CHAPTER ONE

Context, Coetzee and Text

1.1 Text and Context of *Dusklands*

J. M. Coetzee's first novel *Dusklands* (1974) consists of two novellas set in different times, but dealing with the same themes: colonization and eradication of 'inferior' people's identities. Although three hundred years apart in their plot lines, the stories explore the eternal concepts of power struggles through both physical and emotional intimidation. That theme is an exploration of power, or the lack of it, depending on whose side one is on. It is about the power to rule that is fought for in war, or the power that is exerted in prejudice against a group of people who are considered less than human. It is about the power of the mind to conceptualize how to demean a nation of people; how to propagandize one's beliefs; or how to rationalize one's horrible and disgraceful actions. And it is about the power of survival. But power is not the only theme in the novel. *Dusklands* is not only about the power of extensive military machines or the dominance exhibited by white supremacy or the exploitation of colonization, it is also about the sometimes deadly consequences of culture clash, the disintegration of the human spirit, and the complete destruction of a way of life.

The first novella is set in the USA around 1970 at the height of the Vietnam War. Narrated in the first person as is the second novella, the protagonist is working as part of a psychological war unit, thinking of ways to break the North Vietnamese resistance. The protagonist of the novella "The Vietnam Project" is Eugene Dawn. He describes himself as a person who cannot stand unhappiness and needs peace, love and order. He is a nervous man who believes he is creative. He also believes he envisions things more clearly than his superiors. Although he claims that he cannot

stand unhappiness, he is never happy. He is not in love with his wife. He is not secure in his job. He is not, in general, comfortable with his life. He admits symptoms of depression but claims he is not depressed. He feels rejected throughout most of this story. He lives in a fog of confusion most of the time. Although he feels rejected by his boss, he rationalizes that Coetzee is acting out of jealousy when he critiques Eugene's work. Marilyn appears in the novella as Eugene's wife. Eugene blames Marilyn for the couple's lack of deep attachment to one another. He does his duty, Eugene states, but he believes that his wife is disengaged. He also believes his wife is jealous of his work. She is empty and expects him to fill her. She gives Eugene, according to him, no privacy, and he must carry his paperwork around with him at all times in order to keep her from going through them. Although he does not love Marilyn, Eugene feels addicted to their marriage. He misses her most when she goes to her therapist because he suspects that Marilyn is having an affair with the doctor.

Martin is Eugene and Marilyn's son. Eugene mentions him first as Marilyn's child and speaks about him more as a nuisance than as a child he loves. He claims that the poor child suffers from his mother's frustrations, which she takes out on Martin. When Eugene kidnaps his son and takes him to a motel, Eugene believes that the boy fares better. He believes that Martin is poorly influenced under Marilyn's care. Eugene hopes to bring color and spirit to the boy. But Martin grows bored with the motel room and complains. When the police show up, Eugene pierces Martin's skin with a knife. But the young boy is not seriously wounded. As the narrative goes on, the narrator becomes more and more immersed in his fantastic projections. He analyses everything in the same detached rational way, becoming cold and disgusted by his wife. Eventually, mental breakdown ensues and he faces a miserable end in a hospital.

The second novella is set in Southern Africa in the late 17th century, when the Dutch settlers were exploring and exploiting new lands beyond the cape. Jacobus Coetzee sets off exploring, hoping to trade with a new tribe called Hottentots (one that has not yet been enslaved by the settlers). He takes his servants with him, most of them appear to be broken by the enslavement. Coetzee sets out at length about the culture of the native peoples they have clashed with, yet this analysis is superficial and mainly concerned with what the settlers can gain from these tribes. The bushmen being untamable, that is they cannot tolerate being penned in under a foreign master, must be eradicated. Coetzee's party travels a great distance and meets the tribe. Here the old rules are broken and Coetzee loses authority over his servants except one, old Jan Klawer. His authority broken, he falls ill and is at the mercy of the tribes people. Thankfully for him, they merely humiliate him. Eventually he makes his way back without any of his servants but only with the faithful Klawer, who dies on the return journey. As a white man cannot take this slight, this dishonor at the hands of the black people, he sets back with greater forces to eradicate the tribe. He finds his old servants there and murders them. Yet even he is aware that these 'savages' have fine human qualities as well; when Plaatje, one of his servants, is lined up to be butchered, he refuses to beg for his life and stands tall and proud enticing the soldiers to do their worse. This brings out a fatherly respect in Coetzee. He realizes at the end that the Hottentots could have contained a new area of interest for him, but now it is all too late, they are now just a shell. He is just a tool of history.

There is a postscript, a dry tract detailing the explorations of Coetzee in a detached, scientific way. This tract excludes all of the emotions and suffering of those who encountered the settlers. However, this also reduces Coetzee to a pallid symbol, no greater than his victims.

In both novellas, Coetzee textualizes actual historic events. In the first novella, he only uses history to construct a story in which a fictionalized character creates a fictionalized method of propaganda for the Vietnam War, which is a real event. But in the second novella, Coetzee uses real events and writes his story, including a "Translator's Preface" and an "Afterword," as well as footnotes to make the whole piece appear as if it were an actual translation of a real journal of an authentic South African settler.

Coetzee's cosmopolitan outlook helped shape this novel which consists of two separate stories which skillfully interweave fact and fiction. Exploring the theme of the western imperial imagination, the novel contrasts the experiences of Eugene Dawn, an American government official put in charge of the New Life project to transform Vietnamese society, who eventually goes insane, and the account of the travels of Jacobus Coetzee into the interior of the Cape in the 18th century. The novel embraces, however, a binding thread in the mental dualism between mind and body prompted by imperial expansion and conquest and, through the ancestor figure of Jacobus Coetzee, the author's search for his own roots in South African society and history.

The publication of *Dusklands* caused a considerable stir in South African literary circles, as the novel broke with many of the traditions of the colonial novel. Some radical critics, however, charged Coetzee with only partially undermining the colonial conventions of literary realism and taking the western vogue of exploration of the individual self to its extremes.

None other of J. M. Coetzee's works except for his first novel, *Dusklands*, consist of two separate works combined to create a whole. One might argue that this was done haphazardly or with only a weak link connecting the pieces. The works,

after all, take place in two separate countries, at two separate times. The protagonists live in very disparate circumstances and come to terms with their personal challenges in very dissimilar fashions. But the connections between the two separate parts of this book do take form. Similarities between the protagonists' personalities and their situations are evident. The themes that appear in one story are reflected in the other. And the actions and motives of both protagonists can be defined in relatively parallel details. After exploring these traits of what at first appear to be two unrelated tales, it is difficult to see this novel as anything but a cohesive project.

The protagonist of the first novella, Eugene Dawn, is a rather meek person, living in a quiet environment. He spends most of his life in the library or in a lonely corner of his drab office. His work entails the intellect but little physical exertion and no travel. Immediate danger to his body is nonexistent. In opposition is the protagonist of the second novella, Jacobus Coetzee, the tamer of the wilds; the elephant hunter; the macho slave master — a man who lives in danger of physical harm almost every day of his life. The former lives in the twentieth century in a quiet, modern town, where he ponders war but has little to do with it. In contrast, Jacobus lives two hundred years earlier in a time of colonial expansion, which demands that in order to survive, one must live by one's wits and superior physical conditioning. So how do these two men relate to one another? Where and how do their personalities connect? What could they possibly have in common?

One of the first and possibly most evident characteristics these protagonists share is their isolation. Eugene, although married and a father, demonstrates very slim, if any, emotional involvement with his family. He admits that he is addicted to his marriage, but he also states that he is not in love with his wife. She is an annoyance to him. The only time he is slightly attracted to her is when Eugene

believes she is having an affair with her doctor. It excites him to think that another man might be enamored of his wife, or at least physically lustful of her. And Eugene's relationship to his son is even more flimsy. The boy belongs to his wife, as far as Eugene is concerned. Although he kidnaps Martin, he spends very little time actually communicating with him and more often complains that the boy is a young child who craves attention. Away from home, Eugene has very little contact with the people around him. And when he does meet with fellow employees, it is more often in silence. He listens to his supervisor but has little to say to him, even though the dialogue in his head is enormous. Of all the people around him, it is the quiet, mouse-like figure of Harry, the clerk in the library that Eugene relates to the most. And this relationship is fleeting, at best. Eugene is so busy, and therefore so distracted, in analyzing everyone around him, trying to figure out how he either fits into the equation or second-guessing how others perceive him that he devotes little time to actually sharing anything with the people around him. He is isolated by his fear and his lack of confidence. He lives inside his head in a tiny room that becomes more and more distorted.

Although Jacobus, unlike Eugene, appears to have little fear and enough self-confidence to believe that no matter what life-threatening circumstances he might find himself in, he can turn it into a game of possibilities and become excited by the challenges, he too lives in a very isolated world. Not only does he live in a place that he refers to as having limitless boundaries, a place where one can walk for days and never see another human being, he also, like Eugene, lives inside of his head. The room he lives in is also very narrow and distorted. Because of the life-threatening challenges that Jacobus faces every day, he has come to believe that he is superior to those around him. He faces death on a continual basis and eludes it. He has survived

because of his outstanding intellect, he concludes. Others perish in front of him, because of their stupidity or lack of perception. Like Eugene, Jacobus has no friends. The people around him are merely tools that he uses to get what he wants or needs. He has no one to talk to. Once he attempts to talk to Klawer, one of his workers, Jacobus dismisses the man’s responses as trivial. No one understands him, or so Jacobus believes. If given a choice which he is given, actually, but which he refuses to fully act on, Jacobus would like to live wild in the desert, naked except for his shoes, and very much alone. He refers to his life as a farmer as one of boredom, a life of practiced and repetitive routine. Jacobus's counterpart, Eugene, also mentions how bored he is with his office job. And yet both men remain in their positions, alone and isolated by their thoughts. Their thoughts, through which these men make themselves feel superior to their fellow beings, keep them locked in a world that has no space for camaraderie. They walk their paths as if they are the only truly human people on earth.

The stories that surround these two men also contain similarities. There is the concept of propaganda that unites them, for example. Eugene works on a theory of propaganda, which he hopes the government will use in the war in Vietnam. This work is the focal point of the story, around which Eugene at once excels, flounders, and finally deteriorates. The propaganda is presented as a way of finding victory in Vietnam; a way of suppressing the desires of the Vietnamese people to fight for their land and their way of life. In a comparable way, Jacobus also deals in propaganda. He does so when he deals with the African men who work for him as well as when he must face strangers, such as the Namaqua people. With his own workers, Jacobus continually reinforces the concept that he is the master and they are the slaves. He does this in words and in actions. These men could easily overthrow him at any time

and yet they do not because they believe his propaganda. When Jacobus is in danger of being toppled by the Namaqua people, he praises them for their goodness and charity, claims that he does not fully believe. He tells them these things only to pacify them, to win their temporary willingness to share their hunting fields and to leave Jacobus's supplies in tact. This is a more personal propaganda that Jacobus uses, but its purpose is the same as the propaganda that Eugene creates. Both men's aims are to further exploit another group of people, to win them over, and change their ways. Both stories, in some ways, revolve around the concept of using propaganda to colonize a foreign country.

