South Africa with its various physical territorial units has been shaped by the ideology of imperialism. What Henri Lefebvre terms as the ‘built environment’ is, in South Africa, constituted of the abrasive politics of colonisation. This ‘built environment,’ with its social, political, historical and ideological components as part of the spatial structure of a nation is an important idea presented in this thesis. The built environment provide the writer a canvas to trace the patterns of territorialisation of land, address the projections and significance of possessing differently coloured bodies and the shades of resistance that the hegemonic forces bring into being. Coetzee’s texts expose the politics and ideology that dominate the country of his birth. As the cultural, political and ideological spaces of colonialism and racism get dissected, the reader is made aware of the tentacles that encircle and influence the identity formation of a nation. Coetzee, it can be observed, conceives space as multi-dimensional and examines it at the level of the physical, the psychosocial, the political and the ideological-intellectual.

The history of colonialism is necessarily spatial because it has to do with territorial expansion, with the occupation, division and control of
territory. In *The Condition of Post Modernity*, David Harvey notes that “the world’s spaces were deterritorialized, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialized according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration” (264). The history of South Africa is essentially the history of the struggle for the land and its resources. Imperialism and apartheid as socio-spatial practices have had a significant bearing on the land and human body in South Africa. Dominance, subordination and power equations are related issues that emerge in this context. Coetzee, as an Afrikaner, was familiar with the features of colonial history: its origins in an age of European expansion, its forms of economic exploitation and political subjugation, the social history of communities in transition, modes of cultural imperialism and cultural resistance. Living in contemporary times, the writer was aware of the contentious issue of property ownership in South Africa. Land ownership, despite the African National Congress coming to power, was still largely in the hands of the minority white population, just as the privilege provided by the separatist system has left the economic power largely within the white population. Post apartheid South Africa, as Coetzee experienced it, was a violent country in a state of flux — a virtual melting-pot of diverse cultures struggling to come to terms with each other; a cauldron of conflicting forces and tensions bubbling to the surface as the balance of power shifts from one social system to another. The dismantling of the apartheid system had created a fundamental transformation in the political superstructure of society. The challenge that Coetzee takes up in his works has to do with confronting the historical reality of the nation, of the injustices of the past and the
question of repression and dispossession that constituted the experience of the predominantly black population for the past several centuries.

Although he once wondered in an interview “whether it isn’t simply the vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing and criticism that is forcing on me the fate of being a ‘South African novelist’ (“Two Interviews”: 460), there can be no question about the ceaseless, intense engagement with the country and, more specifically, with its political and social history that has marked Coetzee’s writings. Even though his fiction has not taken the form of straightforward ‘resistance’ writing, Coetzee leaves no one in doubt as to his opposition to the policies and practices of the nationalist apartheid government and the older colonial traditions on which it is built. Through ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ with its descriptions of colonial brutality, the imagined state of civil war in Life and Times, and the terrible violence in Disgrace, Coetzee has registered for the readers the brutality, the anger and the sufferings of the people in the colonial and apartheid era.

As is evident, ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ raises some serious questions about the ways in which the creation of colonial space affected life and nature in the colonized territories. The creation and control of colonial space was accompanied by subjection of the indigenous people to the discourse of barbarity and threat, which Gayatri Spivak terms as ‘othering.’ Jacobus Coetzee, contributes to othering through representational practices that identify the natives of South Africa as wild people or savages. Jacobus’s narrative is very explicit in its imaginative rendering of how Christianity ensures that the settlers
are superior to the indigenous inhabitants like Bushmen or Hottentots, who are viewed as nothing but ‘wild animal(s) with an animal’s soul’ (58). Such a mode of narration reveals how the racial discourse was created at the time of occupation of the colonies and how the idea of white supremacy was introduced through the representation of the natives of the land as an uncivilized and primitive ‘other.’ Jacobus’s reflections on the Hottentots and Bushmen originate, not from a philosophy of knowledge but from a theory of absolute domination. Coetzee also clearly etches how the self of Jacobus Coetzee is defined in terms of the otherness of the natives. In Jacobus, there is a Hegelian desire to extract recognition from the Other by means of ideological rhetoric. The rhetoric of a superior culture provides Jacobus with the necessary weapon to ratify his expansionist ambitions. The black Other is viewed as nothing but a speck to be removed from the colonial space which can thus be turned into civilized landscape. The racial and ideological boundaries that are set between Jacobus and the indigenous inhabitants thus serve to create and establish colonial space.

