J.M. Coetzee: *The Master of Petersburg.*

: *Disgrace.*

From the bombing and defoliating of *Dusklands* to the labour camps and burning settlement of *The Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Age of Iron*, history in Coetzee’s novels has been marked by violent invasions, by mutilated bodies, by civil war. Standing apart from this history, but somehow engaged, and responsible and guilty, is the figure of the writer, perhaps a colonial administrator with a taste for archeology, perhaps the employee in *Dusklands* who belongs to a think-tank fingering a photo of a sergeant from Texas raping a Vietnamese child. Such figures tell us that Coetzee was always agonized over the question of where writers stand in relationship to public atrocity, what responsibilities they bear for it, and how they might usefully respond. But the quality of a writer's political engagements, he told an interviewer, should not be measured in the simple way Gordimer suggests; a naive realism only reproduces the injustice it describes, licking wounds rather than offering a critical alternative to the mindset that produced injustice in the first place. In place of such realism, Coetzee offers a more sophisticated, ironic narrative, one capable of demythologizing history. Such narratives, he says, (1988) in “The Novel Today” are not "supplementary" (3) to history; that is, they cannot be checked against it, rather they are a rival, sometimes even an enemy discourse. An ironic narrative is not so much that it substitutes a more accurate version of history and politics for the received one as that it lays bare the unacknowledged assumptions that shape both stories.
Coetzee's impulse to assess the relationship between writers and public violence becomes even more evident in *The Master of Petersburg*, (1994) where he turns to the theme of terrorism. This time, however, the fictional figure of the writer is played not by an obscure bureaucrat or a cancer-ridden professor writing her last letters to a daughter in America, but by Fyodor Dostoevsky, author of the first and perhaps master terrorist novel. In *Demons*, Dostoevsky became the first of a distinguished line of writers, one that grew to include Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Andre Malraux and such contemporary novelists as Doris Lessing and Don DeLillo, to use the relationship between terrorists and writers or intellectuals to question the writer's responsibility for violence. The historical Dostoevsky had transformed the notorious Sergei Nechaev into the sociopath Peter Verkhovensky; Coetzee invents an encounter between a fictional Dostoevsky and Nechaev that thoroughly destabilizes the relationship between the novelist, by middle age a staunch czarist, and his subject. Although never simply doubles for each other, Dostoevsky and Nechaev, in Coetzee's version, are drawn into a dialogue that points to their disturbing similarities.

To understand how Coetzee re-imagines the relationship between a semi-fictionalized Dostoevsky and Nechaev requires us to consider their relationship in real life, and in Dostoevsky's *Demons*. Sergei Nechaev was the author of the "Catechism of the Revolutionist," a 1869 manifesto setting forth a program of systematic
terrorism. The Catechism calls for total dedication to overthrowing the existing system, to doing anything, however cruel and treacherous.

Although Nechaev and Dostoevsky never met, both spent some time in the Russian quarter of Geneva, where in September 1869 a Nechaev supporter, Nikolai Ogarev, encouraged the novelist to sit through a session of a congress sponsored by the League of Peace and Freedom. Nechaev himself was in Russia at the time, and Dostoevsky apparently missed the two most famous speakers at the Congress, Garibaldi and Bakunin; as he retailed the event to his favourite niece, the posturing revolutionaries seemed more comical than horrifying. However, later in the year, when newspapers linked the self-proclaimed terrorist with the murder of a Petersburg student, Ivan Ivanov, Nechaev came to embody for Dostoevsky everything that was most sinister in the radical politics of his day. He began a pamphlet denouncing the terrorists; as is well known, Demons represents a fusion of this pamphlet with a very different project, a novel about Stavrogin called The Great Sinner. As Dostoevsky compiled notebooks and then drafts of Demons, he consistently referred to the terrorist who finally became Peter Verkhovensky as "Nechaev." At the end of The Devils (now translated as Demons) Peter attempts to consolidate his revolutionary cell by accusing the innocent Shatov of being an informer, and cons its members into assisting him in murdering Shatov, an act that closely follows newspaper descriptions of the Ivanov murder. On the other hand, Dostoevsky freely acknowledged to friends the element of invention in his Nechaev figure. Peter Verkhovensky is the archetypal terrorist as
sociopath; every element in his portrayal, from the wolfish greed with which he attacks his beefsteak to his compulsive toady ing to Stavrogin, repels sympathy and suggests that his politics mask and personal derangement.

Where Dostoevsky had pathologized Nechaev, Coetzee restores his connections to the Russian people and suggests the social and not primarily private sources of his politics. In The Master of Petersburg, making Dostoevsky as fictional a character as Nechaev allows Coetzee to bring the argument between writer and revolutionary into his own text and address it more explicitly than he has done elsewhere. In order to do so, he pulls the biographical Dostoevsky, who in Demons so artfully conceals himself behind Anton G – v, into the centre of the stage; and if does not exactly pathologize him, he certainly explores the private and psychological sources of Dostoevsky's art and politics.

South Africa witnessed the first free elections in 1994 and the long postponed dream of “one person, one vote” came true. The world was enthralled, poised between utopian and dystopian scenarios. The spectre of civil war and inter-ethnic strife seemed to have disappeared. Yet only a year before Chris Hani, Secretary General of the South African Communist Party (SACP), had been assassinated. Only a year before, violence between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and African National Congress (ANC) supporters was responsible for deaths in KwaZulu-Natal as well as in townships around Johannesburg. Only a year before, right-wing supporters of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) attempted to halt constitutional negotiations
within the Convention for a Democratic South Africa by driving a truck into the World Trade Centre where the meetings were being held.

Despite all predictions of a bloodbath, the South African elections unfolded peacefully, and Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as President on May 10, 1994. Against this political background Coetzee’s novel, *The Master of Petersburg*, was greeted with astonishment at his turning away from South African realities at such a crucial time. Although the imperialist dynamic on the frontier in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, or the rewriting of Defoe’s island narrative in *Foe*, or the imaginary Cape landscape devastated by war in *Life & Times of Michael K* were relevant to the ‘colonialism of a special type’ unfolding in South Africa, leftist critics especially desired a more concrete engagement with the conditions of apartheid. In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee had anchored the dynamics of the novel to the township struggles of the mid- and late 1980s, only to set *The Master of Petersburg* in nineteenth-century Russia.

Although *The Master of Petersburg* seems out of its proper historical placing, it is of relevance to the literary landscape of South Africa during the early 1990s. It is not a coded representation of the main political actors, yet it is symptomatic of the transition years, for it portrays some of their most salient features, reflecting on the position of the writer vis-à-vis a restructured field of political forces. The novel presents a model of connectivity that places South African culture in a special relationship to postcolonialism and the global configuration born at the end of the Cold War.
The novel opens in October 1869 with the return of this ‘Dostoevsky’ to St Petersburg, following a self-imposed exile in Dresden. He returns travelling on a false passport, to collect the papers and belongings of his stepson Pavel, who had died under mysterious circumstances. The papers, which include a terrorist hit-list, are in the hands of the Tsarist police, with whom Dostoevsky becomes embroiled. He takes up residence in Pavel’s former lodgings, eventually commencing an affair with the landlady, whilst becoming fascinated with her adolescent daughter who had loved Pavel.

There is a wilful manipulation of the biographical data of the real Dostoevsky since he was survived by his stepson. At the heart of the novel’s narrative development is Nechaev, a real historical figure, a nihilist and revolutionary, associated with the murder of a fellow student, Ivanov, who had left Nechaev’s group and could have become an informer. The ideological confrontation in the novel between Dostoevsky and Nechaev is decisive in the presentation of the authorial voice.

The killing of Ivanov occurred in November 1869, and was the event which set the deliberation in trial for Dostoevsky’s novel *The Devils* or *The Possessed* (now also translated as *Demons*). In Coetzee’s novel, there is a character called Ivanov who is murdered in November 1869, possibly by Nechaev, and this is one of many semi-correrpondences and allusions in the novel. But, where *Foe* combined sustained references to several of Defoe’s works, *The Master of Petersburg* narrows its focus.
There are references to characters and themes in several works by Dostoevsky, but the novel becomes, in one sense, an extended treatment of the chapter “At Tikhon’s,” originally suppressed from *Demons*.

