

Multilingualism as a Writing Device in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*

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Abstract

Multilingualism appears as a writing device by which J. M. Coetzee creates a linguistico-typographical hybridity, a polyphonic enunciation as well as textual fragmentations in Disgrace and Slow Man. This scriptural technique also generates multilingual phenotexts which connect the prose texts with World Literature.

Keywords: Multilingualism, hybridity, polyphony, fragmentations, Coetzee, World Literature.

Résumé

Le plurilinguisme apparaît comme un procédé d'écriture par lequel J. M. Coetzee crée une hybridité linguistico-typographique, une énonciation polyphonique ainsi que des fragmentations textuelles dans *Disgrace* et *Slow Man*. Cette technique scripturale génère aussi des phénotextes plurilingues qui rattachent les textes en prose à la Littérature Monde.

Mots clés: Plurilinguisme, hybridité, polyphonie, fragmentations, Coetzee, Littérature Monde.

Introduction

To write the novel, a writer like J. M. Coetzee resorts to multilingualism as a poetic technique. Coetzee integrates so many languages in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* that it could be hypothesized that multilingualism prevails as an artistic phenomenon, which may bring the hermeneutist reader to ask this question: How is multilingualism used as a writing device in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*? Before answering this query, it is advisable to define what is meant by “multilingualism”. Rainier Grutman and Paul Aron define “multilingualism” as follows:

Au sens strict, le bilinguisme (le cas échéant, le plurilinguisme) désigne en littérature l’emploi successif ou simultané de deux (ou plusieurs) langues de la part d’un écrivain, que ce soit dans son œuvre prise comme un tout ou à l’intérieur d’un texte particulier. Au sens métaphorique, tel qu’on peut le rencontrer dans des travaux qui s’inspirent de Mikhaïl Bakhtine, le terme a un champ d’application plus vaste, qui s’étend non seulement aux registres sociaux d’une seule langue (dialogisme), mais encore à l’exhibition d’une compétence culturelle (érudition), voire à toute autre forme de polyphonie énonciative (citation, intertextualité, parodie, par exemple)¹.

From the definition above, it can be inferred that the meaning of the notion of multilingualism, which is relevant to the analysis, is both denotative and connotative. If the first sense refers to the use of many different kinds of languages in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, the second one is related to the metaphorical signification perceived through the ways in which the author reveals his cultural competence by the creation of a polyphonic enunciation in the narratives. The goal of this article is to show that multilingualism is used as a writing device in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*. To this aim, postmodern concepts such as “hybridity”, “fragmentation” and “polyphony” will be used in order to shed light on how Coetzee resorts to multilingualism to make meanings in the selected works. The study falls into three parts. The first section demonstrates that a linguistic and typographical hybridity, and also a polyphonic enunciation are at work in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*; the second part deals with the textual fragmentations deployed in the prose texts; and the third one shows that Coetzee develops multilingual phenotexts which link the studied narratives to World Literature.

1- A Linguistico-Typographical Hybridity and a Polyphonic Enunciation

Heterogeneity both at the linguistic and typographical levels as well as a polyphonic enunciation can be noted by a mixture of languages, and also by a combination of italics and roman letters. Actually, not only does Coetzee mix English with other Indo-European languages, but also uses different graphical means to show that varied languages are translated and included in the phenotexts². Thus, if English is written in roman letters, which

¹ Rainier Grutman and Paul Aron, “Bilinguisme”, in *Le dictionnaire du littéraire*, Paul Aron (dir.), Paris, QUADRIGE /PUF, 2012, p. 72. “In the strict sense, bilingualism (if need be, multilingualism) designates in literature the successive or simultaneous use of two (or several) languages on behalf of a writer, be it in their work taken as a whole or within a particular text. In the metaphorical sense, as is the case in works inspired by Mikhaïl Bakhtine, this term has a larger application field, which extends not only to social registers of a single language (dialogism), but also to the display of a cultural competence (erudition), or even to any other form of enunciative polyphony (citation, intertextuality, parody, for example)” (My translation).

