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**Değişen Coğrafyalar, Değişen Zihniyetler: J.M. Coetzee'nin Güney  
Afrika ve Avustralya Yılları**

**Changing Geographies, Changing Mindsets: J. M. Coetzee's South  
African and Australian Years**

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## Değişen Coğrafyalar, Değişen Zihniyetler: J.M. Coetzee'nin Güney Afrika ve Avustralya Yılları

### Öz

Dönemimizin oldukça kıdemli ama yine de üretken bir yazarı olan J.M. Coetzee, metinlerini bir araç olarak kullanarak çok uluslu, çok kültürlü ortamların mevcut sorunlarına çözümler öneriyor ve bu özelliği Coetzee'yi okuyucuları için sorunları onun gözünden görmek ve tartışmak konusunda güvenilir bir kaynak, yaşayan bir bilgi haline getiriyor. Coetzee'nin seçilen dört romanını bu makalenin başlangıç noktası olarak kabul ederek, Güney Afrika yıllarında (1990-1999 yılları arasında) *Demir Çağı* ve *Utanç* romanlarında gösterilen sorunları, Avustralya yıllarında (2005-2007 yılları arasında) yayınlanan *Yavaş Adam* ve *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanlarıyla karşılaştırmayı hedefliyoruz. Batılı beyaz-elit bireyin konumu, makaledeki değişen coğrafyaların ve on yılların tartışılmasındaki ana odak noktası olacak, ancak Coetzee'nin seçtiği kahramanlarının yanına yerleştirdiği zorlu karakterlerle okurlarına farklı bakış açıları sunması durumunun onun değişmez bir ilkesi olduğu da açıklığa kavuşturulacaktır.

### Özet

Güney Afrikalı, Nobel ödüllü yazar J.M. Coetzee metinlerinde çok uluslu, çok kültürlü toplumların sorunlarını resmeder. Bu çalışmada incelenen dört romanında (*Demir Çağı*, *Utanç*, *Yavaş Adam* ve *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi*) Batılı elit beyazların gözünden sömürgecilik sonrası dönemin Afrika'sı ve Avustralya'sı resmedilmiş, iki ayrı kıtada tecrübe edilen sömürgecilik sonrası dönemler roman karakterleri aracılığı ile incelenmiştir. Afrika'da geçen *Demir Çağı* ve *Utanç* romanlarında baskın olan kaos ve barbarlık temaları, Avustralya'da geçen *Yavaş Adam* ve *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanlarında yerini göçmenlerden oluşan hibrit bir dünyanın daha dingin ve yeniliğe açık atmosferine bırakıyor. *Demir Çağı*'nda beyaz olgun yaştaki bir profesör olan Mrs. Curren'in entelektüel bir birey olarak içinde yaşadığı Afrika toplumu ile kurduğu ilişki ve etik sorumluluklarına tanık oluruz. Kanserden ölmekte olan Mrs. Curren, Güney Afrika'yı bırakıp Amerika'ya yerleşen kızına yazdığı mektuplar aracılığıyla Afrika'ya dair tecrübelerini aktarır. Apartheid rejimine ideolojik olarak en başından beri karşı olan profesör, bu konuda baskı rejimine karşı hayatının herhangi bir döneminde aktif olarak hiçbir şey yapmamıştır. Hastalığı döneminde gözlemledikleri ve tecrübe ettikleri onun yıllardır yaşadığı Afrika'yı farklı şekilde değerlendirmesini sağlayacaktır. Mrs. Curren'in siyahi bir çocuğun öldürülmesine tanıklık etmesi zihninde unutamayacağı izler bırakacaktır. Coetzee, *Demir Çağı*'nda Siyahlar ve Beyazlar arasındaki şiddeti ve