And finally, there is the motif of dominance. Even meek Eugene sees himself as one who dominates. He admits, on one hand, that he is insecure, but at the same time or shortly afterward, he claims his superiority. Eugene is smarter than his supervisor, he says, even though he quakes in his presence. His boss does not understand him or his work. Eugene is the only one who sees the truth, who envisions the true path. He is also better than his wife, who is lost in her depression. His only relationship with his son is that of master. He takes his son to the motel with him and does not, in any way, attempt to create a child's world for his son's benefit. Rather, the son must adjust to his father's life. And to further prove his dominance, when the police come to reclaim the child, Eugene punctures the young boy in an attempt to further deflate him. The police, like everyone else in Eugene's world, do not understand. "The people in front of me are growing smaller and therefore less and less dangerous," Eugene says, just before the police club him over the head (42).

Jacobus's goal is also to dominate. He plans on wiping out everyone who stands in his way. He and his fellow farmers clear the land of the Bushmen so that they can claim the land for themselves. This is the way the Boers conquer. But the

Boers are not the only dominant culture. They have been driven into the interior by the British, whose aim is to conquer the Boers. Dominance, whether played out by men versus animals or man against man, is pressed forward in both of these stories through war, propaganda, slaughter, weaponry, religion, and, in some cases, just an excuse for adventure. One man tries to dominate a whole culture while another attempts to dominate his wife and child. The outcomes vary — one man successfully seeks his vengeance, while the other succeeds only in a total mental collapse. But the desires, motives, and practices of these protagonists, as well as the undertone of these two stories, link the novellas tightly together and present two sides of a compelling narrative.

1.2 Coetzee as a Socio-Political Commentator

South-African novelist, critic, and translator who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003, John Maxwell Coetzee has never shunned himself from vocal criticism of injustice and absurdities. Though of white descent, he is critical of the white domination over the blacks in Africa, as his sympathetic treatment of the native people's suffering at the hands of the colonizers reveals. The violent history and politics of his native country, especially apartheid, has provided Coetzee much raw material for his work, but none of his books have been censored by the authorities. Often he has examined the effects of oppression within frameworks derived from postmodernist thought. Coetzee's reflective, unaffected and precise style cannot be characterized as experimental, but in his novels he has methodically broken the conventions of narration.

In 1969, Coetzee received his Ph.D. from the University of Texas with a dissertation on Beckett. From 1968 to 1971, he taught at the State University of New York at Buffalo. While in Buffalo, Coetzee started to write his first book, *Dusklands*,

which consists of two closely related novellas, one about America and Vietnam, the other, “The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,” set in the 1760s. In 1972, he became a lecturer at the University of Cape Town, at that time an institution for whites, and was later appointed professor of literature. Since 2002, Coetzee has been living in Australia with his partner, Professor Dorothy Driver. In an interview, he said that “leaving a country is, in some respects, like the break-up of a marriage. It is an intimate matter.”

Coetzee’s works cannot be classified as belonging to any specific postmodernist intellectual current. His essays reveal interest in linguistics, generative grammar, stylistics, structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction. The dilemmas of his novels are based on South African reality, but often presented in a timeless, metafictional form and carrying a plurality of meanings. In, *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), in which the central character is a rebellious, sexually deprived daughter of a sheep farmer, Coetzee examined the conventions of the South African *plaasroman*, or farm novel. The calmly written torture scenes of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) questioned the voyeuristic nature of fiction.

Life and Times of Michael K (1983) won the Booker Prize, but Coetzee did not attend the ceremonies. The protagonist of the story, set in a future Cape Town and Karoo, is a descendant of Franz Kafka's characters, who never find out the meaning of their suffering, like the victim of the execution machine in the short story “In der Strafkolonie” (1919). Michael K eventually ends up in a concentration camp.

Foe (1986) played with Defoe's classic novel *Robinson Crusoe*. In the story, a woman, Susan Barton, shares the island with Robinson Cruso and Friday. “I am cast away. I am all alone,” she says without getting any sympathy from Cruso, the cruel tyrant of his small empire. After they are rescued, Susan meets Daniel Foe and

becomes his muse, whom he forgets. Friday remains mute, his tongue is cut, and he is never allowed to tell his own tale. In *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) the protagonist is the famous Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky, who tries to understand the death of his stepson, Pavel Alexandrovich Isaev. In his sorrow, he takes the role of Orpheus. He thinks of Orpheus walking backwards step by step, whispering the dead woman's name, coaxing her out of the entrails of hell; of the wife in grave clothes with the blind, dead eyes following him, holding out limp hands before her like a sleepwalker. No flute, no lyre, just the word, the one word, over and over. Coetzee himself has lost his son. He died in a mysterious fall from a high balcony.

Before producing *Age of Iron* (1990), Coetzee also suffered from a personal tragedy - his ex-wife died of cancer. *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) started Coetzee's semi-autobiographical series, which continued in *Youth: Scenes from Provincial Life II* (2002). In *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (2003), Coetzee invented his female alter ego, a famous writer, who travels all over the world and gives speeches and academic lectures. In the United States, she discusses and analyzes Kafka’s monkey story “A Report to the Academy” (lesson 1), in England at the fictional Appleton College, she drew a parallel between gas chambers and the breeding of animals for slaughter (lesson 3), and in Amsterdam, her subject is the problem of evil (lesson 6). As a material, Coetzee used his own academic lectures, but at the same, time he strips bare Costello’s intellectual lifestyle - although her arguments are always fresh and seductive, the result of all her theorizing is that she starts to resemble more and more the copy of Kafka’s primate, whose basic predilections and moral ideas are contrary to the real world. Costello resurfaced in *Slow Man* (2005), about a misanthropic photographer, who has lost his leg in an

accident and who falls in love with a married Croat woman. In this story, the protagonist is perhaps a figure imagined by Costello.

The novel *Dusklands* set in two different times and locations is once again about the power-political issues. The first novella deals with the negative effect of American war on Vietnam and the second is about the colonizing venture of the European in Africa. Thus, Coetzee seems to be occupied with the issue of politics at global level.

1.3 Outline of the Study

The novel raises some topical questions. As a writer with white descent background, could Coetzee possibly have retained his objectivity whole writing the novellas? How far are the novellas so apart in temporal setting, similar to each other in the wider spectrum of literature on the impacts of colonization upon the life of the African people? And, do the novellas yield to a fruitful reading as postcolonial literature, while they reinforce the western subject and African object position, thus continuing the story of the “self” and the “other”? Ultimately, can the novel as a whole be vindicated as an authentic anticolonial voice, albeit raised by one from inside the colonial camp? The thesis provides answers to these questions. As is shown by the textual analysis, the novel comes up with the argument that any form of domination is essentially inhuman, detrimental to the dignity both of the oppressor and the oppressed. Colonialism as an oppressive political and economic venture is thus berated ass deplorable.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the writer and the novel *Dusklands,* along with review of literature and a general outline of the thesis. Also mentioned here is the methodology that is used for analyzing the text.

The second chapter deals with the critical tool in detail. The tools of New Historicism and Postcolonialism are discussed. A brief history of New Historicism as well as how it is used to review history is presented in this section.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of the novel with the help of the critical insight of New Historicism and Postcolonialism. In effect, it is proved therein that the novel is informed of postcolonial awareness, and that it exposes the inhumanity of colonialism.

The final chapter is the conclusion which captures the motive of the novel, which is a call for reconciliation. Then follows the bibliography which records the names of books and writers who were consulted during the preparation of the thesis.

The thesis is limited to analyzing the novel *Dusklands* as a postcolonial novel. The tool for doing so is New Historicism. Therefore, the concepts of New Historicism and postcolonialsim are dealt with in some details. Library consultation and the guidance of the teacher too are taken for furthering the thesis. Otherwise, it is entirely based on the study and analysis of the text.

CHAPTER TWO

New Historicism: Redefining History

2.1 New Historicism

Michel Foucault provides an interesting method of reading history, now popularly known as the New Historical method. In his world view, history, as it was conceived, in the previous times, to be chronologically systematic and linear, is a myth. History is a play of different elements, all of them, somehow and to some extent, making their presence in the writing and creating of history. Thus seen, history is not a faithful recording of event and fact, nor is it a narration of what happened in the past. Rather it is a reflection of the interest of those who are officially in power. But to stop here would be simply to oversimplify Foucault's historical perspective. Power is not only vertical. Those in upper posts do not control everything. They are controlled in turn by those whom they think they are controlling. Power relation thus is very intricate. It is horizontal and vertical at the same time.

Since one of the basics of New Historicism is that politics is pervasive, it maintains all discourses are impregnated with political interest and biases. Any text, written from any quarter, inevitably partakes of this power play and tries to create a truth effect of its own kind as it suits the promoter or circulator of that particular version of truth. Seen thus, power is not a one-way traffic, but an intricate network of give-and-take relations, influences, coercions and discourses that produce truth effect. New Historicism developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic Stephen Greenblatt, with his provocative revisiting of the renaissance literature, especially of Shakespearean one, and gained widespread influence in the 1990s. New Historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature, which documents

the new discipline of the history of ideas. Michel Foucault based his approach both on his theory of the limits of collective cultural knowledge and on his technique of examining a broad array of documents in order to understand the *episteme*, the knowledge, of a particular time. New Historicism is claimed to be a more neutral approach to historical events, and is sensitive towards different cultures. Foucault's conception of power is neither reductive nor synonymous with domination. Rather, he understands power as continually articulated on knowledge and knowledge on power. The way of perceiving history as a mere recording of facts and events of the past became dubious by the mid twentieth century. Critical concepts about history had been proposed as early as the late nineteenth century by the German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche. There arose a New Historical school based on the critical insight as propounded by the French scholar Michel Foucault in his books such as *Discipline and Punish*, *The Order of Things* etc.

Foucault propounded discourse theory which is greatly shaped by the Whorfian notion of language. The modern theory of language as 'constitutive' also underlines this creative and distorting power of language. The world is not simply there; it is brought into existence by language which, by extension, is discourse here in our context. As Foucault writes in *History of Sexuality,* "Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (100). Now, one can see how the power holder, the European became dominant by writing on the native from the European vantage point, and thus othering, disparaging and dehumanizing the non-western.

New Historicism denies the claim that society has entered a post-modern or post-historical phase and allegedly ignited the 'culture wars' of the 1980s. The main points of this argument are that new historicism, unlike post-modernism,

acknowledges that almost all historic views, accounts, and facts they use contain biases which derive from the position of that view.