²Coined by Julia Kristeva, the “phenotext” refers to the printed text or the physical text composed of signifiers.

is the classical visual scriptural norm, as the main language used to write the prose texts, the other languages are displayed in italics. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* are a melting-pot of six Indo-European tongues like English, French, Latin, Italian, Spanish and German.

As revealed through the characters' thoughts, speeches and actions, but also through the words and expressions uttered by the narrators to describe the characters' deeds, French, Latin, Italian, Spanish and German are systematically used. In *Disgrace*, talking about David Lurie's "sex timetable", the narrator employs the French signifiers "*luxure et volupté*" to depict his sexual activity, as planned on Thursdays: "In the desert of the week Thursday has become an oasis of *luxure et volupté*." (Coetzee, 1999, p. 1) Suggested by the usage of morphemes like "desert" and "oasis", the geographical metaphor unveils the protagonist's lack of sexual activities throughout the week except on Thursdays which are pleasant days for David Lurie, because of his sexual intercourse with Soraya. Despite his old age, David, who got married and divorced twice, is thoroughly interested in having sex with prostitutes. That is why he has sexual contact with another "Soraya", another whore, since the latter's name has become a famous commercial name, "a popular *nom de commerce*": "He spends an evening with another Soraya – Soraya has become, it seems, a popular *nom de commerce* - in a hotel room in Long Street." (Coetzee, 1999, p. 8)

In *Slow Man*, the same linguistic phenomenon occurs. Italicized French words and expressions appear in these sentences: "In the brave new world into which both he and Mrs Putts have been reborn, whose watchword is *Laissez faire!*, perhaps Mrs Putts regards herself as neither his keeper nor her brother's keeper nor anyone else's." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 23), and "After Sheena he is tended by a succession of nurses from the agency, nurses who call themselves *temps* and come for a day or two at a time." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 24), and again "If he has a name for it, it is *le jambon*. *Le jambon* keeps it at a nice, contemptuous distance." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 29). Indeed, the following signifiers "*Laissez faire!*", "*temps*" and "*le jambon*" (repeated twice), are French words and phrases which respectively allude to the way in which Paul Rayment, the amputated protagonist, lets Mrs Putts select and organize the nurses who care for him, the day or night nurses at Paul Rayment's house, and the mutilated leg of Paul Rayment. Actually, what remains after the amputation of the main character's leg is called "*le jambon*" because not only does it look like a ham (the meat from a pig's leg), but also this designation allows Paul Rayment to avoid showing contempt for the stump, that is to say the short part of his limb that is left after the rest has been cut off.

Latin, the Italic language of ancient Rome, is also present in the text through this sentence: "*Sunt lacrimate rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt*: those will be Byron's words, he is sure of it." (Coetzee, 1999, p. 162) The Latin sentence "*Sunt lacrimate rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt*" is the famous verse pronounced by Aeneas, the hero from *The Aeneid* by Virgil, when he saw scenes of massacre and great sadness. It means "There are tears at the heart of things and men's hearts are touched by what human beings have to bear." (Jacobs, 2010) Another good case of Latin signifiers is "*contra naturam*" used to qualify Melanie Isaacs's rape perpetrated by David Lurie: "For unnatural acts: for broadcasting old seed, tired seed, seed that does not quicken, *contra naturam*." (Coetzee, 1999, p. 190)

As for Italian, one striking instance is the expression “*sotto voce*” in these sentences: “‘He was what by experience?’ he hears someone ask *sotto voce*. ‘He was enriched.’” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 56) The Italian term “*sotto voce*” means “in a quiet voice”, or just “whisper” in English. In these sentences: “*Mio* Byron, she sings a third time [...] Where are you? He sings; and then a word she does not want to hear: *secca*, dry. It had dried up, the source of everything” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 183), the morphemes “*Mio*” and “*secca*” are Italian signifiers which mean respectively “My” and “dry”, the last one (“*secca*”) being translated by “dry” in the phenotext, the printed publication. They both refer to Byron’s lover Teresa Gamaba Guiccioli who is looking for the whereabouts of Byron, a Romantic poet in the libretto which David Lurie is composing as Lord Byron’s disciple.