The racial and ideological distinction that is painstakingly underlined through the discourse of the Other is not the only means that served to create colonial space; demarcation of geographical boundaries, incarceration and torture were programmes implemented under the cover of the discourse of the other to justify and prolong territorial expansion. Otherness is eliminated by violence. Dominance, whether played out by men versus animals or man against man, is pressed forward through slaughter, weaponry, religion, and at times, just as an excuse for adventure. Genocide and rape are justified as Jacobus justifies himself in
the name of being just “a tool in the hands of history” (106), the history being none other than the expansionist ambition of the control of colonial space. Defining "true savagery" as "a way of life based on disdain for the value of human life and sensual delight in the pain of others" (104), Jacobus exemplifies precisely these attributes himself as events of the narrative reveal.

‘The Narrative’ with its explosive aggressivity specifically registered in the incidents of the torture and rape of the natives, is a measure of the social and moral framework exhibited by Afrikaners in South Africa during the colonial period. Coetzee hints at the nature of savagery perpetrated by the white settlers and raises the question of who the real savage is through his merciless depiction of the colonial adventure of Jacobus Coetzee. The Africa that Coetzee draws in the narrative provides sufficient evidence to the imperialist designs executed by early explorers during the eighteenth century. Space in this novella turns out to be both physical and cultural as the natives witness their racial uniqueness being upset and overwritten by ideological rhetoric.

*Life and Times of Michael K* presents the disastrous consequences of the unequal spatial policy of apartheid in South Africa. In this work, Coetzee attempts to engage with the historical challenge of the dispossessed and the marginalized over land and domicile in the process of colonisation. The South Africa envisioned in this novel demonstrates the deep insight Coetzee had of the political and social structure of that country. Coetzee presents the nation as a virtual heterotopia as the minority white government grapples with rising insurgency. According to Edward Soja, a heterotopia is “capable of juxtaposing in a single real
place several spaces and several sites” (1989: 17). In other words, it is a single physical space that holds different, fragmented meanings that reflect the constantly shifting ebb and flow of society, including class structure, political struggles, racial tensions, and culture. Life and Times draws attention to the heterotopic nature of South Africa during the period of rigid apartheid control in the early 1980s. Coetzee depicts a destroyed and over-crowded Cape Town, with highways full of displaced people, and images of veld camps with the “air thick with derision” (77). The city symbolizes chaos in a world breathing the final gasp of a corrupt regime.

The civil protest and unrest of the nineteen eighties in South Africa, the consequence of a monolithic oppressive apartheid social structure, is presented through the life of Michael K. The passivity and silence inscribed into the character of K is a reminder of the intrusion of racist history into the life of individuals. Michael K in Coetzee’s text, is entrenched in the ongoing process of history, the experience of which he seeks constantly to translate, revise and update in his daily life. The suppression of the black majority and their substandard living conditions provided the framework for the theme as well as the background of this novel. K’s journey to the countryside accompanying his mother brings out all the restrictive and prohibitionary laws the black majority face at the hands of an apartheid state. K turns away from this regimented, panoptic environment to chart his version of liberty and freedom. In the process, he creates his own social and political space.

The possibility of another way of living in relationship to history, of inventing an identity and a political consciousness that is free from the
racist programmes of the ruling minority can be seen in the way K flourishes in the lonely expanse of the veldt. The political consciousness made manifest through passive resistance and rejection of all that hints of racist hegemony, is a spatial one. The sense of political consciousness impels in K a desire to escape from the camps and the regimented institutions that had dictated his life and living conditions. It leads him to revolt by retreating into silence and construct for himself a space that is partly mental, partly social. This inner space that he creates for himself gives him the freedom to express his unique indigenous identity. This concrete psychological space that the feeling of possessing an identity confers him leads him to a desire to bond with the land through gardening.