Historiography can be understood as the art of writing history using multiple sources such as diary, memoir, journalism, personal encounters, anecdotes etc. It is the act of writing, because something or some event does not become history by the mere virtue of happening or being. If that were the case, there would be an objective truth, one version of history, and the question of multiple comprehension and version of history would not at all be raised. Now, any and all source can become the source of history, provided they come to a discourse making or recounting of the past as it seems from the present. Because, as Foucault says, the search for objective truth is like the search for origin which is never going to be accomplished, the very fact that we cannot re-invent and re-live the past makes it impossible to go to the exact historic situation.

The foundations of Foucault's New Historical theories were already laid, as it were, by Nietzsche, who viewed history as a serving instrument for the better attainment of human personality. In his work "The Use and Abuse of History," Nietzsche opposes the school which views history as something unchangeable and sacred, a factual data of truths. Rather, to him, history is inextricably mingled with the personality traits of the historian, immensely moulded by the contemporaneous order of events and society. The subjective biases, hopes and aspirations, passions and fears of the writer are unavoidably reflected in the history recorded.

Besides calling into question the objective truthfulness of history, Nietzsche warns humanity of the unsettling and crippling effects of history. Taking a particular utilitarian standpoint, he argues for a history which becomes a source of inspiration and energy rather than a debilitating imposition and limit-setting spectral voice from

the past. He goes so far as to warn that history after a certain point can be a restrictive power on life. Therefore we have to accept it so far as it helps life. To quote Nietzsche in the "Preface" to his essay, "The Use and Abuse of History:"

> We need it for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action or to excuse a selfish life and a cowardly or base action. We would serve history only so far as it serves life; but to value its study beyond a certain point mutilates and degrades life. (21)

For Nietzsche, history is thus no longer the mere representation of truths that would not be useful in any way, and understanding the truth is beyond human capacity. What makes history important to us is determined by its usefulness to serve life. The proper and creative use of history is what matters, not the knowledge of history *per se*. He explains its practical usefulness and need in this way:

> History is necessary above all to all man of action and power who fights a great fight and needs examples, teachers, and comforters; [. . . .] Polybius is thinking of the active man when he calls political history the true preparation for governing a state; it is the great teacher that shows us how to bear steadfastly the reverses of fortune reminding us of what others have suffered. (29)

That said, Nietzsche accepts that every man and nation needs certain knowledge of the past through the three different types of history that he names monumental, antiquarian and critical. The need of the historical knowledge is determined by the specific situation of the person and nation.

In the same line of thought, there came another thinker from France, recognizing and appreciating the novel stand taken by Nietzsche and gave currency to the terminologies such as genealogy, new historicism, discourse, knowledge and

power, and the reconstruction of history. Influenced greatly by the philosophy of Nietzsche and a political awareness of his own, Michel Foucault transcends the idea of history as a linear documentation of event of the past. There lie some subtle differences between the two critical minds, and these differences render Foucault a more sophisticated thinker. For Nietzsche, all human conduct is ultimately inspired by the concept of will to power. But in the postulates of Foucault, it is not the traditional knowledge or notion that guides the contemporary socio-political moves. There can be no grand narratives of history, for what is true, therefore history varies at different ages and times. Thus, at the heart of history lies not a continuity but discontinuity and differences.

2.2 New Historical Approach to Revising History

As a method of reading and explicating literary texts, New Historicism arose in the United States vehemently refuting the then current text-based or formalistic criticism. It was argued that a new historical approach was needed, which would move beyond the narrowly formalistic approach to literature which excluded political and social circumstances or context. Without taking into account the context of its genesis, the theorists of the new movement argued, no work can profitably be read and understood. Actually, New Historicism has been a response not to literature proper but to literary studies, to the question of the materiality of literature.

The new historicism developed during the 1980s, largely in reaction to the text-only approach pursued by formalist New Critics and the critics who challenged the New Criticism in the 1970s. New historicists, like formalists and their critics, acknowledge the importance of the literary text, but they also analyze the text with an eye to history. In this respect, the new historicism is not "new." The majority of critics between 1920 and 1950 focused on the historical content of a work and based their

interpretations on the interplay between the text and historical contexts, such as the author's life or intentions in writing the work.

In other respects, however, the new historicism differs from the historical criticism of the 1930s and 1940s. It is informed by the poststructuralist and reader-response theory of the 1970s, as well as by the thinking of feminist, cultural, and Marxist critics whose works were also "new" in the 1980s. They are less fact-and event-oriented than historical critics used to be, perhaps because they have come to wonder whether the truth about what really happened can ever be purely or objectively known. They are less likely to see history as linear and progressive, as something developing toward the present, and they are also less likely to think of it in terms of specific eras, each with a definite, persistent, and consistent zeitgeist (spirit of the times). Hence, they are unlikely to suggest that a literary text has a single or easily identifiable historical context.

New historicists remind us that it is treacherous to reconstruct the past as it really was, rather than as we have been conditioned by our own place and time to believe that it was. And they know that the job of reconstructing history is impossible for those who are unaware of that difficulty, insensitive to the bent or bias of their own historical vantage point. Thus, when new historicist critics describe a historical change, they are highly conscious of and even likely to discuss the theory of historical change that informs their account.

New Historicists argue that all levels of society share in the circulation of power through the production and distribution of the most elementary cultural and social "texts." Power does not reside somehow "above," with lawyers, politicians, and the police, but rather follows a principle of circulation, whereby everyone participates in the maintenance of existing power structures.

Whereas Marx-inspired Cultural Materialists tend to examine sites of subversion in literature, New Historicists, inspired by Michel Foucault, tend to concern themselves with forces of containment and the ways hegemonic forces consolidate the status quo. New Historicists look at moments of rupture to examine how forces of rebellion are still able to surface any moment even when the slightest possibility is created.

New Historicists reject the Western tendency to write history from the top down (e.g. political history) or in grand narrative strokes. They are instead more concerned with what Lyotard terms *petits récits* or little narratives, particularly, how such little narratives participate in the consolidation and maintenance of the status quo. New Historicists tend to follow the post-Lacanian and post-Marxist view of ideology; rather than see ideology as false consciousness, as something that is obscuring one's perception of the truth. New Historicists argue that to recognize your own ideology is like pushing the bus you're riding on, since it is so much a part of the way you perceive the world and its workings.

Many new historicists have acknowledged a profound indebtedness to the writings of Michel Foucault. A French philosophical historian, Foucault brought together incidents and phenomena from areas normally seen as unconnected, encouraging new historicists and new cultural historicists to redefine the boundaries of historical inquiry. Like the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault refused to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development from cause to effect, from past to present toward the end, a moment of definite closure, a Day of Judgment. No historical event, according to Foucault, has a single cause; rather each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors. Like Karl Marx, Foucault saw history in terms of power, but unlike Marx, he viewed power not simply as a

repressive force or a tool of conspiracy but rather as a complex force that produces what happens. Not even a tyrannical aristocrat simply wields power, for the aristocrat is himself empowered by discourses and practices that constitute power.

Not all new historicist critics owe their debt to Foucault. Some, like Stephen Greenblatt, have been most nearly influenced by the British cultural critic Raymond Williams, and others, like Brook Thomas, have been more influenced by German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin. Still others, Jerome McGann, for example have followed the lead of Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin, who viewed literary works in terms of polyphonic discourses and dialogues between the official, legitimate voices of society and other, more challenging or critical voices echoing popular culture. Stephen Greenblatt's brilliant studies of the Renaissance have established him as the major figure commonly associated with New Historicism. Indeed, his influence meant that New Historicism first gained popularity among Renaissance scholars, many of whom were directly inspired by Greenblatt’s ideas and anecdotal approach. This fascination with history and the minute details of culture soon caught on among scholars working in other historical periods, leading to the increasing popularity of culturally- and historically-minded studies. This general trend is often referred to as Cultural Studies.

New Historicism considers literature as a social force that contributes to the making of individuals. The fact that New Historicists attribute the directive role to material or economic conditions in the production of literature takes them very near to Marxist critics. Both have the same central assumptions; first to call into question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse with its own forms and principles and then to dissolve the literary text into the social and political context from which it issued. In fact, New Historicism is not “new;” it follows on the same

path already set by Marxism, in that it also relates literature, a product of human consciousness and imagination, with the material condition of the society in which the writer is born and raised. As D. G. Myers, a scholar in this field writes:

> In New Historicist interpretation, as a consequence, history is not viewed as the cause or the source of a work. Instead, the relationship between history and the work is seen as a dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as both product and producer, end and source, of history. One undeniable side benefit of such a view is that history is no longer conceived, as in some vulgar historical scholarship, as a thing wholly prior, a process which completes itself at the appearance of the work. At the same time, though, it must not be thought that the New Historicism dispenses with the cognitive category of priority. For the New Historicist it is ideology, not history, which is prior. The literary text is said to be a constituent part of a culture's ideology by virtue of passing it on; but the ideology nevertheless exists' intact' intelligible, in a form separate from (and therefore prior to) the work. If it didn't, the critic could not discern a relationship between work and ideology; and if the ideology were not prior to the work, it wouldn't be a historical relationship. (31)

New Historicism goes against literary formalism. The exclusion of social and political circumstances, or the context, cannot be divorced from the interpretation of literary works. The view that a poem is a self-contained object, a verbal icon, a logical core surrounded by a texture of irrelevance, is unacceptable to this mode of interpretation. Thus, the New Historicism in literary study has been a response not to literature but to literary studies. It has been called forth not by the subject matter

under study, not by actual poems, novels, plays, but by the institutional situation in which young scholars now find themselves. Within the ranks of the New Historicism, literature is considered to be one of the social forces that contribute to the making of individuals; it acts as a form of social control. Although most New Historicists are scrupulous to distinguish themselves from Marxist critics, the fact remains that the central task of the New Historicism is the same as that of Marxist criticism; first to call into question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse with its own problems, forms, principles, activities, and then to dissolve the literary text into the social and political context from which it issued.

The major philosophical propositions of the moment can be shortly subsumed here. First, literature is historical, meaning that a literary work is not primarily the record of the attempt of one's mind to solve certain formal problems and the need to find something to say; it is a social and cultural construct shaped by more than one consciousness. The proper way to understand it, therefore, is through the culture and society that produced it. Next, literature, then, is not a distinct category of human activity. It must be assimilated to history, which means a particular vision of history. Further, like works of literature, man himself is a social construct, a result of social and political forces, there is no such thing as a human nature that transcends history. Renaissance man belongs inescapably and irretrievably to the Renaissance. There is no continuity between him and us. History is a series of "ruptures" between ages and men. And, as a consequence, the historian or critic is trapped in her/his own historicity. No one can rise above their own social formations, their own ideological upbringing, in order to understand the past on its terms. A modern reader can never experience a text as its contemporaries experienced it. Given this fact, the best a modern historicist approach to literature can hope to accomplish, according to

Catherine Belsey, is “to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology” (qtd in Myers 4).