Concerning the Spanish language, the phrase “*el oscuro Corazon*”, translated from Spanish into English by “The dark heart”, is a good example of a combination of Spanish and English in the text: “The heart can be a mysterious organ, the heart and its movements. Dark, the Spanish call it. The dark heart, *el oscuro Corazon*.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 157)

Goethe’s language, German, is also summoned in Coetzee’s prose text. Thus, the terms “*Schadenfreude*” and “*handlanger*”, meaning respectively “pleasure derived from the misfortune of others”, and “unskilled assistant to a tradesman”, appear in the following sentences: “The community of the righteous, holding their sessions in corners, over the telephone, behind closed doors. Gleeful whispers. *Schadenfreude*. First the sentence, then the trial.” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 42), and “Petrus needs him not for advice on pipefitting or plumbing but to hold things, to pass him tools – to be his *handlanger*, in fact.” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 136). According to the extradiegetic narrator of *Disgrace*, people from David Lurie’s circle may gloat over the protagonist’s misfortunes linked to his sex affair with Melanie Isaacs. The latter has resigned from his position of lecturer at the Cape Technical University because of this flirtation, and has joined his daughter Lucy Lurie in the countryside where, by Petrus’s side, he plays the role of an associate, an assistant to Lucy’s ex-boy.

Many examples about a mixture of lexical items from different Indo-European languages printed in italics, translated and mixed with upright characters appear throughout the two novels. For instance, in this excerpt (“Is Soraya’s totem the snake too? No doubt with other men she becomes another woman: *la donna è mobile*. Yet at the level of temperament her affinity with him can surely not be feigned) (Coetzee, 1999, p. 3), the Italian expression “*la donna è mobile*” (“women are fickle” or “women change”), like in the case of Soraya the prostitute, who changes her attitude from the one she shows towards David Lurie to the one she has towards her other “sex clients”, is translated and italicized as an expression written not in English, but in Italian. And except this phrase, all the other words in the aforementioned sentences remain in roman letters. The blend of languages such as Italian and English presented in two different graphical forms brings about a typographical and linguistic heterogeneity, which are the hallmarks of textual innovations³. The phenotext is no more

³ R. L. Walkowitz believes that translation, which “functions as a thematic, structural, conceptual, and sometimes even typographical device”, stimulates literary innovations: “[Contemporary writers] present translation as a spur to literary innovation[s].”, in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/g19c/activities/displacements/readingnovelsworkshop/walkowitz_born_translated.pdf, retrieved on 07/05/2017.

homogeneous. On the contrary, it has become heterogeneous. Therefore, it can be asserted that Coetzee promotes typographical and linguistic hybridization through his multiple uses of languages. Those also generate a polyphonic enunciation in the novels.

With these graphical, linguistic and enunciative ploys, Coetzee's narratives are linked to postmodern novels since they share scriptural characteristics connected to the concepts of "heterogeneity" or "hybridity", and also to the notion of "polyphony". The latter, which may also be referred to as « dialogism », suggests the following : "l'existence et la concurrence de plusieurs "voix" dans un texte où s'expriment des points de vue idéologiques ou sociaux divergents, voire incompatibles⁴". Actually, many voices, either from the enunciator (the author, that is to say Coetzee himself) who becomes the narrator in the written texts, or from the characters (David Lurie, Lucy Lurie, Lord Byron, etc. in *Disgrace* ; and Paul Rayment, Marijana, etc. in *Slow Man*), are heard in various languages (French, Latin, Spanish, German, Italian, and English), thereby generating a polyphonic enunciation. Here, the reader can note the metaphorical sense of multilingualism, which allows Coetzee to display his cultural competence or his erudition. In fact, Coetzee shows his great academic and linguistic knowledge which is exhibited through his characters' and his narrators' multilingual proficiency.