Michael K shows how one can establish a relationship with the land outside the restrictions of ownership. He establishes a metaphorical umbilical cord between himself and the South African land through gardening. By assigning to K the role of a gardener and cultivator of earth, Coetzee presents gardening as a mode of active resistance against the draconian Land laws that favoured the white minority.

*Life and Times of Michael K* is Coetzee’s attempt to show how boundaries in South Africa could be defined. The novel can be read as an attempt to invite the marginalised to inhabit the space of power and not to succumb to forces that tend to incarcerate, displace and control space. In apartheid South Africa, the political situation is such that land does not offer any sense of security to either the whites or the majority blacks. The employers of K’s mother, for instance are shown as having to leave their residence in the face of racial riots breaking out, just as the Visagies had
to desert their farm, may be for similar reasons in the rural countryside of Karoo. K’s era is one where the notion of security and the stability of home, ownership and belonging are shown as fragile. Coetzee through his depiction of Michael K’s world has given a realistic picture of the Africa of the eighties.

Coetzee makes a distinction between how the indigene and the settler form their associations with the land. The approach of Michael K and Petrus vary greatly from the attitude that Lucy and Jacobus entertain. The indigene, despite his reduced and dispossessed status, is seen to nurture a pure unsullied attachment to land, a quality that seems to elude the occupiers. The settler is seen to view land in terms of proprietorial possession, a direct anti-thesis to the passionate sense of natural belongingness to land the native exhibits. K’s relation to land is one of pure love for the earth. Once he isolates himself from apartheid civil society and its oppressive spaces, K is seen to flourish along with his garden. Pumpkins may be the only produce that nature has to offer, but it is enough for the marginalized and displaced people like K, since they can virtually thrive in the liberating and free atmosphere of freedom that the ‘idea of gardening’ entails. K declares his belongingness to the South African land through gardening, emphasizing the idea that it is labour rather than tropes of ownership that entitles one to the land.

In assigning to K the role of a gardener and cultivator of earth, Coetzee seems to promote the idea that the marginalized South Africans can resist oppression and displacement and declare their entitlement to the South African land through active interaction with the land. The idea of gardening gives Michael K precisely the freedom that Coetzee says
South Africans lack. Through gardening Michael K provides his own food that will give him independence and freedom from patronization of the state or white people in general. Having seen displacement of black people, Michael K realizes that he can resist displacement only if he lives independent and free from either boundaries of ownership or the mercy of the state in the confines of resettlement camps. Gardening is to be recognized as Michael K’s trajectory to preserve his roots and remember his belonging in the land while he challenges forces that tend to control his living spaces and displace him. Thus, K decides that for survival and claiming his belonging in the land, he needs to establish a new way to connect to the land which is not provisional but lasting.

The symbolic significance of the act of gardening can be linked to the complex political situation engendered by apartheid in South Africa. Through Michael K, Coetzee seeks to demystify the imperially constructed discourses about colonised lands and their inhabitants. Africa is not the land of ‘silent, empty spaces,’ it is not a land that are peopled by indolent tribes, and it is not barren in any sense. Place from this viewpoint is a practice of negotiating and replacing and pushing against the boundaries of all forms of containment.

Though in *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee attempts to show gardening as a way of reclaiming the indigene’s right of entitlement to the South African landscape, there is no clear suggestion of how South African nationhood may be achieved. What can be positively stated is that the novel encourages black resistance in its attempt at dismantling white hegemonic activity. It is after the official demise of apartheid in South Africa, and precisely in *Disgrace* that Coetzee addressed the
urgency of reconciliation and co-habitation of the white and black South African population. In *White Writing*, Coetzee had argued that time will prove to the English-speaking whites that political and cultural attachments to England would fade out and ‘the ultimate fate of white was going to depend a great deal more urgently on an accommodation with black South Africans than on an accommodation with the South African landscape’ (8). Indeed, Coetzee views reconciliation with the black population as the only way out of the political and social impasse the whites find themselves in. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee directly engages with the necessity for reconciliation and co-habitation on equal terms between the various races.