Apartheid Dönemi'nin izlerini postcolonial bir bakış açısıyla mektup üslubuyla aktarır. Yine Afrika'da geçen *Utanç* romanında Güney Afrikada yaşayan İngiliz Profesör David Lurie'nin siyahi öğrencisi Melanie İsaac ile yaşadığı ilişki, profesörün üniversitedeki işinden atılmasına sebep olur. Bu süreçte çalıştığı kurumun ciddiyetsizliğine ve iki yüzlülüğüne de şahit olan Profesör mesleğine olan saygısını da kaybeder. Bir süre kızı Lucy'nin Eastern Cape'deki çiftliğinde kalmaya karar verir. Bu süreçte Afrika'nın gerçek yüzüne şahit olur, çiftliğe saldıran siyahi adamlar adeta bir şiddet gösterisi sergilerler, tecavüze uğrayan Lucy'nin adalete inanmadığı için şikayetçi olmaması ve bu tecavüz sonucu doğacak olan çocuğunu aldırma istememesi Profesör Lurie'yi olgun yaşına kadar sorgulamadığı Afrika gerçeklerini sorgulamaya iter. Afrika yıllarında yazdığı *Demir Çağı* ve *Utanç* romanlarında Afrika'da yaşayan Batılı Elitin serüveni Mrs. Curren ve Mr. Lurie karakterlerinin birbirinden oldukça farklı olan çöküş hikayeleri ile aktarılır. Avustralya'da geçen *Yavaş Adam* ve *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanlarında ise Mr. Rayment ve Señor C karakterlerinin benzer çöküş hikayelerine tanık oluruz. *Yavaş Adam* romanında altmışlı yaşlarında bir Fransız göçmeni olan Paul Rayment'in kendisini ve çevresini keşfetme sürecine tanık oluruz. Geçirdiği bir kaza sonucu sağ bacağı dizinin üzerinden ampute edilen Mr. Rayment, bu vesileyle Balkan göçmeni bakıcısı Marijana Jokic ve oğlu Drago Jokic ile tanışır. Fransız kökenli İngilizce konuşan bir Avustralyalı olarak Rayment bu süreçte kendi kimliğini ve göçmenlik olgusunu sorgulayacaktır. *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanında Coetzee yaşlı bir yazar olan Señor C ile yazmanı Anya'nın Strong Opinions adlı kitap için birlikte çalışırken yaşadıkları duygusal serüvene odaklanır. Señor C'nin kendi gerçeklerinden zaman zaman uzaklaşması ve bu göçmen genç kadına yoğun hisler beslemesi onu kendisi ve çevresi ile ilgili sorgulamalara iter. Genç Avustralya'nın yeni kuralları ile tanışır. Coetzee incelediğimiz bu dört romanda sömürge kökenli iki kıtanın farklı on yıllardaki farklı atmosferlerini sömürgecilik sonrası dönemin bakış açısıyla aktarıyor. Avustralya'da geçen *Yavaş Adam* ve *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanlarında Coetzee Avustralya'nın değişime açık hibrit bit kıta olduğu üzerinde durur. Bu yeni dünyanın bakış açısını vurgular. *Kötü Bir Yılın Güncesi* romanında Batılı adamı temsil eden Señor C'nin Strong Opinions adlı kitap için yazdığı makalelere sekreterinin sevgilisi Alan'ın yaptığı yorumlar Hobbes ve Pound'un batı felsefesini temsil eden görüşlerinin eski ve yeniliğe kapalı olduğunu vurgulaması bu hibrit dünyanın bakış açısını sentezliyor, değişen dünyayı temsil eden Alan karakteri bu atmosferin yaratılmasına yardımcı oluyor. Afrika yıllarında yazdığı iki romanında ise Apartheid rejimi sonrasında karakterlerin kimlik inşası yine ana ve yan karakterler aracılığıyla sorgulanıyor. Kimlik krizi ve yabancılaşma, bu romanlarda tasvir edilen karakterlerin çoğunun ortak deneyimleri olarak



düşünülebilir. *Demir Çağı, Utanç, Yavaş Adam ve Kötü Bir Yılım Günceci* romanlarının kahramanları, eski sömürge dünyası ile yeni sömürgecilik sonrası dünya arasında köprü oluşturuyor. Farklı coğrafyalarda yaşıyor olmalarına rağmen, geleceklerini araştırıyorlar ve geçmişlerini sorguluyorlar. Bu sorgulamalarla, Coetzee Avustralya'nın modern dünyasının Güney Afrika'nın kaotik dünyasından farklı olmadığını hissettiriyor. Bu modern dünyanın bir parçası olmak için uyanık, genç ve dinç olmalısınız. Kaotik bir ülke olarak tasvir edilen Güney Afrika ile düzenli bir ülke olarak tasvir edilen Avustralya'nın ortak noktası sömürge dönemi izlerini hala taşımalarıdır. Beyaz adamın yarattığı medeniyete kendi isteği ile göç eden göçmeler ile neredeyse tüm hayatını Afrika'da geçirmiş eğitilmiş beyazların olayları alımlamaları elbette farklı olacaktır. Tarihsel süreçler göz önüne alındığında, sömürge geçmişinin tüm bu karakterlerin maceralarını şekillendirdiği söylenebilir. Coetzee, bu bağlamda sömürgecilik geçmişi olan bu iki ayrı kıtayı farklı bakış açılarıyla değerlendiriliyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** J.M. Coetzee, Sömürgecilik Sonrası, Age of Iron, Disgrace, Slow Man, Diary of a Bad Year.

## Changing Geographies, Changing Mindsets: J. M. Coetzee's South African and Australian Years

### Abstract

J.M. Coetzee, quite a senior but still a prolific author of our time, relentlessly pursues solutions to the present problems of multinational, multicultural settings using his texts as means, and this feature of him makes Coetzee a living sage, a dependable source for the readers to see and discuss the so-called problems through his lenses. Considering his four novels as the starting point of this article we aim to compare the problems displayed in his South African years (between 1990-1999) in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* to his novels produced in his Australian years (between 2005-2007) in the *Slow Man* and the *Diary of a Bad Year*. The position of the white- elite Westerner will be the main focus in the discussion in changing geographies and decades in the article, however, it will be clarified as well that it is Coetzee's unchanging motto to provide his reader with different points of views through the challenging characters he places next to his chosen protagonist.