Other instances showing that Coetzee's *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* are hybrid and polyphonic prose texts, can be further perceived through these two examples: "The hand shows, settles, makes its X, its cross of righteousness: *J'accuse*. Then a space for the name of the accused." (Coetzee, 1999, p. 40), and "When I was living I did not understand, father, but now I understand, now that it is too late; and believe me, father, I repent, I repent me, *je me repens*, and bitterly too." (Coetzee, 2005, p. 34) Indeed, the reader may notice that Coetzee mixes English written in roman letters with French which is displayed in italics. A linguistico-typographical hybridity and a polyphonic enunciation are effectively at work in the two novels. The scriptural devices generated by multilingualism in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* are also appreciated by textual fragmentations through a combination of broken pieces.

2- Fragmentations Through a Combination of Broken Pieces

As another feature of the postmodern novel, fragmentation appears as a strategy by which the writing shows something incomplete and broken in the sense that English stops and makes room for other languages such as Croatian, Russian, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu. The juxtaposition of different languages in the phenotext turns Coetzee's writing into a fragmentary one, because the latter is composed of dissimilar types of languages which are, in fact, fragments. In the following, Croatian, a Slavic language spoken by the Croatian people, is combined with English, which transforms the text into two pieces that are broken off: "No more gloom. Is funny word. In Croatia we say *ovaj glumi*, doesn't mean he is gloomy, no, means he is pretending, he is not real. But you not pretending, eh?" (Coetzee, 2005, p. 251)

⁴ Constanze Baethge, « Dialogisme », in *Le dictionnaire du littéraire, Op. cit.*, p. 181. (The existence and the competition of several "voices" in a text in which ideological or social points of view, which are divergent or even incompatible, are expressed." (My translation) Synonymous with "dialogism", the concept of "polyphony", whose paradigmatic genre would be the novel, opposes the notion of "monologism" which corresponds to a closed world view which is expressed in the epic or the lyrical poem.

The signifiers “*ovaj glumi*”, which mean “no more gloom” according to Marijana’s translation, are a fake rendering showing through the recourse to a word pun suggested by the phonemes “oo” (in “gloomy”) and “u” (in “*glumi*”). Coetzee uses the terms “gloom” and “*glumi*”, the last word being supposed to be the Croatian word for “gloomy”, which means “sad mood” in English. According to Jae Eun Yoo, Coetzee has resorted to the “internal translation” technique, one method which is the same as the “mechanical translation, which “replaces original words with semantic equivalents, and this technique aggravates Paul’s moral predicaments by concealing the friction within his own language – the language he mobilizes in his attempt to reimagine and represent his body as a fertile, masculine one.” (Yoo, 2013).

Russian, another Slavic language spoken by the Russian people, answers the call for the linguistic interruption. One first occurrence of Russian words can be seen in this sentence: “Can he find a teacher here in Adelaide? Lesson one: the verb to love, *ljub* or whatever.” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 251) To show the reader Paul Rayment’s impossible love for Marijana, a Croatian woman living in Adelaide and working at the protagonist’s house as a nurse, Coetzee employs the lexis “*ljub*”, which is translated by these signifiers: “the verb to love”. Apart from Indo-European languages such as Croatian and Russian, South African languages like Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu are written in *Disgrace*.

Afrikaans, a language spoken in South Africa, is integrated into *Disgrace*. A striking example of an Afrikaans word occurs in the following excerpt: “He helped her buy it. Now here she is, flowered dressed, bare feet and all, in a house full of the smell of baking, no longer a child playing at farming but a solid countrywoman, a *boevrou*.” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 60) The signifier “*boevrou*” is an Afrikaans morpheme which Coetzee translates from Afrikaans into English by the expression “a solid countrywoman”. Applied to Lucy Lurie, the word means that the protagonist’s daughter is no more a small girl, but a strong peasant woman shifting for herself in the country.

In the following, three other Afrikaans words and expressions (“*masa*”, “*jou dom meid!*”, “*kaaps*”) are mentioned: “They are in what appears to be the produce quarter. On their left are three African women with milk, *masa*, butter to sell...” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 71), and “A flash of magnesium, and the stage is suddenly plunged into darkness. ‘Jesus Christ, *jou dom meid!*’ screeches the hairdresser.” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 192), and again “[...] *Kaaps* accent” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 191). The first word (“*masa*”) means in English “sour or fermented milk”, whereas “*jou dom meid!*” and “*kaaps*” denote respectively “you stupid maid!”, and “of the Cape, coloured version of Afrikaans or culture associated with the Western Cape”.

