Kossew remarks, "the voice of the white woman coloniser [presents] ... the ambivalence of the non-existent middle ground, in a situation where only "yes" and "no" are heard. It could also be argued that this is exactly the position in which any "liberal" white writer has found her/himself in apartheid South Africa ("Women's Words" 23). Despite this intellectual obstinacy, Mrs. Curren realises the loss of her authoritative voice in the changed scenario of her nation: "What right have I to opinions about comradeship or anything else? What right have I to wish Bheki and his friend had kept out of trouble?... I have no voice; I lost it long ago; perhaps I have never had one. I have no voice, and that is that. The rest should be silence" (*AI* 163-164). Coetzee refers to Mrs Curren's position, in an interview with Attwell, as "the authority of dying and the authority of classics" that are "denied and even derided in her world" (*Doubling the Point*250). In this act of relinquishing power and authority, Dominic Head notices "a desire to cede authority to the oppressed other" as exemplified in the 'voicing' of Friday's silence with which *Foe* ends (*The Cambridge Introduction* 66).Mrs. Curren's

desire for the other to be submissive always takes a setback when she realizes the impending dethronement onwitnessing the ferocity of blacks.

Like *Life & Times of Michael K*, the text itself explains the cause of the dilemma the whites face through the case of Mrs. Curren, making everything explicit, thus, leaving little to the imagination of the reader/the other. Mrs. Curren refers to the crime committed by the whites, a crime that is "a part of her inheritance" (*AI* 164). She sees herself as a slave to the shame – a sign of the acceptance of the other within. But, the crux of her confession is how she used shame as a guide not to wander into dishonour: "That was the use of shame: as a touchstone, something that would always be there, something you could come back to like a blind person, to touch, to tell you where you were. For the rest I kept a decent distance from my shame" (165). At once, the readers become sceptical of the whole notion of white guilt and shame. With such an effective use of self-reflexivity, the text exposes the ambivalent white selves when it comes to issues related to alterity.

Mrs. Curren as an embodiment of ambivalence is a representative of those who are clearly helpless and hopeless in the cancerous South Africa.It is her liminality that helps Mrs. Curren in analysing and acknowledging the otherness, even if it is with an ulterior motive. In Hayes' opinion she "sympathises with the aims of those who are resisting the South African state, but deplores the violence of their methods" ("Literature, History and Folly" 112).According to Poyner, "during the course of her story [Mrs. Curren] vacillates between the poles, searching for transparent truths but always frustrated by the impasse of the political dogma, as she sees it, of both apartheid ideology and revolutionary activism" (117). She indeed calls herself "a liminal creature, unable to breathe in water, that lacks the courage to leave the sea

behind and become a dweller on land" and terms white as "the colour of limbo" (*AI* 139, 92).While witnessing the troubled times in Guguletu,

> What she wanted was to bare something to them, whatever there was that might be bared at this time, in this place. What she wanted ... was to bring out a scar, a hurt, to force it upon them, to make them see it with their own eyes: a scar, any scar, the scar of all this suffering, but in the end my scar, since our own scars are the only scars we can carry with us. I even brought a hand up to the buttons of my dress. But my fingers were blue, frozen. (106)

Her outlook reflects that of the author who has quite often been the target of critics who accuse him of evading socio-political commitment as a writer. Needless to say, it is this ambivalence that prevents Coetzee's novels from making direct political interventions; an ambivalence that accounts for the resistant nature of the novels and which Coetzee has been quite successful in foregrounding in order to assert it as a key trait in white writers like him, who are often misjudged owing to their racial allegiance and complicity associated with it.

In short, when towards the end Mrs. Curren accommodates Vercueil in her private space, it is not without a pinch of salt that the readers interpret her act as one resulting from an inward transformation. Mrs. Curren says, "I trust Vercueil because I do not trust Vercueil. I love him because I do not love him" (*AI* 131), as and when she chooses Vercueil to entrust with the responsibility of taking her letter to her daughter. She lets and loves Vercueilbecause,as her approach towards John reveals, she has to, in order to liberate herself from the fetters of shame; to atone for the crime committed

in her name. Again, it is her salvation or sense of satisfaction that is important to Mrs. Curren rather than the other. Nevertheless, from Vercueil/the other's perspective occupying the whites' private space is no less than a stupendous achievement, considering the years of marginalised existence without any access to the centre. Needless to say, the text does exhibit a clear socio-political stance when closely read, moving beyond its intricacies as postmodern metafictional narratives.

Age of Iron in particular, largely wards off scathing criticism with more or less direct socio-political references in its realist treatment of the plot, thus historicizing the novel, and in a way, justifying the author's earlier stance, which the detractors mistook for inaction. Sheila Collingwod-Whittick says that Coetzee "gives free reign in *Age of Iron* to his own need to pursue certain important truths both about himself as a white South African and about the culture within which, despite his strong moral condemnation of it, he has the indissoluble link of historical complicity" ("In the Shadow" 45). Coetzee's novels before *Age of Iron* do embody a profound political vision, which is of relevance to the world, let alone the 'New South Africa'. The passive, silent voice of the other embedded in the texts that the critics and readers alike mistook for the lack of agency, does in fact register a strong voice of protest. The only question that remains unanswered is to what extent this voice of protest, which has proved textually effective in foregrounding alterity/otherness, has been effective in bringing about an obvious change in society.

As regards the representation of the other/otherness, the text marks a departure from its immediate predecessor, *Foe* and Coetzee's early novels, in that the figures of alterity have an active agency associated with them quite unlike their earlier counterparts who are silent/silenced, or to be told differently, endowed with a passive

agency as implicit in their silent resistance. They are the "children of iron" giving shape to the "age of iron" (*AI* 50). Poyner comments: "*Age of Iron* explicitly and powerfully engages with the political and, what is more, for the first time in the oeuvre black voices are portrayed with tangible (political) agency" (114). Negating the existence of a transcendent other and vouching for the spatial and temporal exigency of the other, Attridge comments: "otherness is always otherness to someone (who inevitably, and by virtue of the existence of the other, is put in the position of the self and the same). And the other does not come from some totally other place, but is a product of the identical constituting act that has produced the self/same which perceives it as other"(99).In a similar vein Laura Wright makes a keen enquiry into the ethicality embedded in Coetzee's narratives which she terms as performative ones: "[The] performances ask of both characters and audience, if we are unable to imagine the interiority of an alternate subjectivity, whether that subjectivity belongs to a member of another race, sex, or species, what is our responsibility to that other?" (12)From *Age of Iron* onwards the others regain their lost voice and start asserting themselves, thereby forcing the detractors of otherness to acknowledge the differences once disavowed in the name of colonial mission aimed at civilising the others.

When her others in the text – Florence, Bheki, Joannes, Thabane – accuse her on account of her racial lineage, Mrs. Curren finds herself as an outcaste in South Africa in as much as Vercueil is to her and her race.Mrs. Curren's fate sends a shiver down the spine of whites who share her fear and anxiety about the actual decolonization awaiting South Africa; an intense fear of being marginalized, losing the powers/privileges."If the white writer is to break out of his double alienation, he too [like his black counterpart] has to recognize a false consciousness within himself,

he too has to discard a white-based value system which it is fashionable to say "no longer" corresponds to the real entities of South African life but which in fact never did" (Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture* 138-139).Carrol Clarkson too is of the opinion that, "in the first place, the value system and the language Mrs. Curren invokes have no leverage in the totalitarian, apartheid South Africa of the 1980s" (160). Yet,inCoetzee's novels, the whites/selves though suffering from the burden of guilt, still hold on to their liberalism but, as the others (blacks and coloured) resist to being marginalised and slowly and steadily foreground themselves, exerting their influence, it has tremendous impact on the selves, which, ultimately, forced to confront the otherness, are torn asunder. *Disgrace* in particular exemplifies this authorial, ambivalent position.

In post-apartheid South Africa the whites as a minority experience an identity crisis when they confront the hitherto othered selves, when they witness the indigenous, native tribe rising to power as a majority with every right to the possession of land as their nation. Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a powerful exposition of the dilemma the whites face in a post-apartheid South Africa; it is a realistic portrayal of the physical and psychological displacement of its white protagonist whose self confronts the alterity within and tries to acknowledge the same forcing an alienation/withdrawal from the set power structures that once privileged the whites alone. The political immediacy of the novel originates from the way in which "questions of conceptual systems, of modes of representations, of the characters' ethical obligations, are inextricably meshed within a specific historical time and place" (Clarkson 128). In many a critic's point of view, *Disgrace*, being Coetzee's first post-apartheid text set in South Africa, signals a shift of emphasis from the

allegorical to realistic; from the postcolonial to colonial and from the ambivalent to a more direct and explicit approach. Yet, as regards the representation of the resistant other, the text proves to be more political as it makes a statement through its figures of alterity, contesting the universal nature of western notions of human identity – a questioning which Clarkson likens to that of Hardy's, concomitant with the novelist's non-anthropocentric ethics (113).

The novel has artistic and aesthetic dimensions with the protagonist's idea of an opera on Byron's time in Italy working in its background constituting a cohering structural aspect of the text weaving in the imaginative threads into the realistic ones of the plot. One is sure not to miss the parallel between Lurie and Byron as the latter went to Italy, where he settled down, to escape a scandal just like Lurie, who flees from Cape Town to Grahamstown for a similar reason.

The novel, which, quite unlike Coetzee's earlier novels, relies on its realistic narrative than on the metafictional/allegorical aspect, goes about questioning the socio-political changes in the New South Africa like the interests of Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up in the first place with a view to ensuring a peaceful coexistence of blacks and whites post apartheid. *Disgrace* thus foregrounds the abstract and elusive nature of Truth as the text, *Waitingfor the Barbarians* in which Colonel Joll's comments expose the colonial construction of truth to perpetuate the imperialist agenda. The narrative takes a dig at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that persuades the perpetrators of apartheid to confess their crimes in order to patch up the communitieshostilein the name of racism, but which, in many a person's opinion, deny the other a chance for avenging the atrocities laid against them in the past. As David says at the time of his trial, "repentance is neither here nor

there. Repentance belongs to another universe of discourse" (*D* 58). The sincerity of the confession on the part of whites who supposedly bear the burden of guilt- a recurrent motif in Coetzee's novels- is thus in doubt as the novel stresses allegorically the futility of confession through the trial scene of the protagonist. Like Head says, "confession ... becomes a tool for the regulated society to imprison individual consciousness, and is thus emptied of its true purpose" (*The Cambridge Introduction* 77). One of the committee members rightly responds to David's arguments when he says, "what goes on in your soul is dark to us...." (*D* 58) – a statement that hints at the vested interests of the whites who feel insecure at the rise of black majority.

It is through the effective representation of characters, David and his daughter, Lucy, that the text explores the white dilemma in a changing South Africa. The narrative introduces David Lurie as a man of temperament which "is not going to change" as it "is fixed set." Being so, even in the face of a sex scandal, "[David] makes a point of walking with head held high" in the corridors of the university (*D*2, 42). Lurie, fifty-two and twice divorced, is badly in need of an affirmation regarding his identity in his public and private spheres of life. At the professional level, David, who once has been a professor of modern languages, is now a victim of "the great rationalization", having been reduced to the status of an adjunct professor of communications (3). To add to his woes, at the personal level, when the easiness of his affair with Soraya, a prostitute fails to provide him with a sense of his masculine self, David tries seducing his student, Melanie – an attempt that allows him to taste success and as well threatens him with dire consequences thereafter.

David calls himself a servant of Eros when asked to confess his crime. Little is he aware then that the three servants of Eros would do a similar harm to his daughter,

Lucy in Eastern Cape, when he takes refuge there. Lurie's attitude towards the two incidents of sexual assault reveals his sense of superiority as a white male - an attitude that is soon to be dispensed with. Melanie is "Melani" or "the dark one" to Lurie (*D* 18). According to Jane Poyner "this renaming" of Melanie by Lurie "establishes a historical loop whereby the past is brought to bear on the present by alluding to the obsessive categorization of "race" under apartheid that lamentably continues to restructure South African society today"(149). Melanie, like Soraya, represents the other as a woman. In seducing her David finds no fault, as he believes that a woman "has a duty to share her [beauty]", that too "more widely" (*D* 16). However, he finds himself at the receiving end following the debacle or tragedy his daughter meets with, to which he is a helpless, and therefore a hapless witness. When the victim is his own daughter his perspective changes; his racial consciousness comes into play and he urges Lucy to file a complaint against the attackers who are blacks, but to no avail.

In David's dealings with Petrus, Lucy's manservant who later offers to take her hand in marriage, the insecurity of white South Africans in a nation rapidly changing its character becomes clear. When Lucy suggests to David that he can help Petrus during his stay at her place, he responds, "Give Petrus a hand. I like that. I like the historical piquancy" (*D* 77). Poyner draws a parallel between Lurie and the white liberals : "Suggestive of a liberal consciousness that always until now has managed to keep the reality of apartheid at bay, Lurie's burden of guilt also expresses the guilt experienced by white liberals for their albeit unwilling complicity in South Africa's past" (155). Even though white guilt seems to torment David, he wants to go on being himself. It is difficult for David to share the same public space with Petrus; is difficult for him to approve of the fact that Petrus lives on Lucy's property. "Too close, he

thinks: we live too close to Petrus. It is like sharing a house with strangers, sharing noises, sharing smells" (*D* 127). To Carrol Clarkson "it is precisely the contingency of his Western cultural values that Lurie has to confront – and question, on his daughter's small holding in the Eastern Cape" (128). As soon as David meets Petrus, his instinctual response is to assign the latter the identity of a dogman. Such an interpellation, though ineffective as Petrus subtly resists it, clearly reflects David's urge to assert his superiority over the black man.

Though parental concern and affection justify David's rage, in his encounter with Pollux, one among the rapists, one does not fail to notice his 'perverse logic of race, nation and ethnic absolutism' that David is unable to suppress (Gilroy 110). At the mere sight of the boy, David shouts, *"You swine!"* and strikes him repeating, *"You filthy swine!"*... Phrases that all his life he has avoided seem suddenly just and right: *Teach him a lesson, Show him his place*. So this is what it is like, he thinks! This is what it is like to be a savage! ... Pollux! What a name!" (*D*206-207). As Carrol Clarkson comments, "the name [Pollux] is not other enough to effect the boy's distance from a Western civilization in which Lurie finds himself so at home"(145). His response when he hears the name from Lucy for the first time is typical of that of a white: "'Not Mncedist? Not Nqabayakhe? Nothing unpronounceable, just Pollux? 'P-O-L-L-U-X. [And Lucy retorts:] And David, can we have some relief from that terrible irony of yours?'"(200). Pieter Vermeulen makes the observation that "the real problems besetting Lurie can be described as an effect of the disappearing distinction between master and slave..." (52).

David, who exhibits an air of superiority while facing the panel at the trial, is humbled by the ordinary as Lucy goes against his wish and decides to marry Petrus

who emerges as a powerful figure representative of the others who slowly and steadily succeed in reclaiming their material/cultural/textual space. In sharp contrast is David who becomes a white, male outcaste withdrawing to the limited space he has in the end. David's ponderings over his sojourn at Lucy's place following the scandal reflect his sense of alienation: "All at once he has become a recluse, a country recluse. ...This is not what he came for – to be stuck in the back of beyond, warding demons, nursing his daughter, attending to a dying enterprise. If he came for anything, it was to gather himself, gather his forces. Here he is losing himself day by day" (*D*120-121). One cannot but agree with Hayes when he terms the text as a political allegory "in which the universalistic liberal ideals that David Lurie defends seems to have no future at all in the new South Africa" (*J.M. Coetzee*196).

Like Petrus who is the visible other in the novel, Lucy too presents in herself a figure of alterity. The text describes her as "a frontier farmer of the new breed"; she is a woman who defies the norms of gender and sexuality in her lesbian relationship with Helen. David represents the normative heterosexuality as he "privately ... wishes Lucy would find, or be found by, someone better" and so fails to support the bond of Lucy and Helen (*D* 62, 60). David, whose mind is "a refuge for old thoughts", looks down upon Lucy's friends Bev and Bill Shaw (72), and Lucy is the one who sees through Lurie's facade. She shakes David off the complacency arising from his sense of being an upper-class white human being, exposing it as a shallow notion, which has no grounding in the real world whatsoever, other than as a mere construct of the discursive structures that entail a process of othering which David too partakes of. Sarcastically she tells David:

> ‘You think I ought to involve myself in more important things’... ‘You think, because I am your daughter, I ought to be doing something better with my life....’
>
> ‘You think I ought to be painting still lives or teaching myself Russian. You don’t approve of friends like Bev and Bill Shaw because they are not going to lead me to a higher life....’
>
> ‘They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is, there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals....’ (*D* 74)

She pricks his conscience, his taking for ‘a higher life’ and David bit by bit comes to terms with the way in which Lucy is “showing him life, showing him this other, unfamiliar world” (71).

Many a time Lucy reminds David to wake up to the fact that South Africa is no more a nation where only whites are privileged.It is now a place where “whites don’t understand blacks, and the blacks aren’t interested in understanding the whites” (Rushdie, “J.M.Coetzee” A19). When tragedy befalls her, Lucy chooses to resign to her fate, as she falls short of striking reciprocity with Petrus and others, like Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*. Both Magda and Lucy are victims of rape, a recurrent trope in Coetzee’s fiction, and representatives of white guilt. In a conversation with her father, Lucy opens up:

> You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. ... The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to

> me is purely a private matter. In another time, in another place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone.'
>
> 'This place being what?'
>
> 'This place being South Africa.' (*D* 112)

The sense of white guilt overwhelms Lucy who faces a dilemma of making the most difficult choice in her life:

> In her decision as to whether or not to report the crime, Lucy is required to make an unforgivingly absolute choice between a sense of wrong done to her as an individual, and the demands she perceives to be made by the situation she occupies as a white woman – in effect a choice between the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference. (Hayes, *J.M. Coetzee* 207)

As Lucy sees the act of rape as an attack on her racial allegiance than on her womanhood, the rapists as "debt collectors, tax collectors," she picks the second option (*D* 158). Lucy blatantly tells David, "This is my life. I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to be put on trial like this, not to have to justify myself – not to you, not to anyone else"(133). She absolutely does not let anyone, even her father, interfere with her life or dictate terms to her. When David chides her for keeping from him the news of her pregnancy, she puts her foot down firmly:

> David, I can't run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not any more. You behave as if everything I do is part of the

> story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, an in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. (*D* 198)

Lucy exercising her right to make the choice of not lodging a formal complaint has several political implications in that her actions or words resonate with the violent crimes perpetrated by the community to which she belongs and, according to Hayes, Lucy feels nothing but her alternative of marrying Petrus does justice "to the way in which she is concretely situated 'in this time, and in this place'..." (*J.M. Coetzee* 207).In Sue Kossew's point of view, Coetzee's white women characters "are represented as ambiguous colonial figures whose voices are compromised by complicity, a complicity from which his own authorship is never excluded" ("Women's Words" 12). Lucy is no different fromCoetzee's women characters in being "forever under the gaze of others" and experiencing "an end to private life" (*AI* 30). However, that Lucy, who appears at the outset as a woman of character, finally succumbs to the patriarchal notions of womanhood does have serious race and gender implications. Her homosexuality is one area that remains unexplored in the text, which, representing Lucy in the end as one accepting the societal norm of heterosexuality, in its subtext seems to institutionalise the same. Lucy's resistant nature lacks conviction when she, along gender lines, appears as a reactionary/submissive figure in submitting herself to her cultural other, Petrus - an act that shows nothing but Lucy's yearning to exist in the gaze of the other; her yearning for acceptance.

Petrus' absence from the site when the rapists attack Lucy makes David and Ettinger, a German in Africa, point their finger at him. Ettinger is quick to make a generalisation when he comes to know about Lucy's fate: "Of the absent Petrus, [he] remarks darkly, 'Not one of them you can trust'" (*D* 109). Petrus offers no explanation as regards his absence and even defends the culprits when they are in trouble. Even though Coetzee's portrayal of Petrus as a silent schemer raises a few eyebrows, Petrus' silence as a resistance strategy overshadows all other implications. As a result, the stereotyping has negligible effect as it loses its significance in the face of emerging alterity. Lucy speaks for all the oppressors when she says, "I can't order Petrus about. He is his own master" (*D* 114). David too realizes that things are not the same anymore. Though it is "just like the old days: baas en Klaas"- Petrus doing the major share of work, while David sits and warms his hands- quite unlike the apartheid period where clear demarcations existed restraining the blacks, now Petrus enjoys an unprecedented freedom in his sphere.