New Historicism does not view history as the cause or the source of a work, as the excerpt from Myers clarifies. Instead, it views the relationship between history and the work as a dialectic one: the literary text is interpreted as the product and the producer, end and source, of history. Literature is shaped by history and in turn tries to create or guide history too. This reciprocal influence of literature denies both the extremes, the autonomy of literature as well as its purely directive and propagandist role. To some extent, literature is free from outside factors; it is the product of the creative faculty of human mind. But in the final analysis, the creative and critical orientation of the writer themselves is conditioned by the materiality of their life. That is so because the writers and their consciousness both are based on a particular socio-political milieu from which it is practically impossible for them to escape. The critic, Louis A. Montrose makes a study of this subject in his influential essay “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture:”

> By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing - not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question - traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent

> textual mediations when they are construed as the 'documents' upon which historians ground their own texts, called 'histories.' (588)

"The whole point" of the New Historicist enterprise, Jean E. Howard says, "is to grasp the terms of the discourse which made it possible to see the 'facts' in a particular way—indeed, made it possible to see certain phenomena *as* facts at all" (17). At first glance, this objective appears to be little different from that of traditional historical interpretation. The discourse of the past is grasped in its own terms. But what has been subtly introduced is a comparison. The New Historicist sees facts that the people of the time did not, and this special insight is what enables him to grasp the discursive practices that produced the facts that the people did see.

Foucault included the panopticon in his discussions on the technologies of power in part to illustrate the idea of lateral surveillance, or self-policing, which occurs when those who are subject to these techniques of power believe they are being watched. His purpose was to show that these techniques of power go beyond mere force and could prompt different regimes of self-discipline among those subject to the exercise of these visibility techniques. This often meant that, in effect, prisoners would often fall into line whether or not there was an actual need to do so.

The distinctive terminologies popular in this discipline are: "discursive practices," "representations," "mediations," "contradictions," "ruptures," "subversion." What the New Historicism offers to students of literature is the joy of new explanations, new paradigms. It does not designate an unexplored area of scholarly investigation. It does not raise new problems, new questions. If its attempts to "historicize" literary study were merely an inducement to look into new kinds of documents, to ask about the relation of literature to social history in a new way, the movement has performed a service for scholarship. New Historicist thinkers tend to

take a more nuanced view of power, seeing it not exclusively as class-related but extending throughout society. This view derives primarily from Michel Foucault. In its tendency to see society as consisting of texts relating to other texts, with no 'fixed' literary value above and beyond the way specific societies read them in specific situations, New Historicism also owes something to postmodernism. However, New Historicists tend to exhibit less skepticism than postmodernists, and show more willingness to perform the 'traditional' tasks of literary criticism, that is, explaining the text in its context, and trying to show what it meant to its first readers.

2.3 Postcolonial Consciousness and New Historical Gaze

Postcolonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized people. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority of the colonized people and, on literature by colonized people which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized countries. This thesis addresses some of the complexities of the post-colonial situation, in terms of the writing and reading situation of the colonized people, and of the colonizing people. Also, it probes into the question of how literature is imbedded in a socio-political matrix, as well as how writing is an effective tool to fight back a monolithic, Euro-centric world view.

To understand the significance and need of postcolonial criticism in its full import, one may refer to Chinua Achebe's much debated, appreciated and talked of essay "Colonialist Criticism" (1975). As Achebe has fairly successfully shown in this

provocative analysis, what the West/Europe conceives and celebrates as universal is merely European and nothing more, and therefore quite unacceptable to other cultures:

> Does it ever occur to these universalists to try out their game of changing names of characters and places in an American novel, say, a Philip Roth or an Updike, and slotting in African names just to see how it works? But of course it would not occur to them. It would never occur to them. It would never occur to them to doubt the universality of their own literature. In the nature of things the work of Western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. So-and –so's work is universal; he has truly arrived! As though Universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take it if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home. I should like to see the word "universal" banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world. (75)

A postcolonial reading of the texts, whether they were written in the colonial era or merely in the colonial tradition, subverts all such colonial institutions. What was formerly seen and lauded as classic now becomes merely Eurocentric and ethnocentric; whatever was valorized as having been informed of universalism is now brought to its real status as parochial and blinded by the supremacist illusion of racism.

Postcolonial theory is built in large part around the concept of otherness. There are, however, problems with or complexities to the concept of otherness. For instance, otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference, so that every other, every different from and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define. Next, the western concept of the oriental is based, as Abdul JanMohamed argues, on the Manichean allegory (seeing the world as divided into mutually excluding opposites): if the west is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the orient is chaotic, irrational, feminine, evil. Simply to reverse this polarizing is to be complicit in its totalizing and identity-destroying power. All is reduced to a set of dichotomies, black or white, etc. Colonized people are highly diverse in their nature and in their traditions, and as beings in cultures, they are both constructed and changing, so that while they may be 'other' from the colonizers, they are also different one from another and from their own pasts, and should not be totalized or essentialized through such concepts as a black consciousness, Indian soul, aboriginal culture and so forth. This totalization and essentialization is often a form of nostalgia which has its inspiration more in the thought of the colonizers than of the colonized, and it gives the colonizer a sense of the unity of his culture while mystifying that of others.

The colonized people will also be other than their pasts, which can be reclaimed but never reconstituted, and so must be revisited and realized in partial, fragmented ways. Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance, of resistance as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry, but with the haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of the resisting: it is a two-edged sword. As well, the concept of resistance carries with it or can carry with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality, etc., which ideas may not

have been held, or held in the same way, in the colonized culture's view of humankind.

On a simple politico-cultural level, there are problems with the fact that to produce a literature which helps to reconstitute the identity of the colonized, one may have to function in at the very least the means of production of the colonizers - the writing, publishing, advertising and production of books, for instance. These may well require a centralized economic and cultural system which is ultimately either a western import or a hybrid form, uniting local conceptions with western conceptions. The concept of producing a national or cultural literature is in most cases a concept foreign to the traditions of the colonized people, who (a) had no literature as it is conceived in the western traditions or in fact no literature or writing at all, and/or (b) did not see art as having the same function as constructing and defining cultural identity, and/or (c) were, like the people of the West Indies, transported into a wholly different geographical/political/economic/cultural world. It is always a changed, a reclaimed but hybrid identity, which is created or called forth by the colonizeds' attempts to constitute and represent identity.

The very concepts of nationality and identity may be difficult to conceive or convey in the cultural traditions of colonized people. There are complexities and perplexities around the difficulty of conceiving how a colonized country can reclaim or reconstitute its identity in a language that is now but was not its own language, and genres which are now but were not the genres of the colonized. One result is that the literature may be written in the style of speech of the inhabitants of a particular colonized people or area, which language use does not read like Standard English and in which literature the standard literary allusions and common metaphors and symbols may be inappropriate and/or may be replaced by allusions and tropes which are alien

to British culture and usage. It can become very difficult then for others to recognize or respect the work as literature.

The term ‘hybrid’ used above refers to the concept of hybridity, an important concept in post-colonial theory, referring to the integration (or, mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures. The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as oppressive. Hybridity is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that colonized cultures or colonizing cultures for that matter, are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features. The representation of these uneven and often hybrid, polyglot, multivalent cultural sites (reclaimed or discovered colonized cultures searching for identity and meaning in a complex and partially alien past) may not look very much like the representations of bourgeois culture in western art, ideologically shaped as western art is to represent its own truths (that is, guiding fictions) about itself. To quote Homi K. Bhabha on the complex issue of representation and meaning from his article in Greenblatt and Gun's *Redrawing the Boundaries*:

> Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. . . . The transnational dimension of cultural transformation -- migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation -- makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. the natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation , peoples , or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (438)

In addition to the postcolonial literature of the colonized, there exists as well the postcolonial literature of the colonizers. As people of British heritage moved into new landscapes, established new founding national myths, and struggled to define their own national literature against the force and tradition of the British tradition, they themselves, although of British or European heritage, ultimately encountered the originating traditions as Other, a tradition and a writing to define oneself against (or, which amounts to the same thing, to equal or surpass). Every colony had an emerging literature which was an imitation of but differed from the central British tradition, which articulated in local terms the myths and experience of a new culture, and which expressed that new culture as, to an extent, divergent from and even opposed to the culture of the "home" or colonizing nation.

The colonizers largely inhabited countries which absorbed the peoples of a number of other heritages and cultures (through immigration, migration, the forced mingling of differing local cultures, etc.), and in doing so often adapted to use the myths, symbols and definitions of various traditions. In this way as well the literature of the hitherto colonizers becomes post-colonial. It is curiously the case that British literature itself has been colonized by colonial/postcolonial writers writing in Britain out of colonial experiences and a colonial past.

In this regard, a salient difference between colonialist literature, literature written by colonizers in the colonized country on the model of the "home" country and often for the home country as an audience, and post-colonial literature, is that colonialist literature is an attempt to replicate, continue, equal, the original tradition, to write in accord with British standards; postcolonial literature is often but not inevitably self-consciously a literature of otherness and resistance, and is written out of the specific local experience. The discourse of orientalism divests the easterners of

all humanity: they lack the volition to express themselves, they cannot understand the world and themselves, therefore they are to be described by somebody else. Such a concept, in effect, treats the Orientals as mere objects, objects of study. The subject, of course, is the west armed with rationality and intellect. Colonial discourse, by and large, rests upon a dichotomy: the West versus the East. The West (us) is always possessed of all the human virtues that are extolled universally, whereas the colonized (them) is irrational and uncivilized. Hence, the colonizers had to take up their burden to civilize the Other. They had to go to the colonial outposts to teach the natives the decent way of life, of government of religion. And in doing so, the colonizer had to become rude even, at times. The self is, at any cost determined to be rational and civilized, while the other is the brute, the irrational. All colonial discourse and literature are based on this dichotomy. But Coetzee's novel *Dusklands* tries to question this notion and fairly succeeds in doing so. It is thus a novel written with a postcolonial consciousness, though the writer happens to be a descendant of the colonizers. Thus, its postcolonial importance can be seen. A short peep into the story line of the novel elucidates how J. M. Coetzee exploits the revisionist and fragmentary technique of New Historicism to execute a critique both of the American invasion on Vietnam and the British colonial inroads into the heart of Africa.

Coetzee's novel *Dusklands* begins with the section called "The Vietnam Project." The protagonist is Eugene Dawn, who is the author of a special report on propaganda in reference to the Vietnam War. The story opens as Eugene considers the merits of his report, which he feels he must defend since his supervisor, named Coetzee, is not quite pleased with it. Coetzee praises Eugene's ability to write but suggests some changes. Eugene, in the meantime, despite his constant reminders to himself to be confident, feels insecure. Coetzee tries to explain to Eugene that the

report he has written is for the military, which is made up of people who are slow-thinking, suspicious, and conservative. So Coetzee suggests that Eugene rewrite his report in words of one syllable and more fully clarify Eugene's abstract concepts. Eugene leaves the office depressed. Eugene tries to rewrite his report in the basement of the Harry S. Truman Library, where he researches topics related to the culture of Vietnam, mythography, and propaganda. It is while he is surrounded by books that Eugene feels the closest to happiness, an intellectual happiness, Eugene informs the reader, which in his mind is the highest form. He mentions Harry, the library clerk, who dislikes it when people take down the books from the shelves. Eugene, in turn, appreciates order and hopes that Harry appreciates Eugene's neatness. Eugene also exposes how rigid his habits are. He faces a certain specific direction when he writes. He can write creatively only in the early hours of the morning, before so-called walls appear in his brain, blocking out his inspiration.