Concerning Xhosa and Zulu, one interesting case is given in the term “*Hamba*” in this extract: “‘Petrus!’ calls Lucy. But there is no sign of Petrus. ‘Get away from the dogs!’ she shouts. ‘*Hamba!*’” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 92) Either in Xhosa or in Zulu, the word “*Hamba*” means “go away” (Doke and Vilakazi, 1972).

From what precedes, it could be asserted that Coetzee’s use of Indo-European and South African languages leads him to “denaturalize” or “defamiliarize” the prose texts by removing from his works what is “natural”, what is obvious to the reader. By doing so, the

author shows that he is a semiotician whose objective is textual “denaturalization”⁵, [which consists in] revealing the socially coded basis of phenomena which are taken-for-granted as ‘natural’.” (Chandler, 2017) Any reader accustomed only to the codes⁶ of the English language may be baffled by the queer use of English mixed with many other languages, because he or she (as the decoder or user of the texts), and the author (as the encoder or maker of the texts) do not share the same linguistic codes. Only meanings made explicit by the writer in his encoding⁷ task can be caught by the lay reader who may not catch implicit meanings because of the strange use of masses of languages.

All in all, as fragments or broken pieces blended together, the words in English, Croatian, Russian, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu bring about a fragmentary writing, a new form of prose, which shows not only a change in the composition of the novel, but also proves that Coetzee is a subversive and innovative writer. Silué Lèfara writes: “The fragment contributes to the disintegration of genres. In this sense, every text is a broken piece from a more extended one. Thus, the writer who is interested in the fragmentary becomes a non-conformist or a dissident.” (Lèfara, 2015, p. 133) Moreover, with this multiple uses of languages, the author distinguishes himself from the traditional way in which the novel is composed in that he moves from the narration of events and narrators’ and characters’ speeches (dialogues) to the narration of languages. In other terms, Coetzee narrates tongues such as English, French, Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Croatian, Russian, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu, and shows that he is not a monolingual or a monoglot writer. As a result, *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* become narratives of languages in which Coetzee develops multilingual phenotexts belonging to World Literature.

⁵ D. Chandler defines the notion of “denaturalization, defamiliarization” as follows: “One of the goals of semioticians is *denaturalization* [...] The concept was borrowed from Shklovsky’s Formalist notion of *defamiliarization*, according to which *ostranenie* (‘estrangement’) was the key function of art – we need to ‘make the familiar strange’ – to look afresh at things and events which are so familiar that we no longer truly see them. The formalists favoured texts which drew attention to their constructedness and to the processes involved in their construction. Shklovsky used “denaturalization” or “defamiliarization” as a literary technique, and advocated the (surrealistic) practice of placing things in contexts in which they would not normally be found. A feature of many postmodern texts is a parodic use of intertextual references which functions to denaturize the normally transparent representational conventions of ‘realistic’ textual codes. The semiotician seeks to *denaturalize* signs and codes in order to make more explicit the underlying rules for encoding and decoding them, and often also with the intention of revealing the usually invisible operation of ideological forces.”, D. Chandler, *op. cit.*, retrieved on 29/05/2017.

⁶ L. Guillemette and J. Cossette write the following about the “code”: “The code is found in Jakobson’s communication model. It designates all of the conventions that make it possible for the sender’s message to be understood by the receiver in an act of communication. The code may thus be a language, a system used in sports (the referee in baseball or the signs used for communication between the catcher and pitcher), kinesics (interpreting unconscious nonverbal language, such as tiny facial movements), etc.,” L. Guillemette and J. Cossette (2006), “The Semiotic Process and the Classification of signs”, in L. Hébert (dir.), *Signo* [online], Rimouski (Quebec), <http://www.signosemio.com/eco/semiotic-process-and-classification-of-signs.asp>, retrieved on 29/05/2017. U. Eco defines the “code” as “a series of rules that will allow one to attribute a signification to the sign” (U. Eco’s translation, 1988, p. 28: U. Eco, *Le signe*, Brussels, Labor, 1988, p. 28) or U. Eco quoted by L. Guillemette and J. Cossette, *op. cit.*, retrieved on 29/05/2017.