## Summary

South African Nobel laureate writer J.M. Coetzee illustrates the problems of multinational, multicultural societies in his novels. In his four novels (*Age of Iron*, *Disgrace*, *Slow Man*, and *Diary of a Bad Year*) analyzed in this study, the post-colonial periods of Africa and Australia were depicted through the eyes of Western elite White individuals, postcolonial periods experienced on two separate continents were examined through novel characters. The themes of chaos and barbarity, which are dominant in the *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* which are settled in Africa, leave their place to a more serene and innovative atmosphere of a hybrid world of migrants in *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* settled in Australia. In *Age of Iron*, we witness the relationship and ethical responsibilities of Mrs. Curren, a white elderly Classics professor, with the African community she lives in. Dying from cancer, Mrs. Curren transfers her experiences on Africa through letters she wrote to her daughter who left South Africa and settled in America. The professor, who has been ideologically opposed to the Apartheid regime from the very beginning, has actively done nothing in this respect against the repression regime at any time in her life. What she observes and experiences during her illness will enable her to evaluate Africa differently. Mrs. Curren witnessing the murder of a black child will leave unforgettable traces in her mind. In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee conveys the violence between Blacks and Whites and the traces of the Apartheid Period with a postcolonial perspective, in epistolary style. In *Disgrace*, which also takes place in South Africa, the relationship of English Professor David Lurie, who lives in South Africa, with his black student, Melanie Isaac, causes the professor to be dismissed from his job at the university. The professor, who witnessed the frivolity and hypocrisy of the institution in which he worked, lost his respect for his profession. He decides to stay in his daughter Lucy's farm in Eastern Cape for a while. In this process, he witnesses the real face of Africa, the black men who attack the farm demonstrate a violence show, the fact that Lucy, who has been raped does not want to sue the attackers because of not believing in justice and does not want an abortion, pushes Professor Lurie to question the realities of Africa that he did not question until his mature age. The adventure of the Western Elite living in Africa in the *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* novels, which Coetzee wrote in his Africa years, is conveyed through the collapse stories of David Lurie and Mrs. Curren, which are quite different from each other. In *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* novels which take place in Australia, we witness similar collapse stories of Mr. Rayment and Señor C



characters. In *Slow Man* we witness Paul Rayment's, a French immigrant in his sixties, the process of discovering himself and his environment. Mr. Rayment, whose leg has been amputated above the knee as a result of an accident, meets Balkan immigrant nurse Marijana Jokic and her son Drago Jokic. In this process as a French origin, English-speaking Australian Mr. Rayment questions his identity and the phenomenon of immigration. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee focuses on the emotional adventure of an elderly writer, Señor C, and his typist Anya's while working on the book called Strong Opinions. Señor C's divergence from his realities from time to time and his intense feelings for this immigrant young woman pushes him to question himself and his environment. He meets with the new rules of young Australia. In these four novels we have analyzed, Coetzee conveys the different atmospheres of the two continents of colonial background in different decades from a postcolonial perspective. In *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* which take place in Australia, Coetzee focusses on that Australia is a hybrid continent open to evolution. He emphasizes the perspective of this new world. In the *Diary of a Bad Year*, Señor C stands for the Western man, his secretary's lover Alan's comments on the articles he wrote for Strong Opinions emphasizes that Hobbes and Pound's views representing the western philosophy are old and closed to innovation. Alan, who represents the changing world, helps to create this atmosphere. In his two novels, he wrote in African years, the identity building of the characters after the Apartheid regime is questioned through the main and sub-characters. Identity crisis and alienation can be considered as common experiences of most of the characters depicted in these novels. The protagonists of the *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace*, *Slow Man*, and *Diary of a Bad Year* bridge over the old colonial world and the new postcolonial world. Although they live in different geographies, they search for their future and question their past. Through these, Coetzee makes us feel that the modern world of Australia is not different from the chaotic world of South Africa. To be a part of this modern world, you must be vigilant, young and vigorous. The common point of South Africa depicted as a chaotic country, and Australia, depicted as a regular country, is that they still carry the traces colonialism in themselves. Of course, the immigrants that migrated to the civilization created by the white man on their own will, and the educated whites who spent almost their entire life in Africa, will be different. Considering the historical processes, it can be said that the colonial past efforms the adventures of all these characters. In this context, Coetzee evaluates these two continents, which have a colonial past, from different perspectives.

**Keywords:** J.M.Coetzee, Postcolonial, Age of Iron, Disgrace, Slow Man, Diary of a Bad Year.



## Introduction to J. M. Coetzee

Apartheid and Post-Apartheid

South African Years in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*

*Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year*

Conclusion

Author and literary critic J. M. Coetzee was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1940. His family is descended from early Dutch immigrants to South Africa. Coetzee spent most of his early years in Cape Town and Worcester. He graduated from University of Cape Town twice in 1960, and in 1961 (with Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English, and Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Mathematics). Following his graduation, he left South Africa and moved to England for three years where he worked as a programmer and did not lose his interest in literature in the meantime. In 1965 Coetzee entered the University of Texas, and in 1968 graduated with a Ph.D., on the early literary works of Samuel Beckett. Between 1968-1971 he worked at the State University of New York, however, as his permanent residence in the United States was denied as a result he returned to South Africa and began working at the University of Cape Town. Coetzee reflected his experiences of the West in many of his early novels he wrote in his Cape Town years. In 2002, he emigrated to Australia with an honorary position in the English Department of the University of Adelaide where he still teaches. Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

Coetzee, as is clear from his short biography given above, lived in almost every part of the globe. This feature of him makes him an expert in writing not only in fictional norms but in non-fiction as well to draw the attention of the international reading public to its problems. His memoirs, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) and *Youth: Scenes from Provincial Life II* (2002), and *Summertime* (2009) can be counted among these. Coetzee also published essay collections such as; *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988); a collection of essays on South African culture, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (1992) *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996) and *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays* (2001).

