國 立 交 通 大 學

外國文學與語言學研究所

碩 士 論 文

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J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* and *Youth*

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柯吉爾的《雙面少年》與《少年時》

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Graduate Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics

College of Humanities and Social Science

National Chiao Tung University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Art

in

Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Linguistics

July 2006

Hsinchu, Taiwan, Republic of China

中華民國九十五年七月

世事在心：柯吉爾的《雙面少年》與《少年時》

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中文摘要

本文探討諾貝爾文學獎得主柯吉爾(J. M. Coetzee)如何藉著他的兩本自傳體小說—《雙面少年》(1997)、《少年時》(2002)—以他為孩童與青年時自身的生活經驗連結並重新檢視當時/當代世俗/世界議題。就文化產品的層次而言，《雙面少年》與《少年時》已將自傳文學的定位提升為可連結世俗/世界議題，而非只停留於撰寫個人生活故事的層次。柯吉爾的兩本自傳體小說同時揭露書寫世事的重要性：《雙面少年》探究如何以個人記憶作為集體記憶的展現；《少年時》則強調對世事的體驗與省思。

第一章簡介本文的中心題旨、動機與柯吉爾兩本自傳體小說的生成脈絡。文中並回溯柯吉爾孩童時期南非的歷史情境，藉此將「柯吉爾」於文化上和社會上雙重脈絡化。文中並探討，在殖民系統底下成長的小孩不僅只背負著過去殖民體系的印記，在未來自身也將具有去殖民化的潛力。

第二章檢視柯吉爾如何再現南非種族隔離政策下的家國威權，也同時檢視著他如何巧妙地運用小孩的敘事觀點切入成人世界殖民野心的問題重重。文中探討重心囊括家庭威權與國家威權。柯吉爾在《雙面少年》裡雖沒有直接點出南非種族隔離政策的不是，卻以建立個人記憶的方式，回顧式地提供了他對 1950 年代南非政治騷動的孩童記憶，呈現了另類的文化批評。

第三章探討柯吉爾如何以他挫敗的青年生活經驗為讀者揭示過世俗生活的重要性。「世俗性」在文中所指稱的部分定義為人與人實際上接觸的層面而非超越化的精神層次。《少年時》不僅是柯吉爾撰述自身青年時期於 1960 年代僑居在外的生活回顧，更著墨於作者與世界兩者間緊密關係的批判性省思與探究。

第四章以討論文學創作和歷史見證間的互動關係為本文作結。就文學創作的層面而言，柯吉爾的《雙面少年》以及《少年時》可謂提供了以自傳書寫作為見證文學的平臺與典範。

關鍵字：柯吉爾、《雙面少年》、《少年時》、自傳體小說、世俗性、家國威權、後殖民、南非種族隔離政策、見證文學

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of how Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee with his autobiographical novels—*Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002)—uses his own lived experiences, first as a child and then as a youth, to connect with and re-examine worldly issues. *Boyhood* and *Youth* suggest that autobiography should be interpreted as a kind of the cultural product which is closely connected with the world instead of concentrating on one's life story. I argue that Coetzee's autobiographical novels reveal the importance of writing in relation to the world: *Boyhood* suggests the connection of personal memory with the collective while *Youth* emphasizes the worldly experiences.

Chapter One is an introduction which reviews some crucial historical contingencies of South Africa, through which "J. M. Coetzee" will be contextualized within the colonial system culturally and socially. Under such a colonial context, a child not only bears the sign of colonization but also will be someone with a decolonized potential in the future.

Chapter Two aims to examine not only how Coetzee represents the complicated domestic authority during apartheid but how he uses a child's perspective to reveal the problematic nature of adult colonial ambition. The notion of "domestic" here refers to the familial aspect and the national dimension. I argue that instead of directly condemning the wickedness of segregation policy at that time, Coetzee offers a retrospective reflection of the national turmoil, particularly during the 1950s, and suggests an alternative way of presenting political critique.

Chapter Three explores how Coetzee with his frustrating youthful experiences reveals the importance of living a worldly life. My use of the term "worldly" here refers to a physical state rather than a spiritual one. I argue that more than simply a retrospection on Coetzee's youthful expatriate life, *Youth* is a critical reflection on the necessary interaction between the writer and the world.

Chapter Four concludes this thesis with a discussion of the interplay between literary creation and historical witness. I argue that Coetzee's autobiographical writing, as literary creation, projects a form of witness literature.

Key Words: J. M. Coetzee, *Boyhood*, *Youth*, Autobiographical novel, Worldly, Domestic authority, Postcolonial, Apartheid, Witness literature

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my tremendous gratitude to my advisor, Professor Pin-chia Feng, current Dean of Academic Affairs of National Chiao Tung University, for taking pains to correct my thesis besides her heavy daily duty, and for her invaluable inspiration and diverse instruction on my thesis writing. This thesis definitely can not be completed without her guidance and her sharing of labor of love. I would like to thank her for leading me through the journey of the study to the end.

Also, I would like to thank my thesis committee, Professor Eric Yu and Professor Guy Beauregard, for taking time sharing their insights and suggestions with me to help me improving the quality of this thesis.

I would like to thank my classmates at Graduate Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics of NCTU: Albert, Shelbe, Kirsten, Ken, Peni, and Jeremy. I have learned a lot from them both intellectually and physically.

Many thanks go to my elder sister Helen and my brother-in-law Jason, who have been earnestly taking care of Mom and me. I really owe them a great deal and wish them all the best.

Finally, I would like to thank my boy friend Monty for always being there. He devotes his love and support to me, spiritually also materially. I feel so lucky to have his warm company in my life.

謝謝我的母親在我寫論文期間對我的支持, 她的支持一直是我進步最大的動力來源。最後, 願將這份論文獻給我已永別十七年的父親。希望這份小小的作品, 能使父親在天之靈感到片刻的安慰。

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

As a writer coming from the postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa, Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee always has his unique ways to tell about the pain and struggles of the colonized people and the oppressed victims. As many postcolonial and anti-apartheid critics before him, Coetzee continues to reject dominant discourses and engage in a project of *Decolonizing the Mind,* as suggested by Ngugi wa Thiongo's book title. Such a rejection manifests a "protest," in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's terms.[1] In Coetzee's fiction, he often uses irony and allegory to create counter discourse to that of imperialism.[2] Counter discourse can be regarded as a resistance to any kind of authority.[3] To Coetzee, one way to express this resistance lies in his adapting and then reinventing dominant discourses to fit into his postcolonial writing. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* in fact identify three key features of postcolonial writings: "The silencing and marginalizing of the

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[1] Ashcroft et al. point out that "white writing which opposes apartheid, such as the work of Andre Brink, Breyten Nreytenchbach, J. M. Coetzee, etc., functions as protest" (2002: 83).

[2] John Thieme studies how the term counter discourse comes along: "A term introduced into discussions of post-colonial writing by Helen Tiffin (1987), who adopted it from Richard Terdiman's *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (1985) … She [Helen Tiffin] views particular instances of writing back to an English canonical text as metonyms for engaging with 'the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in post-colonial worlds'" (62).

[3] Ashcroft also designates the close relation between resistance and counter discourse: "The effectiveness of a resistance which operates transformatively is demonstrated very well by the term 'counter-discourse'" (32). Later he specifically explains: "The rhizomic structure of imperialist discourse leaves many spaces or discursive fractures in which ambivalence and intention meet. These fractures are the spaces opened up for counter-discourse" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 52).

postcolonial voice by the imperial centre; the abrogation of this imperial centre within the text; and the active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre" (82). In my observation, all the three key features stated above are shown in the writings of J. M. Coetzee: he firstly makes the voice of the colonized to be heard, and then prepares the stage for that emergent voice to move from the margin to the centre. Since Coetzee's writing has much to do with imperialism, it is important to examine the close relation between him and imperialism in terms of his lived experiences. Along with this line of thinking, J. M. Coetzee's autobiographical novels—*Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002)—are important for readers to explore his pre-writer past.

Coetzee is ambivalent about his own position as a white anti-colonialist, yet, it is exactly his ambivalent backgrounds enable him to offer a distinctive perspective on History, and to concentrate on representing the unsightly aspects of histories.[4] In order to clarify Coetzee's ambivalence, let us briefly go over the history of his ancestry's settlements in the Southern Africa: Near the end of nineteenth century some European imperial powers became dominant in the Southern Africa.[5] The Dutch and the British, in particular, took control of a large part of South Africa.[6] The conflicts between these two colonizing powers led to the Anglo-Boer War and its influences

[4] Here I put histories rather than History to highlight its specificity for the individual concern, which is distinguished from the official interest.
[5] It includes Dutch, German, French, Portuguese and British forces.
[6] The Dutch who settle in South Africa are called Boer or Afrikaner as well.

continued to be felt for years after it had ended.[7] The British won the final victory and privileges for the British authority. Those Dutch who were not willing to subject to British authority migrated north or east, a movement known as the "Great Trek," to look for new settlements.[8] After years past, it is in the late 1950s Malan brought forward in his political campaign a solution to improve white employment and to restrain black movement into town.[9] In order to win the support of Afrikaners in the election, he used the overflowed migration of colored people to the white areas for job opportunities as an excuse for the high unemployment rate. According to Malan the separation between white and colored people, black people in particular, was the only solution. Malan finally won the election in 1948, which led to the legislation of the "apartheid" policy.[10]

Coetzee's reflection on issues of the apartheid regime recurs repeatedly in *Boyhood*; migration is especially highlighted and playing a key role in *Youth*. Coetzee shows us that migration is not just a geographical dislocation for it actually has much to do with one's state of mind. Living under colonialism, Coetzee has to

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[7] The first Anglo-Boer war lasted about two years (1880 -1881), resulting from the occupation of Transvaal and the self-determination of the local Boers (Davenport 208). Yet another vital Anglo-Boer wars occur from roughly 1899 to 1902 (Davenport 223-32).

[8] At that time, the independent states including Natalia Republic, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic that the Boers used to establish in South Africa came over to the British empire eventually.

[9] There were two major parties in South Africa at the time. One was the United party led by Jan Smuts and the other was the National party under the leadership of Daniel Malan.

[10] Apartheid in short, was a kind of racial separation with much more complicated practices. Since the history of South Africa proves that different races are hard to live together in peace, the apartheid law therefore assumed its own rights and is strongly supported by the Afrikaners.

face the problem of racial antagonism and conflicts. As a child, he is always confused about his parents' opinions and the Afrikaner nationalists' attitudes towards colored people. Self-interrogation about how to value people of different races conveys the dilemma when he faces the domestic—both parental and national—authority. Under the colonial system, he witnesses how the colored people, the blacks in particular, are oppressed by the whites in South Africa. He learns from his lived experiences that people have no alternative but to struggle and to live within the tension that exists between races and classes in South Africa. From then on, he can not stop questioning the possibility of individual freedom under such a domestic authority. As an Afrikaner child, he often needs to reconcile himself with the expectations and value system imposed upon him by his family. Yet, he comes to realize that there is no room for him to grow up because of interracial conflicts and hatred in South Africa. He needs to escape from the physical presence of that problem.

So in his youth he chooses to run away to London. Immigration is his way to free himself from the heavy burden of colonial history and to initiate a new beginning for himself. That is to say, while resisting the colonial system, he is looking forward to the possibility of renewal of his old self. It is in such a predicament that he resorts to the practice of writing, using his passion for art and love to search for salvation.

To a certain extent, Coetzee is also an interesting practitioner of Joyce's life style, endeavoring to compose a new life of his own and making efforts to create art on his own terms. The purpose of his immigrating to London, he assumes, is to help him create a new life with a new identity that is different from the past one.

With the will to *create*, Coetzee's reflections on his lived experiences enable him to take a critical yet constructive view of his past rather than simply to indulge in personal confession. The writing strategy of *constructing* manifests itself in Coetzee's choice of third-person narrative. Margaret Lenta comments that the third-person narrative in *Boyhood* and *Youth* creates an effect of detachment: "The complex relationship of intimacy and detachment which Coetzee has achieved with his protagonist, most obviously through his use of the third-person, but also through other, more delicate strategies of distancing" (157). As I have pointed out previously: due to Coetzee's ambivalence toward his "white" identity while writing critically on the issues of colonization, it is not altogether easy for him to use the first person singular—"I." By using the writing strategy to *construct* the past from a distance, the "I" can hide behind the narrator. Besides, the kind of narrative distance in Coetzee's third-person autobiographical writing opens up the possibility of collective reading and writing of his texts.