Coetzee, in his Jerusalem Prize address of 1987, recounts how the gap between the whites and non-whites is widened by dispossession and oppression, a division that relates South Africa to many other occupied territories in other parts of the world. In the address, he refers to South Africa of the time, saying, “for centuries South Africa was the society of masters and serfs, now, it is a land where the serfs are in open rebellion and the masters are in disarray.” Set against the historical and political context of post apartheid South Africa, *Disgrace* reflects this sentiment. At a fundamental level, the novel examines the relations between racially defined groups in the new post apartheid Africa. There are repeated references about the new mentality of the changed times and the impact it makes on the way lives are now being lived. In the new post apartheid phase in South African history, land and body become pawns in the political game for control of power. Africa which has been forcibly taken away by the Europeans is presented in *Disgrace* as being reclaimed
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by the original natives employing methods used by the colonizer. New spaces are forcibly carved out in terms of interpersonal relationships, spaces that constantly reminds one of the terrible divide that still exists in the psyche of the racially splintered community. The changes in the lives of Lucy and her father Lurie reflect the altered political and social atmosphere, after the abolition of the laws of apartheid. Coetzee stresses in this work that apartheid is an unjust manner of social structuring and his white protagonists, Lurie and Lucy have to pay for it, as they discover their status in society reduced to that of a ‘dog.’

Lucy and Lurie as minority whites, are forced to reconsider their equations with the black community. It leads them to accommodate the demand of the blacks for reclaiming lands which originally belonged to the latter. It compels Lucy to give in to the demands of Petrus and exist on the holding as a mere tenant. It also forces her to acknowledge African cultural traditions as she agrees to a polygamous marriage and bear a racially mixed child. Lucy learns to think about Africa as a space over which she has no inherent claims of ownership. On this land she has as much rights as an illegal immigrant can entertain. Coetzee through Lucy and her father David Lurie presents the reality of the new democratic South Africa, a reality that sees a revision of spatial equations in terms of both physical and human geography. It also highlights the still ruptured racial relations, a factor that has contributed to the escalation of violence in South African society. Disgrace is thus deeply embedded in the racial politics of South Africa. The question no longer is about who ultimately survives, the black South Africans or the white. Rather, it has more to do with how South Africans of different racial and ethnic origins
might recover from violence and historical divisions. South Africa may have graduated from a racist to a democratic political system, but as Coetzee seems to imply, human relations will have to be rewritten from the scratch, governed by new terms and conditions. The political challenge, Coetzee seems to argue, is to build a new just state, built on the foundations of truth, justice and love.

There is a sense of continuity between *Life and Times* and *Disgrace* in terms of their approach to the land. The relationship between Lucy Lurie and her black neighbour Petrus in *Disgrace* parallels the white landowner heir, Visagies, and Michael K. In *Life and Times of Michael K*, ownership and private property at the time of war is shown to be provisional. The white South Africans are shown as leaving their farms and houses for the fear of violence. In *Disgrace* the drama of violence and racial tensions seems to continue despite the settlement between the two parties in the post-apartheid era. To survive in this changed scenario turns out to be costly for the white South Africans.

In all the three texts, the reader finds Coetzee scrutinizing the political and social reality of the land of his birth. An allegation leveled against Coetzee was that he did not take a clear political posture in his creative writings, for instance, in the mode adopted by contemporary fellow South African writers like Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, or Athol Fugard. Robert Post sums up the most commonly articulated reservations, “Coetzee’s narratives are inclined to be less straight forward, more ambiguous and at least on the surface not to be about the South Africa of today” (Penner, 1989: 89). Contrary to the general opinion, there is clear evidence that in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus
Coetzee,’ Life and Times of Michael K and Disgrace, Coetzee has truthfully and imaginatively portrayed conditions that existed in South Africa in the colonial past, the apartheid times and in the post apartheid present.