> In the old days one could have had it out without Petrus. In the old days one could have had it out to the extent of losing one's temper and sending him packing and hiring someone in his place. ... Petrus is no longer hired help ... [but] is *neighbour*. ... It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it. (*D* 117)

Therefore, David, Lucy and others can only be silent victims of Petrus' expansionist plans to take over their land. To Derek Attridge, it is the above passage from the text, more than other, if any at all, that reflects Lurie's discontentment "with the passing of apartheid and its benefits to the likes of him" (172).

The land transfer that happens in the novel is highly suggestive of the power shift, with the reclamation of the possession of property/land having its seed sown in *Life & Times of Michael K*. At the party organized by Petrus, he declares, "I am not any more the dog-man"(*D* 129). Petrus gives the oppressors/whites a taste of their own medicine with his acquisition/reclamation of land, and as if rubbing salt on the wound he calls Lucy sarcastically as his benefactor. When David confronts the cultural markers of otherness, he reassuringly touches his white skullcap, a recurring symbol of white identity. To let go of all the privileges that are associated with being white is difficult for David; it is equally difficult for him to be "the stranger, the odd one out." In the context of Lucy's rape many questions baffle him and "whatever the answer, he is outraged, outraged at being treated like an outsider" (135, 141). In the face of looming presence of alterity, David gets unsettled and, like Jacobus Coetzee, tries to hold on to his whiteness which is nothing but an illusion.

Incidentally, Petrus' representation as an empowered black/other dispels all accusations against the author of being a racist. Moreover, the similarity between David and the three black rapists reveals the objective of the text in achieving dissolution of the self/other power structure erected on the notions of sameness and difference. David as a 'civilized' servant of Eros seducing Melanie is not so different from the 'uncivilized' servants of Eros raping Lucy. His musings expose the sham of colonial mission: "Mission work: what has it left behind, that huge enterprise of upliftment? Nothing that he can see" (*D* 95). The statement may seem to stereotype the blacks as savages because of the rape committed, but it equally implicates David as well, he being the representative of the so-called civilized whites. David thus confronts the otherness of his own self, "[his] fearsome other [self] projected on to

[his] 'subjects'", and through acknowledging the alterity, he turns humane, caring for even animals, the perpetual others of human beings (Nandy 16). From being a person who refuses to "believe that animals have properly individual lives", to whom "which among them get to live, which get to die, is not ... worth agonizing over", David becomes one who realizes the relevance of the lives of others, to whom "suddenly and without reason, their lot has become important" (*D* 126-127).

Assisting Bev Shaw in her clinic David gradually learns that "he is simply nothing" (*D* 143). "For himself .... For his idea of the world" he chooses not to inflict dishonour upon the corpses of dogs, thus eventually becoming a dogman: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan*" (146). To Chris Danta, who draws an analogy between Mrs. Curren and David Lurie, "rather [Lurie] is feeling the 'disgrace of dying' ... along with [the dogs]. Like Elizabeth ... he is in the process of transforming from a reflective into a practical intelligence, from 'man into something smaller, blinder, closer to the ground'" ("The Melancholy Ape" 133). Analysing the animal/ human binary that runs in the texts, Laura Wright comments, "in Coetzee's fiction, the recognition of the alterity of animals marks an initial step – or, rather, a potential initial step – in the displacement of the binary constructions of colonizer and colonized, man and woman, culture and nature, and, most importantly, self and other" (16). However, his white male ego still asserts itself as evident in his statement following the sexual encounter with Bev Shaw: "After the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs, this is what I have come to. This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this." David sees his act as a favour being bestowed upon Bev Shaw, but, as the text says, "let him stop calling her poor Bev Shaw. If she is poor, he is bankrupt" (*D* 150). Coming to terms with the illusionary nature of human

identity/existence is the only option left for David and as the narrative progresses one finds the protagonist inching towards that realization.

Weighed down by the tragic occurrences due to the political power shift in the country, David seems to have renounced his notions of a superior unitary white male self, withdrawing to the status of an accommodating individual when, deeply influenced by his daughter's tragic fate, he visits Melanie's family and apologetically admits his crime: "I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not a punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day, trying to accept disgrace as my state of being" (*D* 172). Such a transformation does not happen easily asthe otherness eludes him. In Attridge's words, "if Lucy and Petrus are others for David Lurie whom he struggles to know, if Melanie is an other whom he wrongs by not attempting to know, animals are others whom he knows he cannot begin to know" (184). He does, indeed, cut a sorry figure while apologising, but whether he is truly apologetic is debatable as he fantasises Melanie's younger sister. David's split sense of being again surges forth once he comes to know of Lucy's pregnancy.He sticks to the division of 'us' and 'them', the sense of being and belonging to "*We Westerners*"(*D*202) in his conversations with Petrus and the brawl he picks up with Pollux. It is up to Lucy and Bev Shaw to help David take in the reality of life.

David's fall from a position of high status to that of a dogman, whereby he is "resituated as other," constitutes in itself an obvious deconstruction of the binary of self and other (Poyner 162).Attridge claims that the fall constitutes a "state of grace"; that David is "true to an excess, an overflow, an alterity that no calculation can contain, no rule account for" (182). Such an apparent reversal of the dichotomy does

indeed raise doubts in the minds of the readers who, coming across a racial stereotyping within the text, question the motive of the author in employing familiar tropes as black man raping a white woman. As the text instils fear in whites through its stereotyping of blacks, *Disgrace* is strictly within the discursive restraints imposed by the dominant structures, which it tries to subvert. Nevertheless, the text does subvert the notion of fixed identities through the changes in the perception of the central characters, David and Lucy. Their worldview, which is inherently different from each other, is contingent upon the extraneous factors involving the socio-political and economic structures prevalent in the society.

At the end of the novel, David, after having undergone "a life-changing crisis," his "false [self] laid bare", is in a state of becoming with his fragmented sense of self (Poyner 153).It is in effect "a fall from grace, the grace of whiteness" or rather from the grace of humanity (*White Writing* 141). Once "cold, surly, impatient to be alone, in the mornings after the night of sexual encounters" turns out to be a man full of concern for others, including animals, "giving [them] what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (*D* 2, 219). As David says, "one just has to buckle down and live out the rest of one's life," he tries to "accept disgrace as [his] state of being" living it out from day to day, serving one's time (67, 172). The text, though appears to be retrogressive in its employment of the trope of rape, does in fact expose the ineffectiveness of stereotypes through its repetition. For, "in the objectification ... there is always the threatened return of the look; in the identification of the Imaginary relation there is always the alienating other which crucially returns its image to the subject ..." (Bhabha, *The Location* 116). Transcending the binaries or fixed notions of identities, the narrative tries to promote the sense of reconciliation of

races, through which, eventually, the notion ofhybridity as the inevitable solution in today's multicultural context.

Coetzee's novels, especially of his Australian phase – *Elizabeth Costello, Slow Man* and *Diary of the Bad Year* – exemplify the author's preoccupation with the issue of identity, the subversion of the dichotomies. *Slow Man* in particular presents the growing sense of awareness of one's self/selves as a negotiating process, intersubjective by nature, contingent upon the socio-political situations, economic conditions and the power structures of the society. The journey of Paul Rayment, to whom the title 'slow man' refers, has striking parallels with that of the author who willingly journeys from being a white, South African writer to becoming an Australian writer as his latest novels prove with the fictional character Elizabeth Costello, an Australian writer taken as Coetzee's alter-ego.

The dialectics of self and other is at work in the negotiations of Paul as he longs for recognition from Marijana and her familyconsisting of Miroslav, her husband, and their three children – Drago, Blanka and Ljuba; from Elizabeth Costello,who appears halfway through the novel trying to intervene in Paul's life as a writer; from the new nation in the making. He desperately attempts to assert his self by reducing the land, the language and the people he confronts to the status of others. Having failed at this othering directed at gaining a stable self, Paul apparentlyis floating, acquiring multiple names and identities, depending on the contexts he finds himself in. Paul's course of life hinting at the variable nature of identity, problematising its fixed, immutable status, is in accordance with the meaninglessness exposed by Lacan, of the quest for a coherent, original unity or identity. According to Malcolm Bowie, in Lacan's point of view "the subject is made and remade in his

encounter with the Other," and their relationship "is characterised by desire" (117, 118).

From a state of despair after the accident Paul is elevated to the standards of a better life with the arrival of Marijana Jokic who instils in him hope, joy and even kindles his sensual passions bringing " about the longed-for, the long- needed change" (*SM* 72). Paul soon fancies himself enjoying a life with her; readies himself to "give anything to be father to these excellent, beautiful children and husband to Marijana- co-father if need be, co-husband if need be" (72). The vectors of power - class, gender and ethnicity - operate simultaneously in Paul's interactions with the Jokics. He sees himself better suited to Marijana than Miroslav for whom Paul has nothing but contempt owing to Miroslav's Balkan status. When Drago reports the fight of his parents Paul speaks contemptuously of Miroslav's seething Balkan passions: "Miroslav, no doubt a great bear of a man, engaged and drunk, laying into Marijana with his fists, laying into his porcelain-featured daughter too, while the son stands by seething! Balkan passions! How on earth did he get involved with a Balkan, a Balkan mechanic and his mechanical duck!" (133)

Paul is into reiterating the difference between France and southeastern Europe, a difference that in effect puts up a regional alterity. Hailing from France Paul looks down upon Croatia, the homeland of the Jokics in southeastern Europe, which is often referred to as the periphery of Europe in common parlance. The difference between the locales- Coniston Terrace and Munno Paro- in their immigrant life in Australia too is highly characterised by the economic power structures prevalent in the society. The working class setting of Munno Paro is in sharp contrast with the elite nature of Coniston Terrace- a fact that Paul uses to an extent in his othering manoeuvre.

Paul conveniently disavows the similar status shared by him and the Jokics as " new Australians [who] represented boundaries or margins, those marginal voices which bordered the known country and [thus] were themselves hybrids [sublating polarities] comprising both the known and the unknown" (Gunew 111). During the discussions on the issues concerning Drago and Blanka as well, Paul tries to instil in Marijana the feeling that they are in every sense inferior to Paul in terms of class, region and economic status. It is from this sense of a superior identity he has gained through his contact with the Jokics that pours forth the offer, "I could help financially" and his declaration of love for Marijana (*SM* 75). When she chooses not to relent, Paul desperately tries to become a godfather of the Jokic family in order to restate this superiority which he finds difficult to forego and which he needs very badly to overcome the feeling of being a crippled self overwhelming him since the accident. As the economic conditions of the Jokics force them to accept the offer Paul succeeds, though momentarily, in becoming their godfather reducing them to subhuman others and simultaneously asserting his new self. Even so, the newly gained identity is not forever, as the godfather status bestowed upon Paul is negated by the gift- a recumbent bicycle- given by Drago- a deliberate, humane act that readily humbles Paul Rayment and shatters his pride.

> He can feel a blush creeping over him, a blush of shame, starting at his ears and creeping forward over his face. He has no wish to stop it. It is what he deserves. 'It's magnificent,'... 'A magnificent gift.' *Munificent too,* he might add, but does not. He knows what he pays Marijana; he can guess what Miroslav earns. *Much more than I deserve*[sic]. (*SM* 254)

The readers, nonetheless, feel for Paul, a dejected man, thrust into being a crippled self again by the Jokics who, in Paul's words, "mean to teach him: that he should give up his solemn airs and become what he rightly is, a figure of fun, an old gent with one leg who when he is not hopping around on his crutches roams the streets on his home-made tricycle". The youngest Jokic, Ljuba puts the final nail in the coffin when she says, "You aren't Rocket man, you're Slow Man!" highlighting his invalid status (*SM* 256, 258). At the end of the novel the readers confront a disturbed Paul who could neither, be husband or co-husband to Marijana, father or co-father to her children nor godfather in its true sense. He is reduced to a monetary godfather who is to find solace in just receiving the receipt of Drago's college fee, thwarting all his hopes and expectations of being with the Jokics forever.Paul has to accept the becoming aspect of identity, as he finds himself "in the dialogic position of calculation, negotiation [and] interrogation" (Bhabha,*The Location*266).

Elizabeth Costello is the grande-autre (the Other), to use Lacan's term, in whose continual gaze the subject gains an identity and with whose entry the "self-reflexive chiasmus" begins (Boehmer, "J.M. Coetzee" 6). Her status as a writer testifies to her being representative of language, the absolute pole of address in relation to which Paul is reduced as a fictional character, which he continually resists. Incidentally, the parallels that Elizabeth shares with the author, J.M. Coetzee confuse the readers as regards the authorial voice and role. Like Marais says in the context of *Foe*, it is just one of the textual strategies "through which the text attempts, by both anticipating and politicising the interpretive act, to forestall recuperation and, thus, to protect its difference from assimilation into the sameness of the reader's interpretive community" (73). Through the story of Sinbad and the old man, Elizabeth evokes

Paul's childhood memories and reiterates her status as an author; as the unconscious as well, to which Paul has no access. When he denies her authoritative presence, Elizabeth says, "Perhaps I am already there...and you do not know it" (*SM* 129). The paradoxical Hegelian dialectics of master and slave underlies their association, as both cannot survive without each other as an author and a character, yet are always in conflict.

Paul, "who has never been at ease with mirrors" (*SM* 163), is made to confront his specular image when Elizabeth uncovers the mirror initiating Paul into the realm of identification. In place of a coherent feeling, what Paul gets is the sense of a fragmented self contrary to his desires to acquire stability. His act of draping the mirror on Elizabeth's departure suggests his longing for originary unity, his resistance to repression,his difficulty in coming to terms with the split subject. It is when Paul takes a quick peek at the manuscript of Elizabeth that he becomes conscious of his constructed self, prone to further changes. Though he fervently tries to resist it rejecting all the tags that Elizabeth ascribes to him , in the end, as his bonding with Elizabeth reveals, Paul is a compliant self who calls himself "a ventriloquist's dummy"(198), thus accepting the otherness within; acknowledging the incompleteness of identity.

Paul's is an interesting case as regards "national identity business" (*SM* 197). The pull of two enforced social identities –being French and becoming Australian- crushes Paul's self and in effect subverts the notion of polarities.As he tells Elizabeth, "I had three doses of immigrant experience, not just one, so it imprinted itself quite deeply. First when I was uprooted as a child and brought to Australia; then when I declared my independence and returned to France; then when I gave upon France and

came back to Australia" (192). Paul Rayment, whose physically crippled state parallels his psychologically crippled self as a migrant, occupying the liminal space of Australia, a site of continual negotiations, presents a transparent case of cultural hybridisation which undermines the polarities of identity. On assuming that "never is he going to be his old self again" (53), Paul desperately tries to establish his identity as an Australian citizen only to realize that "he is trapped with the same old self as before, only greyer and drearier" (*SM*54). Bequeathing the preserved Fauchery collection, showing life in the early mining camps of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, to the State Library is the means Paul adopts to etch his name in the national historical records. Paul's attempt is no more than a means to create an identity of his own and incidentally, it is Marijana who sees the history embedded in the photographs. As she says:

> In Europe people say Australia have no history because in Australia everybody is new. Don't mind if you come with this history or that history, in Australia you start zero....to go to Australia....Is like you go to desert, to Qatar, ...You only do it for money, they say. So is good somebody save old photographs, show Australia has history, too [sic]. (49)

The question Paul asks Marijana when he shows his Faucherys to her, "Don't immigrants have a history of their own?" (49) echoes his repressed colonial origin and history, clearly hinting at his nature of clinging to his past of being French,though he tries fervently for the Australian present, and little does he realise the impossibility of achieving either of these. Paul's scepticism in getting social acceptance reveals his own ambivalence.

> A people with a story of their own, a past. *Our* story, *our* past.
>
> But is that the truth? Would the woman in the picture accept him as one of her tribe – the boy from Lourdes in the French Pyrenees with the mother who played Faure on the piano? Is the history that he wants to claim as his not finally just an affair for the English and the Irish, foreigners keep out? [sic] (*SM* 52)

Rather than the woman in the picture, it is Paul who is reluctant, experiencing a closed self, trapped with the same old tag of being French; it is the memory of the black and white binary that still influences him

> A memory comes back to him of the cover of a book he used to own, a popular edition of Plato. It showed a chariot drawn by two steeds, a black steed with flashing eyes and distended nostrils representing the base appetites, and a white steed of calmer mien representing the less easily identifiable nobler passions. (53)

Nonetheless, having had his share of immigrant experiences Paul is not wholly French either. In France too, strangely enough, Paul has felt as an "odd one out" owing to his lack of a proper French schooling during his formation period and a French youth as well. He is more English in France and more French in Australia and being so "home is too mystical for" Paul (*SM* 196, 197) - a thought which resonates with the sense of uncanniness. As Paul rightly says, "I can pass among Australians. I cannot pass among the French. That...is all there is to it, to the national identity business: where one passes and where one does not, where on the contrary one stands out" (197).In 'Imaginary Homelands' Rushdie has voiced the same opinion: "Our

identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools..." (15). Since national identity and a sense of belonging are mutually constitutive Paul's difficulty in developing a feeling of homeland either in France or in Australia clearly reveals the problematic nature of his status. "*Is this where I belong?* I asked with each move. *Is this my true home?*" According to Paul, he is "not the *we* of anyone" (*SM* 192, 193).

Despite this knowledge Paul continues to act as typical French when he calls on the Jokics at Elizabeth's insistence succumbing to the pressure exerted by the resurgence of his repressed colonial memories. Paul's letdown at the end attests to the fact that "the subject's desire for a pure origin ... is always threatened by its division" (Bhabha, *The Location*107). Paul finds himself stuck between the two poles forever, neither here nor there, without a well-defined standing – an ambivalence typical of postcolonial, postmodern society owing to the processual nature of identity. Though Paul acts with a view to becoming an Australian national for social acceptance, the ulterior motive is to construct the otherness of Australia in order to confirm his existence as French - a mission in which he fails miserably as he is not able to identify himself with being French either.

Pulling off a stable identity in a hybridised society is a knotty course of action for identity is always in a state of flux. Identity, in Stuart Hall's words, is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' " ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 225). As the inconclusive ending of *Slow Man* proves, Paul is indeed too slow in realising the fluidic aspect of identity, the nature of his self, emerging from the interstitial space between being and becoming. Leaving behind Marijana and her family, Paul rejects Elizabeth's offer of a companionate marriage and bids farewell to her, seemingly

content with what 'others' have imparted to him. In Danta's point of view, "as he flies through the air with the greatest of ease, Rayment is well on his way to becoming a character in a story" ("J. M. Coetzee" xix). Quite typical of Coetzee's novels, *Slow Man* too leaves the rest to the imagination of the readers who readily take hold of the connotation of Elizabeth's final question: "But what am I going to do without you?" (*SM* 263) – That identity and alterity are inextricable. The text, thus constructing an enunciatory site for ambivalence in Paul who would otherwise be content, falling in line with the traditional notion of identity, as white, male, upper-class elite, evidently aligns with the concept of hybridity that the author's later fiction too vouches for.

J.M. Coetzee experiments with an unusual typographic format in the novel, *The Diary of a Bad Year*, in which three narratives – an account of essays by the writer-protagonist JC, who is one of the chosen six contributors to a book, *Strong Opinions*, for a German publisher; JC's personal diary narrative and Anya's account of the happenings – constitute the text. Part I of the novel typographically splits JC's essays, 'Strong Opinions' and his diary into two bands on the pages, with Anya's narrative added to it from page twenty-five onwards. A similar format characterises Part II, which comes after an essay interlude, and what differentiates it from the preceding section is the more informal and personal aspect of the essays titled 'Soft Opinions', written by JC. Each page of the novel thus depicts the three narratives in a tripartite structure, the narratives that in a linear manner form an organic whole on its own. The text acquaints the readers with the third major character, Alan's voice/perspective too, which is interspersed with that of the lead protagonists. The text foregrounds the theory versus praxis conflict of writers cum critics like Coetzee, and as the essays emphasize the postcolonial stance of the author, the personal

narratives of JC and Anya present an excellent explication of the textual deconstruction of the colonial ideology.