As a matter of fact, Coetzee is now distanced from South Africa by

geography.[11] The narrative detachment/aesthetic distance in his autobiographical writing, to some degree, parallels his actual geographical distance. We can understand this analogous detachment both aesthetically and geographically. Moreover, by using the third-person narrative, Coetzee successfully resists the master formula of autobiographical writing. In a way, Coetzee frees himself from the authoritative autobiographical rhetoric of the past.

In terms of writing autobiography in a re-visionary approach, Jerome Bruner notes: "An autobiography is not and cannot be a way of simply signifying or referring to a 'life as lived' to be referred to" (38). Bruner's notion implies that autobiography should be dynamic rather than restricted to the lived expression. I would like to further suggest that autobiography should be interpreted as a kind of the cultural product which is closely connected with the world instead of concentrating on one's life story. Hence, this thesis is a study of how Coetzee with his autobiographical novels—*Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002)—uses his own lived experiences, first as a child and then as a youth, to connect with and re-examine worldly issues.[12]

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[11] J. M. Coetzee has been living in Australia since 2002. He lectures in University of Adelaide in South Australia at present.

[12] I am first inspired by Edward Said's notion of "worldly" texts. In "Secular Criticism," Said notes: "texts are worldly and to some degree they are events … [they are] 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). Clearly Said encourages readers to focus on the worldliness in the texts since what is worth emphasizing is related to human life and social world. Also, in Ashcroft's study of Coetzee's writing, he especially points out that "the worldliness of J. M. Coetzee's writing is of considerable interest because it emerges from the very ambivalent site of the South African anti-apartheid white community" (*On Post-colonial Futures* 141). In response to Ashcroft's words, I would also like to read Coetzee's lived experiences in relation to the world.

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is an introduction which reviews some crucial historical contingencies of South Africa, through which "J. M. Coetzee" will be contextualized within the colonial system culturally and socially. Under such a colonial context, interestingly, the child could be the trope/site with an unstable status. A child not only bears the sign of colonization but also will be someone with a decolonized potential in the future. *Boyhood* and *Youth* are therefore structured with the voice of a child and the perspective of an adult. Chapter Two: "Representations of Domestic Authority in *Boyhood*" aims not only to examine how Coetzee represents the complicated authority during apartheid but how he uses a child's voice to reveal the problematic nature of adult colonial ambition. The notion of "domestic" here refers to two considerations: one is of familial aspect while the other is related to national dimension. Coetzee experiences contradictions and ambiguity towards how to value people of different races in the figures of his parents. For instance, his father forces him to support a boxer simply because that boxer is the only representative of white South Africa; his mother would criticize the colored people without hesitation when she is in no need of their help. He strategically exposes the racial issues during apartheid and he paves the way to reveal its unsightly history. The meaning of apartheid is basically to restrict black people to live in their reserves and to allow colored people merely to be temporary visitors in white areas

when their physical labor is needed.[13] Thus in *Boyhood* he shows his understanding of the colored people as "men without women, without children, who arrive from nowhere and can be made to disappear into nowhere" (62), which highlights his childish confusion about the colored people's ambiguous presence/absence.

Chapter Three: "Reflections on Worldly Life in *Youth*" explores how Coetzee with his frustrating youthful experiences reveals the importance of living a worldly life. My use of the term "worldly" here refers to a physical state rather than a spiritual one. People could never have a real worldly experience simply through reading a literary text. Rather, one can get the kind of worldly experience through close interactions with other people. Among his relationships with other people, I specifically focus on his experiences as a writer, a lover and a man. In order to start a new life in London, Coetzee needs to have the past in South Africa buried. He determines to be an immigrant to England where he believes love and art await him and he expects the migration to England would bring him a promising transformation of his former life in South Africa. This expectation is reminiscent of Edward Said's

[13] By 1939, the residential situation in South Africa was noted approximately as follows: "Only 11.7 percent of the land was reserved for the African population (nearly 70 percent of the total population) … many non-whites had no alternative but to build makeshift shantytowns on the outskirts of white-populated cities." Apparently, the legislation of apartheid statute is designed to make the racist law legal because "many white South African feared, on some level, being submerged within the black masses" (Moss 445-50). Issues and history of apartheid regime are introduced in *South Africa: A Modern History*. In addition, three Acts are so influential that needed to mention particularly. "The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act" (1949) made it illegal for people of different colors to marry. By "The Prohibition Registration Act" (1950), the government forced each South African to belong to a specific racial group, preventing the colored people being treated as the whites at large. "The Group Areas Act" (1950) declared a great deal of areas for "white only" (Davenport 361-98).

"Secular Criticism," where Said asserts that the sense of belonging could be generated by means of culture: "It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in a place*, being *at home in a place*" (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 8). To Coetzee, it is the English culture within which he attempts to be "in a place" since he was educated under the British educational system and he is endowed with English cultural knowledge via his intellectual learning. However, the culture he privileges so much proves to be another disappointment. It is hard for him to fit into the English metropolis because he finds out a huge gap that exists between what he has expected and what he has encountered. When he finally works at IBM, his sense of triumph is mentioned but there is no joy. Without notice, a flood of memories of South Africa return to accompany his lonely moments in London. He is, therefore, trapped again in various forms of self-interrogation about the wrongdoings committed by the whites in the past, for instance, when he meets Theodora.

In Chapter Four, I conclude this thesis with a discussion of the interplay between literary creation and historical witness. I argue that Coetzee's autobiographical writing, as literary creation, projects a form of witness literature. Gunnars's remark—"The central issue in much of what he [Coetzee] writes is what is often regarded as the fundamental problem of twentieth- and now twenty-first-century

literature in general: how do we witness another's pain?" (11)—reveals that she also sees Coetzee's writing as witness literature that invites readers to participate in this project to "witness another's pain." Autobiography thus establishes a platform through which it renders witness-writing original and practical.

Autobiography as a text, of course, is subject to multiple interpretations. In Coetzee's case, he writes a wide range of worldly experiences for every possible reader rather than simply for himself, for instance, he remembers not only his personal history but a collective one of the Afrikaner. Besides, Coetzee allows readers to see versions of history through reading his personal one. Similarly, in Jeremy D. Popkin's study of the relationship between autobiography and history, he points out that increasingly historians themselves are willing to consider "autobiographical materials as legitimate sources" to record history; meanwhile, "the autobiographical critics' renewed appreciation of the importance of the genre's documentary function have thus brought history and autobiography closer together" (32). In addition, autobiographical writing is not only relevant to the historical aspect, but to that of the cultural. When Linda Anderson offers her perspective on practicing autobiography in the cultural dimension, she notes: "autobiography supplies few certainties or answers, its study leads us to engage with some of the most intractable and important cultural questions of our time" (133). To a certain extent,

Anderson's remark well explains *Boyhood* and *Youth* as being practiced as a kind of cultural critique in connection with Coetzee's *growing* concerns.

In "Autobiography and Confession," Coetzee confesses the great relief he enjoys when composing fiction—"Where I do my liberating, my playing with possibilities, is in my fiction" (*Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* 246). Accordingly, the act of writing provides Coetzee with a significant way to feel free. Edward Said remarks that "to join the intellectual writing world is to enter a ceaseless quest for knowledge and freedom" (*Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* 404). Hence, the act of writing indeed is capable of releasing one's soul from its confinement. Nevertheless, for South African writers to take part in the intellectual writing world is never easy. Coetzee points out the severe censorship on cultural productions in South Africa in *Giving Offense*: "Not only books, magazines, films, and plays, but T-shirts … had to pass the scrutiny of the censorship bureaucracy before it could be made public" (34). Moreover, in his own book review "Into the Dark Chamber: The Novelist and South Africa," he discloses the victims of torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians* are parallel metaphors of the writers in South Africa in that they too suffer, so "the state [South Africa] creates the preconditions for the novel to set about its work of representation" (13). Coetzee has showed a real predicament the South African writers encounter when they practiced their art roughly from the

1960s to the 1980s. In a way, censorship exercised by the authority aims to control communication among people. Since Coetzee concerns much of the impact that politics has made on literature and society in his works, his works are then categorized as “Protest Literature” (George 120) because many ideas of his writing attempt to question and to resist authority.

Said’s notion still sounds true: “What I wish to emphasize here is that critics create not only the values by which art is judged and understood, but they embody in writing those processes and actual conditions in the present by means of which art and writing bear significance” (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 53). Since each piece of literature more or less deals with certain problematic issues, it is authors’ enterprise to expose those repressed and the critics’ responsibility to bring them forth for re-examination. By *Boyhood* and *Youth*, I think Coetzee has done well both as author and critic because these two autobiographical novels are indeed rich in their literary and historical value and bear great cultural significance. In this way, Coetzee’s past would exist not simply as a fixed set of personal stories to be recaptured in written words but as an important material for deep reflection in regard to the contemporary world.

Chapter 2

Representations of Domestic Authority in *Boyhood*[14]

This chapter explores Coetzee's strategies of writing in his first autobiographical novel *Boyhood*, in which he reveals the problematic nature of colonial ambition through a child's perspective. I will argue that Coetzee uses his personal childhood memory as a way to represent the domestic authority of the segregated South Africa. By telling his own story in the third-person narrative, he revisits his past as an outsider while restraining himself from being sentimental. Instead of directly condemning the wickedness of segregation policy at that time, he offers a retrospective reflection of the national turmoil, particularly during the 1950s, and suggests an alternative way of presenting political critique, with the hope that it will make his readers re-examine the apartheid regime.

Boyhood consists of nineteen chapters. Coetzee starts this narrative about his gloomy childhood from the age of seven and ends it at thirteen. The temporal scheme spans roughly from the 1940s to the 1950s. Here a brief plot summary is in order: In the early 1950s, Coetzee was an elementary school student. Initially, Coetzee and his family lived in Cape Town. Due to the victory of the National Party

[14] The term of what I call "domestic" here is used for two different aspects: familial and national.

in the election in 1948, his father had to quit his job and had his family move to Worcester, a small town north of Cape Town. However, Coetzee does not like people and ways of living there. As a child, he shares few things with his mother and especially keeps his life at school a tight secret from her. Coming from an "unnatural family" (6),[15] he is out of place in many aspects, such as sharing his personal lived experiences with classmates at school.[16] Meanwhile, he can never understand the value judgment that his parents and adult relatives have tried to educate him with. Failing to figure out the contradiction and ambiguity in the messages delivered by the adults, he feels confused and foolish. Only the familial farm gives Coetzee a sense of security and belonging. Farms mean quite a lot to Coetzee personally. To Coetzee, going back to the farm is like going back to Mother's embrace (96).[17] Despite being timid in front of strangers, he is confident of himself as someone who is different, special and dares to dream to be a great man. He is fond of reading very much and wishes to become a teacher when he grows up. His great aunt Annie's efforts to have her father's autobiography and books published and pass on inspires him to cultivate a sense of duty and the need to tell as well as to

[15] This is Coetzee's own remark in *Boyhood* to indicate his uneasy feeling about his family. In his family, he can directly addresses his parents by their names without any reproach; he goes to school with shoes while other children are barefoot; he can even chooses his own religion at will since his family seldom go to any church.

[16] He has been an excellent student and never been caned at school while his other classmates are usually punished for rebelling against teachers; he supports the Russians while other classmates prefer the Americans at that time.

[17] It is the way with which Coetzee describes his love of and respect for the farm (96).

write down the lived stories for future generations, which can be seen as an initiative step toward his future writing career.

Before going to a close reading of *Boyhood*, first I would like to briefly explain the British influence on Dutch colonial history in Southern Africa since in the novel Coetzee does focus much on the intertwined British-Dutch relations in connection with colonial settlements in Southern Africa. The colonial history of Southern Africa has as much to do with the British as with the Dutch. In *White Writing* Coetzee writes that people of Dutch ancestry had established settlements in southern Africa called Good Hope "to provide fresh produce to East Indiamen trading between the Netherlands and Asia" (1).[18] Because India and the Far East were the main interest to the Europeans in the fifteenth century, southern Africa became a strategic vantage point on the sea route to the Indies (India and the Far East). Under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutch influence in Cape remained superior till the early nineteenth century. In 1815, the British came to grab the Dutch colony in Cape "to protect the sea route to India"; as a result, "the British took two coastal colonies, Cape Colony and Natal from the Boers" (Roberts 10-12). Consequently, struggle over land possession between the Dutch and the British continued for years and led to the Anglo-Boer Wars. It was "in 1910 the Union of South Africa of former Boer

[18] A similar statement from a different source also confirms this part of history: "the Dutch East India Company decided to establish a base beside Table Bay near the southern tip of Africa to supply its Indies fleets with fresh food and water" (Roberts 7).