Coetzee as a very prolific man of letters vividly describes the social atmosphere he lives in. Especially in his early works written in South Africa, he depicts the postcolonial social atmosphere resulting from South Africa's apartheid system, and racial segregation. His Afrikaner family mainly spoke English at home, but they speak Afrikaans in society. Coetzee deals with this language complexity of immigrants in his novels which carry the traces of



his own life story. He lived in societies where he felt as an “outsider”, his emigration to Australia also affects his themes, immigration issues found a wide range in his novels such as *Slow Man* (2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007).

### **Apartheid and Post-Apartheid**

The four novels (*Age of Iron* (1990), *Disgrace* (1999), *Slow Man* (2005), and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007).) that we will analyze were written in the post-apartheid period in which black and white discrimination is no longer welcomed worldwide. In the apartheid period, the rights of social classes are defined and limited by law which is worldly criticized by anti-racists. It would be useful to review the period until the post-apartheid to understand the historical references of Coetzee's novels and the conditions of the period. The characters that are the products of the social and historical atmosphere will be understood from this historical perspective more clearly.

Although “Grand apartheid” was announced in 1950, its background dates back to 1910s. Strict legal discriminations in working conditions of the non-white citizens started with Mines and Works Act (1911) which restricted skilled jobs in mines, and railways to only whites. This was followed by other laws: The Natives’ Land Act (1913) which strictly restricts lease or purchase of lands by black citizens. The Native (Urban Areas) Act (1923) starts “influx controls” to reduce immigration of the blacks to industrialized cities, and establish a uniform policy towards urban Africans. Representation of Natives Act (1936) restricts blacks voting rights, they are allowed to elect a few representatives to the House of Assembly. In the reign of Hertzog’s Pact government (1924–33), blacks segregation was depended on economic restrictions, strict controls, and inferior treatment. In 1936, the government made slight differences in the Land Act but until the end of the apartheid, best lands and mines belonged to the white citizens. The salaries of white citizens and blacks were also different, they earned ten, twelve times more. (Berger, 87-94)

World War II changed South Africa’s destiny, in 1939 Britain declared war on Germany. South Africa made appreciable contributions to the Allied war effort both whites and blacks joined the army, mineral resources were also used by the British Army. The war brought the black population to the cities, the controls were lessened. They started to live in shanty houses in the industrialized areas. They formed unions, boycotted the companies in which they had to work for small fares. Strike of 1946 was the result of this search of legal remedies but it was brutally suppressed by the government (Thompson, 221-230). This atmosphere leads to the victory of National Party in 1948 Elections, they remained in power for years. They removed the deputy of blacks from the parliament. The National Party aimed to make South Africa a republic. Although they were criticized because of apartheid policies, in 1961 they declared that they had founded the Republic of South Africa. After the declaration of the republic which grew rapidly, modern industry surged (Thompson, 221-230).





In "The Apartheid Project", Posel states that Hendrik F. Verwoerd<sup>1</sup>, prime minister of South Africa (1958-1966) transformed apartheid to election propaganda, he believed the idea that the White citizens are the civilized ones who should govern the state. The parliament aimed to legalize the apartheid system, they rapidly made laws known as "petty apartheid" including: The Suppression of Communism Act (1950), The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), Immorality Act (1950) which prohibits any love affair between mixed races, The Population Registration Act (1950) which classifies citizens by race, The Indemnity Act (1961) which authorize the police officers to arrest citizens without a trial or to use violence for their official duties. All these regulations segregated South Africans from society. Under the Group Areas Act (1950) which is known as the "Grand apartheid" demanded physical separation of racial groups, the cities were divided into segregated areas. Blacks were relegated from White areas, social service buildings were also divided. There were strict controls between the areas. "Grand Apartheid" also applied major sanctions in the field of education. The Bantu Education Act (1953), and University Education Act (1959) restricted black citizens right of education. The blacks legally became second class citizens. Organizations against the apartheid were established such as ANC, PAC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, BPC, United Democratic Front none of them made the expected impact on the government's apartheid policies (Posel, 353-358).

From the first day it was declared, apartheid caused political confusion within the country. Economic and social life was negatively affected. Strikes and riots happened, production in the factories disrupted. Black citizens began to migrate abroad. On February 2, 1990, the parliament declared that they would make radical changes in the apartheid system, and they released Nelson Mandela, freed many other political prisoners. Mandela was elected president of the ANC in 1991, he jointly received 1993 Nobel Peace Prize with de Klerk. ANC won the 1994 election and started to work on a new constitution. In 1996 the new constitution of South Africa is declared, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 1995) was established (Clark, 90-96).

Coetzee was among the literary voices speaking against the apartheid regime. His novels depict the reality beneath false apartheid theories of the authorities. He shows the continuing effects of the Segregation Laws, In *South Africa* and describes the effects and results of the process apartheid process.