In the presentation of the body in Coetzee, the anatomical materiality of the body is overshadowed by the psychological, political, and cultural inscriptions that are superimposed on it. Through the body, the complexity of hegemonic power in its various manifestations is exposed in Coetzee’s works. The body in Coetzee is understood as an environment for the play of these forces. During the colonial regimes the body has acquired a distinctly new connotation, being routinely subdued and silenced by the colonizer. The human body in Coetzee can be seen as a map of social meanings, a terrain upon which battles of interpretation are waged or within which contradictions are mediated; it is a physical fact but also the site for the playing out of complex social and racial ambiguities, a place where social and ideological contradictions are mediated religiously. On the body can also be seen in operation the mechanical construction of history. In Coetzee, the body becomes a site from which to re-imagine South Africa’s interrelated histories of political, racial and sexual violence. The soma becomes the raw material on which power works and a site for resistance to the particular forms power takes. In Michael K, the body is successfully transformed into a powerful tool of self-defense, rebellion, and self-empowerment. Michael K’s deformed harelip is a symbolic indicator of how the marginalized is forced to remain mute and silent in repressive regimes. K however, wields the body as a tool for challenging the process of oppressive
apartheid forces. Through the body of Lucy, Coetzee showcases the retribut"ional backlash the gendered body of the white female is subjected to. The gendered body is made to pay for the historical ‘sins’ of the past. The bodily experience of Lucy in terms of being a receptor of racial hatred, forces the white community to reassess their social and ideological stand in the new South Africa. In Lucy’s decision to bear a racially mixed child, Coetzee hints at the deep changes that have come over the white psyche in South Africa. Through the incident of Lucy’s physical violation, Coetzee raises several issues related to the racist history of South Africa’s past and makes his own assessment of the need for a sincere effort at racial reconciliation.

The analysis of the body in Coetzee relies on Foucault’s notion of the body as a site of social inscription. For Foucault, the body is constructed through discourse. The body is thus in Coetzee, the site of social relations, of history, ideology and racial memory. The suffering that the body undergoes in Coetzee can be seen to be the result of the historical and political reality of South Africa. The body becomes a tabula rasa for the play of power relations, as all the three works prove.

Narrative space in Coetzee’s texts under consideration is occupied by textual strategies that proclaim the writer’s affiliation to postmodernism. The “spatial reading” of Coetzee’s narrative method pays attention not only to a “horizontal axis” of plot, but also to a “vertical axis” standing for a variety of other literary dimensions: author-reader relations, literary-historical considerations, and postmodern intertextual allusions. A distinction should therefore be made for ‘story space’ and ‘theoretical/discourse space.’ By extension, narrative space
will take into consideration the dimensionality of the interface with the reader along with the other co-relates. A reading strategy of the nature of the narrative strategy in Coetzee would involve taking into consideration the subtext of imperialism besides the postmodern metafictional elements.

Coetzee’s works display a marked emphasis on metafictionality, a concept inherently connected with post modernism. The dilemmas of his novels are based on South African reality, but are presented in a metafictional form that leads to multiple interpretations and plurality of meanings. In the texts discussed in the present study, Coetzee employs intertextual parallels, free indirect discourse and multiple narrative versions/voices to create a feeling of narrative destabilization. The strategy of multiple versions of the same incident employed in the narrative of Jacobus’s expeditions into the interiors of Africa during the early phase of European colonization is actually an examination of the veracity of the relation between official ‘truth’ and actual historical reality. The subtext of the gross violation of human rights and violent atrocities that colonialism perpetrates is overwhelmingly made evident through the supercilious and megalomaniacal narrative of Jacobus. Coetzee clearly draws a distinction between the history as fiction and factual history. In “The Fiction Today,” he contends:

…history is not reality; that history is a kind of discourse; that a novel is a kind of discourse, too, but a different kind of discourse; that, inevitably, in our culture, history will, with varying degrees of forcefulness, try to claim primacy, claim to be a master-form of discourse, just as, inevitably,
people like myself will defend themselves by saying that history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other. (David Attwell, 1993: 16)

Coetzee has made clear that his text is indeed a discourse of fiction and that it is significantly different from the official discourse of history.