Republics and the British colonies was formed" (Davenport 255-62).[19] Before 1948, the coalition government was primarily led by the United Party under the leadership of Jan Smuts. Smuts was friendly to the British and gave them his support in the Second World War.[20] In the election of 1948, the National Party gained victory. It was a momentous victory since the National Party stayed in power for the next forty years, and most significantly, it made South Africa into a profoundly segregated nation with its apartheid policy. The term "apartheid" was first introduced in the election campaign literature of the National Party in 1948. With the election coming closer, both parties set up their campaign literature, seeking to win over voters.[21] Due to their racial policy, the National Party won the majority votes from the Afrikaners in the election and then brought a turning point to South Africa.

Critics like Stuttaford and Simon see *Boyhood* as a piece of writing that deals with the implication of apartheid regime and argue that Coetzee "uses his early

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[19] Roberts points out the coalition of South African white government "from 1910 to 1994 were led by Afrikaners" for the main reason that "there were three Afrikaners to every two English-speaking whites" (18).

[20] Most South African people did not want to join the European wars. According to Coetzee's uncle Norman, the Germans did not want to fight South Africa had it not for Smuts's determination of standing on Britain's side (41).

[21] The Fagan Report of the United Party stated: "(Black) migrant should be discouraged and black families encouraged to make their homes in well-planned and carefully controlled townships. There was no way they can return to the 'native' reserves which were already overcrowded." In contrast, the Saucer Report of the National Party argued that "the flood of black migrants had to be reserved. 'Apartheid' (separateness) was the only way forward for South Africa. The reserves must continue to be the real home for the blacks. The migrant labor system must continue and be held in place by the Pass Law, as to control the movement of blacks in and out the white towns" (Roberts 25). Basically, the National Party and the United Party are both racists. Yet, there is a slight difference in terms of dealing with the native issue between them. The National Party allows the blacks into town only when they are needed for the physical labor; the United Party opposes any movement of blacks into white areas because they argue that the blacks are hard to control.

collections to probe the hidden anxieties of middle-class white South Africa after WWII" (59). This reading is valid because it indicates that not only domestic economic pressure but also social and political interchanges after World War II significantly affect the mindset of white South Africans. Both Caryl Phillips's and David Coad's readings on *Boyhood* show that Coetzee means to rework the past and not simply to remember it. Caryl Phillips observes that Coetzee uses the third person narration to suggest "construction rather than confession" (40) while David Coad terms *Boyhood* "'A Portrait of South African Artist as a Boy'" (443) because he considers Coetzee attempts to use his writing to express the world vision of a young boy, just like what James Joyce has done. In my reading and understanding of *Boyhood*, I see Coetzee's recollection of childhood is intimately linked the politics of the apartheid regime.[22] *Boyhood*, though autobiographical, never neglects to pay attention to national issues. In fact, Coetzee deliberately attempts to focus on unpacking his childhood experience in relation to that particular time period. Rather than directly condemning the wickedness of apartheid, Coetzee represents it by showing how politics affects human lives in varied aspects. He strategically offers us his lived examples and alternative ways with which to criticize apartheid as unethical.

[22] Apartheid in short, was a kind of racial separation with new and complicated policies practiced to make the old ways of segregation more systematic.

For example, in *Boyhood* Coetzee investigates how politics could make a great impact on people's life. As I have mentioned earlier, why Coetzee's family has to leave for Worcester from Cape Town is because Coetzee's father is a member of the United Party. When Malan beat Smuts, Coetzee's father has to quit his job as the 'Controller of Letting' of the former government service. Besides, Coeztee remembers his classmate Rob Hart in Worcester is the one "whom the teacher [Miss Oosthuizen] particularly loves to beat" (5) since Rob Hart's father is a member of United Party as well. Harts' father serves as United Party town councilor until the elections of 1948 while the Oosthuizen's clan is of extreme Nationalists. Even though Coetzee does not state it outright, with the textual implication we can draw our own conclusion about the reason why Rob Hart is being seriously flogged by Miss Oosthuizen. Coetzee's father also comments that had it been under the leadership of Smuts, "something would have been done about a teacher who brought politics into school" (67).

The child Coetzee thinks that he does not see the point of having elections if the party that wins can change the rules: "It is like the batsman deciding who may and who may not bowl" (68). He does not like Malan and the way he leads South Africa with supreme authority. David Attwell makes a contextualized reading of Coetzee's novels and places an emphasis on the issue of authority: "The problem of authority,

which is sharply focused in Coetzee's fiction, forces us to raise new questions concerning his relationship with his social environment" (23). Also, an image of Malan is engraved in Coetzee's mind: "Dr Malan's round, bald face is without understanding or mercy" (70). As a seven-year-old elementary school student, he can never forget Malan's first act in 1948 to reconstruct the Afrikaner's nationalist thinking was "to ban all Captain Marvel and Superman comics, allowing only comics with animal characters" (70).[23] Through Coetzee's hindsight, on the one hand, he represents how those superheroes might threaten Malan's authority, while, on the other, he shows Malan's extreme authority in his attempt to control South African public culture at that time. Ngugi wa Thiongo also makes a similar point criticizing the impact of politics on culture in South Africa: "The South Africa apartheid regime used to ban books, music even, which described what had actually been witnessed in the streets by television cameras"; even worse, "many fine artists, from apartheid South Africa … have lost their lives" (*Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* 23-35). Through child Coetzee's description of his experience with the Afrikaner's national authority, readers realize the way in which the Afrikaner colonialism had tried to establish its hegemony over people, specifically in the cultural aspects in South

[23] According to Robert Opie in *Remember When*: "Superman was another American creation, a comic–book hero from 1938" (140). Captain Marvel was created by the artist C.C. Beck, and "introduced in the first issue of Fawcett's Whiz Comics early in 1940. Like Superman, Captain Marvel was seen tossing an automobile around on his initial cover appearance" (Goulart 77-78).

Africa.

The portrayal of racial relations is another way for Coetzee to manifest the increasingly strict control by the Afrikaner national authority. Coetzee reveals the lived situations of the Colored and the Native in his parental uncle's farm Voelfontein to illustrate how the national authority affects lives of different races. At that time, most of the Natives were farmers; they were working and employed by their white masters. Having a lot of servants and slaves represents a kind of social status to the Afrikaners themselves. However, as an Afrikaner, Coetzee admits that he feels embarrassed and does not know how to interact with those non-white servants when he is called "'*die kleinbaas*,' the little master" (86). He is even embarrassed when the colored servants are in the house since he is taught to ignore them and to pretend that they are not there. As a matter of fact, he admires a colored farmer named Freek and acknowledges that "he would hero-worship Freek if it were permitted" (87). He recalls that once he is surprised to know that the Natives are not allowed to handle guns even on an excursion on the farm. He comes to his uncle for answer and then only gets a cold response: "They [the Natives] know they mustn't" (90). Furthermore, he has witnessed an unethical brutality on a colored boy servant Eddie. Eddie comes from Ida's Valley near Stellenbosch to work for Coetzee's family. It is Eddie who taught him the art of balancing on bike so he owes much gratitude to Eddie.

Then Eddie runs away after two months of living and working with them. Unfortunately, he is eventually captured not far away the farm. After being taken back again, Eddie is shamelessly dragged, kicked, and almost punished to death. What is worse is that his mother comments on Eddie with cruelty: “People like that always end up in a reformatory, and then in jail” (76). He does not understand why his mother always disparages colored people and treats them without even the slightest sympathy.

Again, he is most curious about the Native and colored farmers in Voelfontein, and often wonders: “Do they wear vests and underpants like white people? Do they each have a bed? Do they sleep naked or in their work-clothes or do they have pyjamas? Do they eat proper meals, sitting at table with knives and forks?” (85). The apartheid law restricts the Native and Colored people from entering the white residence so they could merely come to the city for their labor works. In child Coetzee’s mind, the Native are to “do heavy labour under a blazing sun … men without women, without children, who arrive from nowhere and can be made to disappear into no where” (61-62). Importantly, Coetzee tells the readers that he learns from the Afrikaner adults and the History textbook: The Natives in Worcester “are latecomers, invaders from the north, and have no right to be here … the Coloureds were fathered by the whites—Jan van Riebeeck particularly, upon the

Hottentots" (62).[24] Apparently, the version and content of the History textbook are under the direction of Malan government to make the Natives into "latecomers and invaders."

Likewise, in the early twentieth century, when the British still held authority over the Boers, the public affairs are established in the perspective of the Englishmen. At that time, the concerns of other races such as the Boers, the colored, and the Native are intentionally ignored. It is after Malan wins in the election that the Afrikaner's nationalist thinking reaches its high point and manifests itself in every possible way. So there comes the policy to engrave the marvelous feats of people of the Afrikaners ancestor—the Boers—into the History textbook, such as the Anglo-Boer wars, Kaffir Wars and Great Trek. By reading such kind of the History textbook, students would, of course, merely learn a unitary cultural value and a single historic perspective that serve the nationalist Afrikaners. One of the National Party's great educational projects has even proposed to justify the evil of apartheid in the History textbook so that their children will be convinced of the value of apartheid. All these political interferences with education manifest state totalitarianism of the Afrikaners authority.

[24] Roberts defines Hottentots's ancestor Khoisan as the "South Africa's earliest inhabitants" and explains Hottentots's origin and their relation with the whites and the Colored: "The brown-skinned Khoisan had occupied southern Africa for at least 2,000 years. They can be divided into two groups: the San, who lived mainly by hunting and whom the first whites called 'Bushmen'; and the Khoikhoi, who herded cattle and whom the whites called 'Hottentots'" (6). Jan van Riebeeck set up the Dutch's first base successfully at the southern tip of Africa in 1652 and founded the port of Cape Town. When he allowed his Dutch settled on farms near the Hottentots, the fights for taking graze lands between the Native and the whites took place. The Dutch were so well-armed that "The Khoikhoi became their servants and the Dutch East India Company shipped in slaves from the Far East, which further added to the sense of white superiority" (7-8).

Educational institutions, therefore, emerge as the tool that serves to reinforce the nationalist Afrikaners' ideology and to reconstruct their version of national identity.

Coetzee remembers that at school he learns about Jan van Riebeeck, Simon van der Stel, Lord Charles Somerset and Piet Retief.[25] He is confused about the Kaffir Wars since they are too many to be exactly counted. Despite the tedious historic events, he does well in the examinations and always gives the correct answers to his history tests, although he can not understand why he has to learn that Jan van Riebeeck and Simon van Stel were good while Lord Charles Somerset was bad. When he reads those historical stories he knows that he is supposed to side with the Boers ancestor who fought for their freedom against the British Empire. However, he chooses to admire and support the British. He dislikes the Boers because during the war they "hid behind rocks and shot from ambush" while "the British marched to their death" (66-67). Here I would like to pause to reflect on *histories* and *History*. In Head's introduction to *J. M. Coetzee*, he has explicitly indicated Coetzee's "affinities with a broader postcolonial revision of history" because Coetzee himself once claims that "the novel and history as different kinds of competing discourse" and he continues to suggest that his own role as a novelist is "to counter the claims of

[25] Jan van Riebeeck was a colonial administer who led the Dutch to settle in South Cape in 1652; Simon van der Stel was the successor to Riebeeck. Piet Retief was elected to be the head of governor during the Great Trek but murdered by the Zulus. Lord Charles Somerset was the first British governor of Cape Colony from 1814 to 1826.

history to privacy" (11). I argue that Coetzee deliberately privileges individual *histories* over the official *History*. By doing that he is highlighting the specificity of histories for individual concerns distinguished from the History of the official interest.

It is evident in *Boyhood* that Coetzee deploys a passage of his grandmother's oral story to convey his message. He remembers his mother repeats a story about the Boer War that her own mother has told her: "When the Boers arrived on their farm, they demanded food and money and expected to be waited on. When the British soldiers came, they slept in the stable, stole nothing, and therefore leaving courteously thanked their hosts" (66). Paul Jay has commented on autobiography as a way "to situate the work in the history of an on-going problem" by using "one medium—language—to present another medium—being" (21). This comment corresponds to Coetzee's latent purpose here—to highlight the specificity of individual histories for individual concerns—and works out a resistance to the official History. To a certain extent, the story told by his grandmother becomes the medium that help remembering the *being* in the past. Jay's comment points to the capacity of the autobiographical writing as something written to re-examine and re-evaluate the official History. Of Coetzee's deployment of his grandmother's life story, his autobiographical writing therefore suggests an alternative form of reviewing certain historical events. On the other hand, it can be viewed as a textual production, an effort to deal with the

problematic of recorded History.