The atmosphere in which Coetzee produced these handled four works was a challenging social environment. The dominant themes of postcolonialism,

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<sup>1</sup> Verwoerd, Hendrik Frensch (1901–66): Prime minister (1958–66).



barbarism, terrorism in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* leave their place to immigration, hybridity, the social state in *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year*. Coetzee experiencing two different atmospheres in the two continents, both of which have colonial backgrounds, conveys his experiences to these novels.

### **South African Years in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace***

J.M. Coetzee's sixth novel, first published in 1990, *Age of Iron* is the story of Mrs. Curren, who is a classics professor, is dying of cancer, an educated white woman who lives in Cape Town, South Africa. After learning that she has cancer, she starts to reconsider her life. In the collection of letters she writes for her daughter, living in America, she tells her memories of the past and today's Africa. In this diary-like letters, she recollects all the strange events she witnessed, describes her changing communication with her black maid. She tells all her feelings, beliefs and thoughts to a homeless alcoholic man that she encounters at the door of her house. She also entrusts her letters to him since she has no relatives or anyone to trust in Cape Town. She wants them to be posted after her death. As cancer progresses through her body, her perception also slows down. The decay in her body is symbolically explained simultaneously with the social decay in Africa.

She states that the letters are written to describe the events: "I tell you this story not so that you will feel for me but so that you will learn how things are" (Coetzee, 2018, p.103). In her letters, she says that everything has deteriorated. There is a South Africa where blacks torture whites, roles have completely changed. The blacks think that they are applying the violence they have learned from the colonialists, they justify themselves. As an old woman, Mrs. Curren questions what is happening around and hopes that the violence will end. Her conversation with her maid Florance shows how the "blacks" justify their acts:

[...] You said to me, "I saw a woman on fire, burning, and when she screamed for help, the children laughed and threw more petrol on her." You said, " I did not think I would live to see such a thing."

'Yes, I did say that, and. it is true. But who made them so cruel? It is the whites who made them so cruel! [...]' (Coetzee, 2018, p.45).

The social changes she witnessed make her idealize the past. The rebellions of the local people, the violence, death of the young people deeply hurt her. An old woman who is dying of cancer, though she has no future, is worried about what she leaves behind. The changes she observed in her body are parallel to what she observed in society. Both in constant collapse, but especially the projections of the society makes her sad and she confesses to them in her letter to her daughter: "There were not so many of these homeless people in your time. But now they are part of life here." (Coetzee, 2018, p.6).



Concepts such as cooperation, solidarity, and harmony are outdated. A rotting society with no belief in anything. Family relationships are weak. young people are uneasy and unruly. Charity feeling is also lost in this society and even capable ones like Mrs.Curren avoid it: "I could turn it [my house] into a haven for beggars. I could run a soup-kitchen and a dormitory. But I don't. Why not? Because the spirit of charity has perished in this country." (Coetzee, 2018, p.19).

She observes the collapse in all levels of society and all institutions. There is a very different South Africa than she wants to see as an educated woman. There is no trace of the civilization that the colonialists used to claim that they would bring. Western institutions are destroyed. Despite all this, the facts are ignored. The facts are hidden from the public, media is a mere illusion. The facts and what is shown on TV are completely different:

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 about the square on the hypotenuse and the parrots of the Amazonian jungle (Coetzee, 2018, p.36).

Mrs.Curren looks around with questioning eyes. In the past, South Africa had a dark history but still with active Western institutions there were order and peace. That is why she is longing for her past days in Cape Town. She compares the current situation with the previous one, and tries to predict for the future:

In my day, I thought, policemen spoke respectfully to ladies. In my day children did not set fire to schools. In my day: a phrase one came across in this day only in Letters to the Editor. Old men and women, trembling with just fury, taking up the pen, weapon of last resort. In my day, now over; in my life, now past (Coetzee, 2018, p.48).

She is dying but her generation is also dying. Unless they take the necessary precautions there will be no chance of living for the whites like Verduyn, the White man finding refuge in Mrs. Curren:

[...] 'it is time you took a look at yourself. You have seen what the children of today think of drinking and lying around and *leegloperij*. Be warned. In the South Africa of the future everyone will have to work, including you. [...]' (Coetzee, 2018, p.65-66).

She evaluates the progress of South Africa under colonialism: "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 bloom time of its youth and therefore, in the verdict of history, not loved enough." (Coetzee, 2018,



p.23). The analogy she creates between a used lover and a used land is significant here. She thinks Africa is left unattended and alone just because it is no longer greatly profitable.

In her story, it is blacks and whites who are replaced after long years of colonization. She feels abandoned and an outsider. She knows that in the past, blacks felt the same, too. As a white educated old woman she is afraid of theft and plunder and sees the situation as the Jewish Merchant in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, nowadays being the Jew herself:

It takes me, night after night, to The Merchant of Venice. 'Do I not eat, sleep, breathe like you?' cries Shylock the Jew: 'Do I not bleed like you?,' brandishing a dagger with a pound of bleeding flesh impaled on its point. 'Do I not bleed like you?' come the words of the Jew with the long beard and skullcap dancing in rage and anguish on the stage. (Coetzee, 2018, p.37).