As Coetzee conceives Dostoevsky as character rather than author, object rather than subject of a discourse, he both humanizes the man and subtly defamiliarizes his world. His Dostoevsky returns to Petersburg from Dresden to investigate the suspicious circumstances under which his stepson Pavel fell to his death from a disused tower on Stolyarny Quay. The fictional Dostoevsky's grief is movingly depicted as he visits the cemetery and becomes involved with a police investigation of the death and then with Pavel's radical friends. But Coetzee also refers liberally to deflating details, true enough to the biographical facts: his Dostoevsky worries about his indigestion and his hemorrhoids quite as much as about the famous epilepsy; evinces mild anti-Semitism, needs a bath and a change of underwear, is improvident, writes begging letters to his long-suffering friend Apollon Maikov. Unlike *Foe*, Coetzee's rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Master of Petersburg* is written in late twentieth-century language that defamiliarizes Dostoevsky's world; Coetzee takes advantage, for example, of late twentieth-century freedoms to spell out details of sexual relationships. Familiar features, samovars and tenements, philosophical policemen and saintly beggars, share the pages with apparently deliberate anachronisms such as Anna Sergeyevna's tendency to sound like a
talk-show therapist: “what struck me when you told the story was how angry ... you still seemed to be.”* (27)

In Dostoevsky’s novel, the demons are consuming ideas which dictate the behaviour of the characters, driving them to desperate and wicked acts in the pursuit of freedom through revolutionary activities. Coetzee’s appropriation of the idea of being “possessed” has a secular basis, but draws on the Dostoevskyan critique of ideological conditioning. The focus for this issue is the manipulation of Coetzee’s ‘Dostoevsky’ by Nechaev when he is tricked by Nechaev into making a statement about his son’s death. This occurs at the end of the sixteenth chapter which comprises a crucial exchange between the two. Nechaev gains the upper hand, already trapping “Dostoevsky” by virtue of an uncomplicated surety he cannot match:

As if sensing his weakness, Nechaev pounces, worrying him like a dog. ‘Eighteen centuries have passed since God’s age, nearly nineteen! We are on the brink of a new age where we are free to think any thought. There is nothing we can’t think!...You must know it – it’s what Raskolnikov said in your own book before he fell ill!’

‘You are mad, you don’t know how to read,’ he mutters. But he has lost, and he knows it. He has lost because, in this debate, he does not believe himself....Everything is collapsing: logic, reason. He stares at Nechaev and sees only a crystal winking in the light of the desert, self-enclosed, impregnable. (201-2)

Raskolnikov, the murderous hero-villain of *Crime and Punishment*, is an exemplary figure of Dostoevskyan doubleness; he is self-divided, at once horrifying

and fascinating, and is clearly misread by Nechaev. Dostoevsky, however feels himself helpless to oppose this misappropriation of Raskolnikov in the name of liberating autonomy. John Bayley in his review “Doubles” interprets this passage to show that

Nechaev has got him, because whatever truth the writer utters can be twisted by the terrorists to their own purposes and the author will necessarily collude with the terrorists just by writing for them and about them. (35)

Immediately before the argument’s culmination, the two have discussed the function of words, the idea of authorship, and the construction of history. Dostoevsky argues for the responsibility borne by the author of ideas, whereas Nechaev aligns himself with a freedom in which history can be acclerated:

You keep talking about the inside’s of people’s minds. History is made in the streets. And don’t tell me I am talking thoughts right now. That is just another clever debating trick, the kind of thing they confuse students with. I’m not talking thoughts, and even if I am, it doesn’t matter. I can think one thing at one minute and another thing at another and it won’t matter a pin as long as I act. (200)

Nechaev associates words with actions and repudiates an emphasis on textuality in the construction of idea. This invokes the debate about ‘realism’, and the rivalry between the novel and history which is continually present in Coetzee. Nechaev’s irrationalism here presents the underlying illogicality of putting the novel at the service of history in a transparent portrayal of a radical agenda. Without paying attention to the construction of ideas, to textuality, the fabric of one’s project
collapses, ideas become inconsequential, even contradictory. Yet if this is a parody of
the revolutionary position, it is used to focus the responsibilities of the author, rather
than to comment on the psyche of the activist: if Dostoevsky parodies the Nechaevites
in *Demons*, Coetzee subverts that parody into a debate about writing. The political
dimension to this debate is underscored by a simultaneous evocation of censorship,
and the distortions it produces. In Chapter 16, Nechaev is condemned by a colleague
for watching over Dostoevsky as he composes his statement.

“Writers have their own rules,” says this other man:
“they can’t work with people looking over their shoulders”.
“Then they should learn new rules,” replies Nechaev:
“Privacy is a luxury we can do without. People don’t need privacy.”
(198)

The invocation of censorship implicitly identifies two poles of influence for the
writer to resist. The argument is already shifting from a radical-versus-writer
confrontation to a more complex model of the course the writer must chart in order to
negotiate the Scylla of ideological utility and the Charybdis of state control.

Maintaining an unsettled relationship between biography and fiction, history
and plot throughout *The Master of Petersburg*, Coetzee develops the relationship
between Nechaev and Dostoevsky against the backdrop of another disturbing
relationship, that between the author and the central character in *Demons*, Stavrogin.
Dostoevsky's basic strategy for linking his anti-revolutionary pamphlet with *The Great
Sinner* was to create a friendship between Stavrogin and Peter Verkhovensky, who
dreams of making this charismatic figure into a revolutionary hero. Coetzee, on the other hand, collapses Stavrogin into Dostoevsky--thus stripping the great sinner of all of his Romantic trappings, from his noble birth and his duels to his secret marriage to a holy madwoman and his Byronic appearance, so fatal to so many women. Then, through the invented medium of Pavel Isaev's suspicious death, he makes Dostoevsky himself the link to Nechaev, and thus narrows the distance between the author and the radical politics of the late sixties.

Russian censors insisted that Dostoevsky rewrite the scandalous chapter in which Stavrogin gives the monk Tikhon a written confession accusing himself of having seduced a twelve-year old girl and then failing to intervene in the suicide to which he had driven her. Although the exact nature of Stavrogin's crime is more ambiguous in the revision, it was still too shocking for the censor and remained unpublished in Dostoevsky's lifetime.

Coetzee portrays his Dostoevsky's growing obsession with his landlady's daughter, who is named Matryona after Stavrogin's victim. Seducing mother instead of child, a point that does not escape Anna's psychotherapeutic eye, Dostoevsky contents himself with occasionally patting the child while she sits on his bed. Where the only context for Stavrogin's crime is Dostoevsky's putative desire for Matryona, the great sinner surely seems inseparable from his creator. But the nature of this inseparability, the degree of the writer's guilt, is Coetzee's more interesting subject.
Slipping across the border with a passport bearing the name "Isaev," Coetzee's Dostoevsky almost immediately begins to absorb some of Pavel's identity; "at moments ... he cannot distinguish Pavel from himself" (21). He visits the cemetery, lies down on Pavel's grave, returns with its mud in his hair; he moves into Pavel's room, dresses in Pavel's suit, reads Pavel's stories, sleeps with Pavel's landlady, meets Pavel's friend Nechaev, visits the scene of his death. Re-living Pavel's fall from the tower, he imagines that time must have seemed to stop, just as it does in the auras preceding his own seizures: "We live most intensely when we are falling, a truth that wrings the heart!" (121) the drive to understand Pavel, to get to the bottom of the facts surrounding his death, becomes obsessive; an appropriation of Pavel's lost life marked by strong evidence of rivalry.

Pavel's youth and Matryona's obvious affection for him feed the rivalry, but more crucially the judicial counsellor in charge of investigating Pavel's death, Maximov, gives Dostoevsky a manuscript found among Pavel's belongings. Learning that Pavel had ambitions to write touches his stepfather, who immediately starts to appropriate his story, mentally editing out the cliches in a naive but powerful account of the murder of a lecherous old landowner, Karamzin, by an escaped political prisoner. Maximov reads the story as a confession of Pavel's revolutionary sympathies. Dostoevsky protests that a "fantasy, written in the privacy of his room" (42) should never be taken as evidence against its writer, but nonetheless sets out on a
painful exploration of Petersburg's underground and the criminal connections between
writers and terrorists.

When a Finnish woman named Katri appears on his doorsteps, ostensibly looking for those incriminating documents that have already fallen into police hands, Dostoevsky allows himself to be drawn in by her assertion that Pavel was murdered by the police. The next day she takes him to meet a tall woman who turns out to be Nechaev in disguise. Coetzee’s Nechaev like Dostoevsky’s Peter Verkhovensky in the *Demons* reflects the desperate politics and leaves the reminder of the unpleasant habit of the nineteenth-century pathological homosexuality suggested in Peter’s obsession with Stavrogin into Nechaev’s almost frivolous pleasure in cross-dressing.

Nechaev is a spokesman for Russian revolution, offering a credible alternative to Dostoevsky, whose novels, he claims, reproduce the suffering of the people but do nothing to end it. You, he says to Dostoevsky, lead a "bourgeois" life; you're "appalled" by hunger, but you don't understand it, or any of the other brutal impersonal forces that determine the course of history. (177) In their wretched rooms Nechaev and his group "share" the life of the poor (186); they know that "history is made in the streets" and not in books (200). Yet there's a contradiction in this simple contrast between the activist and the writer; Nechaev claims to have been inspired by Raskolnikov (177), for one thing, and believes that writer can serve the cause. If only, he urges Dostoevsky, “you will give us a statement blaming the police for Pavel's
death, the People's Vengeance will publish and distribute it, and the students of Petersburg will rise up against their oppressors.”

Coetzee allows Nechaev a degree of idealism and permits him to make serious proposals which do not mean that his portrait of the terrorist is finally sympathetic. Dostoevsky comes to believe that Nechaev's group, and not the police, had killed the son in order to lure his famous father to Petersburg. Further, when he tries to outwit Nechaev by making him promise to print a statement acknowledging responsibility for murdering Pavel, Dostoevsky is horrified to discover that his words mean nothing to the terrorist, who is only interested in using his name. With his single-minded devotion to the cause, Nechaev never hesitates over methods, using little Matryona as a courier, supplying her with poison to pass on to Katri after her arrest.