With two narrators and three voices, the text, apart from expressing concern over contemporary issues through JC's essays, unravels the story of JC and Anya. The first narrative consists of 'strong opinions' literally, until the end of Part I thereafter which, as the title indicates it changes its nature to 'soft opinions'. The topics for the essays range from politics to arts to science and so, "is a response to the present" in which Coetzee finds himself (*DBY* 67). In Head's opinion, "the structure of *Diary of a Bad Year* affords Coetzee the luxury of a platform to express his own strong opinions" which mainly constitute those on " 'war on terror' and the sense of dishonour that descends upon civilian populations where governments perpetrate atrocities in their name" (*The Cambridge Introduction* 91). JC's and Anya's narratives, together, account for the novel's plot and the resultant different versions of the same events/incidents constitute an instance of perspective of the self versus perspective of the other – both of which are given due textual space.A novel way of reading that the text demands "dramatizes the generational gap, ... the experience of human existence itself as a site of turbulent interpellations – of ... abstract thoughts, physical desires, public personae, private selves, the passage of time, self-centredness, and obligations and accountabilities that are at once personal, social and national." (Clarkson 97) In addition, through its complexity of structure and simplicity of the plot, the text invites attention to the concept of reality/Truth –"it is the slippage between the two, between author and author-protagonist, that energizes questions about the relationship between public intellectuals and the truths they promote"

(Poyner 169) - a preoccupation of the novelist since his first attempt at fiction, *Dusklands*.

Diary of a Bad Year is an answer to thematic/structural queries on Coetzee and his fiction; the text serves as a site for the author to take on the criticism laid against him. The self-explanatory aspect is not new to Coetzee. In fact, his earlier fiction too pre-empts his detractors with their questions related to, for instance, the author's non-committal stance a propos the socio-political and/or the historical South African scenario. Coetzee's corpus of fiction exemplifies his ideological stance mainly through the representation/construction of the other and *Diaryof a Bad Year* falls in the same league when it comes to handling otherness. Poyner is right when she says, "Coetzee utilizes literature to expose the weak points of intellectual practice, centring on questions of authority and speaking on others' behalf" (176). Thematically, otherness links the otherwise disparate collection of essays and the story that unfolds in the form of two personal narratives. The narratives in tandem deliberate on the concepts of self and other, its status in the transnational context where such polarities hold no significance, and eventually subvert such binary structure that, according to Judith Butler, "depends on the exclusion of women, slaves, children, and animals" and that "through the production of racialized Others" once assigned a position of authority to colonial/imperial powers (*Bodies* 48).

The text triggers the discussion on identity right at the outset suggesting analogies between the author and the protagonist. One can readily draw parallels with the author J.M. Coetzee and his fictional counterpart, JC. Apart from the explicit use of the same initials, the text abounds in references to J.M. Coetzee's works as that of JC's: "In the 1990s, I recall, I published a collection of essays on censorship" –

instantly the readers too recall J.M. Coetzee's *Giving Offense*. In another instance the essay reads, "I was quoted as saying that my novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*..." (*DBY* 22, 171), and the readers are left with no choice but to relate JC to the author. As such, Strong/Soft Opinions as a narrative seems to underscore the author's own stance on current problems. Yet, critics like Poyner warn against the danger in equating authorial figures like JC and Elizabeth Costello with the author himself as "such a move would fly in the face of [Coetzee's] principled ... disavowal of political rhetoric ..." (170). Again, as essay writers, JC and J.M. Coetzee differ in their style of writing. Dominic Head rightly observes that "a clear indication of the 'fictionality' of the mini-essays in *Diary of a Bad Year* is that they are unlike Coetzee's own essays, which are even in tone, carefully argued, and not the stuff of 'strong opinions'"(*The Cambridge Introduction* 92). Apart from this, the biographical details of JC as in Anya's narrative match with those of J.M. Coetzee only in terms of nationality- both hail from South Africa- and profession – both are novelists and critics. Otherwise, the narrative, which makes no mention of JC's wife and kids, states his year of birth as 1934, while Coetzee's, who has wife and kids, is 1940. These similarities and dissimilarities do indeed make a compelling read of the text that calls for an analogy between the fictional and the real worlds it tries to represent, but, nevertheless, as Katy Iddiols puts it, "as readers, we are textually prevented from engaging in the inauthentic readings of singular interpretation" (193).

The first of the essays in the collection, 'On the origins of the state', gives an insight into the preoccupation of the author with the challenge of alterity. It situates the individual in a powerless position in relation to the state that is a pure construct of the humans. "It is hardly in our power to change the form of the state and impossible

to abolish it because, vis-à-vis the state, we are precisely, powerless" (*DBY* 3).With the state being coterminous with the exclusionary ideology of the powerful/oppressors, allegorically, the statement refers to the colonial regime, which imposes on the individuals a fixed identity based on the dichotomy of self/other, the oppressed other always enduring a subjugated state. As Kossew remarks, "it is, of course, significant that the "line" or threshold of the nation state is described as one "we" have drawn, emphasizing the complicity of all those who participate in such exclusionary discourses and practices" ("Literary Migration" 121). What Coetzee's text implicatesironically and quite interestingly too, is the powerlessness of 'we' and it is of immense relevance as in western epistemology 'we/us' is always powerful vis-à-vis 'they/them'. Such an allusion makes the textual trajectory very obvious, in hinting at the otherness within and the existence of a grand Other against which the selves sense their split subjectivity. State, the grand Other, the centre holds everyone subject to it and the colonial selves, in fact, are in a state of illusion as regards their superior identity. All are born subjects and the identity that we bear is that of the other until our death.

Commenting upon the totalitarian nature of the democratic state, JC reiterates the condition of servitude in order to drive the point home:

> If you take issue with democracy in times when everyone claims to be heart and soul a democrat, you run the risk of losing touch with reality. To regain touch, you must at every moment remind yourself of what it is like to come face to face with the state....Then ask yourself: Who serves whom? Who is the servant, who the master? (*DBY* 15)

According to him the modern state, though it appeals to morality, religion and natural law as the ideological bases, will infringe all these contingently along Machiavellian lines. Here, the narrative, making the ambivalence of the state representatives the focal point, seems to justify the means of torture resorted to by the colonial oppressors as well as the textual representations of violence. Along similar lines, in the present context, run the restraints imposed by the neo-imperial powers, whose footsteps Australia too follows, for which, the text cites as an instance the "surveillance ... of the entire world's telephonic and electronic communications" (22). However, the text does indeed embody the idea of resistance for the oppressed to overcome the menial existence: "Ordinary life is full of contradictions; ordinary people are used to accommodating them. Rather, you must attack the metaphysical, supra-empirical status of *necessita* and show that to be fraudulent." JC, in another instance, even proposes the third way – "the way of quietism, of willed obscurity, of inner emigration" (*DBY* 18, 12).

As JC, the writer's essays progress, we get access to his diary, his private space in which he comes across as a white South African male who becomes the target of the resistance he preaches. JC cuts a figure of ambivalence in his personal life as he finds it difficult to hold on to his ideals his essays epitomize. JC confesses to his typist, Anya: "The opinions you happen to be typing do not necessarily come from my inmost depths." What is in his inmost depths is, in fact, manifest in his social relations with others. Anya becomes the object of JC's voyeuristic gaze the moment he sets his eyes on her: "As I watched her an ache, a metaphysical ache, crept over me that I did nothing to stem" (*DBY* 91, 7). At seventy-two, JC feels insecure and his struggle for recognition makes him track her and his hastiness in offering her the job

of being his typist reveals nothing but his desire of/for the other, desire that describes best the motive behind a chosen author like JC's decision to hire as typist a woman like Anya, who "has never done a stitch of editing in her life." As recorded in Anya's narrative, "Senor C can't help it if he desires me, just as I can't help it if I am desired" (*DBY* 19, 87).The very first thing Senor C wants to know is the place she hails from: "Where are you from? he demanded that first day in the laundry room where it all began" (31). That is Senor C's first attempt at securing his superior selfhood in terms of race, gender and class. In her powerful sarcastic retort to his query, Anya implicitly suggests the unconscious racism (or rather, self-conscious ambivalence embedded within the text) at work in Senor C's attitude towards her: "Why ... Why do you want to know? ... Am I not blonde-eyed and blue-haired for your tastes?" (31). Thereafter, it becomes rather tough for JC to ward off Anya's enigmatic influence as she, as a figure of alterity, holds sway over him, making her presence felt in his public and private spheres.

One wonders whether it is not quick on JC's part to call Alan a "pale, hurrying, plump and ever sweaty fellow" (*DBY* 9). Like Paul Rayment, JC looks down upon his sexual rival and names him Mr. Aberdeen. His complicity with the colonialist patriarchal values that cut across gender and race is evident in his attitude towards Anya. Initially, it is as bait that JC attributes Anya 'an intuitive feel' so that she does not turn down his offer of the job as his typist. His judgemental nature, especially of women, reflected in his words speaks volumes of his patriarchal mindset: "*An intuitive feel:* those were my words. They were a gamble, a shot in the dark, but they worked. What self-respecting woman would want to deny she has an

intuitive feel?"(19) JC understands later from what Anya tells him that she has seen through his luring tactics.

> Well, your little Filipina typist can't do it for you. Your little Filipina typist with shopping bags and her empty head.
>
> I never said you had an empty head.
>
> No, that's true, you never said so, you were too polite for that; but you thought so. You thought so from the first minute. *What a pretty ass*, you thought, *one of the prettiest asses I have ever seen*. *But nothing upstairs. If only I was younger*, you thought, *how I would love to bang her*. Confess. That was what you thought. (*DBY* 93)

Like Vercueil in *Age of Iron*, Anya persuades JC, her employer into a confessional mode and unlike Vercueil, Anya does not resort to silence as a strategy. She makes JC realize that he has been wrong in undermining her as a woman with an empty head, or rather in attempting an othering directed against her.

Incidentally, the narrative ponders the ways in which the West constructs the others – how they interpret the same deeds of violence as heroic when it originates in the West and as fatalist when the same is of oriental origin. Discourses suggest the same as the fight for recognition by the west is 'war' and that of the east is 'terrorism'. In order to justify their ironic 'war on terror', how the US government keeps the myth of Al Qaeda alive is yet another example for the western rationality thriving to assert their superiority. JC remarks, "though dropping bombs from high altitude upon a village is no less an act of terror than blowing oneself up in a crowd, it is perfectly legal to speak well of aerial bombing" (*DBY* 21). Such a double standard

in mind is a telling case in point for ambivalence, which compels the stereotyping of others in a struggle for self-affirmation. Only through such a justification can the imperial powers continue their subjugation of others to sustain their cultural rule over the rest of the world, lest they should succumb to the resistance of the other."The condemnation of anti-terrorist legislation in the USA, Britain and Australia is a focus of JC's anger in his essay 'On Terrorism', and this reads like a straightforward piece of political commentary that might well be Coetzee's" (Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 91). In exposing the false logic of the western metaphysics, the essay 'On Al Qaida' also presents in itself a critique of the academic sham of the influx of theories. Suggesting that the root cause of illogicality of the western way of thinking lies in literature classes of 80s and 90s in the US, the text reads:

> they were taught that in criticism suspiciousness is the chief virtue, that the critic must accept nothing whatsoever at face value. From their exposure to literary theory these not-very-bright graduates of the academy of the humanities in its postmodernist phase bore away a set of analytical instruments that they obscurely sensed could be useful outside the classroom, and an intuition that the ability to argue that nothing is as it seems to be might get you places. (*DBY* 33)

According to Head, Coetzee here also implies that "theory has generated something reactionary, when the usual complaint is that, by encouraging a relative world-view, it has contributed to a form of moral lassitude, and has opened up the spaces in liberal democracies where extremism can flourish" (*The Cambridge Introduction* 93). Being a critic himself, Coetzee ruefully attacks how postmodernism distances itself from

real-life happenings; condemns how theoretical interpretation overlooks a compassionate approach to war and violence.

It is normal for individual Americans to bear the heaviness of historical complicity, national shame: "how, in the face of this shame to which I am subjected do I behave? How do I save my honour?" Same thought flits across Mrs. Curren's mind when she feels the weight of guilt and she contemplates suicide that, JC says, "would save one's honour" (*DBY* 39, 40). In connection with war on terror, the author's troubled mindset as regards Australia's complicity in the policies initiated by the US administration clearly reflects in the essay, 'On National Shame'.

> It may not take much of a push for Australia to slide into the same condition as America, where on the basis of denunciations from informers ("sources") people simply vanish or are vanished from society, and publicizing their disappearance qualifies as a crime in its own right.
>
> Is dishonour a state of being that comes in shades and degrees? If there is a state of deep dishonour, is there a state of mild dishonour too, dishonour lite? The temptation is to say no: If one is in dishonour, one is in dishonour. (*DBY* 43)

For a person who is already reeling under the burden of collective guilt, the complicity of the new homeland in the inhuman violent warfare is too much to handle. He says, "the generation of white South Africans to which I belong ... will go bowed under the shame of the crimes that were committed in their name" (44).

Here, Anya chooses to disagree with her employer who feels that "dishonour descends upon one's shoulders" (40). Being a rape victim, in her view, "abuse, rape, torture, it doesn't matter what: the news is, as long as it is not your fault, as long as you are not responsible, the dishonour doesn't stick to you" (105). There is absolutely no need for one to make oneself miserable over nothing. Such differences of opinion that Anya shares with Senor C as well as Alan "are what lead to the rupture in their relationship" (Patton, "Coetzee's Opinions" 59) and those differences of opinion are what, in fact, make Anya's a looming presence in the novel. Anya exerts tremendous influence on JC who changes his opinions completely stumped by her.She "has an important role to play in unsettling the authority of JC's opinions" (Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 92) that change its nature from being strong to soft, from being philosophical/ allegorical to realistic and closer to life as he follows her suggestion to "write about the world around [him]" (*DBY* 35). According to Hayes, it is "under pressure from Anya to abandon his Kulturkritik stance" that "JC begins to renounce his 'strong opinions'" (*J.M. Coetzee* 232). Such a representation where 'the big writer' comes under the sway of 'the little Filipina' reflects the ideological stand of the text that aims at deconstructing the binary structures.

At one point Anya even dictates terms to her employer warning him against using her opinions: "am I going to wind up among your opinions too? ... Because if you are going to use me, remember, you owe me an appearance fee" (*DBY* 55). She takes the liberty to pass judgement on JC's opinions.

> There is a tone ... a tone that really turns people off. A know-it-all tone. Everything is cut and dried: *I am the one with all the answers, here is how it is, don't argue, it won't get you anywhere.* I know that

> isn't how you are in real life, but that is how you come across, and it is not what you want. I wish you could cut it out. If you positively have to write about the world and how you see it, I wish you could find a better way. (70)

Anya serves as a critic of the authorial voice and quite remarkably, to her credit, JC concedes. When JC says he is a human being no different from others, Anya brushes it aside as nonsense and asserts that all are different in subtle ways (32). She even occasionally interferes with language corrections (suggests to replace 'talk radio' with 'talkback radio') hinting at his own otherness due to linguistic displacement. His 'soft opinions' is the answer to Anya's queries -"But what about me? Who listens to my opinions?" (101)-which are an echo of the uneasiness and anxiety of the oppressed others, especially women. (Hilary Mantel, "The Shadow Line").Anya is thus seen as invading the public and private space of the author holding a mirror up to him in which JC could see his dark self/the otherness within and as the narratives progress Anya's character evolves, much to the surprise of JC, and possibly, to J.M. Coetzee himself, as an assertive figure of alterity, as a woman of substance occupying much space.

Anya's elusive identity beats Senor C and Alan alike, both of whom represent the patriarchal ideals. Alan-Anya relationship bases itself on the lies they share. Alan once cautions Anya against the possibility of JC using her in his works. He says to her, "you have an identity, which belongs to you alone. It is your most valuable possession, from a certain point of view, which you are entitled to protect. Vigorously" [sic] (*DBY* 59). Anya does exactly what Alan advises her to do when his true self is revealed to her. She realises how Alan has spied on her, how behind her

back he has used her to plot against Senor C and the truth dawns upon her that her boyfriend is a professional swindler. When Alan spoils their evening with JC, Anya breaks up with him for the last time, asserting her individuality. JC, who once has thought of Anya "as sweet" comes across her "quite stone-like, quite flinty" nature/self (112-113). She resists JC's attempts to undermine her and makes the author realise her indispensability; she even drives him to a point where he confuses himself as regards the authority/authorship of his work: "Was it true? Was Anya from 2514 in any but the most far-fetched sense the natural mother of the miscellany of opinions I was putting down on paper on commission from Mittwoch Verlag of Herderstrasse, Berlin?" Though the author vehemently denies such a possibility, it is to no vein, as his second set of comparatively gentler opinions clearly suggests the pervading influence of his typist. JC acknowledges, "you are everywhere in it, everywhere and nowhere" (124, 181). The success of Anya's resistance to being othered/marginalised gives an inkling of the future of the world andCoetzean texts foreground such resistances on the part of the others with a view to thwarting the western assumptions to homogenise them, disavowing their differences/heterogeneity.

The textual structure in itself favours such subversion. One rightly agrees with Patrick Hayes' observation:

> For every attempt made by the voice at the top of the page to homogenize, diagnose, and denounce modernity in general as instrumental, valueless, and Machiavellian, there is a countervoice at the bottom holding it back ... complicating its diagnosis, diverting its denunciation, and reminding us of the heterogeneity of values within

> 'the political' that metacultural discourse is inclined to overlook. (*J.M. Coetzee* 243)

The Diary published in 2007 continues to engage with otherness in a novelistic format that comprises three narratives shown on each page as three separate bands, which - each in its linearity constituting a plot on its own - are, nevertheless, linked to each other attaining a textual coherence.The text presents gradual evolution of thought regarding alterity as it closely follows Coetzee's previous novels in the explication of otherness centring on the responsibility towards the other. Like Attridge says, "the fullest acceptance of responsibility to and for the other may indeed be to trust the other, since this is to put the relationship to the other under the rubric of the future, and only in a willingness not to pre-program the future can the other – whose impact upon our lives remains incalculable and unforeseeable - be accepted"(103-104).

What characterises Coetzee's fiction during apartheid era is the portrayal of the attempt to consolidate selfhood on the part of the characters representative of colonial selves and the resistance of the others to being marginalised in the same process, as the construction of self entails the subjugation of others. It reflects his postcolonial outlook that is, nevertheless, subject to extraneous influences in the wake of apartheid ban. As in *Disgrace*, though the author has made a serious effort in upholding the postcolonial ideology, in certain instances, the representation of the other regresses to a stereotyped portrayal. Hence, it becomes an ideologically conflicted work steeped in ambivalence. In his Australian phase as a writer, the texts depict the self's desire of/for the other which underlies its struggle for recognition. The trajectory of the oeuvre which spans the apartheid/post-apartheid eras charts a gradual emergence of the other on to the hitherto denied public/private spaces; the

novels depict a textual representation of the same in the due course of which it subverts the binaries on which is erect the false superiority of the privileged term/sign/signified, thereby foregrounding the differences enabling the other to be on par with the self. From being split in the dialectical realm, the writer progresses to transcending the polarities, his retrogressive tendency contingent upon the socio-political exigency, the ban on apartheid, notwithstanding.

Chapter 4

(Dis) Placed In-Between

In South African novels, especially post-apartheid fiction, space emerges as a site of struggle, of resistance and nowhere is this as prominent as is the textual space of Coetzean fiction. His oeuvre, when analysed comprehensively, presents in itself a spatial trajectory that heads towards a relocation of space to subvert its totalising significations as a place characteristic of colonial times. "A highly problematical South African-colonial identity" – describing his, and any South African white writer's status thus, Coetzee highlights the "double-bound situation" in which a white writer simultaneously has to alienate himself from the land in order to appreciate it and identify with the land to inculcate a sense of belonging (*White Writing* 8). As Laura Wright rightly observes, "being white and male in South Africa is to inhabit the subject position of colonizer and apartheid beneficiary, a position with which Coetzee is clearly at odds" (53). Consequently emerges the fact that Coetzee is against any form of nationalism – be it Afrikaner or Black. What he vouches for is a transnational politics rooted in cross-cultural humanity. Coetzee's texts inhabit an in-between space, the space of doubling and so form the site of cultural translation allowing the emergence of other voices that have been hitherto marginalised. Denying essentialist logic and a mimetic referent challenges separatist acts; but at times strategic context-specific essentialist acts are inevitable to reclaimotherness. Coetzee's oeuvre exhibits this postcolonial paradox as it splits between self-other dialectics and the ambivalence of the narrative.