Because of her invading cancer, and medical treatment provided, she starts to forget everything but interestingly her awareness of present social problems is increasing. Similar to a Shylock on the stage she wants to warn the people around her. The murder of his maid's son is heartbreak to her. For South Africa, she just wants peace. Before her fatal disease, she did not think so deeply about the world but now the world around her draws her into and shows the truth. She experiences different dimensions of pain after Bheki's (the black child's) death: "[...] 'Bheki is in the ground,' I said. 'He is in a box in a hole with earth heaped on top of him. He is never going to leave that hole.'" (Coetzee, 2018, p.131).

The novel ends with Mrs.Curren's death and with the apocalyptic world she leaves behind. The message is plain, as long as the blacks as well are convinced to create a setting where they will live with the whites in peace there is no way out.

*Age of Iron* has a lot in common with his *Disgrace* (1999), another novel that he wrote during his African years. *Disgrace* is firstly published in 1999. It is the story of Professor David Lurie who is expelled from his position at the university because of having a love affair with a young student, Melanie Isaacs. After being dismissed, he moves to his daughter Lucy's farm in the Eastern Cape. The farmhouse is attacked by three black men. Lurie is severely injured. Lucy is raped and gets pregnant. She refuses an abortion. She decided to marry a black Muslim who was working with her. For Lurie, these decisions and processes are full of meaninglessness. When he goes back to his life in Cape Town, he sees that his house is being plundered. His story depicts the decay and downfall in the society, and searches solutions for the future of South Africa.

As an educated white man David Lurie questions his present situation, we witness him idealizing the past. As a white professor, the power that he has retained in the past may be pushing him to think so. There is no room for old dignified feelings. He questions the new world around him, and young



people's perspectives: "Like falling in love. Do the young still fall in love, or is that mechanism obsolete by now, unnecessary, quaint, like steam locomotion? He is out of touch, out of date. Falling in love could have fallen out of fashion and come back again half a dozen times, for all he knows." (Coetzee, 2000, p.13).

The situation of the universities, the view of the society in educational institutions, the hypocrisy in the institutions are questioned. Lucy is surprised that her father has been expelled. We understand that it is almost normal to have an affair with black students for the lecturers. These are things that are over-covered. Mr Lurie's words show us the real reason for his being fired: "These are puritanical times. Private life is public business. Prurience is respectable, prurience and sentiment. They wanted a spectacle: breast-beating, remorse, tears if possible. A TV show, in fact. I wouldn't oblige." (Coetzee, 2000, p.66).

Just like Mrs. Curren in *Age of Iron*, Professor Lurie also questions his position as an educated white man in South Africa. He asks where he belongs to. His education, social status, and acquisitions do not mean anything. In his daughter's farm, in the Eastern Cape, in real Africa, these are not necessary. He reviews his status: "He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa." (Coetzee, 2000, p.95).

Coetzee questions the language issues in all four novels. Criticizing the use of English as a native language, its perception as the language of the exploiter, and its use as a compulsory language... English has various positions for different critics. Africa can only be reflected in the use of native languages. English is insufficient to describe what is happening in South Africa. His protagonist in *Disgrace* Professor David Lurie questions the language issues: "He would not mind hearing Petrus's story one day. But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa." (Coetzee, 2000, p.117).

South Africa is described as a place in which women cannot exist without a man protecting them or gun power. It is not a suitable place for a young woman who lives alone. There is no safety, no law, everything is messed up. Lucy is aware of the situation but Mr. Lurie rejects the facts, he wants his daughter to sue the rapists. Lucy knows this will be useless:

[...] what happened to me is a purely private matter. 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'

'This place being what?'



'This place being South Africa.' (Coetzee, 2000, p.112).

Lucy is trying to adapt to this farm life in South Africa. She thinks he needs to make sacrifices. She doesn't want to leave everything behind and go to Europe. This is where she belongs to and she will do what is necessary to stay here. She knows the fact that she will survive only by fitting the new condition: "Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation." (Coetzee, 2000, p.159).

She is a woman alone, and now she is also carrying a baby, a hybrid baby. She does not want to leave everything. Her only option is to accept and adapt. She tries to adapt to the new society by accepting Petrus's protection: "[...] I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here." (Coetzee, 2000, p.204).

In these two novels he wrote in his years of Africa, we cannot say he was very hopeful about the future of the continent. For white citizens, the only way to live in the new Africa is to make sacrifices to adapt. The two elderly and educated characters have to experience vital events to discover themselves and the world they live in. Mrs. Curren learns about her fatal illness, Mr. Lurie is dismissed from his position at the university because of having an affair with a black student. These processes both cause an increase in their interests in the outside world. On the other hand, the outer world defined here is chaotic and hopeless.