The second part of the story contains excerpts from Eugene's report. In it, he discusses the aims and achievements of propaganda and the difference between its effects on people from Western cultures and those from Asian cultures. One theory that Eugene pays special attention to is that of the father-voice and how it works to control the common citizen as well as how it fails as a device of propaganda. Intermixed with the narrative of the report are Eugene's interior monologues. His comments tend to exaggerate his position, such as when he refers to himself as a hero of resistance.

Coetzee's "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" begins with a "Translator's Preface," giving the novella the feel of a historic piece. Immediately after this, the so-called journal of Jacobus Coetzee begins. The narrative starts with a brief exposition about the changes that have occurred in relationship to the Boers, the white settlers (of

which Jacobus is one) and the native, black African tribes. This theme is discussed throughout the narrative, as Jacobus relates circumstances of his life while living in the northern lands of South Africa. Although the Hottentots and Boers share similar circumstances and therefore also share a particular way of life, Jacobus states that the main difference between the two groups is Christianity — the Boers are Christian and the Hottentots are not. Even if the Hottentots are converted, “their Christianity is an empty word”(57). The Hottentots, Jacobus believes, use Christianity in order to gain favors from the whites. Jacobus proves, through the tone of his writing, that his understanding of the Hottentots and the Bushmen is stereotypical. This is because he considers himself a master and the black Africans as slaves to help further Jacobus’s own cause.

After a few days on the trail, Jacobus and his men encounter members of the Great Namaquas, who are tantalized by the supplies that Jacobus carries in his wagon. They taunt Jacobus, who manages to save his supplies, then promises to visit their village. These people invite Jacobus to join in a meal with them, but he is wary of their motives, suspecting that they will ransack his supplies. When Jacobus finds the villagers doing just that, he cracks his whip into their midst. And then he leaves the village.

Jacobus becomes ill, which he describes in a very graphic detail. As his fever takes over, he descends into dreams of his childhood. He awakens for brief moments and hears his men talking. Jacobus suspects they are planning to betray him. Jacobus is taken back to the village, where he is placed in a special isolated hut. While in the depths of his fever, Jacobus envisions his role in the wild. He ponders death and the boundlessness of the wild land. When Klawer comes to visit him, Jacobus asks why his other men did not also come. Klawer tries to conceal the truth from Jacobus, but

Jacobus becomes even more suspicious of the remaining men. Jacobus is fed and cared for but he continues to demean the people who help him back to health. He criticizes their way of life, their food, their lack of spirituality. He sees no sense to their lives.

Jacobus finally arrives home and soon after returns to the Great Namaqua village to claim his vengeance. He returns with an army of men, who burn the huts. Jacobus singles out the men who betrayed him and focuses his attention on Plaatje. He tells them he is there to execute them. Jacobus personally kills Plaatje and seems to relish in the act. There is an “Afterword,” supposedly by the author, following Jacobus's account. The afterword, much like the “Translator's Preface,” adds authenticity to this fictionalized history.

The presentation of the novel itself is informed by the revisionist approach of New Historicism. Coetzee the novelist allows characters to perform the task of gathering bits of information here, and pieces of diaries and journals there, to concoct a colonial history in the second part of the novel. The first part centres on a fairly known mid twentieth century U.S. assault on Vietnam. It is significant in the sense that it exposes the trauma which the assault ultimately backlashes on the invading army personnel. This forms the basis of the assumption of this thesis that the novel is a postcolonial one not merely in its temporal setting but in its critique of the colonial power houses’ atrocities on the natives.

CHAPTER THREE

Colonial-Imperial Mission and Native Victimization

3.1 *The Vietnam Project*: American Imperialism in Twentieth Century

The Vietnam Project deals with how the inhumanity of the invasion of superpower over an Asian country, Vietnam, affects not only the life of the native people but also of the reporter from the invading country itself. A sizeable portion of American literature after the sixties is centered on the atrocities committed by the US army ranging from the scorched earth operation to the burning of the belts of forest to firing on villages from aircraft. The comebacks from the war lived with the trauma, the guilt and the consequent psychological burden. So much was the trauma that many soldiers went mad failing to cope with the war guilt. In the novel under this study, the reporter Eugene Dawn covers the news of the US invasion, and keeps the photographs with him. He is a man of decency, with a wife and a son. When he gets back to America, he starts revisiting the photos, and the memories they evoke. It is then that he starts to see the inhumanity of it all. And he goes mad owing to the intolerable trauma, and his familial relationship starts deteriorating.

The protagonist is Eugene Dawn, who is the author of a special report on propaganda in reference to the Vietnam War. The story opens as Eugene considers the merits of his report, which he feels he must defend since his supervisor, named Coetzee, is not quite pleased with it. Coetzee clarifies that though it is not necessary that everyone has to agree with what he says because he is “working in a novel and contentious field and must expect contention,” he has to make some changes in the suggestions made in the paper (3). Coetzee praises Eugene's ability to write but suggests some changes. Eugene, in the meantime, despite his constant reminders to

himself to be confident, feels insecure. “He is going to reject me,” Eugene says while recounting the day’s events in his supervisor’s office (3).

Coetzee tries to explain to Eugene that the report he has written is for the military, which is made up of people who are “slow-thinking, suspicious, and conservative” (3). So Coetzee suggests that Eugene must rewrite his report in words of one syllable and more fully clarify Eugene’s abstract concepts. Eugene leaves the office depressed.

Eugene tries to rewrite his report in the basement of the Harry S. Truman Library, where he researches topics related to the culture of Vietnam, mythography, and propaganda. It is while he is surrounded by books that Eugene feels the closest to happiness, an intellectual happiness, Eugene informs the reader, which in his mind is the highest form. He mentions Harry, the library clerk, who dislikes it when people take down the books from the shelves. Eugene, in turn, appreciates order and hopes that Harry appreciates his neatness. Eugene also exposes how rigid his habits are. He faces a certain specific direction when he writes. He can write creatively only in the early hours of the morning, before so-called walls appear in his brain, blocking out his inspiration.

Eugene then describes his wife and his relationship with her, which is very dismal. He thinks that because of his preoccupation with his project, she has grown jealous about it all:

> Thus she has grown more and more jealous of my work on the Vietnam Project as I have deepened myself further in it. She wishes dull jobs on me in order that I should find relief in her. She feels herself empty and wishes to be filled, yet her emptiness is such that

> every entry into her she feels as invasion and possession. Hence her desperate look. (8)

He blames his wife for not having any conjugal and intimate feelings between them. And when he refers to their son, he calls him “her child,” and mentions that Marilyn and the boy's conversations disturb his peace. He does not trust his wife. She is a conformist, he says, whereas he is willing to forge new trail, although this nonconformist side of him is slow to emerge. Thus he has given Marilyn the false image that he is a conformist like her. He also believes that she thinks he leans toward violence because of his involvement in the Vietnam project. Marilyn goes to a therapist for her depression once a week. And it is during this time that Eugene misses her. He leaves work early so that he can be there and greet her when she opens the front door. While he hugs her, he sniffs at her, trying to catch the scent of another man. Eugene is addicted to marriage, he states, which is a “surer bond than love” (11).

Eugene carries with him a handful of photographs taken in Vietnam. One is of a U.S. soldier having sex with a Vietnamese woman, maybe a child. Another shows soldiers holding two severed heads of Vietnamese men. Another is of a U.S. soldier walking past a Vietnamese man locked in a cage. The man has been tortured, and Eugene discusses the effects of torture. Here is an excerpt how the mass massacre of the Vietnamese by the American army was inflicted:

> These poisoned bodies, mad floating people of the camps, who had been—let me say it—the finest of their generation, courageous, fraternal—it is they who are the occasion of all my woe! Why could they not accept us? We could have loved them: our hatred for them grew only out of broken hopes. We brought them our pitiable selves, trembling on the edge of inexistence, and asked only that they

> acknowledge us. We brought them our weapons, the gun and it s metaphors, the only copulas we knew of between ourselves and our objects. From this tragic ignorance we sought deliverance. Our nightmare was that since whatever we reached for slipped like smoke though our fingers, we did not exist; that since whatever we embraced wilted, we were all that existed. We landed on the shores of Vietnam clutching our arms and pleading for someone to stand up without flinching to those probes of reality. (17)

Eugene writes that at first they waited to show mercy to the Vietnamese, but had to fire them, and pushed their bodies in ditches. The Americans were forced to wreck the massacre willy-nilly. But when people are attacked, they come up to resistance and mass killing will follow that. Now the sense of remorse on the part of Eugene will get nothing improved. It would have been better if the American government had not taken the role of a big brother to take care or rather control of the Indo-Chinese region.

The second chapter of the novel entitled "Introduction" details out how America deployed the policy of propaganda war against Vietnam. In the first section "*Aims and achievements of propaganda service*", Eugene Dawn gives an account of how the American government tried to demoralize the Vietnamese people by propagating false reports. This is where the insight drawn from New Historicism and discourse theory helps one to see how reality is distorted by the power-wielding party in its favour. To quote:

> In waging psychological warfare we aim to destroy the morale of the enemy. Psychological warfare is the negative function of propaganda: its positive function is to create confidence that our political authority

> is strong and durable. Waged effectively, propaganda war wears down the enemy by shrinking his civilian base and recruitment pool and rendering his soldiers uncertain in battle and likely to defect afterwards, while at the same time fortifying the loyalty of the population. Its military/ political potential cannot therefore be overstressed. (19)

Dusklands not only raises questions concerning neocolonialism and imperialism but also reveals the significance of the complex chronological position of its narratives to the ontology of its protagonists. For, under these conditions, language becomes schizophrenic, meaning it fails to convey clear thinking. Referring to the insurgents who plague America's military progress in Vietnam, Dawn writes:

> If you are moved by the courage of those who have taken up arms, look into your heart: an honest eye will see that it is not your best self which is moved. The self which is moved is treacherous. It craves to kneel before the slave, to wash the leper's sores. The dark self strives toward humiliation and turmoil, the bright self toward obedience and order. The dark self sickens the bright self with doubts and qualms. I know. It is his poison which is eating me. (27)

In being simultaneously Subject and Other to the processes of subjectification, Dawn begins to identify a split in the constitution of his Self: of Eugene Dawn-as-subject (“the bright self”) and Eugene Dawn-as-Other (“the dark self”). It is the negotiation of this impossible divergence that becomes the concern of *Dusklands*, for the negotiation and reconciliation of this recognized split between the Self-as-Other and the Self-as-subject promises some kind of end to the ontological questions that concern both Dawn and Jacobus. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in their

pained bodies. Sitting in the bowls of the Harry S. Truman Library, quietly contemplating the creative intricacies of his introduction to the New Life project, Dawn's body is both silent and silenced in terms of narrative concern. Yet, the moment in which Dawn suffers pain, his focus is uncontrollably diverted to the condition of his body:

> [M]y body betrays me. I read, my face starts to lose its life, a stabbing begins in my head, then, as I beat through gales of yawns to fix my weeping eyes on the page, my back begins to petrify in the scholar's hook. The ropes of muscle that spread from the spine curl in suckers around my neck, over my clavicles, under my armpits, across my chest. Tendrils creep down legs and arms. Clamped round my body this parasite starfish dies in rictus. Its tentacles grow brittle. I straighten my back and hear bands creak. (7)

In the context of Stoic thought, such a conception of the body is further complicated. Since Stoicism maintains that only bodies are existent, each account of the pained body becomes a description of the interruption of the ideational through the assertion of the corporeally real.