Ashcroft suggests that "colonization disrupts a people's *sense* of place" and it affects the coloniser and the colonised alike imposing feeling of displacement and

alienation (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 125). Since being dispossessed of a place where one's cultural roots lie involves estrangement, it is closely related to one's subjectivity. Doreen Massey too identifies 'place as a source of belonging, identity and security' ("A Place called Home?" 14). Such physical and psychological separations from one's place typify postcolonial times.In South Africa, whose history records twice the decolonisation process, both the white settlers and the majority blacks experience sense of displacement in distinct manner. To the early settlers, the African landscape presents a sense of unhomeliness, which intensifies in the post-apartheid era and the blacks sense displacement as they aredispossessed of their indigenous land that they have been trying to recover since the demise of apartheid.Coetzee terms the natives as doubly displaced as they have remained in a marginalized position in relation to white settlers who have denied them the privileges like the land of which the blacks are the rightful owners (*White Writing*1-11). Postcoloniality necessitates the reclamation of lost rights and literature stages the imaginative recovery of the same.In Massey's words, "one of the effects of modernity was the establishment of a particular power/knowledge relationwhich was mirrored in a geography, which was also a geography of power (the colonialpowers/the colonised spaces). And in the post-colonial moment it is that which has come home toroost. For exposing that geography – by the raising of voices located outside of the acceptedspeaking-space of modernity – has helped also to expose and undermine the power/knowledgerelation"(*Power-Geometrics and the Politics of Space-Time*13).

Place is an 'interaction of language, history and environment' (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 75) and sense of displacement refers to the cultural and psychological ramifications that entail colonial dispossession, a sense of feeling of

not-being-at-home. A re-conceptualization of space/place is characteristic of anti-colonial/postcolonial times that aim at subverting the colonial standardisations. In Foucault's description, "a whole history remains to be written of spaces … from the grotesque strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of thehabitat …' (*Power/Knowledge*94-103). Coetzee adopts a typical postcolonial stance in his narratives that critically engage with spatial concerns in terms of how space has been appropriated as knowledge and as territorial constructs in colonial times.To quote Said, "what if the world has changed so drastically as to allow now foralmost the first time a new geographical consciousness of a decentredor multi-centred world, a world no longer sealed within watertightcompartments of art of culture or history, but mixed, mixed up, varied,complicated by the new difficult mobility of migrations, the newindependent states, the newly emergent and burgeoning cultures?(*Reflections on Exile*471) Coetzee's broad vision regarding the world as a boundless space – a vision similar to that of Said - is manifest in his early novels.

The titular term 'dusklands' metaphorically connotates an in-between space invested with the potential to determine the nature of subjectivity. The relation between landscape and identity is explicit in the two novellas juxtaposed in the narrative. Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee are representatives of colonial subjects of postcolonial and colonial times respectively and, how space shapes their sense of selfhood is of paramount significance. The way in which the two protagonists relate to the space they inhabit shows the constructed nature of places and the ideological conflicts associated with it. The colonial spaces generated as shown in Jacobus' narrative have a stronghold on the psyche of the postcolonial subjects who remain in the grip of the sense of guilt owing to their complicity in the brutal colonial regime. It

is through their portrayal as invaders of the land that the texts effect a subversion of the colonial totalisation of the space as colonisers' bastions.

The constrained spaces affect the split subjectivity of Eugene Dawn. As a mythographer, he is asked to work on the Vietnam project and he finds himself confined to the library. He says, "My carrel in the library is gray, with a gray bookrack and a little gray drawer for stationery. My office at the Kennedy Institute is also gray. Gray desks and fluorescent lighting.... Gray planes, the shadowless green light under which like a pale stunned deep-sea fish I float...." During his childhood formative years, Eugene had kept a crystal garden in his room, which has a symbolic significance later when he says, "I am living a crystal life nowadays" (*DL* 7, 30). His public and private spaces are equally problematic. The strained marital relationship with Marilyn affects Eugene. Home becomes a space from where he longs to escape. The sense of belonging that Eugene longs for always eludes him. "America will swallow me, digest me, dissolve me in the tides of its blood. Marilyn need have no fear: she will always have a home" (9).

In the Foucauldian sense, an appropriation of space accords considerable power in the dissemination of knowledge. In his words, "once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain,implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power anddisseminates the effect of power" (*Power/Knowledge*69). Eugene refuses a familiarisation tour of Vietnam. – "I refused, and was permitted to refuse."Besides, he fails in the imaginative appropriation of space whichleads to his downfall.It is the shift in the position of his nation from that of the colonised to that of a coloniser that frustrates Eugene. He just cannot bear the burden and laments, "Vietnam has cost me

too much.... Inside my body, beneath the skin and muscle and flesh that drape me, I am bleeding" (*DL* 14, 32). The spatial metaphor continues and re-inscribes itself in the photographs that Eugene tries to decode/decipher:"yielding no passage into the interior of this obscure but indubitable man, I keep exploring. Under the persistent pressure of my imagination, acute and morbid in the night, it may yet yield" (17). What imperial powers have done to ensure their control is a homogenisation of the diverse native spaces. Here Eugene fails in his attempt to do so. His imaginative discourses on Vietnam take its toll on him. Admitting his failure he says, "In my writings on Vietnam ... I strove too, against great odds, to impose order on an area of chaos, though without success" (44).

On the contrary, Jacobus' narrative exposes the generation/production of colonial spaces. The self-reflexive narrative foregrounds the space-place dialectics quite often only to expose the appropriation that colonial invasion entails. As Jacobus says,

> sending myself out of the shrunken space of my bed to repossess my old world, and repossessed it until, coming face to face with the alien certainties of sun and stone, I had to stand off, leaving them for the day when I would not flinch.... Behind this familiar red or grey exterior ... this exterior jutting into every dimension inhabited by man, lies in ambush a black interior, quite, quite strange to the world. Yet under the explorer's hammerblow this innocent interior transforms itself in a flash into a replete, confident, worldly image of that red or grey exterior. How then, asked the stone, can the hammer-wielder who seeks to penetrate the heart of the universe be sure that there exist any interiors?

> Are they not perhaps fictions, these lures of interiors for rape which the universe uses to draw out its explorers?(*DL*77-78)

Colonisers come forth as the tamers of the wild, of wilderness, a term used in imaginative discourses to disseminate the idea of colonised spaces to erase the differences there. The text speaks of the relation of master and savage as a spatial one where enslavement to space denotes the colonised while a mastery of space, the coloniser. As long as the colonised remain enslaved, it is no threat to the master; once they start re-asserting themselves for reclamation of their space, repression begins.

The indigenous nature of the space which transforms under colonial rule is clear from the text: "Spend a winter under canvas in the Roggeveld, the days too cold to leave the fire, the water frozen in the barrel, nothing to eat but meal cakes and slaughter-sheep, and soon you carry the Hottentot smell with you, mutton fat and thornbush smoke ... The Piquetberg used to be swarming with Bushmen until a few years ago" (*DL*57- 58). Colonialism has always asserted the vastness and emptiness of the boundless space and Jacobus too does the same through his colonial gaze and hunting metaphors: "It is only when you hunt them as you hunt jackals that you can really clear a stretch of country ....I inhabited the past again, meditating upon my life as tamer of the wild. I meditated upon the acres of new ground I had eaten up with my eyes" (59, 74). He reiterates the power implicit in colonial gaze, the power to control and consolidate the space through vision:

> In the wild I lose my sense of boundaries. This is a consequence of place and solitude. The operation of space is thus: five senses stretch out from the body they inhabit, but four stretch into a vacuum. The ear

> cannot hear, the nose cannot smell, the tongue cannot taste, the skin cannot feel.... Only eyes have power. The eyes are free. They reach out to the horizon all around. Nothing is hidden from the eyes. ... I become a spherical reflecting eye moving through the wilderness and ingesting it. Destroyer of the wilderness, I move through the land cutting a devouring path from horizon to horizon. There is nothing from which my eye turns, I am all that I see. (78-79)

Jacobus possesses, as Coetzee says, "the imperial eye – the eye that by seeing names and dominates" (*White Writing* 174). His journey beyond the Great River typifies colonial explorations that acquire spaces through the strategies of the powerful – naming and mapping. In Jacobus' words, "these forking paths across that true wilderness without polity called the land of the Great Namaqua where everything, I was to find, was possible" (*DL* 66). How the brutal regime dispossessed the native comes clear in Coetzee's narrative, which, being so is a subversive act in itself: "Lifting my gun in one easy motion I fired into the ground at her feet. There was no echo and barely any dust, but the woman screamed with fright and fell flat. The crowd turned tail. I left her untouched where she lay and turned to supervise the inspanning. At once she scrambled off" (74).

In sharp contrast to Eugene Dawn is Jacobus – the former succumbs to the pressure exerted by the imaginative geography of Vietnam, while Jacobus succeeds in taming the wilderness: "We cannot count the wild. The wild is one because it is boundless.... I am a hunter, a domesticator of wilderness, a hero of enumeration" (*DL*80). It is the colonial policy of erasure that Jacobus' account reveals: "I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark. If the

Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way"(*DL*106). The sense of acquisition of control over space makes Jacobus different from Eugene, who cannot even exercise an imaginative control over the space.

Jean Sevry rightly observes that "the treatment of space, in the works of J.M. Coetzee, presents us with a ceaseless variation, a constant shifting from vast and empty spaces to narrow and restricted nooks" (18). At the outset of the novel *In the Heart of the Country* Magda says, "In a house shaped by destiny like an H I have lived all my life, in a theatre of stone and sun fenced in with miles of wire, spinning my trail from room to room, looming over the servants, the grim widow-daughter of the dark father" (*IHC*3). Magda is a figure who, confines herself to the four walls of her house on the farm and, like Eugene Dawn, experiences deliriums on emerging out into the open space. Cutting across space and time, the text deconstructs the farm of South African *plaasroman* rooted in patriarchal/colonial ideology. *In the Heart of the Country* presents the farm,"in limitless space, in endless time", as a heterotopia where the master-slave dichotomy comes to naught with the events following the death of the patriarch, Magda's father (13).

The temporal aspects border on that of the spatial on Coetzee's farm where space turns out to be the lived experience of its subjects. "Time on the farm is the time of the wide world, neither a jot nor a little more or less" (*IHC*3). Life on the farm that is always presented as idyllic in *plaasroman* is subject to subversion in Coetzee's narrative. Along gender lines, Magda is representative of the victims of the colonial/patriarchal rule under a patriarch. Her submissive existence and the resultant

despair come forth in terms like “melancholy spinsters” and “miserable black virgin” (3, 5). Nevertheless, she is the white woman who stresses the existence of other selves on the farm: “I grew up with the servants’ children, I spoke like one of them before I learned to speak like this....With the servants’ children I searched the veld for khamma-roots, fed cowsmilk to the orphaned lambs, hung over the gate to watch the sheep dipped and the Christmas pig shot” (7). Her emergence as a figure that stands for intersubjectivity begins with her act of parricide.

Magda has an isolated existence on the farm, where “across valleys of space and time we strain ourselves to catch the pale smoke of each other’s signals” (*IHC*8). Accordingly, such a place shapes the subjectivity that is prone to changes as per the interrelations between the inhabitants. The constrained space of the house makes her mull over the philosophy of being. She says,

> I am incomplete, I am a being with a hole inside me, I signify something, I do not know what, I am dumb, I stare out through a sheet of glass into a darkness that is complete, that lives in itself, bats, bushes, predators and all, that does not regard me, that is blind, that does not signify but merely is.... I live inside a skin inside a house. There is no act I know of that will liberate me into the world. There is no act I know of that will bring the world into me. (10)

The unwritten rules of the farm with the patriarchal values, make her a resistant figure. Though a white, her submissiveness as a woman frustrates her and her narrative too impinges on her sense of alienation. She asks herself, “is it possible that I am a prisoner not of the lonely farmhouse and the stone desert but of my stony

monologue?" Magda is a woman who has never left the farm, is foreign to townslife and who prefers to immerse herself in a landscape of symbols where simple passions can spin and fume around their own centres (*IHC*13).

Magda is devoid of the sense of rightful ownership of the land. When she confronts Hendrik, this sense of alienation overpowers her and she tries to disavow it through verbal iteration. "This is not Hendrik's home. No one is ancestral to the stone desert, but the insects, among whom myself a thin black beetle with dummy wings who lays no eggs and blinks in the sun, a real puzzle to entomology" (20). The narrative functions as a site/space that stages the return of the dispossessed. It does establish the marginalised majority as the heirs of the land taken away from them.

> Hendrik's forebears in the olden days crisscrossed the desert with their flocks and their chattels, heading from A to B or from X to Y, sniffing for water, abandoning stragglers, making forced marches. Then one day fences began to go up ... men on horseback rode up and from shadowed faces issued invitations to stop and settle that might also have been orders and might have been threats, one does not know, and so one became a herdsman, and one's children after one, and one's women took in washing. Fascinating this colonial history.... (20)

A re-inscription of colonial history on the colonial space happens and it challenges the totalising notions associated with the places transformed according to colonial values and norms. As the text suggests, "the landscape recomposes itself and settles [down]" reminding one of the traces of difference that colonial spatial ordering has subsumed or erased (28).

Magda herself refers to her room as an uncomprehending space. She says, "This is the irreducible, this is my room ... and I do not wish that it should ever change" (*IHC*52-53). She is in spatial and temporal constraints, "in her shuttered room ... in cycles of time, outside the true time of the world" (39). Spacing constitutes her ambivalence that makes her adjust to the suffocating existence. She is desirous of a colonial sense of space and at the same time, of a sense of freedom from the private space of home as a colonial/patriarchal gender construct of confinement: "I would not be myself if I did not feel the seductions of the cool stone house, the comfortable old ways, the antique feudal language" (*IHC*47). Spatially she tries to establish the distance locating her'self' and others on either sides of a "dry river" and later realises that "the land knows nothing of the fences" (104, 124). Though she tries to bring down the fences, her ambivalence makes her reluctant too. She even realizes that "here in the heart of the country where space radiates out from [her] to all the four corners of the earth there is nothing that can stop [her,] ... here in the middle of nowhere [she] can expand to infinity just as [she] can shrivel to the size of an ant" (54-55). Torn between conflicts that cut across race and gender, she occupies the in-between space from where resistance begins.

Once she emerges from her recluse life, out into the farm, "in the heart of nowhere, in [the] dead place" [*IHC*120], Magda tries to establish reciprocity with others, especially her servants, Hendrik and Anna, who but, unfortunately fail to understand her gesture. The farm, of which she becomes the head, makes her think, "I am heir to a space of natal earth which my ancestors found good and fenced about. To the spur of desire we have only one response: to capture, to enclose, to hold. But how real is our possession? Still, she is reluctant to acknowledge the rightful heirs of the

land as she voices her scepticism loud: “I cannot say whether Hendrik and Anna are guests or invaders or prisoners” (124, 122). Like her father, she tries to bring order to the farm, make it her second home, and so is the female representative of colonialism/imperialism.

Magda, true to her words, has always been“at the centre of a field of moral tensions” (*IHC*76). The Lacanian overtones of her subjectivity embedded in a spatial metaphor of the body are never to go unnoticed: “Inside my skull the walls are glassy, I see only reflections of myself drab and surly staring back at myself.” Her split sense of the self heightens because of her sense of alienation and displacement. She tries hard to extricate herself from what ties her to the race of the exploiters of foreign land: “I am not simply one of the whites, I am I! I am I, not a people. Why have I to pay for other people’s sins? You know how I live here on the farm, totally outside human society, almost outside humanity!” (41, 128) The sense of being an outsider intensifies on being rejected by her servants. In a state of madness where she hears voices, Magda gets to the bottom of things: “*The feeling of solitude is a longing for place. That place is the centre of the world, the navel of the universe.*” The text achieves an ethical dimension when it asserts through Magda, the re-conceptualization of home -“I for one do not wish to be at the centre of the world, I wish only to be at home in the world as the merest beast is at home” (146, 147).

Coetzee’s envisioning of the world in the microcosm of the farm as “an island out of space, out of time”, as “a district outside the law” (*IHC* 134, 150) continues in his subsequent text, *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The “barbarous frontier” which makes Magda a cantankerous subject, “only because there is infinite space around [her], and time before and after from which history seems to have retreated, and

evidence in [the] bowed faces of limitless power" (150), becomes the unnamed border that effects a transformation in the Magistrate who finds himself being constituted continually in relation to the space and the subjects he confronts.

The text projects the frontier as a curious locale where snakes are delicacies to the people. In the description of the frontier, its nature as a minimally populated area with an economy thriving on agriculture is clear: "the granary is a massive building with heavy doors and tiny windows; it lies beyond the abattoir and the mill in the south quarter. Also what was once an outpost and then a fort on the frontier has grown into an agricultural settlement, a town of three thousand souls" (*IHC*5). Landscape recurs in the dreams of the protagonist as a vast expanse of land suggesting in itself the repressed colonial desire of appropriation of land treating it as an empty and barren land with no occupants.

> From horizon to horizon the earth is white with snow. It falls from a sky in which the source of light is diffuse and everywhere present, as though the sun has dissolved into mist, become an aura. In the dream I pass through the barracks gate, pass the bare flagpole. The square extends before me, blending at its edges into the luminous sky. Walls, trees, houses have dwindled, lost their solidity, retired over the rim of the world (10).

Living at the frontier for a while the Magistrate perceives things in a different way. The border space reminds him of his status as belonging to the group of invaders who have exploited the natives. Such a realization makes him confront the Colonel who comes to the frontier with objective of creating enemies out of the barbarians. The

Magistrate warns the Colonel: "The barbarians you are chasing will smell you coming and vanish into the desert while you are still a day's march away. They have lived here all their lives, they know the land. You and I are strangers – you even more than I" (*WB* 12). He is also instrumental in exposing the colonial way of appropriating geography into knowledge through mapping. When the Colonel comments on their luck to be fortunate as explorers with excellent maps, the Magistrate reminds him of its nature as an imaginative/discursive construct. Reality is far from, what discursive knowledge that arises out of colonial interests provides one with as the truth. The indigenous tales, which are overlooked by the colonial powers, indicate a different truth/reality. As the Magistrate says, "the barbarians, who are pastoralists, nomads, tent-dwellers, make no reference in their legends to a permanent settlement near the lake"(*WB* 16). Such settlements are purely foreign and,creating borders and fences, these communities have had adverse impact on the natives disrupting their normalcy of life in the region, disturbing the ecosystem as well: "A generation ago there were antelope and hares in such numbers that watchmen with dogs had to patrol the fields by night to protect the young wheat. But under pressure from the settlement, particularly from dogs running wild and hunting in packs, the antelope have retreated eastward and northward to the lower reaches of river and the far shore" (41).

The author himself describes a spatial metaphor of the torture room he has used in the text:

> [Waiting for Barbarians is] about the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience. ... [R]elations in the torture room provide a metaphor, bare and extreme, for relations between authoritarianism and its victims. In the torture room unlimited force is

> exerted upon the physical being of an individual in a twilight of legal illegality, with the purpose, if not of destroying him, then at least of destroying the kernel of resistance within him. (*Doubling the Point*363)

Here the Magistrate keeps the fire of resistance burning. From the Magistrate's ruminations the influence space has on human subjectivity becomes obvious. According to him, "if [he] lived in the magistrate's villa on the quietest street in town ... [he] might cease to feel like a man..." (*WB* 22). Apart from investing the hybrid space of the frontier with immense disruptive potential as a site of resistance, the narrative foregrounds the abstract nature of space that has been subject to colonial spatialisation built on unequal power relations. The Magistrate remarks, "the space about us here is merely space, no meaner or grander than the space above the shacks and tenements and temples and offices of the capital. Space is space, life is life, everywhere the same" (17). This re-conceptualisation of space signals postcolonial resistance to the imposition of imperial spatial connotations.

One cannot overlook the existential crisis which the Magistrate experiences. The metaphysics of being vexes his psyche. At times to questions like where he lives, his reply is that he just lives and sometimes he feels that "there is a space of time which is blank to [him]: ... [he is] not even present." Yet, quite often, colonial values/norms resurface as in his dreams. When the barbarian girl enters his life, the centre-periphery dichotomy that structures his consciousness has a firm grip over the Magistrate. What he does is install the barbarian girl in the barracks kitchen as a scullery-maid. It is colonial ambivalence that is evident when he expresses his anxiety: "I look into the eye. Am I to believe that gazing back at me she sees nothing ... at the centre where I am, only a blur, a blank?" (*WB*30, 33) Like Eugene Dawn and

Magda, his desire for spatial control, occupying the centre and subordinating the others to the margins overpowers him.