### *Slow Man and Diary of a Bad Year*

*Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* are Coetzee's two representative novels that are written in his Austria years. *Slow Man*'s protagonist Paul Rayment was injured in a bicycle accident. After that 'tragic event', an amputation has to be done to his right leg. He strictly refuses any kind of prosthesis. Since it is an above-knee amputation, he requires long term assistance for his daily activities, the insurance system found him, nursemaids, to fulfill his needs. Although the insurance system of Australia provides his needs, he regrets not having a child of his own who would probably assist him. He wants a son who will continue his bloodline to the new generations. Paul Rayment as a childless old man wants a better version of himself. He reexamines his youth, his marriage, his family relations, and his origin throughout the novel. He finds out that his nursemaid Marjina Jokic's son Drago who is an immigrant represents this better self. He defines him as "an intelligent representative of the coming era" (Coetzee, 2005, p.175). He is the new generation of Australia, he will take his Croatian roots to his new land and form a new hybrid generation. His words for Drago reflect his hope for the future: "No ordinary boy, this one! The envy of the gods he must be. The Ballad of Drago Jokic." (Coetzee, 2005, p.70)

In *Slow Man*, acceptance of Multiculturalism, and multicultural identity is given as a solution to postcolonial dilemmas. Immigrants who bring newness to Australia will nourish the country. Paul's encounter with Marjina's daughter celebrates this renewal: "It is the first time he has laid a



finger on the child. For a moment her wrist lies limp in his hand. Perfect: no other word will do. They arrive from the womb with everything new, everything in perfect order." (Coetzee, 2005, p.56).

Paul Rayment as an English speaking, French origin citizen living in Australia collects photographs of Australian immigrants. He also defines himself as an immigrant, and questions his home country. Throughout the novel we witness him asking questions about his identity "where do I really belong?", "Am I a French or an Australian?", "What is my origin?".

Paul describes his situation as "unnatural", being a childless man who has no roots to future generations. He knows that the future of Australia will be shaped by new multi-cultural generations; new settlers and immigrants: "Down with the old, make way for the new! What could be more selfish, more miserly — this in specific is what gnaws at him — than dying childless, terminating the line, subtracting oneself from the great work of generation? Worse than miserly, in fact: unnatural." (Coetzee, 2005, p.19-20).

In *Slow Man*, understanding of history and historical facts are criticized strictly. Australia is considered as a country without a real history. Coetzee asks for the definition of "real history". The immigrants, new settlers, colonizers they all shape the history of the continent, for him there is no need for royal wars, royal families or castle walls to have a history. Marjina's description of Australia shows the European's attitude to a colonized country's history: " [...] '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. Zero history, you understand? That's what people say in my country, in Germany too, in all Europe.'" (Coetzee, 2005, p.49).

He questions the social position and perspectives of immigrants. Compares their social status with his own as a French origin Australian. For him, people like Jakovic family are similar to him who leaves everything behind and come to a continent at this end of the world. Everyone has different reasons and different backgrounds. He also questions their perception of the continent.

Mr. Rayment describes himself as a man who's lost everything, desperate for his future but he's hopeful for the future of the country. These immigrants and local people - who choose civilization and migrate to the city- will shape everything. They will be the architects of the new Australia. A hopeful atmosphere is being depicted which we didn't see it in the first two novels of Coetzee. The idea that immigration is a concept that nourishes culturally the place where it comes. This is what creates hope for the future.

Coetzee often refers to the problem of the national identity of the individual who moves between different cultures. He refers to the difference between



the spoken language and the language that is felt by the individual. To be able to speak a language very well and fluently, to express all of their needs in this language does not mean that the individual feels himself/herself belonging to that language: "As for language, English has never been mine in the way it is yours. Nothing to do with fluency. I am perfectly fluent, as you can hear. But English came to me too late. It did not come with my mother's milk." (Coetzee, 2005, p.197-198).

Paul Rayment feels like an outsider. Paul proudly shows his collection of photographs to Drago, the history of Australia which he has collected. Drago photoshops on photos and adds faces of his own relatives. After seeing his modification of photos, Drago feels more and more excluded. Marjina's words on his collection shook him deeply: 'What is this thing, original photograph? You point camera, click, you make copy. That is how camera works. Camera is like photocopier. So what is original? Original is copy already. Is not like painting.' (Coetzee, 2005, p.245). The change of his past by these new immigrants touches his pride. He feels that his future isn't safe. He thinks the Western white man may not even have a place in this multicultural society. Australis has a bright future with all these multicultural immigrants who Works hard for a better life but it is uncertain that there is a place for white Western man in this society. All he has is palimpsest.

Like Mr. Rayment in *Slow Man*, *Diary of a Bad Year's* protagonist, Señor C. is also an educated old man. He is a South African writer living in Sydney, Australia. He is a kind of autobiographical representation of J.M.Coetzee who was born, and lived in South Africa, and went to the United States for education. Señor C. has given up writing novels, he accepts to contribute a book called Strong Opinions in which six writers around the world will share their opinions on controversial issues such as democracy, terrorism, immigration. *Diary of a Bad Year* consists of three separate tales which are told from three characters' point of views, all stories appear on the same page.

This multiple points of views allow us to see the different perspectives of the three characters. Which one reflects the truth is arguable. Three different self-confident ideas are put forward on the same topics. Filipino young assistant, her cheater lover and educated elderly writer comments on the events from their perspectives. The jealousy and passion among them also accompany this process. Alan constantly underestimates Señor C, he does not usually value his ideas. Apart from having completely different personalities, one reason for this is that he is jealous of his girlfriend. He knows that Señor C has a passion for his girlfriend. That is why he constantly comments on the theories in Señor C's essays and insists on his truth.