Coetzee's Dostoevsky cannot judge Nechaev dispassionately. Confronting Nechaev's guilt, he has to confront his stepson's association with the People's Vengeance, the association of Nechaev, and the possibility that he bears some responsibility for it. And in the process, he has to confront the striking resemblances between himself and Nechaev, and perhaps between all writers and terrorists. From the beginning of the novel, Dostoevsky recognizes the violence of his dreams and desires, fears writing because what comes out of his pen may be "vileness, obscenity, page after page of it, untamable" (18). Counsellor Maximov notes that Dostoevsky unconsciously uses the same metaphor for literary activity that he had used for revolution: "You speak of reading as though it were demon-possession" (47).
Dostoevsky himself makes the link between his "vocation" and his childhood habit of spying on visitors; he knows that writers use everyone as material, a "perversion" and "betrayal of love" (235); [I] sold Pavel alive and will now sell the Pavel inside me, if I can find a way. Hope to find a way of selling Sergei Nechaev too" (222). It is more than his youthful involvement with the Petrashevsky Circle that leads Dostoevsky to admit that Nechaev "is like me, I was like him ... only I did not have the courage" (193).

Raskolnikov inspires Nechaev. Nechaev tricks Dostoevsky into signing his name on a document published by revolutionaries who a few days later have succeeded in setting part of the city on fire. Writers themselves can use their words as weapons. Dostoevsky doesn't just soil Matryona with his thoughts or use her as material, at the end of the novel, when he departs for Dresden he leaves behind two preliminary sketches for *Demons*. One is a story about a man who makes love to his mistress knowing that they are being watched, through a crack in the door, by a child whom he wishes to corrupt.

‘Do that again,’ the girl will whisper
‘Do what?’
‘That!’ she whispers, flushed with desire.
‘First say the words,’ he says, and makes her say them. ‘Louder,’ he says. Saying the words excites the girl unbearably.
He remembers Svidrigailov:”Women like to be humiliated.’
He thinks of all of this as *creating a taste* in the child, as one creates a taste for unnatural foods, oysters or sweetbreads.
He asks himself why he does it. The answer he gives himself is: History is coming to an end; the old account-books will soon be thrown into the fire; in this dead time between old and new, all things are permitted. He does not believe his answer particularly, does not disbelieve it. It serves. (244)

In this fictional projection by his father, Pavel is associated with the dubious ‘freedoms’ of Svidrigailov who has a taste for young girls and is also made to articulate a perception of history which conforms with the views of Nechaev. Nachaev had used the attitude of Raskolnikov, in *Crime and Punishment*, to validate a revolutionary acceleration of history unhampered by ethical restraints on thoughts.

The story ends with the man ruffling the child's hair as Dostoevsky had ruffled Matryona's. The other revises a story he had told Matryona earlier about a madwoman named Maria Lebyatkin and Pavel, who, on hearing that she imagined him her suitor, put on his white suit and went calling on her. One story is intended to undermine Matryona's faith in her dead hero and the other to create a sense of sexual shame; leaving them where she will, almost surely read them, is "an assault upon the innocence of a child" (249). As the novel ends, Dostoevsky goes off into the night, reflecting darkly that he may be paid well for his books, but the price of writing them is to "give up his soul" (250).

One Leftist objection to *Demons* is that Dostoevsky privatizes public history, locating the sources of revolutionary violence in pathologies like Peter's rather than in Russian social conditions. Coetzee's Nechaev, a much less fully realized character
than Peter, gives a voice to the revolutionary movement to which his Dostoevsky
attends, though finally without assent.

Much later, remembering meeting Pavel in Semipalatinsk when the boy was
seven, he imagines him accompanied by a troll with Nechaev's features "haunting the
beginnings of his son!" (143). Dostoevsky has to ask himself whether his life seems
empty because it had been grounded in "the contest with his son," and wonders
whether that eternal struggle, in which sons scheme to steal their fathers' money and
fathers "envy their sons their women" is what "underlies revolution," so that the
"People's Vengeance" might more accurately be named "the Vengeance of the Sons"
(108). Recalling a fellow prisoner in Siberia who had raped and then murdered his
daughter, Dostoevsky has a vision of "fathers devouring their children" in comparison
with which Nechaev's complaint about the "greed" of fathers (158) seems quite mild.
Dostoevsky's anxieties about son comes to the surface when he remarks twice that
parents can seem like copies of which their children are the originals (13, 67).
Separated from a wife only a few months younger than his stepson, Dostoevsky
analyzes his affair with a woman of his own age in generational terms, as an alliance
of "those who are not children" against those who are (63). Nechaev represents "what
we do not even dare to imagine about our sons," (112) a perspective from which
Nechaev's remark to Dostoevsky that the two of them look like a "father and son out
for a walk" seems less than reassuring. Renouncing his "faith in Pavel's innocence,"
Dostoevsky finally acknowledges that his son had freely followed Nechaev, not only
in the "adventures of conspiracy" but in the "ecstasies of death dealing," his "implacable war" on the fathers (239, 240). To allow Pavel this fury is to feel his own, and to understand "fathers and sons" as "foes to the death" (239).

Pavel mediates between Dostoevsky and Nechaev, the writer and the terrorist, as an unpublished writer of fiction intended to support the revolution. Within the world Coetzee creates, this mediation is a failure; Pavel dies young while Dostoevsky and Nechaev seem to grow stronger at his expense. At the end of the novel, the process by which Dostoevsky will ransack Nechaev and Pavel, as well as himself, to produce Stavrogin, a character who is identical to neither but bodies forth everything his creator envies and fears in the new generation, to which "everything is permitted" (200).

The relationship of terrorist to writer, of violent public history to fiction, emerges in the novel with all the unresolved complexity of an urgent contemporary dilemma. Coetzee's Dostoevsky considers the old arguments for the writer's superiority to time, listens as Anna tells him in the familiar romantic and Christian vocabulary that he is "an artist, a master" who can bring Pavel "back to life" in his work.

‘You are an artist, a master,’ she says. ‘It is for you, not for me, to bring him back to life.’

Master. It is a word he associates with metal – with the tempering of swords, the casting of bells. A master blacksmith, a foundry-master. Master of life: strange term. But he is prepared to reflect on it. He will
give a home to nay word, no matter how strange, no matter how stray, if there is a chance it is an anagram for Pavel.

‘I am far from being a master,’ he says. ‘There is a crack running through me. What can one do with a cracked bell? A cracked bell cannot be mended.’

What he says is true. Yet at the same time he recalls that one of the bells of the Cathedral of the Trinity in Sergiyev is cracked, and has been from before Catherine’s time. (140 – 141)

Re-imagining Dostoevsky, Coetzee reconstructs the origins of *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov* in the swamp of its author's least noble impulses and under the pressures of history. This history is understood, not as some grand force but in terms of daily encounters with a repressive bureaucracy and a hectoring radical youth, both of which can be lethal but are ordinarily experienced as tedious barriers to getting on with one's life. Coetzee's Dostoevsky recognizes that he is "required to live a Russian life" (221) but does not imagine himself either able to resurrect his son or save Russia from the coming apocalypse, to which his work may even contribute.

Dostoevsky slinks off in the night, meditating on the silence of God, which persists in spite of the betrayals by which he had tried to end it. He remains a guilt-ridden genius who can finally neither transcend history nor shape it to his liking.

In the final chapter a complex manoeuvre is preformed. The fictional Dostoevsky projects onto an imagined ‘future’ Pavel the demonic doubleness that will inform *Demons*, and in which the author figure is already implicated. Beyond this – the Other that is Pavel/Stavrogin becomes emblematic of the kind of postcolonial
representation that is Coetzee’s hallmark. The phantasm which haunts the end of The Master of Petersburg conjoins the problems of representing identity in this branch of postcolonial literature, where the European literary canon remains a decisive presence.

Derek Attridge in “Oppressive Silence,” an essay on *Foe* and the politics of canonization demonstrates how Coetzee’s allusiveness produces a coherent politics of textuality. This is achieved through the claim to an ambivalent relationship with, rather than a direct challenge to the canon. This ambivalence in the novels helps us to conceive of

...a mode of fiction which expose[s] the ideological basis of canonization, which draw[s] attention to its own relation to the existing canon, which thematize[s] the role of race, class and gender in the processes of cultural acceptance and exclusion, and which, while speaking from a marginal location, addresses the question of marginality” (Sue Critial 171)

This formulation links the various questions of literary and theoretical self-consciousness raised by Coetzee’s novels, and suggests an ethical grounding in such a fictional process which would have to be seen as engaged in an attempt to break the silence in which so many are caught, even if it did so by literary means that have traditionally been celebrated as characterising canonic art. If this is the process Attridge offers a speculative ending to his essay, concerning the point of arrival:

If I may end with a Utopian thought....it would be that the canonization – however partial and uneven – of Coetzee’s novels, along with other texts...that question the very processes of canonicity itself, will slowly transform the ideology and the institutions form which the canon derives its power, so that new and presently unimaginable ways of
finding a voice, and new ways of hearing such voices, come into being. (Sue Critial 186)

This explains the ethical grounding of Coetzee’s work, where the stress on textuality also concerns the identities of both self and Other, and the need to renegotiate these identities. This aspect of literature of the postcolonizer explains how the projection of abnegation can be seen as a responsible confrontation with the present moment.