The bodily metaphor reiterates the desire for mastery over the space giving it an added dimension. It is quite perplexing to the Magistrate whether "... [it is] she [he wants] or the traces of a history her body bears?" (70) To the Magistrate, says Jolly, the girl's body is "a surface, a map of a surface, a text" ("Territorial Metaphor" 72). But the barbarian girl eludes him and through such a portrayal the text deconstructs the colonial sense of total control over the space which imperialists acquire as nothing but illusion, as the "racialised and sexualised" space resists any kind of homogenisation with the traces of difference that colonial discourses have tried to erase while assigning meanings through naming, mapping and other policies of segregation to justify their mission (*Text, Theory, Space* Intro 12). In the Magistrate's words, "to desire her has meant to enfold her and enter her, to pierce her surface and stir the quiet of her interior into an ecstatic storm; then to retreat, to subside, to wait for desire to reconstitute itself. But with this woman it is as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry" (*WB* 46). Along with his realisation that one just cannot"burn or tear or hack [one's] way into the secret body of the other" comes the representation of space as a disruptive agent in the text. Images of blankness and emptiness intensify the spatial interrelations between the characters: "but beside him, where the girl should be, there is a space, a blankness. ...The space to the right of the man remains blank" (46, 52). It is this virtual space that emerges as the in-between one where the presencing of the other begins: "The space beside the man remains empty, but a faint sense of the presence of the girl, an aura, begins to emerge" (52).

The journey motif, which Coetzean narratives employ, takes a different dimension here. If in *Dusklands*, the journeys undertaken are to explore and assert the sense of selfhood, exterminating the natives, here the journey into the interiors is to help the barbarian girl. During the journey, the Magistrate comes to face the irresistible alterity of the girl, when all others except the girl find it difficult to adapt to the changing scenario, and the space he covers: "Only with a deliberate effort can I reinsert myself into time and space: into a bed, a tent, a night, a world, a body pointing west and east. ... As the terrain grows rockier we progress more and more slowly" (*WB*69, 76). As he travels, the Magistrate remembers "the people being pushed off the plains into the mountains by the spread of the Empire" (78). In order to construct their own vantage spaces the colonial powers fabricate details – a way of othering the spaces: "Someone has decided that the riverbanks provide too much cover for the barbarians, that the river would form a more defensible line if the banks were cleared. So they have fired the bush" (*WB*89). The brutal spatial appropriation of the regime does in fact add to the psychological impact arising out of cultural denigration.

After his return, the Magistrate reacts to the colonial mechanisms initiated by the Colonel who confines him to a cell in the name of treason from where the Magistrate learns about humanity (*WB*126). Later, he becomes least bothered about the changes that happen at the frontier: "some say that the entire thousand-mile frontier has erupted into conflict, that the northern barbarians have joined forces with the western barbarians, that the army of the Empire is too thinly stretched, that one of these days it will be forced to give up the defence of remote outposts like this one to concentrate its resources on the protection of the heartland" (135). In his dreams, the

catalyst of his transformation, the barbarian girl splits and doubles: "In one dream there are two shapes that arouse horror in me: massive and blank, they grow and grow till they fill all the space in which I sleep." As life on the frontier becomes too difficult for the Magistrate, his dreams too change its nature. He visualises himself "swoop down upon the solitary figure at the centre of the square" (96, 149). With the natives occupying the frontier, the Magistrate wonders about the possibility of a better place to live, free of all the taints of the colonial guilt:"Is there any better way to pass these last days than in dreaming of a saviour with a sword who will scatter the enemy hosts and forgive us the errors that have been committed by others in our name and grant us a second chance to build our earthly paradise?" (157)

Postcoloniality strives hard at the reclamation of these territories or a deterritorialisation to bring about a breakdown of the imperial spatial structures. As the Magistrate says, "They want an end to the spread of settlements across their land. They want their land back, finally. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to" (*WB*54). The Magistrate becomes the spokesperson of the colonisers and colonised alike, who experience the sense of being outsiders – the former, being in a foreign land during the postcolonial times and the latter, lacking ownership and being dispossessed of their native land. According to him, or probably the author, "we think of the country here as ours, part of our Empire – our outpost, our settlement, our market centre. But these people, these barbarians don't think of it like that at all. We have been here more than a hundred years, we have reclaimed land from the desert and built irrigation works and planted fields and built solid homes and put a wall around our town, but they still think of us as visitors, transients" (55). Coetzee's fiction, which, in Head's words, constitutes "the space in

which an autonomous aesthetic expression can be recognized" (*J.M. Coetzee* 17), provides a textual space for the imaginative reclamation of the land by the indigenous people, a space that forms a site of ambivalence and hybridity for alterity to emerge and assert itself.

The border aligns with the conceptualization of the thirdspace by Homi K. Bhabha as a site of hybridity, of differences where other voices makes their presence felt. Being the ambivalent figures inhabiting the in-between spaces, the protagonists of Coetzee's early fiction are prototypes of the latter ones who have their subjectivity shaped in relation to spatial forces. The tension and conflict which the protagonists are subjectto, is highly suggestive of the disruptive presence of the hitherto marginalised others exerting their alterity. Dissolving the binaries involving various variables, Coetzee's oeuvre foregrounds the lived experience of the individuals as informed by the spatio-temporal aspects. To one of the questions posed by Attwell, Coetzee replies:

> *Barbarians* is more accommodating toward nature description than In the Heart of the Country or ... *Dusklands*. ... what is "described" in *Barbarians* is a landscape I have never seen; whereas I know the landscape of the other two books, to say nothing of *Michael K*, all too well. So the landscape of *Barbarians* represented a challenge to my power of envisioning, while the Karoo threatened only the tedium of reproduction, reproduction of a phraseology in which the Karoo has been done to death in a century of writing and overwriting (drab bushes, stunted trees, heat-stunned flats, shrilling of cicadas and so forth). (*Doubling the Point* 142)

The fluid sense of belonging, which a place Coetzee knows 'all too well' - farm in the Karoo – generates, forms the spatial crux of the novel *Life & Times of Michael K*.

Being the first, and probably the only coloured protagonist in Coetzee's fiction Michael's is a case that has been in critical contention for years. With respect to the treatment of space, the text gives certain insights that have serious socio-political implications in the apartheid South Africa. The text presents "the unhomely world" (*L&T*20) from which Michael K tries to get a sense of belonging, a feeling of being secure and safe and in Strode's opinion, "the narrative is ... an exploration of the meanings of being perpetually dislocated from a fixed abode" (181). Owing to his cleft lip, Michael himself creates around him a very intimate and private space that he does not wish others to invade. In terms of spatiality, what strikes first in *Life & Times of Michael K* is the recurring image/vision of Huis Norenius in Faure giving the titular character a sense of uncanniness/unhomeliness. His formative years in Huis Norenius, where during his last years Michael "could slip off to his place behind the shed and be left alone" (*L&T* 68), have been of frightening and suffocating experience/existence that a shift from such a confined space to that of the open gardens that his profession as a gardener demands is a welcome change to Michael K. His repressed desires as a child come to play as his self takes immense pleasure in enjoying the newfound freedom in Cape Town. The fact that a juxtaposition of closed and open spaces in his life happens as early as his childhood, which has shaped his self, speaks volumes about the break-free type he turns out to be in due course of the narrative.

Michael's penchant for open, free space is evident from the way he responds to the space at the public lavatories where he worked as a night attendant for a short

period: "... down in the lavatories he had been oppressed by the brilliant neon light that shone off the white tiles and created a space without shadows." A similar oppression is felt when he comes to take care of his mother, Anna. He does not like "the physical intimacy that the long evenings in the tiny room force[s] upon the two of them" (*L&T*4, 7). How space affects the individuals and their interrelations is perceptible in the mother-son interactions. In Anna's case, she feels, in her own words, "like a toad under a stone living [t]here.... Moreover, her stay at Somerset hospital shows her how hostile the world can be in times of war and her bitter experience makes her wish for her girlhood days on the farm. The text, which presents Cape Town as a city ravaged by war and conflicts, has as one of its spatial themes the city/farm or centre/periphery dialectics. The town is in sharp contrast with "the quieter countryside" which Anna envisions in her imagination about a farm in the district of Prince Albert (9, 7).

Amidst the violence unleashed by the miscreants, Michael and Anna cut out helpless figures huddling "quiet as mice in their room beneath the stairs, not stirring even when they smelled the smoke, even when heavy boots stamped past and a hand rattled the locked door" (*L&T*12). The image of Cape Town "flooded with people from the countryside" with "no work, no accommodation" conveys the unavoidable consequences of suppressed differences which result in the outbreak of struggles for survival (13, 14). Michael chooses to fulfil his mother's desire to return to her farm and not long before he has made his decision, there come the men sent by the owner to force them out of their seemingly secure space/place, heightening their sense of unhomeliness and dislocation. This act of displacement that cuts across the class and race variables speeds up their journey Anna has been looking forward to. The

narrative heightens the sense of being in a strange land as victims of civil war, employing signboards of language like "HERVESTIGING-RELOCATION" with scores of people queueing under it and images like "ghostly industrial quarter of Paarden Eiland" (19, 21), suggestive of desolateness of land where spatial segregations too determine the existence of humans along with other imperial structures.

The journey to the interiors has a different manifestation here, unlike the previous novels. It is an attempt on Michael K's part to reach his roots, finding different routes for the same. Typical of a postcolonial endeavour, the journey signifies the reclamation of one's identity and one's space/place in this world. On the way to the farm, Anna is admitted in Stellenbosch hospital. The disturbing scenes at the hospital, where "no more than a one-foot space can be found between the beds in the wards" (*L&T* 40), his mother's death and the subsequent stay at Stellenbosch make Michael even more determined to find a space of his own. He sets off to the Karoo with his mother's ashes. Anna has already kindled in him the image of home, a place of belonging and security in Prince Albert through her narratives. It is little astonishing then that when the police officers question him on the way, K says that he is "going home to Prince Albert." Whenever he sets his foot in new area, the image of land as a vast expanse crosses his mind. He thinks, "it's God's earth ... I am not a thief" (*L&T*39). Therefore, on being held a captive, there is nothing that K can do but resist any sort of spatial constraints.

Crossing and re-crossing the fences, Michael realises that finally he is "living off the land" (*L&T*46). Alongside the description of Michael's journey, unravels the landscape details that aid in effecting a change in the traveller's perspective of the

world. One comes across the images of vast and empty lands, dry rivers, bushes – all reminiscent of the heterogeneity/diversity of spaces and the constructed nature of places with borders. What it deconstructs is the idyllic portrayal of landscape in traditional *plaasroman* novels, which in representations are political falling in line with colonial interests. Instead of the serene pastoral vision, which even Anna has, the novel presents a hostile and unfriendly world where man struggles to survive. There are times when Michael is shooed off the land by people who consider it as their private spaces. However, to Michael it seems that he can live on any piece of land until his death: "Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before, there would be nothing to say" (46). Michael K conveys a beautiful but idealistic vision of the world as a space free of all kinds of fences, a vision that has serious implications in the new South Africa where land policies still favour the whites as the privileged lot.

On reaching the Visagies' farm in Prince Albert, Michael K puts into practice the philosophy of life he has learnt. The farm presents a picture in contrast to the one he has imagined as per his mother's stories about it. Still he feels he "[is] somewhere", a place where he feels no restraints; as he says, a place where he can "make any sound [he likes]" (*L&T*52, 56). He begins his life there as a hunter and soon shifts to that of a cultivator scattering his mother's ashes on the farm. The place gives him nightmares regarding the claustrophobic Huis Norenius, and he occasionally experiences as if he were "trying to cross an arid landscape that tilted and threatened to tip him over its edge" (57). Yet, he feels stronger during daytime when he gathers strength from gardening/cultivating which assumes immense significance as a symbol of resistance:"The impulse to plant had been reawaken in

him; now, in a matter of weeks, he found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of the earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there" (59). In this "pocket outside time" all the other spaces fade into oblivion until the appearance of Visagies' grandson, whose arrival effects a temporary displacement and, Michael remembers again the colonial frames of references that structure the perception of the world and its subjects (60).

Having already become a different kind of man, Michael goes in search of an open, free space signalling that he can no longer be confined to a marginal space. Challenging colonial spatial organisation, he reaches the mountains, outwitting Visagies' grandson. The mountains convey to Michael, and in turn to the readers, the boundless spaces that resist any kind of totalising definitions. With a powerful narrative that describes Michael's life there, the abstractness of space too gets across the imagination. From the unbound spaces, Michael, when held a captive, is transported to the rigidity of Jakkalsdrif camp.

> Not for a moment had he guessed that it might be one of the resettlement camps, that the tents and unpainted wood-and-iron buildings might house people, that its perimeter might be a three-metre fence surmounted with a strand of barbed wire. When he climbed out of the van holding up his pants, he did so under the eyes of a hundred curious inmates, adults and children, lining the fence on either side of the gate. (73)

When the guards of law and order see the camp as home for many, people like Michael just cannot associate the feeling of being at home with being in a camp. To

him mountains, farm, road and even Cape Town seem better than the camp. The prison-like existence in the bunk, his only home according to a Free Corps man, in the relocation camp smothers Michael who soon finds a way out. While traversing empty landscapes on his escape route, he sees fences quite often reminding him of his status as a trespasser/runaway, simultaneously realising that he can never bring himself to "driving stakes into the ground, erecting fences, dividing up the land" (97).

Back in Visagies' farm, Michael feels at home; the sense of homeliness overwhelms him and he says, "I want to live here ... I want to live here forever where my mother and my grandmother lived" (*L&T*99). Michael starts living as a recluse in harmony with nature. He embraces wholeheartedly the loneliness that Magda dreads and with each passing day, he gathers confidence. The adventurous life of men from the mountains does have a temporary hold on Michael, but then the pull is comparatively weaker than that of being a gardener for all time. Quite unaware of the passage of time, Michael leads life, cultivating pumpkins on the farm where he has created a space of his own. Michael's ponderings during free time bring out the irony in the state's version of the camps as parasites on the town: "Parasites too had flesh and substance; parasites too could be preyed upon." To the questions of the police officers who find him, typical of the free soul he has become, Michael replies, "I live in the veld ... I live nowhere" (116, 120).

Michael experiences strong ties with the land in spite of his fluidic sense of belonging. He himself wonders when being taken away by the police, "so what is it ... that binds me to this spot of earth as if to a home I cannot leave?" (*L&T*124) Michael even cannot bear the sight of a stranger digging his stretch of earth. The text tries to stress the fact that it is simply not the ownership of land that creates a sense of

belonging; a house of one's own is only one of the factors. When to the authorities the camps also are sort of homes, to Michael the place that a home offers is synonymous with mother's lap: "We must all leave home, after all, we must all leave our mothers" (124). Kenilworth camp replicates the narrative of *Waiting for the Barbarians* in that it too exposes the othering process based on fictional/imaginative assumptions that create a militant out of Michael K. Things are no different for Michael at his second camp where he confides in Felicity, the nurse of his sense of freedom: "I used to think about flying. I always wanted to fly. I used to stretch out my arms and think I was flying over the fences and between the houses." Michael's experiences have only reiterated his childhood urge to fly over the fences that the camp, which is "an old racetrack and a quantity of barbed wire ... to effect a change in men's souls", does nothing but make Michael fulfil his desire (*L&T*133, 134).

Continual displacements bring out the resistant nature of Michael. For, displacement, says Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "involves the inventions of new forms of subjectivities ... which also implies the continuous renewal of values to which one refers in fabricating the tools of resistance" (217). Michael's resistance to remain confined to any space is similar to the way he resists the Medical Officer's attempt to decipher him. He presupposes Friday's character in Foe in foregrounding silence as a strategy of resistance. In his determined replies to the queries, Michael stresses that all are "the children of the earth." The Medical Officer who comes under the influence of Michael reads meaning into the life of Michael. He acknowledges in his letter that Michael in fact belongs to the bushes. The self-explanatory narrative of the Medical Officer satirically portrays the nation's laws that put people like Michael in camps. As he states, "here is no home left for universal souls, except perhaps in Antartica or

on the high seas" (*L&T*139, 151). Conflating space and time, the officer writes to Michael,

> We have all tumbled over the lip into the cauldron of history: only you, following your idiot light, biding your time in an orphanage (who would have thought of that as a hiding place?), evading the peace and the war, skulking in the open where no one dreamed of looking, have managed to live in the old way, drifting through time, observing the seasons, no more trying to change the course of history than a grain of sand does. (151-152)

Nevertheless, he asks Michael to yield lest he should perish in obscurity. However, Michael's name goes down in literary canon, postcolonial probably, as a resistant figure who has succeeded in the re-inscription of spaces he inhabits as sites of hybridity/ difference. He is "a genuine little man of earth", which transforms under him into a gardening space for all (161).

Michael flees from Kenilworth camp as well forcing the Medical Officer to ally with his convictions regarding life/existence. The Officer becomes unsettled in his space/place where he has been happy until his acquaintance with Michael and admits: "I could see that you did not belong inside any camp (*L&T*163). He also explicates the allegorical meaning of Michael's space in the world:

> the meaning of the secret and alluring garden that blooms in the heart of the desert and produces the food of life. The garden for which you are presently heading is nowhere and everywhere except in the camps. It is another name for the only place where you belong ... where you do not

> feel homeless. It is off every map, no road leads to it that is merely a road, and only you know the way. (166)

To Coetzee, as he says to Morphet, if there is any opposition between the garden and the camp, it is only at a conceptual level as garden life is transitory when "the whole surface of South Africa has been surveyed and mapped and disposed of." And one just cannot "lump De Wall Park and the Sea Point room with the garden in the Karoo" (*Contemporary Literary Criticism* 32). What Michael has shown the Officer is how to stay out of all camps, which serve as a metonym for all the fences. To Dominic Head "*Michael K* is a highly politicized novel, at once an account of – and a parable about – the control of social space" (*J.M. Coetzee* 103). As Michael says, on reaching Sea Point, "perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all the camps at the same time. Perhaps that is enough of an achievement, for the time being. ... I have escaped the camps... (*L&T* 182).

A poignant portrayal of the psyche of the dispossessed marks the narrative, which lashes against the powerful who thrive at the expense of others.

> If these people really wanted to be rid of us ... if they really wanted to forget us forever, they would have to give us picks and spades and command us to dig; then, when we had exhausted ourselves digging, and had dug a great hole in the middle of the camp, they would have to order us to climb in and lay ourselves down; and when we were lying there, all of us, they would have to break down the huts and tents and tear down the fence and throw the huts and the fence and the tents as

> well as every last thing we had owned upon us, and cover us with earth, and flatten the earth. (94)

Like farm and border, camp too constitutes the space/site of resistance as it urges the subject to challenge/defy the polarising values. Through the old man, Robert, who defines the camp as a place of abode the text lays bare the hegemonic control the state repressive mechanism exercises on its subjects. Laura Wright finds both, the Magistrate and Michael K, pushing "at the boundaries that define their existence within the interregnum" (93). The novel is a clarion call for the public to think, to act, to break all the shackles which erect boundaries and fences in the name of race, class, gender and nation with a view to subjugate others establishing and justifying unequal power relations. This is what exactly Michael K does choosing a nomadic existence over being confined to a specific geo-political locale that lays restraints on the subjects.

In the wake of poststructuralist theories that stress truth and reality as purely linguistic constructs, Coetzee's fiction seems to fall in line with the major tenets that assert identity, power, knowledge, place, space etc as products of language. *Foe*, which progresses in four parts with its settings, an unidentified island and London, is no exception and the revisional nature of the novel accounts for its potential to make political interventions mainly through the textual space foregrounded as a context/site of resistance.Spivak, in her reading of the novel says, "*Foe* is more about placing and displacement than about the timing of history and labour" ("Theory in the Margin" 161).

It is on the unnamed, remote island where the castaways negotiate their identities in an effort to assert themselves and experience their homeland. Susan and Cruso seek reassurance of the superior selfhood in their attempts to reconstruct the selves based on the identities that helped them survive in their homeland. Susan's first impressions of the island reflect the preconceived notions as per the Western stereotyping of the remote, unknown places in traveller's accounts: "I have come to the wrong island, I thought, and let my head sink: I have come to an island of cannibals." The island does not hold any appeal to her who revels in the superior rationality of human beings. She wonders, "who accustomed to the fullness of human speech, can be content with caws and chirps and screeches, and the barking of seals, and the moan of the wind?"(*Foe* 6, 8) In effect, the island being a replica of the third space, a conceptual space suggestive of "the contingent and the liminal" (Bhabha, *The Location* 256), becomes the site where the polarised identities dissolve and new identities emerge. The new selves, foregrounding the in-between borders amid self and other, and even space and place/non-place, are essentially ambivalent and thereby unsettle the sense of a unitary selfhood.