In addition to Anglo-Boer war and Kaffir Wars, the Great Trek is one of the central features of the Afrikaner's feats in Dutch's colonial history. The Great Trek therefore produced a significant mode of identification in Afrikaner nationalist discourse. Subsequently, during the 1930s, there was a wave of racist nationalism developed among Afrikaners. Particularly, in forming his racially monolithic political party, Malan "had a vision of an Afrikaner 'volk' or people who, united by trek, racial threat and war against Britain" (Roberts 23).[26] In order to understand how the nature of the Afrikaner nationalist discourse had emerged, it is necessary to review the Great Trek in relation to the politics of identity experienced at that time. Looking back at the Dutch colonial history of southern Africa, a large-scale migration occurred due to the British oppression between 1835 and 1845. The Boers felt immensely threatened by the possible changes in their ways of life because the British intended to abolish the slavery system. In that case, "14,000 Boers with the same number of Khoikhoi and black servants left Cape Colony," also with their aim "to preserve proper relationships between master and servant" (Roberts 11). Those Boers who joined the Great Trek are called as "the voortrekkers." [27] During the

[26] "Malan won the support of the Dutch Reformed Church (the main Afrikaner church) and also of the Broederbond, a secret society of the most influential Afrikaner men. Its aim was to create a completely independent genuine Afrikaans government for South Africa" (Roberts 23).

[27] According to Norval's glossary, voortrekker means "pioneer" (368), and Roberts defines it as "the people who traveled away" (11).

voortrekkers' long journey northward, the Boers' leader Retief was murdered by the Zulu people though, the final victory belonged to the relatively few Boers in the long run. Both of those two historical events later became the founding myth of Afrikaners' racist and nationalist thinking: "Retief's murder became an act of black savagery, and the 'miraculous' victory at Blood River a sign that the voortrekkers and their descendants were God's people who alone had the right to rule the South Africa" (Roberts 11). In memorial and honor of "Voortrekkers," Norval points out, the government celebrated their history and pioneers with "their struggles and sacrifices to establish a state independent from the British colonial authorities" (39-40) in 1938. During the ceremony and festivals, "men started to grow Voortrekker beards and women sported Voortrekker dress; children were baptized at camping-sites and couples dressed in Voortrekker gear were married where the wagons congregated"; by doing that the Afrikaner nationalists hoped to represent the nation-building in the act of family-gathering and to revive "historical forms of identification" (Norval 39-40) of the greatness in the history of Boers' Trek as a whole. Along with the political device of the government, I see this kind of celebration as creating two closely related ideas: to precisely re-create the meaning of their ancestor's great historical experiences and then to reinforce the previous myth of nationalist thinking in order to justify the discourse of racial segregation.

Besides banning comics of Captain Marvel and Superman, there is one thing from Malan's nationalist policy that the child Coetzee dreads very much: the National Party claims that the Afrikaans will be the official language. This language policy has much to do with the former British colonial establishment in southern Africa in the early nineteenth century. In Davenports's study, Lord Charles Somerset had endeavored to practice an anglicized policy on language: "to replace Dutch by English in all spheres of public life" so that "English, stated the proclamation of 1822, would also become the sole language of the legislature" (44-46). It is obvious that Somerset tried to establish his colonial powers through cultural measures to dismantle the Dutch influence in South Africa. With the legal act to legislate English as the only official language, the British authority aims to overwhelm that of the Dutch in the cultural also most effective way. Ngugi's remark that the Afrikaans in South Africa can be categorized as one of the rare cases in which "the colonizers themselves lost their linguistic linkages to their home base" (*Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* 82) seems to be a proof of the success of Somerset's long-term policy. In Coetzee's own case, his mother's family has German roots but speaks English; his father is an Afrikaner but has been cultivated in English ways. Due to his parental preference to English and his parents' British background, Coetzee, though as Afrikaner, speaks English as his mother tongue. Unfortunately, "in Worcester the English are a

minority … in school since few of the Brothers speak English as a first language" (67). He could recall the school had hired an Irish Catholic, Mr. Whelan, to deliver the English classes but Mr. Whelan actually hates the English and does not hide his dislike of the British colonizer. Coetzee remembers, "Most of their time in English classes is spent on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, where Mr. Whelan's method is to assign the boys roles and have them read their parts aloud" (138). He even suspects that Mr. Whelan does not really understand what Jesus parables mean when he teaches them. In Coetzee's point of view, Mr. Whelan as an English teacher is not qualified. Yet it turns out to be exactly the result of what the National Party had expected.

Outside the life of school and the country, his own family disappoints him most. Coetzee is an excellent student at school and he regards himself as a special person.[28] It is understandable that when Coetzee senses that his family is not that outstanding, he carries a distressing feeling toward his family all the time. Although he is close to his mother, he shares nothing with her. His mother's love to him is a "cage in which he refuses back and forth, back and forth, like a poor bewildered baboon" (123). His father is too common to accomplish anything worth mentioning. Besides,

[28] Coetzee had the experience of drowning once when he took part in a swimming test of the boy scouts. He was rescued after all. Yet, after that he firmly regarded himself as a special person for he was given a second life. He seems to try to exaggerate the meaning of the rescue. To a certain extent, Coetzee is narcissistic.

Coetzee's father has financial troubles and a problem of alcoholism so he fails as a role model to the child. Coetzee feels he usually "burns with shame of his father's being stupid" (154). He even declares that he does not need a father. In his daily getting along with his parents, his is most confused about his parents' judgments on racial issues. Contradiction and ambiguity towards how to value people of different races perplex him quite a lot. To take some examples, he has had a dispute with his mother on what to do with a teacup which a colored visitor had used. It appears that his mother wants to uphold the custom: "after a person of colour has drunk from a cup the cup must be smashed" (157). Likewise, his uncles Norman and Lance often try to impose on him with the idea that "the Jews are everywhere, the Jews are taking over the country" (21). However, in regard to his uncles' dislike to the Jews, he knows why. It is because the Jews refuse to buy more feathers from his grandfather's Voelfontein so that his grandfather goes bankrupt in the long run. On the other hand, his mother contradicts Norman and Lance. She regards the Jew Bensusan as "a good guy for he is going to rescue his father and pull him back on the right track" (153-54). Despite the different kinds of judgments upon the Jews, Coetzee himself recalls the memory of Wolf Heller, who has brought his father from Cape Town to Worcester when his father lost his job in the civil service after the election of 1948. In Coetzee's reflection, Heller indeed took good care of his

employees because “he [Coetzee] received the Christmas present from Wolf Heller even though Christmas means nothing to Jews” (23). On this point, Coetzee chooses to believe there must be many Jews like Heller, who are exempted from the general stereotypes of being selfish.

Coetzee shows us he is endowed with another trouble by his own family—they believes in no specific religion so Coetzee has no religious affiliation as well. Yet, the school teacher forces him to choose one religion from among the Jewish, the Christian, and the Roman Catholic religion. He identifies the Roman Catholic as his religion but did not know much of it. At the same time he chose to favor the Russians over the Americans when everyone else would choose the Americans in 1947. Some questions by his classmates, such as whether he would consider Smuts or Malan as a better politician, are as difficult to him as to choose between Superman and Captain Marvel in his childish understanding. He is all the time alienated because of his “improper” choices. He can not help thinking why one has to face so many choices. What’s worse is that even “thinking” itself, to some degree, is wrong sometimes. Once he mentioned his personal habit is “thinking”; soon “everyone in his class knew about it: the boy was odd, he wasn’t normal” (29). His observant mind takes him away from his school life and people. Though he always goes first in his class, he is easily isolated. As an Afrikaner boy, he can not find any comfort

from his Afrikaner classmates. Rather, he is bullied by them now and then. Coetzee vividly recalls one of his experiences of being abused by his peers:

> The two Afrikaans boys pinned his hands behind his back and marched him behind the earth-wall at the far end of the rugby field … one of those idiots or near-idiots who can break your fingers or crush your windpipe as easily as they wring a bird's neck and smile placidly while they are doing it. (112-13)

Another time he and another friend of him are not allowed to play in a cave by an Afrikaner boy, he questions himself: "A cave: do they need permission to be in a cave?" (70). Consequently, as a child, what he hates most about Worcester, what most makes him want to escape, is the rage and resentment that he senses against the Afrikaner boys. He not only fears but loathes those Afrikaner boys. Therefore, he would easily associate the Afrikaners with violence, something stupid and mean.

He enjoys his relation to the Afrikaner only when he visits Voelfontein—"Bird-fountain" (80).[29] Voelfontein is the place where he is able to find comforts and to feel more at ease with himself. He refuses to connect any evil with farms. Yet we readers learn that there is the slaughter of sheep on Voelfontein regularly: "Every Friday a sheep is slaughtered for the people of the farm" (98). On this point

[29] Voelfontein used to be his grandfather's property. After his grandfather died, the farm was passed down to Uncle Son.

Coetzee makes it quite clear in *The Lives of Animals*, "I [Coetzee] hesitate to call them [production facilities] farms any longer" when animals are slaughtered in "production facilities" (19). Here we can see Coetzee shows his reverence to farms.[30] To him, a farm should be a place that "no ill can happen here" (81). His relation to farm is like that of a son to a mother. Therefore, he feels he was: "twice-born: born from woman and born from the farm. Two mothers and no father" (96), and more than that: "everything … is complicated in his love for his mother" while things are "uncomplicated in his love for the farm" (79). "There is no place on earth he loves more or can image loving more" (96); in his own mind he believes that "belonging to the farm is his secret fate" (96)—a secret that he can not talk to anyone else, his mother in particular. Because confessing his love to that farm could be a betrayal to his mother since his mother does not have a good relationship with his father's family so that she is not that welcome on Voelfontein. In this case, belonging is a "secret and sacred word" (95) to him. Only when he is on the farm alone then "he can breathe the word aloud: *I belong on the farm*" (95).

Coetzee's sense of belonging to the farm leads to his other arguments of the

[30] Also, Coetzee's reverence to farms seems to suggest his reverence to the Colored people. When he mentions Outa Jaap, one of the two Colored family working on the farm, he can not help admiring him. It is evident in the way in which he describes that "Outa Jaap was on the farm before his grandfather … Outa Jaap was part of the farm; though his grandfather may have been its purchaser and legal owner. Outa Jaap came with it, knew more about it" (84). His reverence is somehow tinted with an envy at the close affinity between the Colored and the farm. That kind of affinity is exactly what he does not think he has ever possessed.

veld, farm, and pastoral life in South Africa. Specifically, he privileges the nature of language itself which not merely functions as "verbal transcription" but performs as the art of "literary landscape." It is the literary landscape that "offers something that pictorial landscape cannot: read out and articulate the meaning of the landscapes" (*White Writing* 166-69). Furthermore, the statement that "*I belong to the farm*" (96) is completely different from a statement like that *the farm belongs to me*. He knows and accepts it as a truth that "Voelfontein belongs to no one [since] the farm exists from eternity to eternity" (96). The farm is greater than people. Except for being on the farm, Coetzee is out of place everywhere in South Africa.

Coetzee confesses his detestation of growing up: "Something is changing. He seems to be embarrassed all the time … At the age of thirteen he is becoming surly, scowling, dark" (151). What Coetzee is suffering from is not merely the physical change but also a psychological one. He is in need of a solution that can break out the deadlock of his situation. When Voelfontein can serve as a place for him to escape to, "leaving" for London will be the only way that can both detach himself from his past self and the domestic authority in South Africa. London in his second autobiographical novel *Youth*, hence, signals as a transnational site for Coetzee to initiate a brand new start.

In this chapter, I have discussed how Coetzee turns his memoir of gloomy

childhood into representations of the domestic authority during apartheid specifically from 1940 to 1953. In the past, when people talk about the violence and injustice happened in the segregated South Africa, I could not fully understand the anger they expressed. Through Coetzee's description in a child's voice and perspective, I finally have a clear picture of that astonishing violence and I am able to piece together a different understanding of the obsessively classed and strictly segregated South African society. The South Africa in *Boyhood* is set in a period of political transition. Coetzee's narrative leads his readers through that baffling period. I believe that what I am reading of *Boyhood* contains some versions of reality. History or the truth of history is constantly under threat; not only because historical records may be thrown away, but also what has survived and the way it is surviving can be distorted. Therefore Coetzee's writing and his looking back at the past offer some valuable lessons. It is through Coetzee's writing strategy in dealing with personal childhood experience that he has succeeded in making us feel and reconsider the issues. We can take *Waiting for the Barbarians* as another example, he chooses to show rather than to tell—to pose "torture"—the main evil of apartheid—as a thematic subject within the novel but does not make an explicit remark in regard to apartheid.[31] Instead of condemning apartheid directly, he chooses to represent its way of cruelty.