(ii)

J.M. Coetzee’s Booker Prize-winning novel *Disgrace* (1999) draws an anxious picture of post-apartheid South Africa. Written after the 1994 elections in South Africa, J.M. Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* offers a dark depiction of South Africa’s transitional tremors since the dark days of the apartheid do not dissipate overnight. Many black South Africans still live in impoverished conditions with a high unemployment rate and crime rampant. The novel portrays the politically precarious situation of the whites in the new South Africa besides the contemplation of the meaning of whiteness in the new South Africa that seeks to leave behind the racist and imperialist discourse that previously defined whiteness as a social identity. *The Age of Iron* (1990), the novel that appeared before *Disgrace* engages history by alluding to the political circumstances and depicts a society at war. In *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren writing to her daughter about South Africa of mid 1980s views the grim panorama of devastated communities, callous authorities, and armed children, through the lens of
classical myth of the Hesiod’s account of the successive ages of men. She involves the reversal of ages by placing the Bronze Age after the Age of Iron in which she lives. The time of *The Age of Iron* is set in the years of emergency laws and the perilous warfare of township which on recall seem that the days are numbered for the apartheid regime but which during those days of chaos appeared like an unending saga of peril. *Age of Iron* vividly portrays the violence in townships and the systematic viciousness of the police. There can also be no shred of doubt about Coetzee’s strong opposition to the policies and practices of the Nationalist Government in power between 1948 and 1994 and the older colonial traditions on which they were built, even though his fiction did not take the form of straightforward “resistance writing.”

Coetzee’s unpresumptuous intellect has once again taken the darker aftermath of the 1994 democratic election, as he retreated to an unexpected destination of Russia to rewrite Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg*. Inventing a new mode of narration, Coetzee in *The Master of Petersburg*, peers into the abyss of revolution. When Coetzee rewrites Defoe or Dostoevsky, he exerts power over their texts. The authors figure in the titles of the texts, (*Foe*, after Daniel Defoe, *The Master of Petersburg*, after Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Disgrace* keeps the tenor intact of its previous novel, *The Master of Petersburg* that was written by Coetzee in 1994. The Russian connection of *The Master of Petersburg* centering Dostoevsky finds him discovering love by humbling himself, filling his emotional encounters with violence and death. In *Disgrace* the theme continues, as the protagonist falls as a victim to schematic
violence and undergoes emotional turbulence and dwindles into being a mere dog-keeper from being an academician. The novel deftly plays the alarming revelations of Truth Reconciliation Commission (TRC) foregrounding shame, pain, confession and forgiveness, pointing at ethical devaluation and reconciling the immediate social fabric with Dostoevskyan skepticism about “bad faith” and “double thought.” The interesting connection between Dostoevsky and Disgrace is subtly analyzed in Coetzee’s essay of non-fiction “Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky,” published in 1985, and republished in Atwell’s edition of Coetzee’s Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews (1992). In this essay Coetzee muses on the notions of “grace,” “confession,” and “absolution.”

South Africa going to second democratic elections saw two path breaking works exploring disgraceful crimes and emotional commotions. J.M.Coetzee’s Disgrace (1999) and Andre Brink’s The Rights of Desire (2000). In both the novels the middle-aged or older male protagonist is involved in a relationship with a much younger woman and faces life-changing decisions about work, life and ethics. Disgrace is a complex exploration of collision between private and public worlds; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation.

Disgrace was written after 1995, when the new constitution for South Africa was passed. This constitution gave men and women equal rights. The constitution also gave equal rights, regardless of gender orientation (a fact very relevant to Lucy in the
book). The African National Congress (ANC), the then ruling party, was one of the most prominent anti-apartheid movements led by Nelson Mandela. In 1994, Mandela won by a landslide victory to become the first President of South Africa. Post-apartheid South Africa was by no means idyllic, however. Violence increased significantly in the country. Incidents of car-jacking escalated, and many commercial farmers either emigrated or gave up farming because of violence committed against them. From 1989 to 1994 the murder rate doubled, and a young South African woman could be expected to be raped twice in her lifetime, on an average. The changing landscape encouraged many of the wealthier South Africans, particularly in Johannesburg, to move into gated communities.

David Lurie, a fifty two year old divorcee, was once a Professor of Modern Languages at Cape Town University but with the change of the times and administration, he is now Adjunct Professor of Communication. Other than the mandatory Communication, he is allowed to offer only one elective or special-field course and so he offers a course on Romantic poets. Lurie is apathetic toward the material he teaches and rarely engages his students. He no longer teaches out of passion or conviction but only to make a living. Over the past twenty-five years the professor had published three scholarly books on opera, the erotic nature of Richard of St. Victor's revelations, and Wordsworth's influence on history. Yet, his true desire is to write a chamber opera about love entitled *Byron in Italy*. 
Every Thursday Lurie travels to a prominent gated community, enters a well-furnished apartment, and sleeps with Soraya, a prostitute that he chose from a catalogue at Discrete Escorts, the hotel, placed under the “exotic” category. Lurie's relationship with Soraya is founded on money. *Disgrace* opens,

> For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well. (1)*

After Lurie unexpectedly sees Soraya in public with her children, Lurie becomes distracted during their love-making. Perhaps because she senses the awkwardness, Soraya announces that her mother is ill and so she can no longer see him. Lurie tries another prostitute also named "Soraya" but she is young and inexperienced. Having grown bored, he sleeps with a married secretary, Dawn; her enthusiasm in bed repels him and he makes sure to avoid her at work. Frustrated and even briefly but not seriously considering castration, Lurie calls Soraya at her home. She is horrified and demands that he never call her at her house. His response to her reaction is a cool observation,

> What should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs? (10)

Without his Thursdays with Soraya, Lurie is terribly bored until he spots a young student in his Romantics course. Melanie Isaacs is thin with dark eyes and hair and broad cheekbones. He first sees her by the college gardens and invites her to his

---

*J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1999. All the subsequent references to the text are to this edition.
house for a drink. Melanie is not an exceptional student and does not share his passion for Wordsworth or literature; she is a theatre major and hopes to have a career in stagecraft and design. After dinner and a movie, Melanie inquires whether or not he is married. He replies he has been married twice and then proceeds to invite her to sleep with him. When she asks why, Lurie responds,

Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it. (16)

Melanie seems to be momentarily intrigued until he quotes Shakespeare.

From fairest creatures we desire increase [....] that thereby beauty’s rose might never die.” (16)

Instead of withdrawing his advances, Lurie pursues her more intensely and invites her to lunch. Taken aback, she agrees but is clearly uncomfortable throughout the lunch date, not eating or talking much. They return to his house and have sex. Coetzee suggests that his pursuit of Melanie is predatory in nature. He first sees Melanie in the University gardens, a metaphorically rich location connoting love, desire, and fertility. The garden also resonates with the Bible as the place where Eve was seduced by the serpent. At every turn, Lurie has reason to believe that his advances are inappropriate. He and Melanie don't even share interests. As they watch the Norman McLaren movie, Lurie wants Melanie to be "captivated," yet Melanie watches passively. She is passive, too, during sex. Lurie ignores every indication that Melanie is repulsed by him, instead choosing to interpret her behaviour through his
own desires. For instance, when Lurie forces himself on her at her cousin's house, Lurie notices,

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes...Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. (25)

Lurie thus equivocally justifies his action with slippery language. When Melanie comes to the class the next day Wednesday, Lurie lectures on Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Melanie looks up from her book for the first time just as he is re-envisioning their sexual encounter; she at once understands and looks down. Lurie continues his predatory behaviour. He secretly watches her at a play rehearsal where Melanie is playing a hairdresser. She misses her mid-term and Lurie falsifies her record, giving her a C until she retakes the test. Melanie arrives at his door tired and disturbed, wanting a place to stay. He prepares his daughter's old room for her. A young man - Melanie's boyfriend - visits Lurie unexpectedly in his office that afternoon. He threatens Lurie with disclosure of the relationship. That night Lurie's car is vandalized and Melanie does not come to his house.