Though Friday's existence is seemingly a subjugated one, he defies the colonisers' attempt to marginalise him, appropriating his space. It is not as per the commands of Cruso that Friday helps Susan out at the beginning. Nor is it as per the whims and fancies of Cruso and Susan that he leads his life. Quite contrary to the western/colonial assumptions as regards blacks/Negroes, Friday has an individuality; enjoys much freedom as some of his activities reveal – singing, dancing, casting petals on the waters and his private retreats or "mopes" (*Foe* 78), as they are called. He comes out as a human being with goodness despite the cannibalistic attributes that

the colonial figures bestow him with frequently. In London, Friday is no different from what he has been on the island. He weaves a world of his own and is unwavering in his silence, resolute not to communicate.

In her relationship with Cruso, Friday and Foe, Susan's identity, overdetermined by gender and race, is at the same time that of the oppressed and oppressor. Such a tension accounts for the ambivalent attitude that she shares with Magda, another Coetzean female protagonist of *In the Heart of the Country*. She resists the unconscious attempts of Cruso to appropriate her space in terms of patriarchal conventions. The instinctual urge on the part of Cruso, who "would brook no change on his island," is to restrict Susan's freedom when he has to share the space with her. He warns her not to venture from his castle and when Susan violates the order Cruso's male ego erupts: "While you live under my roof you will do as I instruct!" (*Foe* 27, 20)

Incidentally, it is noteworthy that during her stay on the island she does subject herself willingly to the desires of Cruso, who, initially, invades Susan's private space and infringes upon her freedom as an individual trying to restrict her to a closed circle on the island. She, to her credit, emerges unscathed, successfully resisting the male othering efforts, as a bold, intelligent and determined woman who has the power to unleash retorts against the patriarchal Cruso. When Cruso restrains her freedom, she firmly tells him, "I am a castaway, not a prisoner" (*Foe* 20). While Magda ends up murdering her father, thus ending an era of patriarchy, Susan tames Cruso to some extent, though she chooses to restrain her tongue most of the time.

Susan's journey comes full circle when she reaches her homeland after her sojourns in Bahia and on the island. When she is in Bahia, Susan is looked down upon as a whore as "a woman who goes abroad freely is thought a whore"(*Foe* 115). Her identity changes from that of a whore to that one of a mistress/lover in due course, as per the instruction of the captain of their rescue ship. Her stay on the island is instrumental in changing her preconceived notions as a Westerner – "All I say is: What I saw, I wrote. I saw no cannibals..." (54) – the truth she tries to convey through her story in keeping with the liberalist position as a writer.On reaching London, again Susan is in her elemental Western selfhood, replaying the master-slave dialectics between Cruso and Friday. She makes Friday the gardener and the laundryman "for otherwise", according to her, "idleness will destroy him" (56). Until she meets Foe, an encounter that confuses her further as regards her own self/identity, Susan's sense of superiority remains intact. Soon she succumbs to the patriarchal demands of the society.

The only identity that seems meaningful is the one the island confers upon its inhabitants - that of a castaway, which turns out to be a hybrid one, subsuming all other selves. Or, to be more precise, any effort to construct unified identities proves to be futile. As castaways Cruso, Friday and Susan become figures of hybridity – a fact which Susan realizes only later: "From downstairs to upstairs, from house to island, from the girl to Friday: it seems necessary only to establish the poles, the here and the there, the now and the then – after that the words of themselves do the journeying" (*Foe*93). Like the author-figures, Susan Barton, Daniel Foe and also J.M. Coetzee, who are lost in "the maze of doubting" (135), a textual phrase for ambivalence, the text, too, strikes an ambiguous and ambivalent note in leaving the rest for the readers

to construct, and thus inhabits the metaphorically ambivalent and in-between space of voiced silence, the latent site of postcolonial resistance.

When it comes to *Age of Iron*, the setting is again Cape Town. Incidentally, Coetzee has admitted that except Cape, "the rest of South Africa has always felt like foreign territory" to him (*Doubling the Point* 337). The text presents the narrative of a white woman, an elderly professor Mrs. Curren who is caught in the empty space of her house in the last phase of her life. Her home only intensifies her longing for a companion: "With what slow steps did I enter this empty house, from which every echo has faded, where the very tread of footstole on board is flat and dull!" In her letter to her daughter, she gives a picture of the civil war-torn South Africa: "There were not many of these homeless people in your time. But now they are part of life here" (*AI* 5, 7). Her upper class status, her racial lineage and her liberal position make it difficult for her to convince others of her sympathies for the oppressed in her nation. Being so her character shows shades so close to the author who has quite often been criticised for the evasive political stance/attitude, the explanation to which has gone many a time unheeded. On another level, the novel presents the acquisition of denied spaces by the other through the character of Vercueil, a representative of the homeless and destitute in apartheid regime. The spatial imagery employed here follows the same city/interior dichotomy of Coetzee's early works only to expose the generation of colonial spaces and it aims at demystifying the same. The textual space foregrounds the diverse spaces subsumed in the exclusionary narratives that aim at homogenisation of differences.

The in-between space that Mrs Curren inhabits is because of her race- the fact of complicity and the resultant white guilt- and her liberalist ideology, evocative of

her lived experience in South Africa. She fears equally the dormant violence in the oppressed and the cocooned existence of the oppressors. Employing memory as a narrative device, the novel presents one of the major symbols of Afrikaner spirit/nationalism in the story about her childhood told by Mrs Curren of the age of ox-wagons. It reminds one of the Great Trek of the Boers and does indeed consolidate the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism. Mrs Curren's sense of belonging, if at all she has any, is from these narrations of the past (which Bhabha refers to as the pedagogical aspect of nation). This journey from the memory is in contrast with the journey that Mrs Curren has to undertake in search of her house cleaner's son to Guguletu, a black suburb in South Africa. As per the journey motif, *Age of Iron* too falls in the same category as that of the previous novels, and here too the space of the interiors adds up to the way in which Mrs Curren perceives her position in relation to the space/place she inhabits in the world.

Her narrative presents the consequences of civil wars; how the conflicts have affected the minority white population. It is a spatial re-appropriation by the majority blacks in what is considered as history repeating itself:

> abandoned farmhouses ... in the Karoo and on the west coast whose owners decamped to the cities years ago ... A land in the process of being repossessed, its heirs quietly announcing themselves. A land taken by force, used, despoiled, spoiled, abandoned in its barren late years. Loved too, perhaps, by its ravishers, but loved only in the bloomtime of its youth, and therefore, in the verdict of history, not loved enough. (*AI*25-26)

The places she sees remind her of the historical process of spatial conquests which colonialism entails and the sense of guilt overpowers her. Though she sees only justice in the violence resorted to by blacks, she cannot approve of it. Mrs Curren who is dying of cancer has a vision of life at one point: "The one border they cannot close ... [is] the border upward, between the Republic of South Africa and the empire of the sky. Where I am due to travel. Where no passport is called for" (*AI*23). In the face of the inevitable reality, death, the borders, which demarcate people and regions, are of no relevance - the truth which people disavow and thus continue their activity of erecting barriers to suit their motives.

At times Mrs Curren exhibits typical Afrikaner nationalism, for instance, when she narrates her childhood to Vercueil. To her the nation South Africa is all about Cape Town, where she lives. She confronts Vercueil with a flurry of questions when she is with him: "Are you from the Cape? ... And have you lived here all your life?" (*AI*18) Vercueil becomes visibly restless and disturbed at the suggestive significance of her questions. In her musings, Mrs. Curren gives credit to the Afrikaner character and courage:

> Did we not have Voortrekkers, generation after generation of Voortrekkers, grim-faced, tight-lipped Afrikaner children, marching, singing their patriotic hymns, saluting their flag, vowing to die for their fatherland? ... Are there not still white zealots preaching the old regime of discipline, work, obedience, self-sacrifice, a regime of death, to children some too young to tie their own shoelaces? (51)

She actually situates herself among the whites who consider South Africa as their home. On other occasions, she is a typical liberal embracing the hybrid culture. She sarcastically comments about national television, which airs programmes depicting Afrikaner spirit: "... I am watching not the lie but the space behind the lie where the truth ought to be" (*AI* 30) She is also critical about the media, which suppress major news about black uprising: "Of trouble in the schools the radio says nothing, the television says nothing, the newspapers say nothing. In the world they project all the children of the land are sitting happily at their desks learning..." (*AI*39). It can be said that the novel too exploits 'the space behind the lie' to expose the strategies which the State uses for/as repressive mechanism.

Guguletu, where Mrs. Curren's maid, Florence and family live, is in opposition to Cape Town. Rather than from the media, it is from Florence that Mrs. Curren learns of the unrest and its consequences in Guguletu and nearby areas where schools are closed and the population is affected badly. There is immense trouble in the area where shooting too occurs and Mrs Curren is irritated to the core that the nation neglects such incidents of violence. She says, "In the news that reaches me there is no trouble, of shooting. The land that is presented to me is a land of smiling neighbours." She is unable to connect herself with "a country prodigal of blood .... A land that drinks rivers of blood and is never sated" (*AI*54, 63). Living in such a nation, she cannot escape from its inherent ambivalence. In her words, "What is left of that world, what still works, I am trying to hold on to. Whether I love it or hate it does not matter. ... I belong to it as I do not belong ... to what it has become.... I am comfortable there, it is a world I understand" (71) on one hand, she lets Vercueil inside her house, and even comes to his rescue amidst an attack directed against him

saying that, “this man lives here. It is his home.” On the other, she declares resolutely that she “cannot turn [her] home into a haven for all the children running away from the townships” (47, 54). Nevertheless, her act of lending her home, her private space to Vercueil is suggestive of her resistance to the Afrikaner policies of spatial segregation.

When the boys, John and Bheki are injured in an attack, Mrs Curren realises how spatial segregation works in the hospital spaces as well. At Woodstock hospital, which houses only white patients, Mrs Curren sadly comes to terms with her complicity as a white woman. Her thoughts say it all: “My secret brothers ... this is where I belong.” Groote Schuur presents a starkly different picture with low class people and blacks featuring on its patients’ list. On being a witness to the plight of the inmates, she wonders: “Is this how I feel toward South Africa: not loving it but habituated to its bad smell?” (*AI*68, 70) Mrs Curren cannot do anything but lament her fate for being a South African. She is the voice of many whites who feel trapped in the colonial history of the nation.

> We who marry South Africa become South Africans: ugly, sullen, torpid, the only sign of life in us a quick flash of fangs when we are crossed. South Africa: a bad-tempered old hound snoozing in the doorway, taking its time to die. And what an uninspired name for a country! Let us hope they change it when they make their fresh start. (70)

Her sense of unhomeliness is due to her self-acknowledged position as an exile. Though not one, the status of an exile she bestows upon herself, as she says, “I am the

exile," suggests her sense of being an outsider inside the boundaries of the nation, an exile within. Still, on Vercueil's suggestion of moving out to America and joining her daughter she comments, "I can't afford to die in America ... No one can, except Americans." The place/land that represents the nation of South Africa is "fixed in [her] mind as a place of flat, hard light, without shadows, without depth" (76, 83). Such a curious case of national identity runs throughout the novel in contradictory spatial metaphors like within/ without and inside/ outside.

The recurring journey motif is manifest in Mrs Curren's travel into the interiors, to Guguletu where she becomes first hand witness to death and violence. What she experiences there brings about a difference in her outlook; it throws more light on the violent reproach on the part of the blacks. How she describes the place is worth quoting in the context: "Around us was a wilderness of gray dune and Port Jackson willow, and a stench of garbage and ash. Shreds of plastic, old iron, glass, animal bones littered both sides of the path" (*AI*93). An image of a little boy wearing a balaclava cap locates Guguletu as a place where the indigenous people reside. Mrs Curren soon names the place as the "landscape of violence", where the boy feels at home, but where she feels she is a misfit (92). Devastating scenes welcome her at Guguletu that she feels the urge to "close out [the] looming world of rage and violence." Bearing witness to gory sights, Mrs Curren cries out, "I am going away, I am getting away, I am out of place here" (96, 97). The place, along with its people, seems to be beyond her comprehension. Her conversation with Thabane proves to be her moment of epiphany. He questions her on seeing her desire to retreat from the scene of violence, to go back home: "You want to go home ... But what of the people who live here? When they want to go home, this is where they must go. What do you

think of that?" Now, Mrs Curren is clueless as to how to answer him. Mr Thabane, later, contemptuously tells her to follow the "signs to civilization" along the tar road to reach her home (97, 107). The irony of the phrase strikes the readers in the face of violent struggle of the blacks who, having suffered an oppressed existence, now rise against their civilised enemies.

On reaching home, Mrs Curren ponders her doll-like existence in a country, which, for her, as a place becomes synonymous with hell. An old photograph of hers turns out to be the space/site where she sees the disavowed presence of others.

> I recognize the place. It is Uniondale, the house in Church Street bought by my grandfather when ostrich feathers were booming. Year after year fruit and flowers and vegetables burgeoned in that garden, pouring forth their seed, dying, resurrecting themselves, blessing us with their profuse presence. But by whose love tended? Who clipped the hollyhocks? Who laid the melon seeds in their warm, moist bed? Was it my grandfather who got up at four in the icy morning to open the sluice and lead water into the garden? If not he, then whose are the gardens rightfully? Who are the ghosts and who the presences? Who, outside the picture, leaning on their rakes, leaning on their spades, waiting to get back to work, lean also against the edge of the rectangle, bending it, bursting it in?
>
> *Dies irae, dies illa* when the absent shall be present and the present absent. No longer does the picture show who were in the garden frame that day, but who were not there. (*AI*111)

Guguletu makes her, virtually at least, relinquish her ownership of the land of which she has, what Coetzee calls, "uneasy possession" (*White Writing* 8). She feels an accomplice in the crimes associated with apartheid and wishes "to rage against the men who have created these times" (*AI* 117).

While going for a drive with Vercueil, Mrs Curren voices her exasperation. She tells her companion, "Leave maps behind, drive north and east by the sun, I will recognize it when we come to it: the stopping place, the starting place, the place of the navel, the place where I join the world." But the truth is that, having lost that love/desire forever as the land she once loved as her mother, she believes, has betrayed her, she is unable to locate the place: "I do not love this land anymore ... I am like a man who is castrated" (*AI*121). Her sense of unhomeliness only intensifies in a country where madness is in the air. She is representative of white guilt when she says,

> when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them. They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again. Millions of figures of pig iron floating under the skin of the earth. The age of iron waiting to return. (125- 126)

When John takes refuge in her house, Mrs Curren visualises signs of change on the horizon when she sees the "house that was once [her] home and [Vercueil's, become] a house of refuge, a house of transit." Her words for John reflect her abhorrence for the colonial policies that allocate confined spaces for others and: "Poor John, who in

the old days would have been destined to be a garden boy and eat bread and jam for lunch at the back door and drink out of a tin, battling now for all the insulted and injured, the trampled, the ridiculed, for all the garden boys of South Africa!" (136, 151) Though her liberalism does not allow her to advocate violence, Mrs Curren does experience happiness and pride in John's protest against the oppressive ideology. Later, John's death in her house at the hands of the police, as Timothy Strode observes, "signifies a final collapse of distance between black and white space – at least as such space is experienced by [her]" (198). Her own act of leaving her home at a later point declaring it not as hers anymore is symbolic of transcending the spatial barriers of imperial regimes (*AI* 157). The narrative also presents the other, Vercueil dancing to the tune of the Anthem of the Republic at Mrs. Curren's home. Mrs Curren, Vercueil and through them the text reject spatial othering and conveys the authorial vision through a rhetorical question, "What is a roof good for but to keep off the rains?" (*AI*166)

Coetzee's fiction presents a metaphorical journey through ambivalence towards other spaces. *Disgrace* too exemplifies this and it closely follows *In the Heart of the Country* in subverting the pastoral fiction/romances that stand for Afrikaner nationalism/ideology, which Young describes as "militant [and] supremacist" (*White Mythologies* 8). It is the only novel of Coetzee set in post-apartheid South Africa, where despite the end of apartheid, "between black and white there is a gulf fixed" (*Youth* 17). Like Mrs Curren, the leading character, David Lurie too is a professor, thus enjoying the much-privileged space/position in South Africa that of a white, upper class male. It is the intrinsic ambivalence of his position that the text reveals, an ambivalence that enables the existence/emergence of multiple positions that resist the

monolithic ones. How landscape, "a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity", affects/influences David in acknowledging the diversity/heterogeneity of other spaces/positions is one of the meanings one can read into the text (Mitchell 2).

Windsor Mansions constitutes the space where Lurie's sexual escapades with Soraya, a prostitute, happen. David suffers from a sense of failure, being a widower and feeling displaced as a professor of communications with the closing down of Modern Languages that he used to teach once: "... in this transformed ... and emasculated institution of learning he is more out of place than ever" (*D* 4). He tries to gain a space/place in his relationship with Soraya who herself has a split identity - inside and outside Windsor Mansions: "Of her life outside Windsor mansions Soraya reveals nothing." On an occasion when Soraya absconds herself, Lurie meets her at St. George's Street. As David starts pestering her, Soraya reminds him, "You are harassing me in my own house" (3, 10). Soraya bestows upon him the status of an invader, marching into her private space without her consent. She shuts him out later, an act of resistance on her part. Lurie's trespassing lands him in more trouble when he repeats the same act with Melanie, a student of his class, since "the strangeness that has followed" his final encounter with Soraya (7).

It is quite an irony that David in his classes on Wordsworth teaches the students the meaning of the term "usurp upon." David associates Melanie with her place, incidentally named George and the accent pertaining to the locale: "Her accent is glaringly *Kaaps*" (*D*21, 24). It suggests David's sense of spatial segregation, ormaybe his approval of it. Once he fulfils his physical desire for her, he is quite reluctant to accommodate her in his space: "The last thing in the world he needs is for

Melanie Isaacs to take residence with him", while she is "thoroughly at home" at his place (27). Once the scandal spreads and the enquiry committee finds him guilty, it is a disgraceful and vulgar exit for David from the university. Following the fall, David, like Byron, on whom he is working for his academic project, chooses to flee from his place of residence. It is nothing but pure coincidence that like David and the meta-textual character of Byron, Coetzee too chooses to dislocate himself, to move to Australia in 2002, though for different reasons altogether.

The place where David takes refuge is the town of Salem on the Grahamstown – Kenton road in the Eastern Cape, where his daughter leads the life as a frontier farmer. A short description of the place easily distinguishes it from the hustle and bustle of Cape Town.

> His daughter's smallholding is at the end of a winding dirt track some miles outside the town: five hectares of land, most of it arable, a wind-pump, stables and outbuildings, and a low, sprawling farmhouse painted yellow, with a galvanized-iron roof and a covered stoep. The front boundary is marked by a wire fence and clumps of nasturtiums and geraniums; the rest of the front is dust and gravel. (*D*59)

The liveliness in it is in opposition to the desolateness that the dilapidated Visagies' farm in *Life & Times of Michael K* implies. The fence that hints ownership is highly symbolic in post-apartheid South Africa where the possession of the land is still in the hands of the minority whites:"The more the things change the more they remain the same History repeating itself, though in a more modest vein." The only difference is that, on the new farm, dogs and daffodils have displaced the cattle and maize of the

old days. Lucy represents "the frontier farmer of the new breed" (62). On reaching there, David notices that the farm has turned Lucy into "a solid countrywoman, a *boervrou*" as she had fallen in love with the place. Lucy really baffles her father: "Curious that he and her mother, cityfolk, intellectuals, should have produced his throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share" (60, 61). Little does David know that he too is in for a transformation pretty soon as the farm takes its hold on him, the farm which has the disruptive potential to let his ambivalence play on, unsettling David's sense of colonial spatialisation.

Cold winter mornings welcome David who slowly gets accustomed to the farm life with Cape Town receding into the past. He learns, and definitely cannot commend, that Petrus and wife live on Lucy's property, on the old stable. David simply refuses to share the same space with Petrus. To him the farm appeals only as "poor land, poor soil .... Good only for goats" (*D* 64). The text brings out the urban/rural split, which has been brought about by colonial spatial co-ordinates, in David's contempt for the country ways for which "he has other words: indifference, hard-heartedness" (*D*125). To an extent, one can assume that he has little concern for the place, the people as, when he says to Lucy about Melanie that she is "from this part of the world", there is a condescending tone to that (68). Also, it is difficult for David initially to accept people like Bev Shaw.