[31] Many anti-apartheid protesters were said to be tortured to death under police custody. It was particularly notorious that one of the leaders of South Africa's Black Consciousness Movement—Stephen Biko—died during the white police detention.

Sam Durrant analyzes Coetzee's writing strategy and observes that Coetzee's "refusal to provide a direct articulation of apartheid nevertheless constitute a mode of living through it" and he continues to define that sort of indirect expression actually could "grapple with the material, bodily affect of that history" (50).

Boyhood is represented as a continuation of Coetzee's ways to express a more powerful albeit indirect criticism on apartheid so that it can be remembered and articulated in an alternative way, via a child's voice and perspective in this case. Writing *Boyhood* is not a selfish business to Coetzee, to some degree, he doesn't write entirely for himself. There is the kind of message of "anti-authority" that he wants to deliver to the world. Besides, *Boyhood* can be regarded as a powerful cultural practice that effectively battles against the colonial authority. Also, Coetzee as an intellectual is advocating a kind of a resistance to western hegemony. His childhood experience of colonialism is packed into a piece of autobiographical writing and serves to complement his adult stance of anti-colonialism. At his great aunt Annie's funeral, he is most concerned about who will tell the stories he knows: "He alone is left to do the thinking. How will he keep them all in his head, all the books, all the people, all the stories? And if he does not remember them, who will?" (166) *Boyhood* allows us to witness how he uses his individual talent to translate his life into writing. The importance of *Boyhood*, therefore, lies in his achievement of

literary creation based on his lived experiences on the one hand, and, on the other, in his creation of a kind of historical testimony to the Afrikaner South African people's collective memory.

Chapter 3

Reflections on Worldly Life in *Youth*

After his first autobiographical novel *Boyhood*, Coetzee continues to write his memoir in *Youth* in the present-tense and in the third-person narrative. More than simply a retrospection on his youthful expatriate life, J. M. Coetzee's second autobiographical novel *Youth* is a critical reflection on the necessary interaction between a writer and the world.[32] Generally specking, *Youth* is in many ways similar to James Joyce's *A Portrait of Young Man as an Artist* in that Coetzee, like Joyce, also tries to depict his struggle to make writing his future career. However, Coetzee's recollection in *Youth* can not be simplified as a portrait of a lonely young man who escapes to London in order to fulfill his ambition to be a writer. In this chapter, I would argue that Coetzee uses his frustrating experiences to reveal the importance of living a worldly life. Coetzee has presented to readers his youthful experiences in relation to the real world, since the way in which he understands the world is mostly based on his fantasy and experience via reading, I will investigate how the "worldly" experiences teach and help Coetzee to formulate his different thoughts on living a worldly life.

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[32] Edward Said has suggested that the intellectual should maintain a critical attitude and uphold a "critical consciousness" in life (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 24).

The chronological and geographical context of *Youth* can be roughly divided into two parts. The former part of the novel is set in South Africa, starting from where *Boyhood* leaves off, in which Coetzee tells about his study-employee life in South Africa during the late 1950s. Then he turns to focus on writing about his adventures in London during the early 1960s, which constitutes four-fifths of the novel. Here is the brief summary: *Youth* opens with young Coetzee working and living alone in Cape Town as a nineteen-year-old college student majoring in mathematics. In Cape Town, he spends most of his leisure time with artists and intellectuals; meanwhile, he always has women in and out of his life. Among all the women he dates, Jacqueline is the only one with whom Coetzee has a serious relationship. Desiring for a solitary life, however, he quits his relationship with Jacqueline. It is not long after he begins another love affair with Sarah, a girl who has been pregnant with his child but gets an abortion eventually. Coetzee plans to live a brand new life of love and literature outside the South Africa in order to escape from the family and the country that he despises as well as his sense of personal failure in that particular environment. He assumes that leaving for England is the only way that he can cut all bonds with the past and to attain his personal freedom. When he arrives in London he is only in his early twenties. Coetzee's life in London is based on the experiences as follows: to work as a computer engineer; to pursue love

of women as his way to salvation; and to build up a career as a writer. He first tries to have a career at IBM and then gives up the job so that he can devote himself to writing—literary as well as academic writing since he is working on his thesis about Ford Madox Ford for the University of Cape Town. During the period of thesis writing, he has been a short-term house-sitter in order to make a living. In the long run, he again returns to work as a computer engineer at the International Computers since he needs to be officially employed to meet the immigration regulations set specifically for the non-British people in the United Kingdom. When he closed his memoir in London it had been the middle 1960s. At the end of *Youth*, Coetzee reveals that he has achieved nothing successfully and by the time he is a twenty-four-year-old living as a computer programmer who seems to have no future in literature. Overall, readers see in *Youth* Coetzee has spent three years or so on his youthful life in London. Pankaj Mishra's argument that "*Youth* does begin to appear a surrender to nostalgia, the kind of thinly fictionalized memoir of long-surmounted bitterness that well-feted novelists are prone to write in comfortable middle age" (51) takes an overly simplified view of *Youth*. In the following part, I would like to give a close reading of Coetzee's struggling youthful experiences and thereby to discuss how Coetzee uses his frustrating experiences to reveal the importance of living a worldly life.

First of all, I would like to point out that women are important in Coetzee's youthful life. In the beginning of *Youth*, Coetzee admits he is haunted by a sense of perpetual babyhood: "There is something essential he lacks. What will cure him of babyhood, make him into a man?" (3). Then he continues to talk about love: "If it were to arrive, will be love. He may not believe in God but he does believe in love and the powers of love … if he had a beautiful, worldly-wise mistress he would soon be transformed, even transfigured" (3-4). Obviously Coetzee takes women's love as a powerful instrument for salvation as well as a way to cure to his own lack; and he wishes that different types of women can enlighten him in different ways. Yet I do not think that in Coetzee's mind women are capable of *transforming* himself. I would argue in *Youth*, Coetzee simply takes women as something he can make good use of to fulfill his wish/fantasy to live like a *man* but never as the companion to his life. As we know, Coetzee likes reading, and his reading has drawn him too much into the fictional world. Therefore, his knowledge about women mostly derives from what he reads. His reading of Flaubert's famous fictional character Emma Bovary is a good example.

Emma Bovary is one of the examples of Coetzee's fantasy of women. Why Coetzee likes this famous fictional woman is because he is enchanted by Emma through Flaubert's depiction of her beauty; he wishes that he can go to bed with her so

that he will be able to “hear the famous belt whistle like a snake as she undresses” (25). As Coetzee admits in *Youth*, the ways in which he imagines Emma are based on Flaubert’s writing. Though he knows he can never meet Emma in reality he is still convinced that “Emma was not created out of nothing. [There are] experiences of her author, experiences that were then subjected to the transfiguring fire of art” (25). In this respect, we see clearly how he loves the fictional Emma and how she is such an influential figure to Coetzee’s fantasy of women. Coetzee may be right when he connects the fictional with the real. His reflection on this point is reminiscent of some ideas of literary realism. When Gareth Cornwell talks about the use of fictional character in Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello* and *The Lives of Animals*, he suggests that literary realism “reflects the worldly contingency of ideas, dramatizing the contexts in which the ideas acquire meaning and evoking the content” (308). In a sense, Coetzee’s notion that Emma is “created out of experience” also comes out of the ideas of literary realism. In *Youth* we also see Coetzee’s tendency against Romanticism when he follows Pound: “Pound has taught him to smell out the easy sentiment in which the Romantics and Victorians wallow, to say nothing of their slack versifying” (21). Yet, Coetzee has gone too far. He is under too much influence of the literary/fictional world and that makes it hard for him to come out into the real world. His wish of becoming a *man* is doomed to meet with frustration.

As Coetzee admits, he is waiting for a “worldly-wise mistress” (4) to bring light to his life. Here Jacqueline serves as one of the crucial examples who give him a lesson. Before Coetzee leaves for London, he has had many love affairs with different women. Jacqueline is a one of them. She is thirty years old, born in England and brought to South Africa in her youth. Before her days in the South Africa, Jacqueline used to be trained as a nurse in midwifery at Guy’s Hospital in London. That is to say, supposedly she has widened her knowledge and enriched her life during her stay in London. Her worldly experience is the reason why although Jacqueline is ten years old than Coetzee he still adores her—because he feels flattered by her attention. He depicts her as “an attractive woman, more attractive, more sophisticated, more worldly-wise than he deserves” (8). When they start their relationship, Coetzee let Jacqueline move into *his* apartment and shares *his* room with her. It seems that he intends to learn something from Jacqueline by living with her. He knows “during her stint at Guy’s Hospital, [Jacqueline] slept (she says) with Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, even a Persian” (8). Therefore he somehow expects to be able to have an opportunity to “broaden his education in the realm of the erotic” (8). Coetzee is satisfied with Jacqueline in terms of sex, which makes Coetzee feel confident of himself as a *man*. Nonetheless, there is a fly in the ointment. After living together with Jacqueline for a short time, Coetzee admits that

he has been tired of her with her personal stuff: “the clutter of boxes and suitcases, the clothes scattered everywhere, the mess in the bathroom” (7). What’s more, Jacqueline leads his life into a chaos: he wakes up late and is late for his lectures; he even missed some classes and has those subjects fallen behind. What he can not endure most is that while he is out of the apartment Jacqueline “searches out his diary and reads what he has written about their life together” (8). Jacqueline exemplifies how Coetzee’s fantasy about women is in conflict with his worldly experience with women. Initially, he wants to have the relationship with Jacqueline to fulfill his sexual desire based on a fantasy toward women. He is never sincere with his love.

In terms of living together with another human being, he has no *space* for Jacqueline, practically also spiritually. And he tries to express this lack of space in his diary. In the diary Coetzee blames Jacqueline for being an “unspeakable burden” (8) that could destroy his peace, privacy as well as his ability to write and he feels tremendously upset. After Jacqueline has confronted him with this diary entry, he is angry because Jacqueline does not respect his privacy since, he argues, one is never allowed to read other people’s private papers without permission. On the other hand, somehow he is also aware that he may have done the entry for her to read:

> What was his motive for writing what he wrote? Did he perhaps write it in order that she should read it? Was leaving his true thoughts lying

> around where she was bound to find them his way of telling her what he was too cowardly to say to her face? (9)

It is a crucial moment when Coetzee questions about the true meanings of his act of writing: Does one write privately or for other people? Coetzee intends to invite readers to reconsider one thing: if the writer is not willing to keep something immoral or unethical as a secret forever, is he or she destined to pay certain kind of price when the written pieces are exposed to other people? Further, Coetzee continues to remind readers that they should remain suspicious with what is written down because to any writer "at one moment he might truly be himself, at another he might simply be making things up" (10), and most important of all—"*Things are rarely as they seem*" (10). To a certain sense, in this relationship Coetzee is a failure both as writer and as lover. It is Jacqueline who teaches him a lesson about love relationship.

Caroline—a drama student with stage ambitions—is another worldly woman who educates Coetzee in another way. Coetzee has known Caroline since his last days in South Africa. Months later after Coetzee arrives in London, she shows up as well. In London he has resumed the love affair with her. He is impressed by Caroline, especially by her energy and enterprising spirit in building up her acting career. However, he is at the same time not happy about Caroline's ways of making friends in order to extend her career. Nonetheless, Caroline reminds him tartly that

"In the acting world … contacts are all-important. Without contacts her career will never take off" (70). She seems to warn Coetzee against living an alienated life in the world, especially when he wants to be a *real* writer. Caroline's point brings forth Coetzee's reflection on living worldly—to understand that the living principles are based on getting along with other people; to accept that in that real world the living rules are mostly set up already by other people. Therefore, in Coetzee's perspective, Caroline demonstrates herself as a model of being worldly wise. Caroline successfully discards the old South African society and well incorporates herself into ways of living in the new environment of the metropolis London. Caroline's success consequently reveals Coetzee's worldly incompetence in getting in touch with other people. The way in which Coetzee denies Caroline's effort shows how he tries to twist people's motivation. He is jealous about Caroline's connection: "Laurence Oliver is taking an interest in her acting career. He has promised her a part in an as yet unspecified play; he has also invited her to his house in the country" (77-78). The suspicious tone suggests that he is speculating Caroline is actually using her body to get the "contact," a speculation that he can hardly prove but goes to reveal his cynicism in terms of worldly engagements.