Alan says Señor C is obsessed with Africa. Although there have been many years since he left from Africa, he continues to think about the problems there, try to find solutions and feel sorry for the continent. He describes his





nationality as "white South African". Although he lives in Australia, he mentally related to Africa. Africa's brutal social atmosphere doesn't come out of his mind. He can still depict the atmosphere vividly.

Coetzee states all countries, nations are in a race to be the most powerful. Two countries that are far from each other can compete with each other, that is not Uncommon. Nations are ready to do anything for power. He thinks this is the balance of nature, everything based on a brutal balance. He is referring to Darwin's theory and says that the strongest will survive:

...A race, a contest: that is the way things are. By nature we belong to separate nations; by nature nations are in competition with other nations. We are as nature made us. The world is a jungle (the metaphors proliferate), and in the jungle all species are in competition with all other species for space and sustenance (Coetzee, 2007, p.61).

Coetzee frequently questions the mother tongue issue, the criteria for how a language can be considered as a mother tongue are insufficient for him. Is mother tongue the language you learned from your family, spoken in your land? or Is it the language you can express yourself more easily? Is it the language you feel free when you express yourself? He applies various queries to express the complexity of the language issue, especially for the immigrants.

Coetzee thinks that individuals from different cultures influencing each other create a great cultural richness. He points out that migrants traveling to Europe and the United States have influenced art, especially music. It is an undeniable fact that immigration brings new colors to cultures. As far as this cultural enrichment is concerned and the constant changes and innovations brought about by immigration. Coetzee says he cannot understand why countries apply such strict rules to migrants and refugees as they do in Austria. He wants this recirculation to be accepted as a reality of the global World.

In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Señor C represents the Western man. He writes essays for the book called *Strong Opinions*, he synthesizes western philosophy from Hobbes to Pound but his ideas are old and closed to innovation, he can't keep up with the changing world. He is almost in simulacrum as Baudrillard advocated. Some are supporting his everyday life and writing process, he is needy. He represents the weakest chain of the society just like Mr. Rayment, his data can be stolen and changed easily. His neighbor Alan plans to manipulate his bank account to defraud him. What happened to them makes the reader feel that the modern world of Australia is no different from chaotic South Africa. To be a part of this modern world, you have to be alert, young, and energetic.



## Conclusion

This study aims to compare J.M.Coetzee's African and Australian years in terms of postcolonial discourse. Colonial identity construction under the apartheid regime and post-apartheid is questioned. Not only the native inhabitants but also the white invaders' perspectives are included in Coetzee's selected novels; *Age of Iron* (1990), *Disgrace* (1999), *Slow Man* (2005), and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). These four novels addressed the challenging social atmosphere shapes the voyage of the protagonists. Postcolonialism, barbarism, terrorism in *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* leave its place to immigration, hybridity, the social state in *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year*. Coetzee portrays two continents' two distinct atmospheres, both of which have colonial backgrounds. In terms of generic distinctions, Coetzee's handled novels can also be considered as political thrillers, set under the postcolonial era which carries the traces of former political bans.

Identity crisis and self-alienation can be considered as joint experiences of most of the characters portrayed in these novels. Protagonists of *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace*, *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* depict stories of characters that go between the old colonial world and the new postcolonial world. Although they live in different geographies, they are in search their future.

In *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*, Coetzee is optimistic about the future of the continent. The only way to live in the new Africa for white people is to create sacrifices for adaptation. To discover themselves and the world in which they live, the two elderly and educated characters must experience vital events. Mrs. Curren learns about her deadly disease, Mr. Lurie is rejected from his university position because he has an affair with a black student. Both of these experiences lead to a rise in their external interest. The exterior world described here, on the other side, is messy and desperate. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Señor C represents the intellectual Western man. He writes essays for the book called *Strong Opinions*, he synthesizes Western philosophy from Hobbes to Pound, but his concepts are ancient and closed to innovation. Like Mr. Rayment, he represents the weakest chain in society, his information can be robbed and altered. His neighbor Alan intends to defraud him by manipulating his bank account. What they have experienced makes the reader feel that Australia's modern world is not distinct from South Africa's chaotic world. You need to be alert, young and vigorous to be part of this modern world.

As mentioned, South Africa is depicted as a chaotic country. Australia is an orderly country but there is still tension between ethnic groups because of immigration. Geography change also affects the reception of cases. Every character has his/her past which determines his/her reactions. Unlike South Africa, the immigrants in Australia eagerly come to the white man's civilization, they choose this life for themselves. Unlike Africans they are unarmed but they are also struggling. What they want is to impose their own culture. The main question is 'whose culture is a settlement?', The answer still creates conflicts but peaceful solutions are suggested by Coetzee



as in the case of *Slow Man's* ending; Mr. Rayment is tired of searching the real truth in life instead he buries himself to his truth as much as he remembers with palimpsest and lives in a Baudrillard-like simulacrum. The modern world, no matter which geography he/she is in, no longer in a more complicated situation for the heroic white man than the past. Just like Mr. Rayment what all these characters have in common is that they bear the traces of the post-colonial period in all their selves. When the historical processes are taken into consideration, it can be said that the colonial past shaped their adventures. Coetzee exhibits the traces of the post-colonial period on the educated white individuals.

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