At the farm, emerging signs of alterity forcing itself on to the spaces that conveniently have hidden such presence before, disturb David. The small boy, the assistant to the Afrikaner couple, Tante Miems and Oom Koos, wears a balaclava cap, which is an image of ethnicity that recurs (*D*71). The historical other, Petrus "is busy

establishing his own lands." Lucy tells David of the Land Affairs grant that Petrus received that enabled him to buy her land. She informs David, "the boundary line goes through the dam. We share the dam. Everything from there to the fence is his" (76, 77). Moreover, David feels like an intruder, an outsider sharing his daughter's house, "her life" and so occasionally "withdraws to his room." Bev Shaw's clinic is the space that makes David reflect on the existence of life. He finds the animal world to be an egalitarian one in which there are "no classes. No one too high and mighty to smell another's backside" (86, 85). However, he also feels like being a part of the repressive apparatus, in assisting Bev Shaw "doctoring dogs. Playing right-hand to a woman who specializes in sterilization and euthanasia" (91).

The entry of the men from Erasmuskraal, a hamlet with no electricity, no telephone, into their lives proves to be a life-changing one for David and Lucy. A violent invasion of their space results in Lucy's rape and ruined farm. "In *Disgrace*," Laura Wright claims, "women's bodies signify as sites of displacement; for the black men who rape her, Lucy's white female body symbolizes the land from which they have been dispossessed" (98). Much to the disappointment of Lurie, Lucy decides to go on as before on the farm. To Lucy the insult is a purely private matter, intensely personal. She says, "In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone." After the incident, a grey mood settles on him and David feels the burden. "It is a burden he is not ready for: the farm, the garden, the kennels. Lucy's future, his future, the future of the land as a whole ..." (*D*112, 107). Like Magda's, Lucy's body is also a spatial metaphor: "... over the body of the woman silence is drawn like a blanket" and this gives the invaders a sense of victory. In racial terms, though it suggests

postcoloniality when it comes to gender, such tropes become problematic in Coetzee's fiction as in "how they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for" is reflected the subjugation of women along patriarchal lines (110, 115).

David wants Petrus to admit his complicity in the attack against Lucy: "*Violation*: that is the word he would like to force out of Petrus. *Yes, it was a violation*, he would like to hear Petrus say; *yes, it was an outrage*" (*D*119). Petrus resists David's every attempt following which David feels that he is unable to decipher the other figures and the other spaces that his nation accommodates within. In the face of the "difference 'within'" (Bhabha, *The Location*19), David tries to hold on to his ways of living and thinking. David tries to foreground his prejudices of Petrus overlooking his virtues:

> A peasant, a *paysan*, a man of the country. A plotter and schemer and no doubt a liar too, like peasants everywhere. Honest toil and honest cunning ... Petrus would like to take over Lucy's land. Then he would like to have Ettinger's too ...Petrus has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place. ... Country life has always been a matter of neighbours scheming against each other pests, poor crops, financial ruin. (*D* 117-118)

With each passing day on the farm, David becomes "more and more ... convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa" (117). Showing David as being busy from dawn to dusk, the text actually deconstructs the colonial idea of wilderness as a location of idleness, which the ideology attributes to the natives. David fails to decode the mystifying intricacies of the space he inhabits in the present

and with Lucy constantly reminding him that he is in Africa when he expresses his aversion to certain aspects that one fails to find in the city, David deeply ingrains the sense of being an outsider, the sense of belonging lost on him. City, which is tantamount to civilization in David's concept, emerges as an appropriated and constructed image/space in their conversations.

Being the only whites at Petrus' party, David and Lucy suffer curious glances cast at them, especially at his white skullcap. Thereafter, when, after the ruckus David creates at the party on seeing Lucy's attackers, she, retiring to her roomcloses the door and closes him out, he feels like a complete "stranger, the odd one out." David to shirk his sense of non-belonging, "lifts a hand to his white skullcap. For the first time he is glad to have it, to wear it as his own." (*D*135). The relationship between David and Lucy turns sour. But David is unable to abandon his daughter who feels that as she is marked in the foreign territory, the attackers will come back for her. He inhabits "the back of the beyond", "where he lives for the present: in this time, in this place" (121, 141). To recover from the shock of the incidents, David "tries to spend the daytime hours outdoors ... works in the garden [and] when he is tired he sits by the dam..." (141). Besides, he assists Bev Shaw at her clinic, a work that has a cathartic effect on him.

In effect, at one point, when David visits Cape Town, he experiences a strange, unprecedented sense of strangeness: "... he is home again. It does not feel like a homecoming". In three months' time "the shanty settlements have crossed the highway and spread east of the airport. The stream of cars has to slow down while child with a stick herds a stray cow off the road. Inexorably ... the country is coming to the city. Soon there will be cattle again on Rondebosch Common; soon history will

have come full circle" (*D*175). It hints at the demystification of space that David has finally come to terms with. At the university campus too he feels like an outcaste with the name-tag on his door already removed. He goes to the Dock Theatre where too the case is no different: "Though [the audience] are his countrymen, he could not feel more alien among them, more of an impostor." Life on the farm does in fact put things in a better perspective for David. He apologises to Melanie and feels "a free man with no duty to no one but himself" (191, 178).

David truly represents what Strode calls as the "ethically split subject." Conflating the ethical and the spatial, Strode describes Coetzean subjects as "simultaneously implicated in racist dwelling and oriented, as an internal exile, toward a spatial "beyond" (viii). Coming back from Cape Town, David's ponderings echo *Life & Times of Michael K*. On reaching Lucy's farm, Lucy's patch of earth he wonders: "Is it his earth too? It does not feel like his earth. Despite the time he has spent here, it feels like a foreign land" (*D* 197). David tries to coax Lucy into giving up the life on the farm. She cautions him of attributing the colonial/patriarchal sense of the farm to her stretch of earth: "This is not a farm, it's just a piece of land where I grow things..." (200). Lucy also turns out to be adamant as she has already decided to be a *bywoner*; to become a tenant on Petrus' land on one condition that the house remains hers (204). Again, on racial lines, it suggests a postcolonial reclamation for Petrus and Co, but for women like Lucy it is status quo again. Lucy's explanation, "Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game", speaks for itself (*D*203). It is even more problematic

when it comes to black women and the space ascribed to them. Moreover, generalisations based on white women characters run the risk of subsuming differences as reflected in the words of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, according to whom, Western feminism "colonizes and appropriates the pluralities of the simultaneous location of different groups of women in social class and ethnic frameworks; in doing so, it ultimately robs them of their historical and political agency" (213). The question of space that women have access to and its representation in Coetzean fiction is still in contention, the only probable solution being a re-negotiation of space/place; "space ... needs to be [re-]conceptualized in terms of social justice" in terms of gender (*Text, Theory, Space* 15).

David's sense of unhomeliness in the city and on the farm alike is evocative of Coetzean vision of the world as a hybrid space devoid of any totalisation. The sense of belonging is relative and is not absolute on any account. On his return from Cape Town David hires a room in a house near the hospital. Gradually, Bev Shaw's "clinic, more than the boarding–house, becomes his home" (*D* 211). David's last visit to his daughter's farm is symbolic of his transcending the boundaries in the changing face of his nation:

> From the last hillcrest the farm opens out before him: the old house, solid as ever, the stables, Petrus's new house, the old dam on which he can make out specks that must be the ducks and larger specks that must be the wild geese, Lucy's visitors from afar....
>
> He reaches the fence and stops....
>
> He clambers through the fence. (*D*216-217)

Lucy treats him like a visitor and David considers it as a new start, to be back in the beyond. In Rita Barnard's judgment, "*Disgrace*'s penultimate scene may invite us to imagine the Eastern Cape as such a place, a place where the difficulties of cultural translation may be overcome, wordlessly, by bodily experiences: pregnancy, field labo[u]r, the materiality of dwelling on the land" (38). At the clinic, inside the room where he attends to dogs, he experiences a sense of belonging; he connects with other spaces and other creatures: "Something happens in this room, something unmentionable: here the soul is yanked out of the body; briefly it hangs about in the air, twisting and contorting; then it is sucked away and is gone. It will be beyond him, this room that is not a room but a hole where one leaks out of existence" (219). David's journey from the city to wilderness represents a progression from the sense of being displaced to a sense of being placed in-between, a site that allows the differences to co-exist.

It is a known fact that J.M. Coetzee decides to migrate to Australia in 2002, following the sharp criticism he receives for his post-apartheid fiction, *Disgrace* – most of the critics term it as a racist novel, though the text speaks otherwise with its embedded layers of meaning. In fact, Coetzee introduces his alter-ego, Elizabeth Costello as an Australian writer in the novel, *The Lives of Animals* published in 1999. Since his migration, the novels Coetzee has written barring the latest, *The Childhood of Jesus*, have as their setting, his second nation, Australia. Sue Kossew terms it as "Coetzee's personal and literary migration" ('Literary Migration' 113). The editors of *Text, Theory, Space* make a noteworthy comment on South Africa and Australia:

> These two southern spaces, once part of the British Empire, had much in common: their similar latitudes, their arid, fragile interiors, and their

> shared settler myths of the 'empty land' and policies of white racial domination. Yet there were also divergences in the histories of colonization, the articulations of resistance to the imperial presence by the indigenous inhabitants, and the complex modernity and unitary nationhood of these two settler sites. (Intro 1)

In terms of spatiality/spatialisation both the landscapes have been appropriated by the colonial powers in constituting the respective nations, overwriting the heterogeneity of the spaces. Like the novels with South African settings, Coetzee's Australian fiction too contests the constructed nature of places that aim at homogenisation. Quite naturally, the authorial in-betweenness that is characteristic of the diasporic space that he inhabits, adds to the subversive potential that the texts exhibit.

"The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment *and* generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance", says Said in *Orientalism* (259). *Slow Man* explicates such a position with its themes of migration and transnationalism narrated through the lives of the migrants, Paul Rayment and Marijana Jokic. Coetzee's migration to Australia only strengthens his vision of a hybrid world that his fictional space represents. In *Slow Man*, in terms of space the first image is that of hospital, "the land of whiteness" where Paul Rayment recovers after having his leg amputated following a bicycle accident along the Magill Road in Adelaide. The hospital stay frustrates Paul: "It is only the pain, and the dragging, sleepless nights in this hospital, this zone of humiliation with no place to hide from the pitiless gaze of the young, that make him wish for death. The implications of

being single, solitary and alone are brought home to him most pointedly at the end of the second week of his stay [there]" (*SM* 13). Time spent in hospital makes him revise his opinions regarding war and violence: "In the razing of cities, the pillage of treasure, the slaughter of innocents, in all that reckless destruction, he begins to detect certain wisdom, as though at its deepest level history knows what it is doing. Down with the old, make way for the new!" Paul's subjectivity is always under the influence of the spatial dimensions he dwells in as his solitary life in Australia has made him a sort of eccentric, though "within the mildest Australian limits" (20, 25). Likewise when being attended to by a nurse, he thinks, "he has entered the zone of humiliation; it is his new home; he will never leave it; best to shut up, best to accept" (61).

Another migrant, Marijana Jokic is the nurse who comes to take care of Paul. It has been twelve years since she, a Croatian, left her land of birth. To her Paul reveals, "... I have family in Europe ... I was born in France ... I was brought to Australia by my mother and my stepfather... I was six" (*SM*43). The centre/periphery binary initially determines the relationship between Paul and Marijana.To Paul she is "the lady from the Balkans" and she "speaks a rapid, approximate Australian English with Slavic liquids and an uncertain command of *a* and *the,* coloured by slang she must pick from her children, who must pick it up from their classmates" (28, 27). She has come to Australia after her training period in Germany, in Bielefeld. Her husband works in a car assembly plant, and in Australia, they live in Munno Para, north of Elizabeth, a half-hour drive from the city. The conversation between the two reveals the distinct way in which they try to develop a sense of belonging/homeliness in the foreign land/space they have ended up in their life. As such, how the text deconstructs

the notion of nation, which presents space in its most political sense, and promotes the concept of transnationalism is of utmost significance.

Paul's efforts to be at home in Australia are precisely due to the alienated feeling he suffers from. According to him, "if a better, more peaceable life is not to be found in Australia, where is it to be found?" (*SM*40) He is into saving photographs that speak of the true history of the nation, with an aim to hand those down to the State Library in Adelaide. He has kept intact "in two old-fashioned cedarwood cabinet ... hundreds of photographs and postcards of life in the early mining camps of Victoria and New South Wales" (47-48). Through Paul's photographs, the text subverts the metanarrative of history. In western versions, the nation comes across as an empty land/space at the time of exploration. Coetzee speaks of "a certain historical will to see as silent and empty a land that has been , if not full of human figures, not empty of them either" in the context of analysing textual representation of space in white South African poets (*White Writing* 177). The history of the nation begins with the entry of the colonial powers. Such narratives disavow the presence of the indigenous/native population who are the rightful heirs to the land. Marijana satirically exposes the European notion of Australia: "In Europe people say Australia have no history because in Australia everybody is new. Don't mind if you come with this history or that history, in Australia you start zero" (*SM* 49). As Paul and Marijana assert, Australia is not, as people in the West say, "bush and then mob of immigrants" (48). Although Paul acknowledges the absent presence of the aborigines, he still clings on to the notion of a pure and original nationhood. Accordingly, when Paul's repressed desire resurfaces in restating his own history Marijana just brushes it aside. And also, the question, "Is the history that he wants to claim as his not finally just an affair for the English and Irish: foreigners keep out?" reflects Paul's sense of being placed in

the in-between (*SM*52). The text answers the question in the negative, in foregrounding the presencing of the marginalised and thus asserting hybridity – "a radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, the permanent revolution of forms" (Young, *Colonial Desire* 24) – which contests the monolithic notion of history.

In a poetic metaphor of darkness and light, the narrative alludes to Paul's mental makeup. A darkroom technician once, Paul's greatest pleasure has been always in darkroom work. As colour takes over, he loses interest and gives up the world of photography: "Does it say anything about him, the native preference for black and white and shades of grey, that lack of interest in the new?" (*SM*65). Paul, who is torn between the old and the new, despite his continuous attempts to feel at home in Australia, typifies those "who gesture back at colonial nostalgia for Europe, yet also signify a desire to regenerate as Australian through their suffering and dying" (Boehmer, "J.M. Coetzee" 10). Paul wonders about her attitude in the new place: "*Peoplesof the Balkans: Between East and West* ... Is that how the Jokics felt back home: caught between Orthodox East and Catholic West? If so, how do they feel in Australia, where east and west have quite new meanings?" (*SM*64) Marijana, too, at times clings to her cultural roots. The sense of displacement does affect, especially the first generation of the migrants. Though born in Australia, the youngest child of the Jokics has been named Ljuba, Ljubica. In Paul's opinion,

> As with most immigrants, their feelings towards the old country are probably mixed ... desperate for the country of ... new allegiance to the idea of it ... formed from afar ... Australia had to be the sunny land of opportunity. If the natives were unwelcoming, if they fell silent in their presence or mocked their faltering English, no matter: time and

> hardwork would wear down that hostility ... The Jokics, man and wife, must hold to ... faith. Whereas their children, Drago and Ljuba and the other one, will have formed their own picture of Australia, clearer and cooler. (*SM*66)

In fact Paul, though brought to Australia as a child, is so like Marijana as his memory functions as a device in bringing to the fore his European/Dutch lineage; both as immigrants are subject to the new place with its language, history and environment, but Paul quite often consciously disavows his migrant status.

In Paul's point of view Australia is a place which "is not an easy country for a boy to grow up in ... [where a] climate of manliness prevails" (*SM*74). A colonial sense of homogenisation as regards space/place informs Paul's way of thinking. It is thus a self-reflexive strategy that the novel employs when Paul questions his way of conceptualising space: "Why should boys not also be boys where the Jokics come from? What does he know about the forms that manliness takes in south-eastern Europe?" (74-75) Such moments mark the postcolonial interventions effecting a rupture in colonial spatial ordering. With the entry of Elizabeth Costello, the rupture happens at the textual level with the fictional space gaining prominence. Paul finds it difficult to decipher the place where he resides – be it Australia or be it the textual one. The metafictional encounter between the author and the character only heightens the latter's sense of alienation. Differences start surfacing.In Elizabeth's words, the concept of home acquires new dimension. As she tells Paul,for her home constitutes the space of writing/enunciation, "When I am with you I am at home; when I am not with you I am homeless" (159). She tells Paul that solely because of love for each other, Marijana and her family are at home in this world, which is to them a good

place. Coetzee has made the readers hear his voice in the author-persona, Elizabeth Costello who, every so often, expounds his ethical vision that transcends all boundaries.

What Elizabeth hints at is the hybridity of the textual spaces, which elude the grasp of the solipsist authorial vision/intention. As she tells Paul, "the moment you decide to take charge, I will fade away. You will hear no more from me; it will be as if I had never existed" (*SM*100). In addition, at the same time it is difficult for the narrative to resist the impulses of the traces. As the narration progresses in accordance with the perspective of Paul happens the arrival of Elizabeth, who intrudes into his private space, annexing "the coffee table in the corner if [his] living-room ... as her own." With her interference in his life, an obviously frustrated Rayment shuns her: "What is going on between myself and Drago's family is none of your business. You do not belong here. This is not your place, not your sphere ... You are the one outsider among us" (88, 141). It is the co-existence of multiple points of view that the hybridity of texts connotes. An appropriation resulting in totalisation of textual space in fact masks its inherent ambivalence that erupts in reading the text against the grain or what Said calls as "contrapuntal reading" (*Culture and Imperialism* 59)that unravels the traces or the other spaces/voices.

The motif of journey that Coetzee's apartheid fiction exploits is very much in force in his Australian fiction too. It is a metaphorically "displaced homeward journey" from the diasporic spaces through memory and desire that the texts exhibit (Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 232). One can only fondly remember the young narrator of Youth, the semi-autobiographical memoir, at this juncture. While in England, when attempting his first short story, "it disquiets [Coetzee] to see

that he is still writing about South Africa" from where he has tried to escape (*Youth* 62). *Slow Man* affirms the fact that unless one crosses a threshold, one is "caught in a limbo, unable to grow" and after having "crossed the threshold ... [one is] free to proceed to higher and better things" (*SM* 112). Paul undertakes such a journey that enables him to realise the non-existence of any originary home/space of one's own and thus surpass/go beyond the boundaries. No one but Elizabeth acts as the catalyst in his life. Occasionally Paul confronts "the other remnants of a French childhood that crossed the oceans with them to the new country." In Australia, he is just a "notional Frenchman" who does not have the least idea of what 'French' connotes. He is into becoming "a man who sees the world in his own way"(*SM*129, 162). Paul, and even Marijana, the "two ex-Europeans" are caught in the grip of the strangeness of the place. Reflecting on his diffidence to use the word 'care', Paul thinks, "Too much an English word, an insider's word. Perhaps Marijana of the Balkans, giver of care, compelled even more than he to conduct her life in a foreign tongue, will share his diffidence." In a similar vein goes, "excuse the language lesson, I too am feeling my way, I too am on foreign soil" (172, 165). Such textual statements throw light on the inadequacy of foreign language to comprehend and thereby express the nuances of space and subjectivity.

Due to Paul's three doses of the immigrant experiences, the sense of non-belonging/unhomeliness haunts him continually. He also lives through the linguistic alienation that typifies the immigrant life. He tells Elizabeth, "English has never been mine in the way it is yours ... [It] came to me very late. It did not come with my mother's milk. It fact it did not come at all. Privately I have always felt myself to be a ventriloquist's dummy. It is not I who speak the language, it is the language that is

spoken through me" (*SM* 197). He also finds it difficult to ingrain the connotations of the foreign language that is a "disguise ... a mask, part of [his] tortoiseshell armour" (231). As he confesses,

> I have always found it a very English concept, home. Hearth and home, say the English. To them home is the place where the fire burns in the hearth, where you come to warm yourself. The one place where you will not be left out in the cold....
>
> Among the French ... there is no home. Among the French to be at home is to be among ourselves, among our kind. I am not at home in France. (*SM*192-193)

He feels at home neither in France nor in Australia, which is for him just a "foreign land" where he tries to find some safe niche (195). Moreover, in France, he says, "I was always the odd one out, the stranger in the corner at family gatherings. Among themselves they called me l'Anglais. It came as a shock, the first time I heard it, since I had no ties to England, had never been there. But Australia was beyond their ken. In their eyes Australians were simply Englishmen ...." In the liminality of his new place Paul realises he just has "a domicile, a residence" (196, 197). One can easily relate Paul's experience to that of Coetzee's. The author tells David Attwell about his "sense of being alien" (*Doubling the Point* 393) in South Africa in, what he terms as the "ethnic-linguistic sense":

> No Afrikaner would consider me an Afrikaner. ... In the first place, because English is my first language, and has been since childhood. An

> Afrikaner ... is a person whose first language is Afrikaans. ... In the second place, because I am not embedded in the culture of the Afrikaner....
>
> I am one of many people in this country who have become detached from their ethnic roots ... and have joined a pool of no recognizable *ethnos* whose language of exchange is English. (341-342).