⁷ D. Chandler describes the concept of “encoding” as follows: “Encoding is the production of texts by encoders with reference to relevant codes [...] Encoding involves foregrounding some meanings and backgrounding others.”, D. Chandler, *op. cit.*, retrieved on 29/05/2017.

3-Multilingual Phenotexts Belonging to World Literature

As a scriptural technique, multilingualism connects Coetzee's writing with World Literature. Indeed, set in Adelaide, Australia, *Slow Man* lies within the framework of a multilingual and a transnational context. In fact, in *Slow Man* Australia is shown as a country of immigrants who have travelled to this place with their country's history, cultures and even their national languages. As immigrants in Australia, Paul Rayment, who emigrates from France, and Marijana, who emigrates from Croatia, speak and use terms related to the languages from their countries of origin when they have conversations in English. Their practice of French and Croatian goes beyond the physical territories of France and Croatia, and transforms the textual territory of *Slow Man* into a universal linguistic terrain which links this novel to World Literature. Actually, the plurality of languages (French, Croatian and English) seems to be the main topic in *Slow Man* so that it could be suggested that in this prose text the diverse languages are the universal subject matter. Therefore, *Slow Man* becomes part of World Literature through which Coetzee launches himself into a quest for transnationality. As a matter of fact, with the release of *Slow Man* which encapsulates numerous languages, it can be said that Coetzee has found a means to "rise above mere nationality." (Vold, 2011, p. 39) The author has got out of national literature and has become a universal writer, a novelist in the world of literature. Indeed, with a novel like *Slow Man*, Coetzee has shown his ambition to build up a literary universe which is as famous as his name: "Acknowledging the connections between the works [*Youth* and *Slow Man*] makes us aware of a development in Coetzee's fiction of the 21st century in which the author's work seems insistent on constructing a literary world peculiar to the name J. M. Coetzee." (Vold, 2011, p. 35) And just as "The many intertextual traces of Coetzee's earlier novels in his more recent ones, create [...] a paratext for his readers to judge his work by, to rival the paratext of nationality – South Africanness – which until this moment has been the most influential way of reading and evaluating Coetzee's novels" (Vold, 2011, p. 35), and relate his prose texts to World Literature, so multilingualism gives rise to interlinguistic features which connect *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* with the world of letters.

With multilingualism, Coetzee has moved from "the paratext of nationality" marked by his "South Africanness", which is used to measure his earlier novels, to "the paratext of transnationality" with narratives like *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, which are prose texts in which he deals with "transnationalism⁸", universalism of literature, or World Literature⁹. Indeed, through multilingualism, Coetzee addresses "the themes of migration, transnationalism, and authorship and challenge[s] the notion of the national as a fixed and valuable category."

⁸ A. Portes and R. G. Rumbaut consider "transnationalism", or what they refer to as "selective acculturation," as the only way out of the vicious circle of reactive ethnicity engendered by the ideologies of nativism and assimilationism [...].", A. Portes and R. G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 286. See also J.-J. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 150. "Literary scholar Stefan Helgesson sees transnationalism in Southern Africa, but we could also add in many places, including Australia, as "a condition, a predicament of literature... not a programme or an ideology.", T. Vold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.

⁹ National theme and World Literature do not go hand in hand: "The nation theme, moreover, occupies a difficult position in the model: the importance of the national is a measure of a literature's provinciality or centrality, as the more national a literary theme is, the less universal it is." T. Vold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37; and see also P. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Trans. M. B. DeBevoise, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 191.

(Vold, 2011, p. 35) *Slow Man* testifies to Coetzee's rejection of the "national language" through the character of Paul Rayment who makes friends with immigrants with whom he speaks French and English in Adelaide. By the multiple uses of languages in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, Coetzee highlights the importance of readers by and large, and does not intend to address any specific audience composed of a homogeneous group of people speaking a standard language. On the contrary, the target readership is a heterogeneous one like the "Babel tower"¹⁰, which the novels incarnate. Coetzee himself epitomizes this "tower of Babel", since he grew up in a family where both Afrikaans and English were spoken. The babelization, the transnationalization, and the universalization of *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, which is carried out through multilingualism, is part of a literary strategy which links the author's novels with World Literature.