Such a conception of the split body is important since it recalls Dawn's fractured experience of the Self-as-subject and the Self-as-Other. This recognition of the alterity of Self is most important because it allows the individual to grasp himself as an event; and grasp the event actualized within him as another individual grafted onto him. That is to say, it is the moment in which the elements of Subject and Other stop designating individual, irreconcilable positions and become merely two elements in an inexhaustible continuum of possible personal states.

Clearly, the self-as-subject is passive to the determining voice of the

authoritative Other here. For Dawn, the trace of the Other follows the same line of the "voice of the father" that he identifies in his Department of Defense report (24): an authoritative voice that has the potential to condition all bodily actions. In this environment, the schizophrenic condition of language extrapolated from Stoic thought is doubled, and Dawn experiences what should be impossible. Through the schizophrenic condition of autoscopy, Dawn is drawn outside of himself to witness the events of his own life unfurl in front of him, apart from him. The Stoic pain-event responds by laying bare the destruction of Dawn's Self in a literal act of self-destruction brought about by the precession of an infinite identity through over-determination and the collapse of reason.

Such reclamation of subjective authority in the production of knowledge through the suffering of the body caused by the pain-event clearly compromises the claim to objective and universal truth made by scientific rationalism. However, it is important to note here that the objective scientific rationality that lay at the base of Enlightenment investigation lay in tandem with the highly personal subjectifying structure of Christianity. With this conditioning apparatus that responds to both the corporeal and incorporeal orders of the world, the physical and the metaphysical, what the science of the day could not explain, was found within the pages of Christian doctrine.

Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in the emotionally charged analogy Jacobus draws at the conclusion of his punitive raid on the Hottentots' village between the mercy killing of a wounded bird and the killing of Plaatje, one of his ex-servants. While the association between bird and human is more than questionable, nonetheless the analogy invokes all of the complexity allied to Jacobus's complicit position as both agent and opponent of the colonial endeavour, both Subject and

Other, as “nothing but an occasion” (91).

Thus, in the “compassion” and “distaste” that arrives at the literal hands of Jacobus, Coetzee offers a response to the question of what happens when the reliable extemporaneous dialectic of the Self and Other begins to fail. Meaning becomes the artifact of a subjective experience that cannot be dominated by objective claims to truth since the value of such subjective experience resides beyond the judgement of another. The effect of this revitalization of the Self is a world more complex, more nuanced and ambiguous than any world that can be described by the principles of scientific rationalism. Perhaps this is why Jacobus concludes his narrative by stating: “I have other things to think about” (107).

On the other hand, *Vietnam Project* is a modern restaging of the same old conflict between the self and the other. This part of the story contains excerpts from Eugene’s report. In it, he discusses the aims and achievements of propaganda and the difference between its effect on people from Western cultures and those from Asian cultures. One theory that Eugene pays special attention to is that of the father-voice and how it works to control the common citizen as well as how it fails as a device of propaganda. Intermixed with the narrative of the report are Eugene’s interior monologues. His comments tend to exaggerate his position, such as when he refers to himself as a hero of resistance. He also tries to vindicate the war ploys used by the American army when he advocates for the spray technique:

> PROP-12 spraying could change the face of Vietnam in a week. PROP-12 is a soil poison, a dramatic poison which (I apologize again), washed into the soil, attacks the bonds in dark silicates and deposits a topskin of gray ashy grit. Why have we discontinued PROP-12? Why did we use it only on the lands of resettled communities? Until we

> reveal to ourselves and revel in the true meaning of our acts we will go on suffering the double penalty of guilt and ineffectualness. (29)

From this reference, one can see how inhumanly America tried to obliterate the existence of Vietnam by literally following scorched earth policy, by killing every living thing there. So it comes as no surprise that when the American soldiers and the eye witnesses like Eugene came back, they could not cope with the qualm of conscience and went abnormal mentally.

In part three, Eugene reflects on his childhood and how much time he spent with books. Then he quickly returns to the discussion about Coetzee and how much he wants to please him and be more like him. He then discusses how he feels abandoned by Coetzee, how his boss ignores him. Eugene is bored at work. Sometimes he passes the time by calling his wife. After she does not respond to one of his calls, he leaves work to spy on her. Eugene also admits in this section that owing to the experience in Vietnam, he is not mentally sound:

> There is no doubt that I am a sick man. Vietnam has cost me too much. I use the metaphor of the dolorous wound. Sometime I think the wound is in my stomach, that it bleeds slime and despair over the food that should be nourishing me, seeping in litter puddles that rot the crooks of my obscurer hooked organs. At other times I imagine a wound weeping somewhere in the cavern behind my eyes. (32)

Eugene marvels at himself, in part four, because he has done a deed. He has kidnapped his son and is hiding in a motel room, where he hopes to write. He wants to find the peace and order that his mind requires. And by being away from his wife, he thinks he will find it. His son is happy at first, but he soon becomes bored with the inaction of the daily routine. Eugene believes his son fares better when away from his

mother who coddles him. After a few days, Eugene’s interior dialogue begins to disintegrate as evidenced when he begins to talk about a child who lives inside of him. This is a child who robs him of nourishment and consumes his inner organs. Shortly afterward, Marilyn arrives with the police. Eugene is taken away but not before it is obvious that Eugene has experienced a mental breakdown. He pierces his son's skin with a knife.

Locked away in a hospital, Eugene feels comfortable. Life is simpler. In his thoughts, he is on an equal basis with the doctors, not with the other patients. He talks about wanting to get out eventually, but not yet. He still has much to figure out. Eugene’s story ends with the lines: “In my cell in the heart of America, with my private toilet in the corner, I ponder and ponder. I have high hopes of finding whose fault I am” (49). The fault is attributed to the political system which forces its people to commit atrocity upon the others, the native of some other country.

3.2 British Colonialism in Africa

The second section of the novel “The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee” completes the novel *Dusklands*. It begins with a “Translator’s Preface,” giving the novella the feel of a historic piece. Immediately after this, the so-called journal of Jacobus Coetzee begins. The narrative starts with a brief exposition about the changes that have occurred in relationship between the Boers, the white settlers (of which Jacobus is one) and the native, black African tribes. This theme is discussed throughout the narrative, as Jacobus relates circumstances of his life while living in the northern lands of South Africa.

Although the Hottentots and Boers share similar circumstances and therefore also share a particular way of life, Jacobus states that the main difference between the two groups is Christianity. The Boers are Christian and the Hottentots are not. Even if

the Hottentots are converted, their Christianity is an empty word. The Hottentots, Jacobus believes, use Christianity in order to gain favors from the whites. Jacobus proves, through the tone of his writing, that his understanding of the Hottentots and the Bushmen is stereotypical. This is because he considers himself a master and the black Africans as slaves to help further Jacobus's own cause.

The colonial venture had started well before the mid seventeenth century. The growing production back at home in the European imperial powers like Dutch, France, Portugal and England demanded an ever expanding market as well as a continuous supply of raw materials. Hence, the empires systematically navigated across the Atlantic and the Pacific for new settlement or colonies. Before the 1880s, the British showed little interest in Africa apart from Cape Colony, although the Scottish explorer Mungo Park explored the Niger River. However, during the 19th century, there developed a 'scramble for Africa'. This was partly to secure the mineral wealth of the continent, partly to secure markets against foreign competition, partly to spread Christianity and British culture, and partly to provide an outlet for British adventurers. The first large group of British settlers landed in the Cape in 1820. They were bitterly resented by the Boers, the descendants of Dutch Protestants who had settled in the Cape nearly 200 years earlier. When slavery was ended throughout the British Empire in 1833, the Boers were forced to free their African slaves. Although the British government gave them generous financial compensation, the Boers regarded this further interference by the British as too much to accept. In 1835, they began the 'Great Trek' northward to found the Orange Free State and the South African Republic. By 1856, the British had recognized the independence of these states but had themselves founded a new colony in Natal. After heavy fighting,

beginning in 1879, the British conquered the African military state of Zululand and added it to Natal in 1897.

Jacobus goes on to describe the Bushmen, the other major tribe that he encounters. Jacobus describes how the white people set traps for the Bushmen, much like they set for animals. He offers instructions on how to kill them and thus clear the countryside of them. “A bullet is too good for a Bushman,” he writes (80). Then he tells of seeing a Bushman tied “over a fire and roasted”(81).

After these descriptions, Jacobus records the incidents of a journey to the “Great River.” He takes some of his men with him on an elephant hunt to gather ivory. He hires one extra man, Barend Dikkop, a good shooter but a troublemaker. Jacobus eventually tells Dikkop to leave the troupe, but before Dikkop sets off, he steals a horse and some supplies. Jacobus beats him when he finds him and leaves him in the desert. As the remaining troupe continues on their travels, the harsh land exhausts them. Although his men do most of the work, Jacobus states that they would have all perished if he had not told them what to do. “They saw me as their father,” he writes (64).

After a few days on the trail, Jacobus and his men encounter members of the Great Namaquas, who are tantalized by the supplies that Jacobus carries in his wagon. They taunt Jacobus, who manages to save his supplies, then promises to visit their village. These people invite Jacobus to join in a meal with them, but he is wary of their motives, suspecting that they will ransack his supplies. When Jacobus finds the villagers doing just that, he cracks his whip into their midst. And then he leaves the village.

Jacobus becomes ill, which he describes in a very graphic detail. As his fever takes over, he descends into dreams of his childhood. He awakens for brief moments

and hears his men talking. Jacobus suspects they are planning to betray him. Jacobus is taken back to the village, where he is placed in a special isolated hut.