The Student Affairs office contacts Lurie informing him that a sexual harassment complaint has been filed against him and includes a copy of the corresponding section of the Code of Conduct he has been accused of violating, Article 3.1: the victimization or harassment of students by teachers. Lurie is shocked by the notification and refuses to believe that Melanie filed the complaint out of her
own will. He imagines a scene in which Pauline forces Melanie to file the complaint. Lurie, after going to the office and signing the complaint, notes,

The deed is done. Two names on the page, his and hers, side by side. Two in a bed, lovers no longer but foes. (40)

When Lurie arrives for his appointment at Aram Hakim's office (the Vice-Rector), his department chair, Elaine Winter, and the university chair, Farodia Rassool, are present. They inform Lurie of the harassment charge and further accuse him of falsifying Melanie's attendance records. Hakim, who unlike Elaine is somewhat sympathetic, advises Lurie to seek legal counsel. Lurie rejects counseling, refusing to exhibit shame for his desires. During a dinner with his ex-wife of eight years, Rosalind, Lurie reveals that he plans to visit his daughter, Lucy, on the Eastern Cape, once the term is over. The date of the hearing arrives. Melanie, who has submitted her statement to the committee the day before, is not present. Manas Mathabane, Professor of Religious Studies, chairs the hearing. Hakim is the secretary. The remainder of the committee is composed of Farodia Rassool, Desmond Swarts (Dean of Engineering), and a Professor from the Business School whom Lurie does not know. Lurie is defiant throughout. When informed of the charges, Lurie says:

I am sure the members of this committee have better things to do with their time than rehash a story over which there will be no dispute. I plead guilty to both charges. Pass sentence, and let us get on with our lives. (48)
The committee insists upon a confession of wrongdoing, but the closest Lurie allows himself to come is when he says,

I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorce at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros. (52)

This half-hearted confession does not appease the committee. Lurie's trial alludes allegorically to events in South African history. In 1995, A Truth and Reconciliation Committee was formed by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. During the hearings, thousands of witnesses came forth and gave their testimonies. The accused were given amnesty as long as they told the entire truth. Similarly, the trial of David Lurie takes on a greater cultural significance. The manner in which he haughtily uses his status and gender to get Melanie is analogous to white South Africans' attitude during apartheid. Lurie, like an embodiment of the white supremacist element in South Africa, refuses to apologize for his abuse of power. This does not stop him, just as it did not stop the Truth and Reconciliation Committee from rooting out vestiges of apartheid, from being removed from power.

Lurie goes to Lucy's farm in Salem, a town on the Eastern Cape and stays in Lucy's girlfriend Helen's room. Helen had recently moved back to Johannesburg. Lucy surprisingly passes very little judgment on him. She says to her father about the affair,

Well you have paid your price. Perhaps looking back she won't think too harshly of you. Women can be surprisingly forgiving. (69)
Lucy's role is altogether nurturing. Lurie and Lucy are different in many ways, though.

He says,

Curious that he and her mother, city folk, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share. (61)

From Lurie's perspective, his daughter is somewhat of an anachronism. Yet despite their differences, they live together quite harmoniously for the time being. Petrus is a man around forty or forty-five who assists Lucy helping with the garden and the dogs. He identifies himself not by his tribe or family name but rather by his occupation. In the course of their interaction, Lurie does not inquire any further into Petrus' personal life. Thus from the beginning, there is a distance between them. Just as in his relationship with Soraya, Lurie is markedly uncurious about this very different person. He unquestioningly accepts Petrus' servile status.

Lucy introduces Lurie to life on the farm; he helps to sell her produce and to run her animal refuge. At the refuge he meets Bev Shaw, a robust woman. Bev initially repulses Lurie because she makes little effort to be attractive and her house smells of cat urine. Lurie also meets her husband, Bill Shaw. Lurie later remarks to Lucy,

It's admirable, what you do, what [Bev] does, but to me animal-welfare people are a bit like Christians of a certain kind. Everyone is so cheerful and well-intentioned that after a while you itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging. Or to kick a cat. (73)
When Lucy encourages Lurie to volunteer at the animal shelter with Bev, Lurie objects jokingly, saying,

I'm dubious, Lucy. It sounds suspiciously like community service. It sounds like someone trying to make reparations for past misdeeds. (77)

Lucy replies that the dogs don’t care about his motives. Lurie agrees but only on the condition that he does not become a better person. Lurie's first job as an animal volunteer is to help restrain a dog as Bev lances an impacted tooth. Next, a goat needs to be put down after being attacked. Lurie begins to understand Bev Shaw's purpose, thinking to himself,

This bleak building is a place not of healing-her doctoring is too amateurish for that-but of last resort... Bev Shaw is not a veterinarian but a priestess, full of New Age mumbo jumbo, trying, absurdly, to lighten the load of Africa's suffering beasts. (84)

As Lurie interacts more with Bev, he comes to understand the special role that she plays, overcoming his superficial repulsion. He sees her, indeed, as a powerful force in the community – an almost magical bringer of hope and death. From his first day, Lurie grows attached to an abandoned bulldog named Katy. The dog is depressed and unresponsive to Lurie. Yet despite this, he feels enough of a connection with the dog to fall asleep in her cage. Lurie immediately becomes somewhat sympathetic in terms of his relationship to animals. He loves Katy and feels disgust toward humans who would abandon such a creature.
Lurie and his daughter wake up early on Wednesday morning and walk with the dogs together. As they walk together, they encounter three men whom they’ve never seen before. When they return from their walk with the dogs, the men are waiting for them at the house with a request to use the phone. Lucy lets a young boy in to use the phone, but the other two men push past. Lurie, seeing the attack, calls out to his daughter but there is silence. He sets one dog on the attackers before being knocked unconscious in the kitchen. The men shoot the dogs with Lucy's rifle and light Lurie on fire. Lurie tries to comfort his daughter but she wriggles away and locks herself in the bathroom. She finally comes out and agrees to seek help from a neighbour. She tells Lurie that she has been raped. Lurie has his heroic moment when he kicks in the kitchen door in order to save his daughter, but his heroism is ridiculously short-lived as he is knocked down. He is powerless to help himself or his daughter.

Lucy returns with her neighbour, Ettinger, who drives Lurie to the hospital to take care of his burns. The incident affects Lucy and Lurie's relationship as well as their bodies. The nature of the respective crimes they have suffered separates them. Lucy instructs her father, “You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me (99),” thus suggesting that they are not alone in their misfortune. Their crimes are separate and deeply personal. Each must deal with the aftermath individually. Two police officers arrive to file an official report. Lucy emerges from her room haggard and Bev drives them back to the farm. Petrus is nowhere to be found. The only
survivor is the abandoned bulldog, Katy. Lucy reports the robbery and her father's assault but leaves out her rape, even when the police notice that the bed has been stripped bare. Lurie cannot get his daughter to tell him why she refuses to report the rape. He buries the dead dogs and offers to let Lucy sleep in his room, as she no longer feels comfortable in hers, Lucy finally explains why she doesn't report the rape, saying,

The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. (112)

Having returned to the farm, Lurie quickly gets to the business of protection. Lucy's neighbor, Ettinger, offers to loan them a gun. Lurie is not able to pin down Petrus' involvement in the incident. Lurie's search for the truth can be described as both anthropological research and an inquisition. He rejects the simple prospect that Petrus set up the crime as payback for his servile treatment, instead deciding that the truth is more complicated. Lurie realizes that the crime is connected to culture – that it is silly to judge such a historically complex situation on the basis of simple guilt and innocence. When he envisions the process of seeking the truth, he sees himself as an anthropologist with clear objectives and methodology, conducting a well-planned survey.

When Lurie actually does speak to Petrus about the event, however, he loses his scientific objectivity. His questions become more like a lawyer's than an anthropologist's. He says,
I find it hard to believe the reason [the robbers] picked on us was simply that we were the first white folk they met that day. What do you think? Am I wrong? (119)

Lurie begins the conversation confrontationally; yet, Petrus remains calm and collected, smoking his pipe. Though Lurie realizes, in theory, that he ought to maintain a cool distance in order to understand the forces behind the crime, he is unable to do so in practice. More and more, a rift opens up between Lurie's idea of himself as an academic and as a person. This also occurs during Petrus' party, which Lurie dreads because of his personal distaste for the sacrifice of the lamb. Lurie feels sympathy for the sheep, saying,

I'm not sure I like the way he does things - bringing the slaughter-beasts home to acquaint them with the people who are going to eat them. (124)

After the party has been going on for a while, one of the three robbers arrives. Lucy wishes to leave immediately. However, Lurie confronts him and asks Lucy to confirm his identity but Lucy will not do so in front of so many people. They leave the party. Lurie intends to call the police but Lucy will not let him. When Lurie confronts his daughter about why she refuses to confront the boy or charge him, she insists again upon her privacy.

Since the robbery, Lurie has been unable to get his daughter to talk to him about the rape. He has tried, for the first time in his otherwise selfish existence, to reach out, to help, but these attempts have been met coldly. Lucy feels that Lurie will not understand her experience of the rape because he is a man. Lucy finally does speak
about the rape to her father, the historical import of the act comes clearly to the surface. She says:

It was so personal. It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was...expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them. (124)

Lurie replies:

It was history speaking through them...A history of wrong. Think of it that way if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors. (124)

 Though Lurie is able to contextualize the act in terms of the historical mistreatment of black South Africans, his daughter continues to exhibit distance toward him. The fact that he is a man stands between them; she realizes, knowing his history with Soraya and Melanie, that Lurie too is a predatory sexual creature, a rapist. Her experience has completely eradicated any sympathy she once felt for Lurie's exile. He is part of another great socio-historical injustice: not apartheid, but misogyny. Lurie responds to the overwhelming pressure of these complex questions by developing sympathy for animals. It is almost as though he displaces the grief and shame he won't allow himself to express about the rapes of Melanie and his daughter onto a simple affection for the dogs he must kill and bury.