Another illustration about the connection of Coetzee's multilingual phenotexts with World Literature appears in his numerous prestigious literary awards. As a "literary technique" (Olsson, 2017, p. 17), multilingualism has allowed Coetzee to win World Literature Prizes. This device has permitted him to become a universal writer whose "ethical universalism" has a humanistic value (Head, 1997, p. 75), which is meant to call for equal recognition for all languages spoken in the world. This may account for the reason why none of Coetzee's novels have been censored in South Africa because they are considered as fictions which deal with "universal" topics:

The long list of prizes received by Coetzee's novels throws light on the important link between his life in South Africa in the period of apartheid, his literary activity, and his international standing. Indeed, Coetzee has been hailed as both a national and an international literary master. In his own country, he managed to escape censorship, and his novels were never banned by the South African authorities, in part because the censors and their advisors read them as treatment of "universal" themes [...] (Amoia and Knapp., 2004, p. 156)

In *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, multilingualism universalizes Coetzee's novelistic writing which has been rewarded by preponderant literary laurels. Indeed, Coetzee's consecration as a world literature writer materialized with his 2003 Nobel Prize. By "narrating (Indo-European and South African) languages", which become a subject matter in the novels because of their occurrences and their recurrences, Coetzee rejects national literature which promotes a unique or a standard language, and adopts "World Literature"¹¹. With the recourse to Indo-European

¹⁰ The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* suggests the following definition for the term "Babel": The sound of many voices talking at one time, especially when more than one language is being spoken. ORIGIN: From the Bible story in which God punished the people who were trying to build a tower to reach heaven (the tower of Babel) by making them unable to understand each other's languages.", in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* New 8th Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 89. Borrowed from the Bible, the term "Babel" suggests the development of a variety of languages.

¹¹ P. Casanova has written an important book on World Literature, *The World Republic of Letters*, which was published in French in 1999, and translated from French into English in 2004: "In her global literary study, Casanova defines the workings of world literature from the 1550s until today. Her two goals are, first to present a historical account of the global development of literature, and second, to describe the general laws that rule world literature. Building on Paul Valéry and Pierre Bourdieu, she speaks of the world republic of literature as an autonomous field; she also refers to Ezra Pound's ideas of literature credit (16-17) [...] world literature constitutes a battle field where writers and literature strive for recognition and gain or lose credit. Importantly, Casanova's system of world literature relies on a spatial and temporal center-versus-periphery template. Literary

and South African languages, which allows Coetzee's prose texts to reach a universal dimension, and awards him important literary honours, Coetzee demonstrates his success in having access to "the world republic of letters or literature", or to the "Greenwich Meridian of literature", to borrow Casanova's terms. As part of Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* coined in 1827, Coetzee's *Disgrace* received the Booker and the Commonwealth Prizes.

Last but not least, as a scriptural technique, Coetzee's multilingualism is also connected with another literary device called "rhetoric of simultaneity"¹², which shows once more the babelization and the universalization of novel writing in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*. Inclined to make localized colonial pain easier to understand and less complicated by explaining it in a clear and simple way, Coetzee gives official authority to his works in order to tackle difficult choices which South Africa and the whole world are faced with. In his attempt to bring his "rhetoric of simultaneity" into existence, Coetzee has decided to "write not about the "provincial" but about the "universal" that, "purged of uniqueness and alterity"¹³, can express "a spiritual and moral truth beyond politics or culturally determined structures of signification"¹⁴. From what precedes, it can be inferred that *Disgrace* and *Slow Man* are universal works which go beyond the case of South Africa¹⁵ because of the multiplicity of languages which are used as ploys to write the selected prose texts.