While in the depths of his fever, Jacobus envisions his role in the wild. He ponders death and the boundlessness of the wild land. When Klawer comes to visit him, Jacobus asks why his other men did not also come. Klawer tries to conceal the truth from Jacobus, but Jacobus becomes even more suspicious of the remaining men. Jacobus is fed and cared for but he continues to demean the people who help him back to health. He criticizes their way of life, their food, their lack of spirituality. He sees no sense to their lives.

When he is strong enough to walk, Jacobus leaves the hut and searches for his men. He finds them sleeping off a wild night of drinking and sex. He tries to rouse them but only Klawer pays any attention to him. When Jacobus attempts to awaken Plaatje, the young boy threatens Jacobus with a knife. Plaatje then tries to convince Jacobus that he should leave all the men alone, let them continue to sleep. Jacobus leaves to take a bath in the river. When he is in the water, children come and steal his clothes. Jacobus chases them. When they jump him and punch him, Jacobus bites off one of the children’s ear. Men come and insist that Jacobus should leave without a horse, supplies, or weapons. Klawer is the only one who leaves with him.

As they travel across the desert, Klawer becomes sick. Jacobus promises to come back for him, but there is no further mention of Klawer. While Jacobus travels alone, he wishes he could stay in the limitless existence of the wild. He almost fears finding his farm and returning to the domesticity and boredom of routine.

Jacobus finally arrives home and soon after returns to the Great Namaqua village to claim his vengeance. He returns with an army of men, who burn the huts. Jacobus singles out the men who betrayed him and focuses his attention on Plaatje.

He tells them he is there to execute them. Jacobus personally kills Plaatje and seems to relish in the act.

There is an "Afterword," supposedly by the author, following Jacobus's account. The Afterword, much like the "Translator's Preface," adds authenticity to this fictionalized history.

The second half of the novel entitled "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" is an interesting reading material for its self-referential, postmodern and of course, historical insights into the tale of British and Dutch invasion of Africa. About how the ensuing story was achieved, the editor makes this explanation:

> *Het relaas van Jocobus Coetzee, Janszoon* was first published in 1951 in an edition by father, the late Dr. S. J. Coetzee, for the Van Plettenberg Society. This volume consisted of the text of the *Relaas* and an Introduction, which was drawn from a course of lectures on the early explorers of South Africa given annually by my father at the University of Stellenbosch between 1934 and 1948. (55)

According to his admission, the present publication is an integral translation of his father's introduction, which he has taken the liberty of placing after the text in the form of an "Afterword." In the Appendix, he has added a translation of Coetzee's official 1760 deposition. Otherwise, the sole change that he has made has been to restore two or three brief passages omitted from his father's edition and to reduce name words to the standard Kronlein orthography.

That the Narrator, having permission by written order of the Honourable Governor to travel inland for the purpose of dwelling place near the Piquetbergen with one wagon and six Hottentots, crossed the Oliphants, Groene, and Cous Rivers,

and traveled as far as the Coperbergen visited by the Governor Van der Stel in the year 1685.

It is known that the Narrator pursued his journey further northward. He had never before traveled that far, and thus he becomes the first man to tread the terra incognita, the unknown land. He finds banks covered with a kind of fine yellow glistening dust or sand of which, on account of its beauty, he gathers little knowledge and brings back with him.

The British adopted contradictory policies in ruling their newly acquired Cape Colony in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Having seized the Cape from the VOC in 1795, the British returned the colony to the Dutch government in 1803 when peace had been concluded with the French. In 1806, however, with the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, the British again took the Cape in order to protect the sea route to their Asian empire. Like the VOC before them, the British tried to keep the costs low and the settlement small. Local officials continued the policy of relying on imported slave labor rather than encouraging European immigration with the latter's implication of permanent and expanding settlement. They also introduced racially discriminatory legislation to force Khoikhoi and other so-called "free" blacks to work for as little as possible. The Hottentot Code of 1809 required that all Khoikhoi and other free blacks carry passes stating where they lived and who their employers were. Persons without such passes could be forced into employment by white masters.

The British attempted to alleviate the land problems of Boers in the Eastern Cape by sending imperial armies against the Xhosa of the Zuurveld. They attacked the Xhosa from 1799 to 1803, from 1811 to 1812, and again from 1818 to 1819, when at last, through ruthless warfare, they succeeded in expelling the Africans into the area

north of the Great Fish River. Thereafter, the British sought to create a fixed frontier by settling 5,000 British-assisted immigrants on smallholder farms created out of land seized from the Xhosa south of the Great Fish River and by clearing all lands between the Great Fish River and the Keiskama River of all forms of African settlement.

But other policies and developments worked against these measures. In 1807, Parliament in London ordered an end to British participation in the slave trade everywhere in the world. This decision threatened the basis of the Cape's labor supply, for farmers in the eastern areas as well as in the west.

British missionaries, who were active in South Africa for the first time in the 1810s and who had a sympathetic audience in Britain, condemned the cruel labor practices often adopted by Trekboers against their slave and Khoikhoi workers and decried the discriminatory provisions of the Hottentot Code. Although British officials did not rescind the legislation, they did respond to this criticism by establishing a circuit court to monitor conditions in the Western Cape. This court offended many Boer sensibilities by giving equal weight to the evidence of "servants" and "masters," black and white alike. The British also raised a force of colonial police, including Khoikhoi regulars, to enforce the court's authority. In 1815, a Dutch-speaking Afrikaner farmer who refused to answer a court summons for mistreating a Khoikhoi employee was shot dead while resisting arrest. Relatives and neighbors rose in what became known as the Slachter's Nek Rebellion, but their resistance was soon crushed, and the British hanged five of the rebels.

British policies on the eastern frontier also engendered growing Boer hostility. The attempt to close the frontier in 1819-20 following the defeat of the Xhosa and the importation of British immigrants only exacerbated land shortages. British settlers found that they could not make a living from small farms, and they competed with the

Dutch pastoralists for the limited arable land available, thereby intensifying Boer-British tensions.

British pressures on the Dutch-speaking population of the South African Republic became intense in the aftermath of industrialization. In seizing the diamond fields in 1870, the British had swept aside the lands claimed by the Boer. In 1877, fearing a collapse of the South African Republic in the face of defeat by a Pedi army, the British had formally annexed the Boer state, as the Transvaal. They then set about destroying the Pedi to obtain laborers for the Kimberley mines, and they completed the task in 1879. In 1880, however, the Transvaalers rose, and at the Battle of Majuba Hill in 1881, they defeated a British army. The British then withdrew, leaving the Boers victorious in what they would later call their First War of Independence.

The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand greatly increased Boer-British tensions. Here was vast mineral wealth beyond British control. Moreover, the president of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger, attempted to lessen his state's long-term dependence on Cape merchants by developing a rail link to Portuguese East Africa. Such a link threatened British commercial interests and revived old fears of the Boers' gaining direct access to the sea and thus to other European powers. At the same time, the mine owners were, without exception, English speakers who exhibited no loyalty to the South African Republic and who did not seek to reinvest their gold profits in the local community. Indeed, they complained bitterly about all attempts to tax the gold industry.

These economic tensions lay at the base of a political issue whether the English speakers had the right to vote. With the rise of the gold industry and the growth of Johannesburg, the South African Republic had been inundated by so many English-speaking immigrants (called *uitlanders* by the Boers), most of them being

skilled mine workers, that by the 1890s, they constituted a majority of the white male population. The state's constitution limited the vote to males who had lived in the South African Republic for at least seven years, and Kruger feared that expanding the franchise would only enable mine owners to manipulate their workers and to thereby win political power. British mine owners and officials constantly decried Kruger's refusal to extend the franchise. In December 1895, Cecil Rhodes took matters a step further by sending 500 armed men, employees of his British South Africa Company, into the South African Republic under the leadership of Dr. Leander Starr Jameson. Rhodes hoped that the *uitlanders* would rise and join the invaders to help overthrow Kruger's government. The invasion, however, was a fiasco: Boer commandos disarmed Jameson and his men with little resistance, and the *uitlanders* took no action. Rhodes resigned the premiership of the Cape Colony in disgrace. The British government denied having advance knowledge of the invasion and claimed that it had no expansionist plans of its own.

Distrusting the mine owners and the British government, Kruger sought to build his country's strength. He engaged in diplomatic relations with Germany, imported arms from Europe, and continued to deny the vote to *uitlanders*. He also cemented relations with the Orange Free State and sought support from Dutch speakers in the Cape. In these endeavors, he was assisted by a growing sense of Afrikaner identity that had developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This nationalistic identity had emerged clearly in the early 1880s, after the victory of Majuba Hill, when S.J. du Toit, a Dutch Reformed minister in the Cape, had published a newspaper, *Die Afrikaanse Patriot* (The Afrikaner Patriot), and a book, *Die Geskiedenis van ons Land in die Taal van ons Volk* (The History of our Land in the Language of our People), which argued that Afrikaners were distinct people with

their own fatherland in South Africa and that they were fulfilling a special mission determined expressly by God. Du Toit had gone on to found a political party in the Cape, the Afrikanerbond, to represent the interests of Dutch speakers. The Jameson Raid and anti-Boer sentiments expressed by gold magnates and British officials further cemented an Afrikaner sense of distinctiveness, which in the 1890s reached across political boundaries to include Dutch speakers in the Cape and the citizens of the Orange Free State as well as the Transvaalers.

Rhodes, together with his fellow gold mining magnates and the British government (in the persons of Joseph Chamberlain, secretary of state for the colonies, and Alfred Milner, high commissioner in South Africa), continued to denounce Kruger and his government. Rhodes and his peers called attention to what they considered rampant official corruption while also complaining that taxes were too high and that black labor was too expensive because of perceived favoritism by the government regarding the labor needs of Afrikaner farmers. Chamberlain had concluded by the second half of the 1890s that the British needed to take direct action to contain Afrikaner power, and he had at first used diplomatic channels to pressure Kruger, although with little success. Milner pointed out what he considered the appalling condition of British subjects in the South African Republic, where, without the vote, they were kept permanently in the position of helots. In 1899, Milner advised Chamberlain that he considered the case for British intervention overwhelming. Ignoring attempts by Kruger to reach a compromise, Chamberlain in September 1899, issued an ultimatum requiring that Kruger enfranchise British residents of the South African Republic. At the same time, Chamberlain sent troop reinforcements from Britain to the Cape. Kruger, certain that the British were bent on war, took the initiative and, allied with the Orange Free State, declared war on the

British in October 1899. This war was the expression of the sense of patriotism and rebellion from the broader African community consisting both of the native Africans and the Dutch settlers. The war was fought with the sense of do or die. But as was inevitable in the face of the greater military strength of the British, the African resistance was crushed, establishing the political enslavement for over a century.