Lurie's transformation into a carer of animals touches the roots of his identity. The first time Lurie meets Petrus, Petrus introduces himself as the "dog-man." Lurie now reflects, "A dog-man, Petrus once called himself. Well, now he has become a
dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a harijan (146)." Coetzee uses this shared description to illustrate how Petrus and Lurie have exchanged their roles. At the beginning, Petrus served Lucy. Although a grown man with two families, Petrus lived in a stable on Lucy's property. He did the hard labour looking after the dogs, tending to the garden. Petrus no longer submits. He says at his party, "No more dogs. I am not any more the dog-man (129)." Lurie, instead, is the dog-man.

The exchange is captured also in Petrus and Lurie's co-operation in laying the pipes. Petrus treats Lurie like a child who simply hands the tools to the knowledgeable tool-user. Indeed, Lurie has handed Petrus his "tools" in more ways than one. The tools that Lurie once used to manipulate society – his erudition, his gender, his status – have become worthless and debased. Petrus' tools, on the other hand - his skillful labour, his status as a black African – have grown useful. They help him to establish his own land. Lurie has no place of his own. Whereas Petrus gains a home, Lurie finds his ransacked and robbed. Needless to say, this exchange of power corresponds to the historical exchange of power from white to black South Africans. In the end, Lurie accepts the job that Petrus is now too good for, that of honourably disposing of dogs' bodies. His other tools are no good. As he says:

There are other people to do these things-the animal welfare thing, the social rehabilitation thing, even the Byron thing. He saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it. (146)

Lurie meets his ex-wife, Rosalind, for coffee, during which they first discuss Lucy's safety on the farm. When Rosalind calls Lurie to have dinner, he says,
His best memories of her are still of their first months together: steamy summer nights in Durban, sheets damp with perspiration, Rosalind's long, pale body thrashing this way and that in the throes of a pleasure that was hard to tell from pain. (187)

Rosalind expresses her anger that Lurie has thrown his career away for an affair. Meanwhile she mentions that Melanie Isaacs is in a play at Dock Theatre. Lurie decides to attend her performance of Sunset at Globe Salon; however, Melanie's boyfriend, Ryan, spots him there and throws spitballs at him.

Lurie keeps up with Lucy over the phone. He feels that she is withholding something from him so he calls Bev Shaw. After an ambiguous response, he visits Lucy in Salem. She is pregnant, having never taken emergency contraception after the rape. Lurie must take a walk in order to not explode in front of Lucy. Over dinner, Lucy informs Lurie that the young rapist has returned. His name is Pollux, and he is Petrus' brother-in-law. Lurie confronts Petrus, who says that he would suggest that Pollux marry Lucy if he weren't so young. As a compromise, Petrus agrees to marry Lucy. The absurdity of the offer enrages Lurie. When he tells Lucy about it, however, she has already been considering the proposal. Because she is a woman alone, she needs protection. Realistically, she has no father or brothers who can protect her. She tells Lurie to propose to Petrus that he provide her with protection in exchange for her land, adding that he can publicly call her his third wife. The next morning Lurie takes a walk with Katy. They catch Pollux spying on Lucy as she takes a shower. Lurie has the dog attack Pollux and then kicks him on the ground. Lucy comes out and stops the
attack. Both Lucy and Lurie admit that the boy is mentally disturbed, but for some reason Lucy protects him.

Lurie returns to the shelter to help Bev. With her help he finds a room in Grahamstown. He buys a truck to transport the dogs' bodies to the incinerator. In his spare time, he plays his banjo amongst the dogs trying to compose the music to his opera. Lurie has a dream about Teresa Guiccoli in his sleep. She is a ghost pleading for Byron to come with her. On Saturdays, Lurie helps Lucy at the market. Soon, they are on visiting terms once again. The novel ends on a Sunday when Lurie is putting dogs to sleep at the shelter. He kills a dog that he has grown fond of without resistance.

Flowing from Lurie's delusions are concerns about his progeny. Until this point, grandchildren have not been a concern expressed by Lurie. In fact, despite all the discussion of sex, fertility does not enter the picture until this final section of the book. Lurie summarizes the purpose of the University's investigation as follows:

That was what the trial was set up to punish, once all the fine words were stripped away. On trial for his way of life. For unnatural acts: for broadcasting old seed, tired seed, seed that does not quicken, contra naturem. If the old men hog the young women, what will be the future of the species? (190).

Lurie brings a fatalistic tone to the future of his family. Following his daughter's pregnancy, his line will be carried on through hatred, violence and accident. He says,
A father without the sense to have a son: is this how it is all going to end, is this how his line is going to run out, like water dribbling into the earth? (199)

Neither Lurie's nor Lucy's hope for the future is positive. Lucy says to her father,

[I]t is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps this what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. [Lurie replies] Like a dog. [And Lucy responds] Yes, like a dog (205).

Lurie's negative outlook for the future does not speak well of his outlook on South Africa—a South Africa where the crimes of history haunt the present. A nation conceived in hatred gives rise to more hatred. It's violence—under which white farmers suffer post-apartheid conditions and as a natural result of prior unjust policies toward blacks. Rape begets rape. Hate begets hate.

In the midst of this desolate, perpetual tragedy, Lurie and Lucy–two South African whites who couldn't be more different–can find meaning only in disgrace. Lucy accepts a humiliating position as Petrus' third wife or concubine in exchange for protection, for the privilege of living out her years on the land she loves. Lurie, incapable of redeeming himself for crimes that seem to follow from his very being, resigns himself to bringing dignity to dead dogs. Each shoulders his or her disgrace, resigned to live for small private satisfactions in a wounded nation.

The novel is presented through the consciousness of the fifty two-year-old University Professor David Lurie who loses the precarious balance he has maintained under the new regime, as a Professor in the Communications Department of a large
Disgracing himself through an affair with a female student, Melanie Issacs, Lurie loses his job and finds himself adrift in a society which is variously hostile, inscrutable and unpredictable. Lurie is broadly representative of an older social order, the officially defunct South Africa of Afrikaner dominance, and statutory racial oppression and the uneasy pleasure of white privilege. *Disgrace* demonstrates Lurie’s confrontation with change, his effort at first to avoid it and then to amend not only his life but his temperament, that seems really hard for him. The confrontation with change is precipitated early through the text’s striking of a note of complacent equipoise, followed by loss and a contrasting note of desperation.

Lurie at the beginning of the novel is seen speculating on the life lived by “Soraya,” the prostitute with whom he has a weekly arrangement. She may, he realizes, work for the escort agency only once or twice a week and otherwise have a respectable suburban existence. “That would be unusual for a Muslim, but all things are possible these days.” (3) Lurie is articulating what sounds like a common experience of old certainties gone, and a rapidly altering landscape. It is hardly an expression of regret at religious breakdown. In fact, Lurie is perfectly happy to profit from such a breakdown, if this is indeed what makes it possible for a Muslim woman to work as a part-time prostitute. But it does suggest at the very opening of the novel that it will be concerned with “these days” in South Africa, with changed surroundings, a new mentality and different ways of doing things.
Once a Professor of Modern Languages, he has been an adjunct Professor of Communications, since Classics and Modern Languages were closed down as part of the great rationalization. The arrangement with Soraya breaks down because Lurie can’t sustain his attempt perfectly in keeping with the times through a rational solution to what the novel’s first sentence calls “the problem of sex.” (1) Her disappearance also helps to precipitate the event that sets in motion the unfolding of the central plot: Lurie’s seduction of Melanie Issacs, a twenty year old student in one of his classes. A different vision of “the times” is presented by the play in which Melanie is acting, which Lurie surreptitiously watches in rehearsal. Sunset at the Globe Salon is the name of the play they are rehearsing, a comedy of the new South Africa set in a hairdressing salon in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. On stage a hairdresser, flamboyantly gay, attends to two clients, one black, one white.

….catharsis seems to be the presiding principle all the coarse old prejudices brought into the light of day and washed away in gales of laughter. (23)

Even before the official dismantling of apartheid, Hillbrow had become known as a suburb of Johannesburg in which middle/class racial mixing occurred freely. After the brief liaison with Melanie Issacs has come to a nasty end, Lurie, now the subject of an official sexual harassment enquiry, dines with his ex-wife. She curtly tells David,

“Don’t expect sympathy from me, David,” she warns him, “and don’t expect sympathy from anyone else either. No sympathy, no mercy, not in his day and days.” (44)
Forced to resign from the university, Lurie seeks refuge with his daughter Lucy on a small holding in the Eastern Province, where she grows flowers and vegetables for the market in nearby Grahamstown and runs dog kennels. He meets Petrus, the African who assists Lucy and has recently become her co-proprietor, and expresses his concern about her isolation; “Yes,” replies Petrus, “It is dangerous….Everything is dangerous today” (64). Locked into Lurie’s view of things, the new South Africa to those who are poor or black or both at this moment seem a telling exception as it introduces a new layer to the accumulating meanings of “the times”. To black as well as white, there are new fears about personal safety. In Coetzee’s fiction, the racially or socially privileged characters have virtually no understanding of the inner world of the “other” who has been excluded from such privilege.

A little later, Lurie and his daughter Lucie discuss his disgraceful act and his refusal to gain a reprieve by complying with the committee’s demands that he make an acceptable public confession and undergo counseling. What has precipitated Lurie’s public shaming is not his submission to the desire to involve in a sexual affair with Melanie Issacs but Lurie’s refusal to submit to the demands of his submission to the newly-asserted institutional rights and newly emergent collective mores that he finds deeply repugnant. “These are puritanical times,” he says, “Private life is public business” (66).