In sharp contrast to Jacqueline and Caroline, Marianne and Sarah are presented as women who are sexually victimized and who stand for provincial South Africa.

Both Marianne and Sarah have been sexually exploited by Coetzee. Marianne studies in the University of the Orange Free State and is a friend of Coetzee's cousin Ilse's. She meets Coetzee during a short visit to London. According to Coetzee: "Marianne has never heard of computer programming and is incurious about it" (128). After a sexual experience with Marianne, Coetzee discovers that she was a virgin. Coetzee admits: "He has never slept with a virgin before. Has never given a thought to virginity as a physical state. Now he learns his lesson. Marianne bleeds while they are making love and goes on bleeding afterwards" (129). And he worries more about how other people see him than with Marianne's continuous bleeding. He is most concerned about how to ease this episode out of his life. After all, in London he is new and just wants to have a good start, in Coetzee's mind: "In the world of South Africa he is no more than a ghost … for London, he is as good as unknown here" (130-31). Actually, what matters most to him is that he will not know what to do if other people hear about this shame. Hence he implores God not to have his shameful story get out: "Let that be his contract then, with the gods, he will punish himself, and in return will hope the story of his caddish behavior will not get out" (130). Ironically, he reveals himself via his autobiographical writing. Again, it is a crucial episode in Coetzee's youthful life. Because of Marianne's sexual trauma Coetzee has learned a lesson of worldly experience. He is not even feeling sorry to

what he has done to Marianne and feels annoyed by Ilse's implicit reproach. I think he is self-conscious about how bad he is since he tries his best to bargain with God about his shameful behavior. At the same time, readers are informed a secular message: it makes no difference whether God forgive him or not because things are exposed anyhow.

The other girl Sarah, who comes from Johannesburg, is pregnant with Coetzee's child, yet she gets aborted eventually. Through leaving Sarah, Coetzee symbolically cuts all the bonds with the South Africa. Significantly, when Coetzee refuses to raise a child together with Sarah, he is also claiming his disconnection with a potential family of South Africa. Coetzee will have no child *of* South Africa and thereby no possible connection with its future. He convinces himself that "South Africa is a wound within him" (116). Sarah, to a certain extent, is a symbolic wound within Coetzee in relation to South Africa. With the negation to Sarah, Coetzee considers that he can protect himself from getting hurt by South Africa again. Yet, Sarah is worldly intelligent in dealing with her own abortion matter, which serves as a sharp contrast to Coetzee's inadequacy and makes he feel disgraced. By this kind of selfish fantasy of disconnection to Sarah/South Africa, Coetzee is also trying to hide his own disgust about his incompetence.

After he ends his relationship with Sarah, he thinks that he finally can go for his

new life. London, in his fantasy, will be a new heaven. Naturally, Coetzee is unable to choose not to be an Afrikaner/white South African yet still he strives to gain a new identity. London, a metropolis for the formerly colonized in the 1960s, happens to meet his demand:

> He is ready for romance, ready even for tragedy, ready for anything, in fact, so long as he will be consumed by it and remade. That is why he is in London, after all: to be rid of his old self and revealed in his new, true, passionate self. (111)

Life in London in his imagination is filled with cultural diversity and advanced progress.[33] Accordingly, living in London is an opportunity for Coetzee to attain a new identity and to find a new sense of belonging. London will help him transcend the national boundary of his blood tie with the Afrikaner. Coetzee is convinced that he will be free and then attain a new identity in England with his cultural knowledge and social experience. According to Brubaker's discussion of the use of identity, there are five ways that can demonstrate the uses of identity. I think one among the five can be applied to Coetzee's case here; Coetzee's strategy to attain a new identity—an English identity, in particular—is by the "*collective* phenomenon, [which]

[33] In Peter Hall's discussion of central city-planning in the 1960s around the world, London is defined as a successful case of "world city" with "new towns as a central, high-level shopping and service center" (310); Hall specifically indicates London as a model of public housing for immigrants. Accordingly, in *Youth*, Coetzee observed that people from different countries emigrated to London in the early 1960s, for instance, the Indian couple that lives below Coetzee and the Hungarian Miklos who shows Coetzee the rented flat.

donates a fundamental and consequential '*sameness*' among members of a group or category" (34).[34] Coetzee obviously hopes to cultivate the elements of "collective" as well as "sameness" through his intellectual learning of English literature and his everyday social experience in London. By living among the British people and reading English literature, he believes that he will have the English "collective" quality and English "sameness" within the English group in terms of the cultural and social dimensions. While in Africa he plans "to *read* everything worth reading before he goes overseas, so that he will not arrive in Europe a provincial pumpkin" (25). In addition, Giles and Middleton's remark on the relation between literary culture and identity-formation of the Englishness also makes sense in regard of Coetzee's case here: "literary culture [is] promoted as a handy tool in the rebuilding of a sense of national identity" (150). Coetzee's migration to London can be understood at both national and economical dimensions. He wants to make a living by his own and to attain an English identity through his British education, cultural knowledge in English literature, and social experience in London. By re-situating his own national identity within an English circle, Coetzee's new identity is not

[34] Please see Rogers Brubaker's *Ethnicity without Groups* for the other four uses of identity. They are practically demonstrated as: "1. a ground or basis of social or political action, and [it is] opposed to "interest" in an effort to highlight and conceptualize *non-instrumental* modes of social and political action; 2. a core aspect of (individual or collective) selfhood or as a fundamental condition of social being, and [it is] invoked to point to something allegedly *deep*, *basic*, *abiding*, or *foundational*; 3. a product of social or political action, [it is] invoked to highlight the *processual*, *interactive* development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible; 4. the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, and [it is] invoked to highlight the *unstable*, *multiple*, *fluctuating*, and *fragmented* nature of the contemporary self" (33-35).

simply based on physical migration but through his intellectual cultural learning. To put it simply, Coetzee's project is to claim himself a new Englishman, culturally and socially. Here Edward Said's remarkable note on the distinctions between filiative relationship and affiliative relationship in "Secular Criticism" can be helpful to explain Coetzee's case:

> If a filial relationship was help together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority … the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of "life," whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society. (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 20)

Said's extrapolation between "the affiliative relationship" and "the filiative relationship" can very well explain the ways in which Coetzee deliberately discards his natural bonds with South Africa and then looks for a new affiliation in England. In this way, with his culturally accumulated power and social connection with the British, he thinks he can access the true meaning of "Englishness."

His cultural knowledge gives him a fantasy with which he finds consolation, but his worldly experiences within the English circle give him a practical also frustrating lesson. Through *Youth* Coetzee shows that this attempt to become an Englishman can never be fully successful. Coetzee's intellectual learning of English

literature gives him a key to get into the English culture and he observes and acquires Englishness via his education. Coetzee's personal experience of daily encounters in London is also one of the important ways through which he imagines the various possibilities of what constitutes the English. Yet Coetzee understands the truth clearly: "he may dress like a Londoner, tramp to work like a Londoner, suffer the cold like a Londoner, but he has no ready quips. Not in a month of Sundays would Londoners take him for the real thing" (102). On top of that, he needs to answer a very fundamental question—what kind of Englishman, or Londoner specifically, would he like to be? He will have to make a choice between "to be middle-class English or working-class English" (102). Initially, he would like to fulfill his early ambition to be a real poet in London. He wishes to settle for good in England and to devote himself to writing. Later when he works at IBM, the ways that Coetzee "wears the uniforms of middle-class, reads a middle-class newspaper, imitates middle-class speech" (103) clearly inform readers the result of his choice to be a middle-class English. The question remains: does Coetzee desire more than just being one of the middle-class computer engineers? Would Coetzee want to be regarded as one of "citizens of the world" in the world central city London?[35] Has Coetzee forgotten his early ambition for writing and poetry already? Or, does he come

[35] In John Renni Short's *Global Metropolitan*, he discusses global elites in the 1960s and points out that many of them had considered themselves as "citizens of the world" (114), of which he particularly takes the chief executive of IBM World Trade as an example.

to realize that he needs to be identified as something new immediately, if not as an Englishman, in order to get away from the South Africa forever?

Hence Coetzee needs to find out a kind of affiliation with London, where he hopes he can start a new life. However, the worldly experience of cooperating at IBM makes him suffer in London. One of his tasks at IBM is to help the IBM's clients on the 7090 whenever they run into difficulties with their own data cards.[36] The processing system 7090 is the heart of the IBM bureau. It is important to IBM whether the 7090 is well-operated or not. To make good use of the 7090 in the most *efficient* way is to make it running all the time without being idle. Idle time is inefficient. Coetzee remembers: "The ultimate goal of the bureau is to keep the 7090 running all day and all night; the most valued clients are those who occupy the 7090 for hours on end" (82). The demand for connecting with 7090 helps to underscore the importance of IBM as one of the significant forces of American capitalism in the 1960s. IBM has swept England with the American economic power. In Coetzee's observation, IBM is strong in its ways of emphasizing the employees' capacity and

[36] Here is a summary of the history of the 7090 archived from the IBM website: "The 7090 is the most powerful transistorized data processing system ever in IBM; it is announced on December 30, 1958 and withdrawn on July 14, 1969. The IBM 7090 is mainly designed to permit the programmer the widest ease and flexibility in the manipulation of data; in relation to business, the 7090 can process a variety of large-scale business applications such as inventory control, production control, forecasting and general accounting. Also, it has been applied to the scientific uses such as jet engines, nuclear reactors and supersonic aircraft, and most important of all, the Air Force's Ballistic Missile Warning System—the 3,000-mile radar system in the far north designed to detect missiles fired at southern Canada or the United States from across the polar region." (http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/mainframe/mainframe_PP7090.html)

performance instead of the English ways of class hierarchy—"men of all kinds can get to the top because all that matters to IBM is loyalty and hard, concentrated work" (50). On the other hand, each employee of IBM will simply concentrate on his or her business. Consequently, it is not easy to find a real friend. Yet it seems that nobody but Coetzee cares about how to get a friend. Hard working and loyalty to IBM are all that matter. IBM does not care whether its employees can be friends or not. Things are not what Coetzee has initially imagined. After all, he is there in London to find "affiliation."

Working with little or no human contact, what sustains Coetzee to work at IBM consistently is his ambition for an independent life according to what he has read from literature. Among all the prose writers, Pound, Eliot, and Kafka are his favorites. Reading their works with their life, he decides to follow what they suffer and endure in order to make a living:

> T.S. Eliot worked for a bank. Wallace Steven and Franz Kafka worked for insurance companies … His choice is to wear a black suit as they did, wear it like a burning shirt, exploiting no one, cheating no one, paying his way. (60)

So via the living model of both Eliot and Kafka, Coetzee excuses his cooperate life because he would like to be the disciple of his favorite writers. However, after

working over a year at IBM, Coetzee decides to leave. He confesses that he can not go on anymore since “in the office there is nothing to rest the eye on but flat metallic surfaces … IBM, he can swear, is killing him, turning him into a zombie” (47). The conflicts in Coetzee’s case here reveals a fact about capitalism, which is the impossible choice between living an individual life and working like machines to meet the cooperate demand. In Coetzee’s case, he finally can not tolerate scarifying his passion for writing and spending his time working endlessly only for his bread. Coetzee’s answer to the query from his manager about why he wants to quit IBM is the lack of friendships: “I was hoping for friendships … People have been very kind. But being friendly is not the same thing with friendship” (107). Indeed, friendship is one of the very fundamental needs for human beings. Yet, does Coetzee really need friendship? His explanation may not be completely honest.

After IBM, Coetzee soon finds another proper job as computer programmer in International Computers (IC). He thinks leaving American IBM for British IC will brings a transition to his life in London—to work with the real English people. In the Cold War era of the 1960s, both the United States and the United Kingdom sought employing professionals in computer science for the sake of arm races. To Coetzee personally, working for IC compares is more meaningfully than working for IBM. He considers the colleagues of IC provide him with new ways of understanding and

living with each other. In IC he can learn from his colleague how to co-operate instead of how to compete, sharing rather than grabbing. He is also in charge of the project of Atlas in IC.[37] Working on the project of Atlas is "a race against time … That is something he can understand, something he can commit himself to more wholeheartedly than he could commit himself to IBM's goal of making more and more money" (143-44). What is specifically unique about Atlas is that it has self-consciousness of a kind: "at regular intervals—every ten seconds, or even every second—it interrogates itself, asking itself what tasks it is performing and whether it is performing efficiently" (143). In that self-conscious way, Atlas itself rearranges its own tasks and thereby carries those tasks in a different and better order. Along with the discussion of superiority of Atlas, what is appealing to Coetzee is exactly the capacity of Atlas's "self-consciousness," which is the reason why I relate Said's perspective "the critical consciousness" of an intellectual to Coetzee's reading and writing his life at the beginning of this chapter. Yet, Ganapathy, his co-worker at IC—"a particularly valuable acquisition for International Computers (145)—holds a different opinion from his. Ganapathy disparages IC and the whole Atlas project. He regrets that he did not stay at America after he got his degree in computer science.