3.3 Domination of the Native: Colonial Project

The novel is an exposition of the unjust practice the powerful nations of the world inflict on the less fortunate ones. It is a presentation and critique of the violence inherent in the colonialist and imperialist mentality of the western world. The novel actually consists of two separate stories. The first one, 'The Vietnam Project,' relates the gradual descent into insanity of its protagonist Eugene Dawn. Eugene works for a U.S. government agency responsible for the psychological warfare in the Vietnam War. However, his work on mythography and psychological operations is taking a heavy toll on him; his fall culminates in him stabbing his own son, Martin. The second story, 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,' which takes place in the late 17th century, is an account of a hunting expedition into the then unexplored interior of South Africa. After crossing the Orange River, Jacobus meets with a Namaqua tribe to trade, but suddenly falls ill. He is attended to by the tribe and gradually recovers, only to get into a fight for which he is expelled from the village. His last slave dying on the way home, he returns alone and later organizes a punitive expedition against the Namaqua. The narrative concludes with the execution of his slaves that deserted him on the previous journey and the massacre of the tribe.

The colonial expansion out in Africa and in India was, by and large, made viable by mechanism of the superior armaments, military power. In their quest for markets and raw materials, the colonizing powers rummaged every nook and corner

of the hitherto uncharted terrains. Their principal power in this hunt was the gun power, the gun powder. The cruel treatment inflicted upon the Bushmen is the expression of the colonialist's dominating spirit.

> You have to act at once or it will seep into your system. I have seen a man lie three days in agony, his whole body swollen up, creaming for death, and nothing to be done for him. After I had seen that I knew there was no more cause for softness. A bullet is too good for a Bushman. They took one alive once after a herder had been killed and tied him over a fire fat. Then they offered him. They even basted him in his own fat. Then they offered him to the Hottentots; but he was too sinewy, they said, to eat. (60)

The first White to invade the lands of the Hottentots, Jacobos Coetzee tries to ameliorate the inhabitants by approaching them, their leader with the gift of the fattest ox. His hope is that they will turn all praise to him for that gift, but to his surprise, they accept his gift only after ridiculing it as skinny. This they do, as they later reveal to him, to flatten down his sense of ego. Anyway, the confrontation between the two, one representing the western colonial power and the other the chief of the Hottentots, the native, takes on an interesting turn worth citing here for one's consideration for its intensity.

> Thus we approached each other. We could make out their number, twenty, one riding on an ox. All were men. I inferred that they had heard of our coming, by what means I did not know, and were come to meet us. If need be a wild Hottentot can run all night without stopping. Perhaps one of their spies had seen us. They carried spears. They made no warlike sing, nor did we. On the contrary, we rode out peacefully to

> meet each other, as pretty a singer as you could wish, two little bands of men under a sun only a few degrees above the horizon, and the mountains blue behind us. (64)

In fact, it is the miniature picture of the larger confrontation that would take place in the course of the colonial intervention into the lands of the blacks by the whites. The lack of trust on each other is only understandable, as they are from totally different cultural and colour background. Added to this is the problematic superiority complex a Whiteman carries with him. He is there to expand his business, to conquer and control the natives, to civilize them so to speak. And the black do not entertain the idea of some strange colored man coming to their peaceful nomadic and sylvan life.

The natives, in this case the Bushmen, have no sense or idea of number. Or at least that is the perception of the white reaching there for the first time. As it has already been illustrated, the west and the rest, the self and the other dichotomy is highlighted on the conceptual difference, difference between the capacity of the white Europeans and the rest of humanity. The Africans are naturally devoid of all such mental faculties as the sense of time, space and number, as Macaulay's infamous minute on Indian education too well clarified. The same dichotomy is capitalized on by Coetzee the first European to reach the Bushmen:

> Every wild creature I kill crosses the boundary between wilderness and number. I have presided over the becoming number of ten thousand creatures, omitting the innumerable insects that have expired beneath my feet. I am a hunter, a domesticator of the wilderness, a hero of enumeration. He who does not understand number does not understand death. Death is as obscure to him as to an animal. This holds true of the

> Bushman, and can seen in his language, which does not include a procedure for counting. (80)

What he says here is tantamount to the statement that the Bushmen, and by extension, the Africans, have no sense of number. In other words, they have little sense of rationality. They have no capacity to understand death also implies that they cannot appreciate and understand life either. This is a much disparaging verdict on the part of the colonizing power concerning the mental capacity of the colonized. The spirit of domination is clearly seen in such remarks:

> Over them I then pronounced sentence of death. In an ideal world I would have waited the executions for next morning, midday executions lacking the poignancy of a firing squad in a rosy dawn. But I did not indulge myself. I ordered the Griquas to take them away. The Tamboers went without protest, nonentities swept away on the tide of history. Plaatje looked at me, he knew he was dead; he did not bother to plead. Adonis however, whom I had always suspected I would one day despise, wept and shouted and tried to crawl to me. (101)

Thus, at his merest fancy and idiosyncrasy, the white can take the lives of a number of natives. In fact, they count the natives nothing more than mere beast, to be captured and hunted down. This is the colonial mentality pure and simple, which looks down upon the other, the blacks, as beasts of prey.

The “Afterword” of the novel also provides some insights as to what the role of the civilizing mission of the British colonialism played together with the civilizing and salvaging mission of the Christian missionaries there. The two seem to come together, at one point, to bring light to the dark continent. But that is a mere veneer to dominate the natives. It is revealed in this rather lengthy excerpt, which one cannot

and should not forgo without making a double check if ever one is to see the intricate relation between the colonizing and christianizing missions. Interestingly enough, the very word mission and missionary come from this theological history of Christianity.

> In this context I cannot refrain from quoting that most eminent of British missionaries John Philip, whose words reveal only too well his co-religionists' collusion in the imperial mission: "While our missionaries are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilization, social order, and happiness, they are by the most unexceptionable means extending British interests, British influence, and the British empire. Whenever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way and their dependence upon the colony is increased by the creation of artificial wants." (111)

Thus, the confluence of poetics, politics and theological ethics comes together to prop up the colonizing project, a venture over Africa. With the critical hindsight of postcolonilaism which reveals the lacunae, the loopholes inherent in the colonizing project, combined with a new way of looking at history as rather fragmentary and fabricated piece of writing, one can fruitfully read the novel.

CHAPTER FOUR

Call for Reconciliation

John Maxwell Coetzee's novel *Dusklands* is a novel of an intricate love-hate relationship that inevitably emerges in course of the conflicts and compromises between the expansionist colonial powers and the resisting natives. *Dusklands* presents the narratives of two men who begin to experience themselves uncontrollably oscillating between the ontological states of the known-subject and the incomprehensible-'other.' Moreover, the consequence of this complex state of affairs is highly detrimental to the integrity of the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment that underwrote the structural imperatives of European colonial discourse. Indeed, it seems certain that without the guarantee of a conceptual Other with which to construct world reality, the claim to "truth" maintained by scientific rationality begins to stutter.

It is in the face of this compromised access to the truth of the real that the determining structures of subjectification are deployed most vigorously through imperial and colonial discourse. For example, under the entry of "victor" in his Department of Defense report, Dawn writes of the necessity to crush native insurrection in Vietnam. It is a call for a state of total domination based on both interpretations of the term subjectification. Firstly, it is a call for an irresistible violence to be meted out upon the body of the Vietnamese population in order to pacify every kind of resistance; and, secondly, it is a call to condition the Vietnamese body by bringing it into the American/Western "family" of the selfsame: to transform the incomprehensible Other into the known value of Subject by means of identification through representation to become "the sons" of the imperial father. However, my final point is that while such calls recognize the essential quality of the

physical body in the processes of subjectification, the suffering that results from the violence meted out upon the subjectified body serves only to compromise further the veracity and authority of imperial/colonial discourse.

Dawn's continued privileging of the ideation above the physical body becomes an echo of the privileged western subject. In the opening paragraph of Coetzee’s narrative, Dawn proclaims that he is a thinker, a creative person, one not without value to the world. He ponders why the project of destroying Vietnam was discontinued.

There is much to post-colonial literature than reading colonialist narratives only. Generations of writers and intellectuals who were born under and after colonialism have inspiringly written about the struggle for independence. They write about the conflicting interests of the natives under and after colonialism. Other writers direct their attention to the conflict between the natives and the newly appointed regimes that supplanted the colonialists. Many others write about fossilized social habits and customs in need of rehabilitation or replacement. Some writers exhibit a high level of animosity to the colonialists and their agents; others are less aggressive in their representation of the colonial past, and the postcolonial present.

Indeed, it is this search for true meaning that stretches across both narratives of *Dusklands* and ultimately reduces to the singular activity of attempting to reclaim one’s own true being from the limiting principles of rationality. Perhaps, it is Jacobus, who offers the clearest articulation of this ontological search. Putting the grandiosity of Jacobus’s metaphysical conjectures aside for one moment, it is nevertheless just such introspection that requires both Dawn and Jacobus to question the self’s presence to the self, in moments of self-analysis that is not of one’s self but of the self of the soul. So, while Dawn talks of the universal attempt of the West to determine itself in

contrast to the Vietnamese Other, Jacobus Coetzee reflects on his punitive raid on a Hottentots' village as an act of self-determination. Both narratives demonstrate that the search for any kind of true meaning is predicated on the struggle for existence and, as such, it is no coincidence that both narratives pivot around Dawn's ontological enquiry. Of course, it is precisely this kind of self-analytical questioning that stands outside of the remit of scientific rationality, and it is precisely this kind of question that insists on the reassertion of subjective value in an excessively scientific world.

Coetzee cleaves the world of *Dusklands* in two along the fracture caused by the seemingly divergent geographical locations, eras, and characters of its two major constitutive narratives. On the one hand is the narrative of Eugene Dawn, prophet of the colonial enterprise and on the other hand is the narrative of Jacobus Coetzee, night-errant of the colonial endeavour. This dualism exposes the monolithic character of colonialism as a fiction; the elucidation of such a distinction is not the final extension of the Stoic structure of *Dusklands*. Indeed, as with Stoic thought, the most significant aspect of this structure does not concern maintaining a strong duality between the corporeal and incorporeal orders of the world, but rather concerns the way in which these orders interact with each other on a fundamental level so that the world becomes discernible only in terms of the way in which it moves and changes.

The novel is designated to be critique of colonialism of all sorts, and of super power invasions in the modern times. By showing the disintegrating impact of such power-wielding ploys and policies, the novel speaks for a peaceful, mutually accommodating world.

Dusklands, the first novel by John Maxwell Coetzee, by showing how the American reporter goes insane by the inflicting memory of the gruesome murders committed by the US Army on the Vietnamese populace, and by exposing the

inhuman treatment meted out to the natives in Africa, advocates for reconciliation. Coetzee as a socio-politically aware writer, though white by color, feels sympathy for the underdogs. That is why, he revises the atrocious history of American military rape on Vietnam and British colonial expansion into Africa, through the narrative technique of diary and memoir, to hold such unjust military intervention up to scathing critique. Thus, the novel *Dusklands* is informed and fuelled by the critical awareness both of what is termed New Historicism and Postcolonialism.

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