Lurie explains to Lucy that he can’t mount a public defense of his actions: “The case you want me to make is a case that no longer be made, basta. Not in our
day” (89). In this new age, hitherto private details of sexual intimacy have become matter for daily public discourse, but rather than heralding a greater acceptance of sexual diversity and sexual needs, this shift marks an increase in puritanical surveillance and moralistic denunciation. In a recent essay “Critic and Citizen: A Response” on the intellectual in South Africa, Coetzee writes of

….a process of intellectual colonization going on today that… originates in the culture factories of the United States, and can be detected in the most intimate corners of our lives, or if not in our own then in our students’ lives” (111)

Much of the early section of the novel reads as satire not difficult to connect with its author’s situation at a time when he was Professor of Literature in the University of Cape Town. The mood begins to shift and deepen when Lurie reaches the Eastern Cape as he begins to understand the scale of his gesture of opposition and it gets transformed when one day the small holding is attacked by two men and a boy wrecking havoc in the farm house. The dogs in the kennels are shot, Lurie is burned and his car stolen and Lucy is gang-raped.

After this event, the novel’s representation of “the times” becomes much darker. Lurie formulates his sense of a changed moral and social landscape with characteristic angry sarcasm, which can neither be attributed to the author, nor to Lurie.

A risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day….That is how one
must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. Cars, shoes; women too. There must be some niche in the system for women and what happens to them. (98)

To a greater degree, it is the attack by the three intruders – combined with the generally negative light in which black characters are presented – that has angered readers concerned with the image of post-apartheid South Africa. For Lurie, it is entirely representative of what has happened in past ten years: the coming of majority rule has also meant rising expectations which can’t be met, a reduction in the efficiency of the forces that previously kept criminals as well as political opponents in check, and a new sense that whites, once all-powerful, are now exposed and vulnerable. If “realism” is used in some measure to judge the novel, there is nothing implausible about the scene of rural crime that Coetzee introduces. More important is the question of its place in the novel and the responses to it that seem to be endorsed.

Lurie is in many ways a typical white South African of the generation that grew up with apartheid of the white population. In the attack he can see only a crime that deserves punishment, oblivious of any parallel with its own recent sexual behavior. Lucy, to his astonishment, has a different attitude and a different sense of the new South Africa. She refuses to lay a rape charge against the men, explaining

…what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone,” [when Lurie asks]

“This place being what?”

[She answers] “This place being South Africa” (112)
Lucy is like Petrus, a figure of the other for Lurie, though she is a daughter to whom he has in the past been a loving and attentive father. Where he clings to the values and habits of a lifetime, regretting their erosion or rapture, she seeks a new accommodation, even to the extent of a willingness to become Petrus’s third “wife,” fully conscious of the enormous price she is paying. David Lurie’s experience of changed times grows stronger as Petrus comes to play a larger and larger role in their life and in Lucy’s future. It comes to seem likely that his absence during the attack was no coincidence and that his long term plan is to reduce Lucy to a condition of dependency, a by-owner on his expanding farm. Lurie finds to his exasperation that in the new South Africa he has no way of dealing with this challenge.

In the old days one could have had it out with Petrus. In the old days, one could have had it out to the extent of losing one’s temper and sending him packing and hiring someone in his place….It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it. (116-117)

This is the closest expression of discontent of Lurie with the passing of apartheid and its benefits to the likes of him. The distribution of power is no longer underwritten by racial difference, and the result is a new fluidity in human relations, a sense that the governing terms and conditions can, and must, be rewritten from scratch.

Although much of the discomfort Lurie experiences on the smallholding arises from traditional African farming practices that have been unaffected by the political
transformation, Petrus does not represent the old ways of doing things. The story of post-apartheid South Africa in picture is emphatically not that of a technologically advanced state but that of an oppressive state sliding into backwardness under majority rule. Petrus borrows a tractor and makes short work of the ploughing, and Lurie reflects,

All very swift and businesslike; all very unlike Africa. In olden time, that is to say ten years ago, it would have taken him days with a handplough and oxen. (151)

Although this example is a benign one, there is a hint once more of the startling pace of global change in which even rural South Africa is now participating.

One last reference to the times occurs in the final pages of the novel, when Lurie, having been for a while back in his house in Cape Town ransacked during his absence, returns to Lucy’s smallholding, then takes lodgings in Grahamstown. Lucy is pregnant from the rape and has refused an abortion, and Lurie feels more cut off from her than ever:

“I am determined to be a good mother, David,” she tells him,

“A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too. (216)

Whatever be the ironies playing through this last sentence, there is clearly some seriousness beneath the irony in Lurie’s answering thought: “A good person. Not a bad resolution to make, in dark times” (216)
The romantic elements point to deeper implications in the text. The location of these passages refer to Lurie’s academic interests characteristic of his undeniable white colonialist perspective and also Coetzee’s literary project of juxtaposing two famous yet explicitly antagonistic Romantic poets. Romanticism contested the much prompted atomistic tendencies augmented by industrial revolution with its coincidental destruction of the planet, the revival of humaneness is once again given a fresh lease by Coetzee, an evidence of his empathy and sensitivity to the needs of both humans and animals.

The Romantic musings and the role played by animals are the two strands that do not entail reflection on “the times.” The events and preoccupations that constitute these strands do not soften the work’s emphatic nature or provide a way out for any of its characters, but it does lead the ethical and political issues raised by the chamber opera which Lurie is contemplating at the beginning of the book and on which he is working in earnest when it ends. Lurie studies Western Romanticism on which he has written three books: one on the “Genesis of Mephistopheles” (via Boito’s Faust), one on “Vision as Eros,” the third on “Wordsworth and the Burden of the Past” (4). Having published three books of criticism, Lurie is seized with the idea of writing a musical work based on the life of a poet with whom he identifies: “Byron in Italy: a meditation on love between the sexes in the form of a chamber opera.” He explains to Lucy that he will borrow most of the music, though for a long time he has been hearing in his mind snatches of the sung lines. The opera deals with Byron during his
final years, when he was living in Ravenna with his young mistress Teresa Guiccioli and her husband. It is only after the assault on the smallholding that Lurie starts the work, and once he does so, the opera refuses to remain in the form in which he had imagined it, as if in his new state the idea of the “Byronic has lost some of its savour. Back in Cape Town, in his wrecked house, he starts yet again – this time pitching the work long after Byron’s death, when Teresa is a dumpy little widow installed in the Villa Gamba with her aged father” (181) calling sadly to her one-time lover, whose faint replies can just be heard. Instead of the borrowed music he had planned, the two characters, one alive, one dead, “demand a music of their own,” (183) and the music slowly and fitfully comes to him. Finding the piano producing too rich a sound, he drags from the attic a township banjo, bought as a child’s present, and creates for Teresa a music based on the contrast between a yearning song and the instrument’s “silly plink-plonk” (184). When he returns to the Eastern Province, he continues to compose with the aid of the banjo: the opera consumes him night and day but shows no sign of developing beyond this

...long, halting cantilena hurled by Teresa into the empty air, punctuated now and then with groans and sighs from Byron offstage. (214)

The last time the opera figures in the narrative is when Lurie wonders if he could add another lamenting voice to the duet: that of a dog (215). This thought provides a transition to the apparent sadness of castrated animals. Lurie on reaching the rural retreat has a changed perception about animals. Lurie
meets the dogs being kept for their owners in Lucy’s kennels. They are all watch-dogs not a new phenomenon in South Africa but one which testifies to the general state of anxiety about crime. At first they appear to Lurie as nuisance that keeps him awake at night. His affection is gained by one of the dogs in the kennels: Katy, an abandoned bulldog with whom he feels an obscure empathy and relates it to the widowed and loverless Teresa Guiccioli. In a moment that combines absurdity and pathos, Lurie falls asleep in Katy’s cage, stretched out on the concrete beside the dog. The ironic parallel with all the women he had slept with needs no underlining. The change of attitude crystallized in this event becomes more marked when Lurie meets an acquaintance of Lucy’s, Bev Shaw, who runs an animal clinic. But before long Lurie helps Bev Shaw regularly, he looks down upon the job: “offering himself for whatever jobs call for no skill: feeding, cleaning, mopping up” (142). His altered relation to animals is further evidenced by his response to the two sheep Petrus brings back for a party to celebrate the transfer of some of Lucy’s land: He can’t stand seeing them tethered at a barren patch, and moves them to where there is grass.

Animals and art provide the substance of Lurie’s new existence. After his return from Cape Town and until the novel ends, he spends most of his days at the animal clinic, waiting out the time of Lucy’s pregnancy among the dog-pens, carrying out chores or plucking Teresa’s childish banjo. By any standards of rational thinking, he has learned nothing and is contributing nothing. There is no chamber-opera to surprise the world, and his work with animals has no value whatsoever when
measured against the human needs in the country. Lucy comments, "On the list of the nation's priorities, animals come nowhere" [73]. Thus, having identified these two motifs there is a temptation to argue that Coetzee is offering two related "solutions" to the multiple problems of the age his novel delineates: the production of art and the affirmation of animal lives.