"wealth" depends on the national literature's age and on a literary milieu. (14-15). The literary center of Casanova's system is made up of those literary societies that are simultaneously the oldest (classic) and the most up-to-date (modern), which are measured according to her eloquently named index, the "Greenwich Meridian of Literature" (87-91). From these measurements, the center of the literature world emerges as Europe, specifically Paris and to a lesser degree, London." (Vold, pp. 36-37) Vold gives the function of World Literature: "What the notion of world literature demands of us is first and foremost to evaluate how we map and how we conceptualize literature beyond national borders.", T. Vold, 2011, *Op. Cit.*, p. 36.

¹² "Since the publication of *Dusklands* (1974), Coetzee seems to favor what we may call a rhetoric of simultaneity, one that emphasizes the importance of considering South African colonial trauma not as an isolated and autonomous event, but as one that relates to, and must therefore be juxtaposed with, similar human conditions outside South Africa.", L. Lin, "J. M. Coetzee and the Postcolonial Rhetoric of Simultaneity", in *The International Fiction Review* Volume 28, Numbers 1 and 2, 2001, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/view/7690/8747>, retrieved on 09/05/2017.

¹³ J. Gitzen, "The Voice of History in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee," in *Critique* 35.1, 1993, p. 3.

¹⁴ D. Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the *British Literary Canon*," in *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-century 'British' Literary Canon*, ed. Karen R. Lawrence, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1992, p. 226.

¹⁵ "Critics have widely read Coetzee's works in the context of South African history, the apartheid system, and its historically located sociocultural divisions [...] [D. Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993], and Susan Gallagher [...] [S. V. Z Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1991]. At the same time, his novels have been praised for their ability to overcome local issues, projecting them toward more general and universal thematics. His novels therefore have been read as representations of wider phenomena such as colonialism [...] [S. W., "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." in *Research in African Literatures* 17, 1986, pp. 370-92. [Reprinted in H. Graham, and S. Watson, eds. *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*, London, McMillan, 1996], the writing of otherness [...] [J. Dodd, "Naming and Framing: Naturalization and Colonization in J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*", in *World Literature Written in English* 27, 1987, pp: 153-61], and empire and the dynamics of imperialism [...] [M. V. Moses, "The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", in *Kenyon Review* 15, 1993, p. 115-27], the links between his novels and their most immediate cultural context are constantly examined [...] [S. Durant, "Bearing Witness to Apartheid: J. M. Coetzee's Inconsolable Works of Mourning", in *Contemporary Literature* 40, 1999, p. 43-63] [...].", Alba Amoia and Bettina L. Knapp, *Multicultural Writers Since 1945: An A – to – Z Guide*, Westport, Connecticut, 2004, p. 159.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, not only has Coetzee pluralized the languages in his novels by mixing Indo-European and South African languages like English, French, Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Croatian, Russian, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu, but also has shown that his multilingualism is a literary technique which allows him to bring about a graphical and linguistic heterogeneity, as well as a polyphonic enunciation in *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*. The generated multilingual phenotexts babelize, transnationalize and universalize *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, thereby linking Coetzee's works to World Literature. As a polyglot, Coetzee has come up with a universal scriptural approach with which he has published excellent worldwide narratives.

In a world that has become a global village, Coetzee writes novels which belong to World Literature thanks to multilingualism as a writing scheme. He has demonstrated that he cannot make his prose texts be part of "The World Republic of Letters" by resorting to English as a unique language to compose *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*. That is the reason why he has used multilingualism as a scriptural strategy. Through this original artistic device, Coetzee teaches the world of letters that "no novel is a linguistic island¹⁶", which means that the linguistic domination of a language like English should stop to the benefit of other languages which need to be promoted because they could be as powerful and important as English.

¹⁶ The expression is phrased after the quote by the great English poet J. Donne (1572-1631), who wrote that « no man is an island ». This means that in the human society man cannot live and do things alone; man needs other men with whom he can interact in their daily activities. In other words, man is sociable because he is likely to seek and enjoy companionship. But in *Youth* (2003), J. M. Coetzee takes the opposite view of J. Donne's quotation when he makes the narrator from his novel say these sentences about John Coetzee: "He is proving something: that each person is an island; that you don't need parents." , J. M. Coetzee, *op. cit.*, 2003, , p. 3.

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