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[37] A summary of the history of Atlas from the University of Manchester website: "There were two projects in the U.S. laid the foundation for the hardware and software of the large mainframes of the 60s and 70s. Ferranti joined the project in 1959, now called Atlas, which made a major contribution to the large operating system. The first Ferranti Atlas was inaugurated in the department in 1962. At this time it was the fastest and most sophisticated computer in the world." (http://www.cs.manchester.ac.uk/About/history.php#1956-1963)

Furthermore, Coetzee recalls that Ganapathy criticizes that “the English do not know how to think big” (145). Ganapathy’s critique on the English is complex. The point can be regarded as an accusation from the Indian colonized against the English colonizer. Let us pause here to see a relevant case observed in *Orientalism* instantly. In “Knowing the Oriental,” Said mentions an English officer Balfour’s attitude when he is invited to give a speech to explain the legitimacy of the British governance in Egypt. When Balfour is questioned about the necessity for occupation of Egypt, he responds in an almost godlike fashion and states: “we know it [Egypt] further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it” (32). Apparently, Balfour justifies the British occupation by claiming that the English people “know” more about Egypt than Egyptian people themselves do. It is obvious that he feels superior to the Egyptian not only in terms of military or economic mastery but also with the power of “knowledge.” Now let’s return to the case of Ganapathy. It is interesting that after India obtains independence in 1947, the colonized are now able to turn and ridicule the past authority—the English. Ganapathy, as one of the representatives of the colonized, with his superior knowledge about computers and his better technological performance in programming, is able to criticize that the English “do not know to think big.” Accordingly, Coetzee makes a sarcastic comment on the English hegemonic way of thinking. Also, by picking up Ganapathy’s opinion to the

English, Coetzee may allude to the decline of the conservative English and to privilege the rising power of the Third World intellectuals after World War II.

To Coetzee himself, according to his social contact with English people, there is another scenario he has imagined and thereby criticizes in terms of the narrow-mindedness of the English. Coetzee in fact makes up some short stories as a kind of writing experiment while he stays in London. When he finishes he has no wish to show them to the English people or to publish those works in England. The reason is that he considers the English will not make any effort to understand what they are not familiar in his short stories. The beach set up in South Africa in Coetzee's short story is an example. Coetzee thinks with emotions: "The English will not understand it. For the beach in the story they will summon up an English idea of a beach, a few pebbles lapped by wavelets" (62). In Coetzee's opinion, the English will not try to figure out what that specific beach in the South Africa is really like. Actually, Coetzee's critical reflection on the ways in which the English people represent what they see or how they feel actually implies the fundamental problematic of the whites' representation of the non-white people—the whites are used to understand the non-whites in their self-connected and authorial ways without paying any respect to the social and cultural specificities of the non-whites. However, though Coetzee admits that the western hegemonic ways of representations is a bad

practice, the truth is that we are too human to avoid it. In this case, Coetzee takes himself as a living example. Coetzee never conceals his admiration for Anglo-American literature, especially those which are canonical. He genuinely admits the superiority of some great literary figures and sincerely admires them. Among all the great literary writers he knows, he considers Pound as a significant literary authority. And he tries to know other literary works through Pound's guidance. Pound is one of the American expatriates in London and he is Coetzee's model in many ways. For instance, it is through Pound that Coetzee gets to know Ford Madox Ford—"Pound called him the greatest prose stylist of his day and excoriated the English public for ignoring him" (53)—and Coetzee thereby decides to write his master thesis on Ford's works.[38] In a similar way, he is interested in Provence because of Ford's introduction to where as "the cradle of all that is gracious and lyrical and humane in European civilization" (136). Yet, readers need to notice that later Coetzee is quick to show his hesitation to entirely believe Ford's words: "is Ford to be believed? Will he himself ever see Provence?" (136) Significantly, this is exactly the message that Coetzee would like to deliver to readers—people should always question what the authority expresses. When Coetzee's admiration for the

[38] As a matter of fact, Coetzee resembles Ford Madox Ford in many ways: Ford had lived in different countries such as France, the United States, and finally moved to London. Same as Coetzee, Ford is said to be involved with a number of women in his lifetime. In terms of the literary works, one of Ford's frequent themes is to deal with the conflicts between traditional (British) values and those of the modern industrial society.

literary authority is somehow changing into something critical, he is giving the notice: If one has never been to Provence, or any other place for that matter, one should keep a distance with what the authority has represented.

Importantly, Coetzee asks readers to treat the authority with a skeptical attitude. His attitude toward literary canons is a good indication. As we can see in Coetzee's discussion of the classic canons in "What Is a Classic? A Lecture," he stresses the point that "criticism is that which is duty-bound to interrogate the classic" (*Stranger Shores* 19). In this way Coetzee reminds his readers the importance of re-examining the great classic writings as one reads them. Interestingly, he has practiced his re-examining experiment in *Youth* when he writes: "He is proving something: that each man is an island; that you don't need parents" (3). Apparently, the passage above is a reversal of what John Donne has asserted: "No man is an island … every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (1278). Coetzee's appropriation here, I consider, is qualified as one of the subversive strategies of the postcolonial writing. Ashcroft mentioned some canonical literary texts in postcolonial writings are "'consumed' in such a way that they become the basis for restraint, appropriated versions which subtly subvert the values and political assumptions of the originals" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 33). Postcolonial writing in many ways tries to subvert the value and the convention to that of imperialism. Here Coetzee subverts

not only the human connection stressed in Donne's essay but also the familial structure suggested within. To some degree, he is practically proposing a de-colonized situation: the colonized should not be afraid of the colonizer anymore, just like children do not need to be fearful of their parents, either. The oppressed can now go against the past authority.

Besides the appropriation of English canonical writings, Coetzee also reminds readers to pay attention to worldly situations in terms of the acquisition of different languages since English, the past imperial language, is still dominant at present. In *Youth*, Coetzee informs readers that he does not know French although he admires French writers through his reading, "He has no feel for the language … so he must take it on trust from Pound and Eliot that Baudelaire and Nerval, Corbiere and Laforgue, point the way he must follow" (22). Besides, through the third-person narrator, Coetzee informs readers and comments on his own situation when he faces those great ancient cultures from around the world—"unless he learns Chinese and Persian and Arabic, or at least enough of the languages to read their classics with a crib, he might as well be a barbarian" (26). We all know that without language things will be hardly expressible and understood. Hence, if one is capable of knowing many other languages, one will be likely to have the access to know a nation or a culture more directly and clearly. It is not enough to simply depend on a certain

kind of authority. In “Imperialism of Language,” Ngugi defines the function of language in two aspects:

> One aspect is its role as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival. The other is its role as a carrier of the history and the culture built into the process of that communication over time. (*Moving the Center* 30)

In his second idea about the function of language, Ngugi points out the significance of the use of language: language can be a practical medium to first conserve certain cultures and then to continue their civilizations in the historical and cultural dimensions. With the short discussion of the attributes of language here, I would like to particularly point out Coetzee’s personal ambivalent attitude towards English. In his childhood, he is installed with the English through the British educational system. English in a way becomes the medium through which the British people exert their power over the South African people. Actually when Coetzee strives to identify himself with the English, at a postcolonial level he identifies more with the colonial language English than with his mother tongue Afrikaans. Yet though he masters the use of English, Coetzee still expresses a sense of relaxation while he is using his mother tongue Afrikaans to communicate with his cousin Ilse and Marianne: “though it is years since he spoke Afrikaans, he can feel himself relax at once as

though sliding into a warm bath" (127). In the postcolonial era, how to find a balance between the imperial language and the mother tongue is really a big issue for the colonized people to deal with all over the world. English has been the imperial language so long that it becomes kind of the authorial voice to the world. When talking about the English, Coetzee reminds readers of the colonial past behind the authorial voice.

Besides, Coetzee cares much about the authorial voice, he reminds readers the way how it has something to do with people's everyday life. The issue is of the representation by the authorial voice. As we ca see in *Youth* Coetzee deliberately brings up another case of his worldly experience in London to criticize the ways in which the British media operates. In the historical context of *Youth*, the Vietnam War and the Cold War are both extremely influential issues in the timeline of 1960s. People worldwide concern about the war circumstances and keep watching where the wars go via the mass media. To Coetzee, he pays attention more to how the media communicates to the public on issues of wars than to wars themselves. For examples, Coetzee takes notice of how the British newspaper the *Guardian* sides with the American forces. He writes:

> Since he arrived in England the British newspaper and BBC have carried stories of American feats of arms in which Viet-Cong are killed by the

> thousand while the Americans get away unscathed. If there is a word of criticism of America, it is of the most muted kind. (152)

As is implied in Coetzee's statement, there might be a case of collaboration between the American and the British through public media. As a whole, people need to be aware of the given argument when it stands on a certain side. There are facts and, of course, values involved in the interpretation offered by the press. In Bernhard's notion of "words are weapons," he has a strong critique on many media companies in the Cold War period; among which he presents the Associated Press as one of the few positive cases.[39] The Associated Press reportedly ceased its services to the American government for refusing to be "tainted [their output] as propaganda" (30). Coetzee continues to note: "the newspapers are full of CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament" (84); he witnessed the CND rally once in the Trafalgar when the CND marchers cry out: "*Wake up! … we are on the brink of nuclear annihilation*" (84).[40] As mentioned, people are easily manipulated by the media. It is necessary for people to be really careful with any kind of news coverage.

Though the CND movements seek to influence American or Russian missile policies by asserting people's living rights, the fact is that Kennedy threatens to

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[39] Bernhard also indicates the Associated Press as one of the three important American wire services during the World War II (30).

[40] Rojecki remembers that *Time* magazine actually scorned the CND demonstrations in Britain and regarded it as "outdoor sport" and that *Time* magazine had sarcastically depicted a number of CND marchers walking through the London rain as "damp crocodile, teen-agers living on sausages, posing for photographs" (77).

bombard Russia so Khrushchev has built Russian missile-pods in Cuba to counteract the American missiles as well. This happens exactly when CND is strongly against the nuclear strike "in which America bases in Britain would participate" (84). In Coetzee's anti-war attitude, he does not see why the British need to side with the American and go against the Russians since "the Russians have never threatened to invade Britain. Britain and Russia have been on the same side in all the wars he knows of since 1854" (83-84). In the words of Rojecki, the American foreign policy during the Cold War can be demonstrated as the "*conflict (or spiral) model*," which means to portray "nation-states as mutual victims of an anarchic state of international relations that disposes them to build alliances and arms caches" (24). Therefore, under the threat of 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the effect of excessive buildup of arms, the American government successfully pictures an international scene of terrors by polarizing Russia as the evil side. After all, Coetzee makes it clear in his writing: "only love and art are, in his opinion, worthy of giving oneself to without reserve" (85). Obviously, Coetzee criticizes the war impact to mankind here, under the threat of wars everyone is a potential victim. Like what people in London are afraid of: "They believe that London is going to be bombed; they believe they are all going to die. Are they right? If they are, it seems to be vastly unfair … unfair most of all to him, having to be incinerated as a consequence of American bellicosity" (85). Here

he seems to ask a crucial question of what is the exact nature of evil and good, if people are hurt anyway during the war declaration in the name of democracy and liberty.

As mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, women at large are the key in Coetzee's youthful life. Different types of women bring him different kinds of worldly experiences. I would like to conclude this chapter with a discussion of his encounter with the African woman Theodora. According to Coetzee, the reason why he leaves IBM is to look for friendship. It is still in doubt that he really needs friendship. Unfortunately anyway, things do not go as smoothly as he expects. After Coetzee gives up his job at IBM, he works as a house-sitter for the Merringtons temporarily. Theodora, a housekeeper of the Merringtons, makes him realize that he will never get friendship easily no matter where he is. Theodora comes from Malawi and she is "not just a house-help but a friend" (120), according to Coetzee's female employer Diana. In his days and ways of getting along with Theodora, Coetzee knows that Theodora is not happy about his presence in the house; he suspects that she does not like him because of his natural bonds with white South African:

> Does she [Theodora] resent him in his person as a South African, a white, an Afrikaner? … is there anything he can do to make her understand that

> he is not one of them, that he has quit South Africa, is resolved to put South Africa behind him for ever? *Africa belongs to you, it is yours to do with as you wish … Africa is yours*. What had seemed perfectly natural while he still called that continent his home seems more and more preposterous from the perspective of Europe. (121)

Theodora, as a fellow African, is like the return of a repressed memory in relation to South Africa. Her presence in the text seems to suggest that it's not easy for people to get rid of their historical/troublesome burden. Since Coetzee wishes to look for a new identity with a new home in London to settle down, we know that home issue still occupies much of his mind. England may have been his adopted haven, the place where he hopes to feel free enough to pursue his ambition to write, but South Africa remains his true home. When he makes his prose-writing experiment, "the story is set in South Africa," (62) still. It is obvious that South Africa dominates his imagination and creative energy in writing. Geographically he is in migration, but spiritually he suspends in the confused feeling of love and hate toward his original home South Africa as usual. Therefore, his worldly experience of living together with Theodora again highlights his ambivalence and dilemma: he is a white man whose ancestor used to occupy the place not belonged to them. Such manifest reminds me of Ashcroft's analysis on Coetzee's writing of the colonizers' anxiety in

relation to finding a place called *home*: “the desire to be at *home* is the desire to be in place which constitutes the very substance of settler colonial anxiety” (*On Post-colonial Futures* 152). In the analysis Ashcroft similarly points out Coetzee’s permanent concern for the colonizer’s home issue. Through Coetzee’s dilemma, readers know that one’s past is not separable but complementary to one’s present. What is in the past can hardly get passed without a trace.

In Coetzee’s quest of becoming the English, he finally finds out that it is not easy for him to fit into the life in London when he faces a series of failure in terms of sexual practices, social contacts and intellectual communication with English people. Yet, there is something we can learn from him, who suffers as an intellectual yet still insists on questioning about the authorial voice and suggesting the necessity to maintain suspicious of the authorial expression. Seemingly, Coetzee is not a total failure at the end of *Youth*. He is aware that he stands the danger of failing to be a poet, a writer, and an artist and he finally comes to realize: “unless he wills himself to act, nothing will happen, in love or in art” (166). He can not just wait to be transformed by somebody else but he has to do something himself. Otherwise, he will never become a *man*. Ultimately, Coetzee demonstrates how he turns the daily experiences into a literary practice with his reflection on his youthful life. He makes readers learn the importance of honesty in interpersonal interactions in the course of

reading his writing. Through his failures, we see Coetzee serves himself as a kind of lesson for readers: to live a worldly life one needs to get in touch with other people through the sharing of love and respect instead of relying on one's fantasy.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

As autobiographical novels, *Boyhood* and *Youth* both reveal the importance of writing in relation to the world: *Boyhood* suggests the connection of personal memory with the collective while *Youth* emphasizes the worldly experiences. Importantly, Coetzee writes about the past not exclusively for himself to remember but also for the world to think. In a way, Coetzee's autobiographical writings are transpersonal and should not be simply interpreted as the piece of autobiographical indulgence. Said remarks on his own experience of exile in *Reflections on Exile*: "exile and memory go together, it is what one remembers of the past and how one remembers it that determine how one sees the future" (xxxv). It clearly points out that the ways in which one recalls the past could affect how one views the future. So how to remember and thereby understand the past is of great importance for it has much to do with how to deal with the future. In this respect, Coetzee has done well to suggest the alternative ways to record the past because he leads readers to engage with many important albeit basic issues of our time when he writes his memoirs.

Coetzee writes about his emotional childhood memory and youthful memoir in the present tense, using the language and perceptions of a child and then a youth,

which suggests that he would like to experience his own past along with his readers. And when readers read his past, to some degree, readers witness the histories. Yet, it will be a totally different case had he told his retrospection in the past tense from the point of view of an experienced aged man. Coetzee's particular narrative point of view is used to show that he is still in the process of self-education while writing his memoirs. This device of writing strategy invites sympathetic readings. When Coetzee shows his inadequacy in dealing with "adult" issues first as a child then as a young man, it can easily invoke readers' sympathetic understanding.

In terms of connecting with the world, Coetzee suggests that the interest of writing should lie in its connection with human beings and its relation to the secular world. This insistence on worldly connection is evident when he scorns the Surrealists' artistic practices as something random and in lack of true artistic value: "the Surrealists wrote words on slips of paper and shook them up in a hat and drew words at random to make up lines" (*Youth* 161); he also criticizes that James Joyce concerns too restrictedly about the Irish matters in his writings: "He admires Joyce, he can even recite passages from Ulysses by heart. But Joyce is too bound up with Ireland and Irish affairs to be in his pantheon" (*Youth* 67). I guess he would hardly appreciate Oscar Wilde's view: "art's for art's sake." So Coetzee's autobiographical novels offer a piece of criticism towards the closed life of the world. In Coetzee's

perspective, writing itself should be embedded within the real world. The value of writing should lie in its connection with humane life. Readers would get new insights from the texts because texts themselves contain possibilities of alternative readings. Again, we can take Emma Bovary for instance. Coetzee deeply believes that Emma is out of Flaubert's real experience and comments on the reading effects on women:

> Emma was not created out of nothing: she had her origin in the flesh and blood experiences of her author ... even if no woman in the real world is quite like Emma, there must be many women so deeply affected by their reading *Madame Bovary*. (25)

By the time authors create with their own experiences, readers are given the chance to pick up some versions of "reality." However, readers will come to the texts with their own preconceptions and needs. In this way, authors are hardly in control while texts are out there in circulation. So there might be a lot of women readers who are transformed into "Emmas" because they can not help being affected when they read *Madame Bovary*. Hence, while authors are gifted with the power to write, they always need to take heed of the potential interaction between texts and readers, which is the beginning of a worldly connection.

In my own case, I interpret *Boyhood* as a representation of the domestic

authority in South Africa. I argue Coetzee has strategically criticized the apartheid regime with a child's voice. It is exactly through the naïve child's perspective that the serious social problems of apartheid are vividly represented. Children are not only the hope for future but the agents who bear bad experiences in the past. When Anna Elizabeth van der Hoven talks about the domestic violence and its impact on South Africa, she immediately notes: "it is especially true in the case of children, who learn from it that violence is an acceptable way to cope with problems and to gain control over another person" (125). It reveals that inside South Africa, the tension related to violence as a social phenomenon has long existed, which is then presented in texts such as *Boyhood*. In Coetzee's literary articulation, it is observed that there is indeed a shift of autobiographical motif from personal construction to national confession. Coetzee in fact develops his autobiographical writing into a confession of the white South African for the wrongs done in the past, making his autobiographical concern transcend the self/personal level into that of the nation/national. In doing so, the construction of self-narrative is transformed into a confession/narration of the nation.

Since Coetzee can not stand the oppressiveness of South Africa anymore, he runs away to London, where he hopes to fulfill his childish wish to be a writer and to have a new beginning. However, Coetzee's search for an entirely new beginning is

not that easy. In London, he is actually haunted by what is related to South Africa now and then. For examples, when he tries to write a short story as a way to explore prose writing, he writes about the beach in South Africa; when he can not get along with Theodora well he attributes that matter to his permanent albeit historical burden of being an Afrikaner. All of these troublesome matters are reflected in his autobiographical text *Youth*. Similarly, when Said talks about the demand of one's will to make a new beginning, he notes:

> There must be the desire, the will and the true freedom to reverse oneself, to accept thereby the risks of rupture and discontinuity … whatever he looks in order to begin now, he cannot continue as he is. It is, however, very difficult to begin with a wholly new start. (1975: 34)

Accordingly, even if Coetzee is willing to accept the rupture and discontinuity with his past, he can not make it. The truth is that a clear cut from one's past is not possible when one strives for a new start in whatever aspect. In a way, in *Youth* Coetzee is destined to continue his misery. Nevertheless, I argue, he has used his frustrating youthful experiences to reveal the importance of living a worldly life for an artist. He shows readers that without any worldly experience, his ambition to be a writer, a lover and a man will fail. We can see clearly that via reading canonical English texts and writing in English, Coetzee hopes his identity as an English—which

he hopes has *nothing* to do with the old self in South Africa—can be achieved. However, when he gets into the English social circle, his daily experiences lead him to disappointment. In the course of reading Coetzee's difficulties while trying to live an isolated life as a would-be artist, readers come to realize the importance of living a "worldly" life as well. Besides, he is ambivalent with the issue of home. In my opinion, home has two kinds of distinguished power. On the one hand, home provides the power to gain a sense of security, a sense of belonging through the intimate relationship among family members, with which people get warmth and thereby feel settled. On the other hand, home can also become a confinement under the control of a mastering authority. So people may be happier when they leave home because they are able to get away from the mastering control at home. To Coetzee, when he finally leaves South Africa, paradoxically he is looking for support, caring as well as love again. As can be seen the text, Coetzee has a lot to learn about love because if he keeps on being cold and aloof he will never realize the true meaning of love. Just as what he admits in *Youth*: "if he were a warmer person he would no doubt find it all easier: life, love, poetry" (168). Coetzee's text helps to prove that only through the sharing of love and respect with other people can one live a worldly life in a positive way.

Ultimately, from *Boyhood* and *Youth*, readers know that some memories of

Coetzee stay with him. It is because he relives those unforgettable moments many times, keeping them fresh in his mind. To Coetzee, what is in the past is never past. So his autobiographical writings have recorded many momentous issues from the 1950s to the 1960s. Of course, any narrative is a literary creation so autobiographical writing itself is an aesthetic construction. To Coetzee, writing a memoir is a particular struggling task. As he informs readers in the novels, he is always tormented by his secrets, such as his experience of never being caned by teachers, his childish privilege for the Russians over the Americans, his loyalty to farms, and his bad behaviors to women in his youthful life. What to put in and what to leave out in these autobiographical texts have been carefully selected. Therefore, readers should not take what Coetzee has talked about in his life as all honest and should remain skeptical and keep in mind that there are versions of reality in his writings. There is no exact truth in one's telling of the lived experiences, only selected memory and traces are represented. Despite the uncertainty about truth, however, the autobiographical writing can still be an effective way to express individual observation.

Additionally, from *Boyhood* to *Youth*, we see that Coetzee lives between worlds—South Africa and Britain. Expatriate life has provided him with a sharper vision and allows him to move from the national level to that of the transnational. In

terms of riots and war circumstances, he shares his experiences not only of the apartheid regime, the Sharpeville massacre at South Africa but those of the Cold War and the Vietnam War. Though Coetzee comes from South Africa, he is not limited to that place. Not to mention he has earned an international reputation as a writer. With the business of writing, therefore, to some extent his wish in *Youth* to become a world citizen is carried out.

To sum up, it would be overly simplistic to think that Coetzee merely means to recall his past when writing the memoirs. Rather, with his autobiographical writings, he is using his own lived experience to remind people of many crucial issues that people may encounter in the real world, such as the injustice to people of different races, the difficulties of fighting against the authority and the problematic of representation, issues that remain current today. In a way Coetzee is dramatizing his past experiences to make a connection between what concerns him most with our own times. This idea of dramatizing the past has been explained in his collection of essays *Stranger Shores*. He explains that he reads Eliot not in the aspects of "the transcendental-poetic and the social-cultural" but of "following an autobiographical path" because he thinks that "following an autobiographical path may be methodologically reckless but has the virtue of dramatizing the issue" (8-9). Accordingly, in his own life writing Coetzee tends to relate the autobiographical

enterprise with the crucial issues of the real world. That tendency can very well describe how Coetzee through writing about his past highlights the significant historical contingencies and to bring them closer to our times. Importantly, when readers read about his past, they are likely to think about what is happening at the present. Consequently, the crucial historical events will be reconsidered and that is exactly the value of autobiographical writings: to invite people to have their own reflection while reading other people's experiences and make a personal connection with the historical timeline. In Coetzee's deployment of interweaving many crucial issues into his past in reality, he has successfully connected with the world. From *Boyhood* to *Youth* we see that his concerns about life change as he grows up, but his life-long project in criticizing rather than accepting, questioning instead of answering, remain the same. And that inquisitive spirit is precisely what makes Coetzee a great writer of the contemporary world and his life stories worth reading.

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