The words Grace and Disgrace buried in the novel's title have specific references to the experiences of David Lurie and his daughter, and its vaguer reference to the prevailing conditions in which they occur. Lurie's exwife misremembers Lucy's lover's name as "Grace" (187), and a particular dog at the clinic is said to have a "period of grace" during which it may be adopted. There are many verbal doublets in the novel - (compliant/pliant [51, moderate/moderated [61], purgation/purge [91], but one never finds disgrace/grace in the text. Yet it seems that the term is present in a ghostly way through much of the text. Disgrace can only be cancelled by honour and public shame can be struck down by public esteem. Lurie spurns the opportunity to escape disgrace by means of public confession, and he makes little attempt to regain a position of public honour after his shame. His visit to the Isaacs family is his most significant effort in this direction, but his appeal for forgiveness is constantly undercut by the uncontrollable reassertion of desire-he even imagines Melanie and her schoolgirl sister together in bed with him, terming it "an experience fit for a king!" (164). Yet his behaviour after the committee finding against him is by no means an endeavour to shrug off what has happened, to rebuild his life on a conventional basis.
He sees no point in attempting to wash away the public disgrace, to regain honour in the eyes of the community: that would involve capitulation to the very standards he has now rejected. He declares to Isaacs:

I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not a punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day, trying to accept disgrace as my state of being. (172)

Although there is an element of self-dramatization here, Lurie's acceptance of his condition is not belied by his acts. With Bev Shaw he is more straightforward, if less acquiescent, telling her that he is “[feeling] what I suppose one would call disgrace” (85). And he wants to learn from his invented Teresa how to manage, as she does, in a condition "past honour" (209). The disgrace into which Lurie feels himself to be sunk cannot be equated with the public disgrace his actions and words have produced: he never wholeheartedly regrets his seduction of Melanie, the memory of whom continues to stir flickers of desire, and he has no regrets at all about his behaviour before the committee. What he experiences is a deeper sense of being unfit for the times in which he lives. Sexual relations become an end in itself for him and the inconsequential sex with Bev Shaw seems to mark the exhaustion of this aspect of Lurie's life.

Lurie spends the rest of his life in a stumbling but tenacious endeavour to be a good father to Lucy, and although his protection of her is without value and his advice to her is ignored, although he understands very little of her feelings and motives, his fidelity and persistence are not to be dismissed. On their last meeting she invites him
for tea as if he were a visitor, and he thinks, falling back on one of his verbal doublets, "Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start" (218). One would not call this intimation of a new relationship the achievement of grace.

Lurie in the novel neither finds grace nor is he found by it. In his reaching for a register that escapes the terminology of the administered society, Coetzee has often turned to religious language, and there is a continuity among three of his characters who find that, although they apparently have no orthodox religious beliefs, they cannot talk about the lives they lead without such language: Mrs. Curren in Age of Iron, who asks, "How shall I be saved? By doing what I do not want to do.... I must love, first of all, the unlovable" (136); Elizabeth Costello in The Lives of Animals, who says of her vegetarianism that it does not come out of moral conviction but "out of a desire to save my soul" (43); and David Lurie, who does not use the terms grace and salvation but often talks of souls, as he makes clear to Mr. Isaacs “does not believe in God.” (172) Although Lurie's motives for doing what he does seem as obscure to him as they are to us, something leads him in his "state of disgrace" to undertake a life of toil in the service of others. The "others" in question, moreover, are not other people; they are, on the one hand, the partly historical, partly imagined characters in an artistic work, the animals. It is as if the conventional moral injunctions about the human community are themselves too compromised, too caught up in the age's demands, because of his newly stark vision of what is truly important. This vision is very different from either Bev Shaw's whole-hearted commitment to the cause of animal
welfare or Lucy's survival strategy of pragmatic accommodation whatever be the cost. It goes with a certain openness to experience, an openness which is not simply a matter of expectation, nor even of expecting the unexpected. We are reminded of the tortured self-communings of Coetzee's Dostoevsky of *The Master of Petersburg*:

> As long as he expects what he does not expect, what he does not expect will not come. (80)

The arrival of the unexpected in Lurie’s life takes the form of three men who one day force their way into his house, set him on fire, and rape his daughter. As he is locked in the toilet by the attackers, Lurie thinks, “So it has come, the day of testing” (94).

Lurie's phrase "state of disgrace" (172) clearly evokes the theological notion of a "state of grace," the name for a condition of constant receptiveness to the divine. To claim that by the close of the novel Lurie achieves something approaching a state of grace is to claim that his daily behaviour testifies to some value beyond or before the systems – moral, religious, emotional, political – of reward and punishment, of blueprint and assessment, of approbation and disapprobation that have brought about his disgrace, that he is true to an excess, an overflow, an alterity that no calculation can contain, no rule account for. One symptom of his state is that, in spite of the trials he faces, he does not fall into despair-in its theological sense a loss of faith in the capacity of God's grace to exceed human deserving but evinces an obscure tenacity, not even strong or clear enough to be called faith or optimism.
Coetzee testifies to the role of something like grace in the act or event of aesthetic creation, though it is usually given different names, such as "inspiration." Though David Lurie expends great effort on his musical composition, it seems to emerge, when it does so in a form which he feels is worth preserving, without his willing it and, astonishingly, in dribs and drabs, the music comes. Sometimes the contour of a phrase occurs to him before he has a hint of what the words themselves will be; sometimes the words call forth the cadence; sometimes the shade of a melody, having hovered for days on the edge of hearing, unfolds and blessedly reveals itself. As the action begins to unwind, furthermore, it calls up on its own accord modulations and transitions that he feels in his blood even when he has not the musical resources to realize them. So this is art, he thinks, and “this is how it does its work! How strange! How fascinating” (183-184).

Coetzee makes Byron in Italy, as it comes into being, anything but a masterpiece, and Lurie has no illusions about his odd, monotonous, often ludicrous work.

It would have been nice to be returned triumphant to society as the author of an eccentric little chamber opera. But that will not be. (214)

Nor is it even a matter of the artist's personal satisfaction that something genuinely new or beautiful has been created. The most he hopes for is that "somewhere from amidst the welter of sound there will dart up, like a bird, a single authentic note of immortal longing." However, he is aware that if it should, he would not recognize it.
"He knows too much about art and the ways of art to expect that" (214). Art, the novel implies, may provide all sorts of pleasures and remedies and enhancements for its society, it may bring all sorts of satisfactions and insights to its creator.

If Lucy and Petrus are for David Lurie “others” whom he struggles to know, if Melanie is an other whom he wrongs by not attempting to know, animals are “others” whom he cannot begin to know. There are many interrelations between the attention given to animals in Disgrace and Coetzee's roughly contemporaneous Tanner Lectures, The Lives of Animals. Although Lurie's growing attachment to animals, his increasing awareness of their own singular existence, can be traced in a number of narrative developments – the two Persian sheep, the abandoned bulldog, the many animals he helps Bev Shaw to treat at the clinic - the most telling and fully realized exemplification of this new attitude is his handling of the dogs that have to be killed. As with his treatment of artistic creation, Coetzee strips away all the conventional justifications for kindness to animals implying not that these are empty justifications, but that they are part of the rational, humanist culture that doesn't get to the heart of the matter.

After the attack, Lurie helps Bev Shaw at the animal clinic as often as he can, but it is Sunday afternoons that are the most intense, for it is then that she administers lethal injections to the large numbers of dogs who can't be cared for. Lurie is as mystified by his emotional involvement in this procedure as he is in the emergence of Teresa's yearning music or the sudden coursing of sexual desire at a memory of
Melanie Isaacs's young body. He had thought he would get used to it. But that is not what happens. The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets. One Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's kombi, he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake.

Lurie's total absorption in the animals' dying is vividly described, but it is his care of the corpses that marks the extreme limit of this theme in the novel. If a dog is an absolute “other”, what is a dead dog, and what response does it demand? It would be easy to dump the carcasses in their black bags at the incinerator on the same day, but he feels he can't simply discard them with all the other garbage: "He is not prepared to inflict such dishonour upon them" (144). Here the contrast is drawn with the casual slaughter of the dogs in the kennels by the intruders [95]. This degree of attention to the corpses is excessive by any rational accounting, but Coetzee's description of what had happened when the crew did the furnace feeding gives a shudder of understanding.

The dead legs caught in the bars of the trolley, and when the trolley came back from its trip to the furnace, the dog would as often as not come riding back too, blackened and grinning, smelling of singed fur, its plastic covering burnt away. After a while the workmen began to beat the bags with the backs of their shovels before loading them, to break the rigid limbs. It was then that he intervened and took over the job himself. (144-45)

The compulsion to intervene that Lurie experiences is all the more powerfully conveyed in Coetzee's unemotional and precisely descriptive prose. As in Lurie's reaction to the tethered sheep, this can't be termed an ethical response, nor is it really
an affective reaction; it's an impulse more obscure if no less commanding than these. Yet in this absurd misapplication of the terms of human culture to dead animals there is an obstinate assertion of values more fundamental, if more enigmatic, than those embodied in the discourses of reason, politics, emotion, ethics, or religion-those discourses that govern the new South Africa.

*****