Nationality comes under critique as an exclusionary strategy/policy creating boundaries within which "one passes and ... one does not, where on the contrary one stands out. Like a sore thumb, as the English say; or like a stain, as the French say, a stain on the spotless linen" (*SM* 197). Australia becomes a place where sore thumbs and stains co-exist, an in-between space that subverts spotless linens as monolithic, hegemonic concept suggesting homogeneity. The re-conceptualisation/re-negotiation of space has a symbolic representation in the way in which Drago, Marijana's son, forges Paul's Fauchery collection.Paul initially feels "[Drago] must be feeling his way into what it is like to have an Australian past, an Australian descent, Australian forebears of the mystical variety. Instead of being just a refugee kid with a joke name" (191-192). Faking the photographs, Drago actually creates a space for the others, simultaneously defying the constructed nature of history. The forged photograph is a metaphor for the diasporic space, a hybrid, liminal space where living through differences is inevitable for survival. Elizabeth challenge to Paul forces him to face up to diversity/heterogeneity of existence: "... the pictures were not yours, you were merely guarding them for the sake of the nation's history ... Drago is part of that history too ... What harm is there ... in inserting a Jokic into the national memory ...?" (220-221) In the wake of transnationalism terms like Australian, French and the rest

have come to lose its essential values and norms as diasporic spaces within a nation present unprecedented challenges to homogenising narratives.

Adelaide proves to be "a dozy city", "too much like a graveyard" where Paul lives and suffers. (*SM*219, 231) Paul's realisation of the nature of his migrant status is complete with his visit to Munno Para. The centre/periphery dichotomy strikes us in the contrast between Coniston Terrace and Munno Para. Paul has lived since his divorce in "the flat on Coniston Terrace [that] a part of refurbished pre-war block. It is high-ceilinged and spacious, yet not too large" (*SM*178). The initial impressions that Paul develops about Marijana's husband reveal the class difference of the two locales. According to Rayment, Jokic is under the impression that his wife "is in the process of being lured from hearth and home by a client with plenty of money and an easy familiarity with the world of art and artists; also that the elegant environment of Coniston Terrace is teaching her to look down on working-class Munno" (149). When Paul visits "the dark continent of Munno Para" (241) along with Elizabeth, the space appeals to him otherwise:

> Years ago [in Munno Para] it was just a few houses dotted around a filling station, with a bare scrub behind. Now tracts of new housing stretch as far as the eye can see.
>
> Seven Narrapinga Close: [Marijana's is] a colonial-style house with green lawn around an austere little rectangular Japanese garden: a slab of black marble with water trickling down its face, rushes, grey pebbles. (241-242)

The newness/hybridity of the place, the colonial-style house offers "with green lawn around an austere little rectangular Japanese garden makes Elizabeth attribute it with an authenticity that is so real: "... living room furnished in white leather, dominated to one side by a large television screen and to the other by a huge abstract painting, a swirl of orange and lime green and yellow against a white field. A fan spins overhead. No dolls in folk costume, no sunsets over the Adriatic, nothing to put one in mind of the old country." In Coetzee's opinion, "... somehow in ways so obscure, so labyrinthine that the mind baulks at exploring them, the need to be loved and the storytelling ... are connected" (*SM*243, 238). Ultimately, then, the text hints at acknowledging other spaces and other presences that help one to go on in this inevitably hybrid world. Like what Elizabeth implies when she says to Paul, "What counts is that you have left your flat and visited Munno Para...." (*SM*259), what matters is an open mind to let in other voices.

Unlike Coetzee's other novels, especially those with South African settings, *Diary of a Bad Year* set in Sydney relatively gives a more constricted feeling. "Here Australia," writes Boehmer, "specifically Sydney, post-2001, post-Iraq War, is a land of compromised liberal idealism, reduced moral decency, and withering national pride; incorporated into the global economy, yet also marginal to it..." ("J.M. Coetzee" 9). Nevertheless, spatially, the text presents a wider canvas covering many places in relation to the extensive range of topics the lead character, JC touches upon as a writer. JC lives in Sydenham Towers and he leads a recluse life all alone in the apartment. He says, "I live on the ground floor and have since 1995 and still I don't know all my neighbours" (*DBY* 5). As such, it is from Vinnie, the attendant to the North Tower, that JC gathers information about Anya who lives along with her

partner Alan on the top floor of the same building. It speaks much about the nature of the life in the big cities where people live lifelessly, without much interaction with others.Living in such a constrained space/place with the accompanying solitude, particularly in his case, does affect the way in which JC, who sways between the past and the present, perceives socio-political issues of international relevance. Mainly, his coming to terms with his immigrant position that entails unhomeliness results in a shift in his perspectives – a shift for which to happen Anya's presence aids him fairly well. JC then testifies to what Ashcroft et al. suggest:

> writing is one of the most interesting and strategic ways in which diaspora might disrupt the binary of local and global and problematize national, racial and ethnic formulations of identity.… More importantly perhaps, diasporic writing, in its crossing of borders, opens up the horizon of place.…For certainly that *unheimlichkeit*, that 'unhousedness' or 'uncanniness' which characterizes colonial displacement, is a primary force of disruption in postcolonial life. (*The EmpireWrites Back* 218)

The text, which in itself exemplifies a re-conceptualization of space in that it presents a tripartite narrative allocating the other voices its due space, projects the hybrid nature of diasporic spaces as the one enabling JC to revise his strong opinions to soft ones and envisions such thirdspaces as the inevitable reality and all other monolithic notions as mere constructs that subsume differences/heterogeneity.

In Australia, JC and Anya, who he hires as his typist, are "neighbours of a kind, distant neighbours, El Senor and La Segretaria." The first meeting between JC

and Anya happens in the laundry room. The hostility of their first encounter changes to amiability when the venue is a public park, an open space. Anya is a woman who likes to present herself as a Filipina, though she has not lived in Philippines, and she has been to international schools all over the place (Washington, Cairo, Grenoble) (*DBY*32, 70).She exemplifies hybridity in its most literal sense, being born to Australian father and Filipina mother and her influence makes JC revoke his solipsist outlook. In connection with JC's points of view, Alan makes a remark: "That is the root of [JC's] problem: Africa. That is where he came from, that is where he is stuck, mentally. In his mind he can't get away from Africa" (94-95). Coetzee's texts, in general, represent such an in-between position. Like Paul Rayment, JC too holds on to his past land, its culture and so, finds it difficult to adapt to the foreignness of Australia. According to Alan, it is the colonial dichotomy which structures JC's thinking. Hence, Alan comments about JC, "

> He comes from another world, another era. The modern world is beyond him....
>
> He doesn't understand Australian politics. He looks around for big issues and when he doesn't see any he pronounces judgment on us: Australians are narrow-minded, insular, callous....
>
> If he wants old-fashioned politics, where people stage coups and murder each other ... he should go back to Africa. He will be completely at home there. (*DBY*98- 99)

True to Alan's words, JC does experience unhomeliness in Australia despite his efforts like that of Paul Rayment to inculcate a sense of belonging. Writing constitutes

his main effort/ attempt to feel at home in Australia. However hard he tries the land/space/nation eludes his grasp. In Africa too JC feels the same. In his description, "what I excluded myself from ... [was] the joy of belonging to (belonging in) a mass, of being swept along on currents of mass feeling. What a realization for someone to come to who was born in Africa, where the mass is the norm and the solitary the aberration!" (170) In his acquaintance with Anya, through whom he learns to give and get space that is due for one, JC gets the opportunity to self-reflexively analyse his in-betweenness subsequent upon which he gives up the claim to a space of his own.

One method, which sustains the recurrent motif in Coetzee's works and using which JC tries to overcome the sense of alienation is imaginary journeys to his place of birth, South Africa where colonial spatialisation has been at its extreme. He gives instance of man's invasion and appropriation of space, an image that reflects the dispossession of the natives during the apartheid regime:

> Once upon a time the little strip of land across from the Towers belonged to the birds, who scavenged in the creek bed and cracked open pine cones for the kernels. Now it has become a green space, a public park for two-legged animals: the creek has been straightened, concreted over, and absorbed into the runoff network. (*DBY*207)

In a similar manner, to contribute to the German publisher, most of the topics that JC pronounces his strong opinions on are in one way or other related to the politics of the nation of South Africa. In his viewpoint, "the theft of the land from the Indians or the rape of slave women comes back in unforeseen form, generations later, to haunt the oppressor" (48). It is his position as an outsider that enables him to reflect on the

culture that he finds his roots in. JC also distinguishes between the two settler colonies of which he has been a part of:

> In South Africa the situation is in one sense better than in Australia: the handover of farmland from white to black, even if it has to be enforced handover, is a practical possibility there as it is not in Australia. ...Every parcel of land transferred from white to black hands ... seems to mark a step in a process of restitutive justice whose end will be the restoration of the status quo ante. (107)

It is noteworthy, then, that Coetzee's *Disgrace*, which also exemplifies 'new raidings',deals with this transfer of ownership of land that "is of huge symbolic value, even if small-scale farming is declining in importance within the national economy" (107).

The nation as a socio-political space is to Coetzee a notion erecting boundaries that no longer are the same. *Diary of a Bad Year* is self-explanatory in the sense that the answers to the questions, which the readers confront, are metafictionally embedded within the narrative of JC's strong opinions. The text explicates through the image of raiding, the creation of apartheid nation/state with the institution of boundaries that prevented the natural heirs of the land from accessing their land, and that legitimised the illegitimate possession of the land by the whites. Coetzee deals with the insider/outsider dichotomy with respect to the land of South Africa in the present. JC, the authorial voice says,

> During the years when Cape Town was my home, I thought of it as "my" city not just because I had been born there but above all because I

> knew the history of the place deeply enough to see its past in palimpsest beneath its present. But to the bands of young blacks who roam its streets today looking for action, it is their "city" and I am the outsider. (*DBY*104)

It is nothing but a co-existence of differences/hybridity that the text vouches for when JC comments, "the world into which we are born, each of us, is *our* world" (103).

Like Paul Rayment, JC too is subject to linguistic alienation that follows displacement. Despite being a writer, as he says, "at times, as I listen to the words of English that emerge from my mouth, I have a disquieting sense that the one I hear is not the one I call *myself*. Rather, it is as though some other person (but who?) were being imitated, followed, even mimicked" (*DBY*195). Interestingly, in the novel one finds Anya correcting his language. JC also adds, "but in a way that is, precisely, inarticulate, inarticulable, English does not feel to me like a resting place, a home." He always has "the uneasy feeling that there is something false going on" (*DBY*197). It is reminiscent of *Youth*, where the narrator says about French, "the language resists him, excludes him; he cannot find a way in" (75). These "ventriloquist's dummies" are true representatives of the cultural alienation that immigrants experience in a foreign land (*SM* 198). Yet, the same foreign language that one uses to resist the homogenising elements is indicative of hybridity in the way it is subject to appropriation.

White writers in South Africa are no different from those in Australia. Both experience the sense of non-belonging in its intensity. As such, writers feel the landscape as resisting their efforts to represent it, which "remains trackless, refuses to

emerge into meaningfulness as a landscape of signs" (*White Writing* 9). Coetzee, who is to Boehmer "so nationally disaffected a writer," too is no exception ("J.M. Coetzee" 7). Writing Australia proves to be as difficult to him as writing South Africa. In one of his interviews, Coetzee admits,

> One can appreciate and enjoy many geographies, but there is only one that one feels in one's bones. And I certainly know from my experience that I don't respond to Europe or the United States in the same way I do to South Africa. And I would probably feel a certain sense of artificial background construction if I were to write fiction set in another environment. (Rhedin 10)

As his intellectual allegiances are clearly European, Coetzee's identity is no better than that of "visitor, stranger [and] transient" in South Africa, and the same experience welcomes him in Australia too (*White Writing* 8).He remains, forever and everywhere, an alien, an outsider and acknowledges "the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade", as Gilroy claims to happen in diasporic spaces (*The Black Atlantic* xi). One cannot but counter when JC says, "writing is a less unsettling experience" (*DBY* 195). Probably, to a small extent, yes, it is less unsettling. But, rather through the appropriation of language that helps one to unravel the traces overwritten, writing, and also speaking, to a great extent, does initiate the ambivalence that leads to an unsettling experience.

One can argue that the novels in discussion envision as postcolonial space, an ambivalent location within the construct, nation, where the subjects resist any fixed identity/subjectivity and embrace a fluidic existence for survival. As "no man is an

island ... [but] part of the main", one should "never waver from according [the other] the full respect, the full attention [it] demands" (*DBY* 107, 209). It is the vision of the world as embodied in *Life & Times of Michael K* that JC too expounds, when he says, "this is a public garden. You are as much a visitor as I.... It's a free world" - a vision that culminates in Coetzee's latest novel, *The Childhood of Jesus*, which projects an abstract space devoid of any totalisation (209). The novel presents anonymous characters and anonymous places; the moment norms come into being or the characters sense an institutionalisation that implies they are being brought under surveillance, they choose to quit the place, to wander.As Alan in *Diary of a Bad Year* says, "it is all a continuum ... all shades of grey, from darker shades at one end to lighter shades at the other" (135). Coetzean fiction shows a nomadic existence to be the most effective way of life as bell hooks suggests - "Home is nolonger one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotesvaried and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new waysof seeing reality, frontiers of difference' (148).Cited in *Disgrace* in an entirely different context, the phrase "the instant of the present and the past of that instant ... caught in the same space" refers to the space of enunciation in Coetzee's novels, which, thus, are in accordance with the pedagogical and performative aspects of space/place that enables the texts to act as the sites of hybridity to deconstruct the spatial dichotomies (15). Reading Coetzee's novel leaves one feeling displaced/ dislocated from a position of complacency, if any.

Conclusion

As writing does, a reading of narratives/texts too entails the probability of being complicitous with the dominant ideology at work. How reading succeeds in exposing the subtle elements of cultural hegemony in force determines the extent of the subversion of the same and the emergence of marginalised narratives. Coetzean texts pose a difficult read emerging as it is from the intricate socio-political background of South Africa and Australia and, on an analysis, present the textual nuances that lead to, invariably, postcolonial interpretations owing to the predominance of variables like race, class and gender on which postcolonialism as a theory erects itself. The thesis, premised on the hypothesis that the novels of J.M. Coetzee undermine the Eurocentric notions and values, especially in terms of subjectivity and space, has attempted at exposing the place of splitting/doubling that the texts exploit in contesting the Western universals.

Being the products of an ideology that functions along insidious lines, to an extent, Coetzean texts apparently are complicitous with the dominant colonial/racial ideology. But through the strategies of ambivalence and ambiguity, the narratives contest the hegemonic practices/underlying ideology which determine/s the way in which the world functions and thereby assume a self-reflexive status. The texts are in fact self-reflexive narratives that question the authority of the white world, its values and norms in its representation of characters and the space/place ascribed to them. What the texts embody is the concept of a hybrid world where the binaries no longer are valid, where difference/alterity/otherness hitherto disavowed stakes its space/place, where identities are fluidic and always in a state of becoming.

In the early phase itself, Coetzean texts have sown the seeds of hybridity, of difference in making the white protagonists the victims of white guilt or of their own oppressive structures. As a result, readers find Eugene, Magda and the Magistrate as figures of ambivalence journeying towards an abstractness experiencing unhomeliness in their land of birth. Almost all the protagonists thereafter realise that individuals are but hybrids in-between who have no option other than acknowledging the otherness within and without. Simultaneously it occurs to them that the sense of the space they inhabit is a place of domination and resistance alike and hence the shift from the sense of being displaced to that of being placed in-between.

Coetzee's fiction through the resisting others – Michael K, Friday, Vercueil, Petrus and Lucy, Marijana and Anya – follows a definite pattern. In the texts of his South African phase up to *Disgrace*, there is a shift from the passive resistance of Michael K and Friday, to an active protest manifest in the violent resistance strategies represented as adopted by the blacks in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*. In keeping with this shift that suggests the powerful assertion of alterity/difference is the realization on the part of the white protagonists and characters of the disavowed otherness within their selves. The recognition of alterity/otherness that is long overdue culminates in the liberal vision of a hybrid world of heterogeneity and diversity. It is a painful paradox that the texts of this phase overlook the gender dimensions, as race as a variable subsumes all other concerns. Consequently, in terms of gender, the novels, invariably, fall in line with patriarchal norms with the major women characters Susan and Lucy portrayed as succumbing to the pressures of white male values.

Marijana and Anya, the women characters of Coetzee's Australian phase, rise to expectations in unsettling the male protagonists who cling on to a

colonial/patriarchal sense of selfhood. Thus moving beyond the ideologically divided stance manifest in texts of Coetzee's South African period, the narratives shaped by the diasporic space of Australia contest the constructed nature of the gender dichotomies and succeed in crossing them. It eventually makes the conception of the world in Coetzean fiction as a heterogenous space accommodating differences more meaningful, albeit the striking absence of the voices of native women - a fact that calls for further critical attention.

The treatment of space/place in the novels adds to the split sense of the self. Juxtaposing the colonial generation of place with its originary abstractness, the texts subvert the totalising notions of places that are complicit with hegemonic institutionalisation. Coetzee's novels of the beginning phase of his career show, through the subversion of the pastoral farms, the shift from dream topographies to the in-between/abstract space that comes alive in the later works through the metaphors of borders, islands, hinterlands and diasporic spaces. The analysis vouches for the intrinsic otherness that reverberates from within the cocoons of dominant ideological concepts that concern race, class, gender and space.

In the dissolution of the centre-periphery binary, the journey motif that the texts employ has immense significance. The flight of the lead characters to the remote interiors that culminates in an acknowledgement of otherness represents the journey to the dark, disavowed corridors of one's own self where one confronts the other lying hidden. Coetzee's texts are manifestations of a crossing that leads one to spaces in-between, the thirdspaces, which enable the selves to transcend the binaries that are nothing but constructs.

It may be said that Coetzee's fiction, envisioning a hybrid space and subject, does indeed subvert the long standing binaries, but, it does not mean, in any sense, a definite closure as texts like *Disgrace* present an ideologically conflicted position in terms of gender when the texts seem to reiterate the man/woman binary overlooking the differential positions of gays, lesbians and transgenders. Post *Disgrace*, the diasporic spaces from which the texts emerge, empower the narratives in a better way to challenge and transcend the gender binaries as well. Reiterating the fact that there is no right kind of migrant, the diasporic space of the texts foregrounds the individual as hybrid self in the third space, as one above the socio-culturally constructed barriers imposed by the hegemonic, dominant cultural ideology and as one subject to the fluidic nature of subjectivity and sense of belonging.

Though the narratives do transcend the cultural dichotomies the colonial regime has succeeded in constructing, it happens, in the end, only in relation to the white men, white women and black men. When race cuts across gender, needless to say, as the analysis shows, the subtexts seem to uphold patriarchal norms/values. The doubly marginalised positions of black women are still in contention as regards Coetzee's novels and, as such, his fiction becomes a point of contention to feminists' concern rather than evolving into one that presents feminist concerns. The Coetzean corpus, which represents subjects and spaces as inhabiting the in-betweenness of being and becoming, too, occupies a similar thirdspace in resisting a final closure to its interpretative possibilities and thus provides further scope for investigation/research as regards various aspects of which the representation of women, especially of black community may be of primary concern. Nevertheless, foregrounding heterogeneity/hybridity as the culmination point of postcolonial

condition, the texts envisage a journey that one apparently has to embark on, transcending all borders/barriers in order to materialise a space where diverse subjects coevally exist, to create/construct a world that belongs to all alike.

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