South African writing in general has shown a predilection for what George Lukacs calls ‘petty realism, the trivially detailed painting of local colour’ (1963: 34). Writers in South Africa were aware that they could not escape the politics of the country in their works. Nadine Gordimer, claiming the quotient of ‘writer’s responsibility’ adopted critical realism of the Lukacsian mode in her depiction of the South African situation. Her novels rely explicitly on actual history, a reliance that has been responsible for the fact that her books have been banned in South Africa. Coetzee’s approach to the subject and the techniques through which he renders his themes mark him different from the rest. His “fiction remains unmatched in South Africa for its multivalence, formal inventiveness, and virtuoso self-interrogation of narrative production and authority” (David Attwell, 1993: 166). In *Doubling the Point*, Coetzee, has admitted to his books being “…too indirect in their approach, too rarefied…”(16). In many ways, Coetzee’s works, unlike Gordimer’s, can be seen to be more infused with artistic purpose. It exposes his works as the product of slow, skilled and meticulous deliberation of artistic technique.

Coetzee undertakes a unique variation of the artist’s responsibility to society. Coetzee wants to create what Barthes would have called a
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‘writable’ text, one which makes ‘the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text,’ one which does not attempt to reduce the potentially multiple meanings, the ‘plurality’ of the text, by fixing one single meaning for it. To promote this notion of literature, Coetzee has made good use of the transformative effect that an intertextual mode can create. This creative use of intertextuality has added new dimensions to Life and Times as well as to Disgrace. Both these works have exploited to the full, the possibilities inherent in Beckettian and Kafkaesque allusions. These narrative methods while shielding Coetzee from a direct expression of commenting on the South African situation provides the much needed space to obliquely register his protests and views on the South African situation. Both works explore the possibility of diverse narrative perspectives. Coetzee makes effective use of homo and hetero diegetic narration in Life and Times. In Disgrace the narration filtered through the voice of a patriarchal white university professor adopting the strategy of free indirect discourse and succeeds in providing a telling critique of the ‘new’ realities of post apartheid South Africa.

The use of multiple narrative versions/voices has allowed the author to distance himself from the characters in his story and in a sense abnegate responsibility for their actions. The postmodern element of narration has been deliberately introduced into the matrix of Coetzee’s writings to give his texts a unique autonomy. This autonomy has allowed him to steer clear of any overtly distinct political programmes and helped the writer slip through the censor’s net. Coetzee’s narrative strategy has also allowed him to escape the conventions of politically committed literature while at the same time be part of a tradition of committed anti-
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apartheid writing. The writer has thus through his unique narration, employing postmodern techniques helped elevate his works to the status of ‘art.’ Coetzee’s texts even while experimenting with the fundamental structures of narrative method explore at the same time the possible fictionality outside the literary text. Viewed from this perspective Coetzee’s novels can be defined as situational metafiction.

Coetzee’s works have escaped the fixity characteristic of traditional uses of the mode. The event of the reading is more complex than any meanings that can be derived from it. Ultimately, the peculiar inventiveness and singularity of Coetzee’s fiction lies in its resistance to such nonliterary uses and in its invitation to the reader to experience an alterity that cannot be domesticated.

To conclude, it can be said that Coetzee’s novels become a narrative space where he inserts a number of explicitly political issues. He addresses the role of race as a key factor that affects the formation of particular spatial practices throughout the text. In the creation of a postmodern narrative, the boundary line between an actual world and the world as represented in the text is maintained throughout. Coetzee in his Jerusalem Acceptance Speech observed: “…texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted.” Coetzee saw himself living in the age of political transition, of decolonization. The basic propositions of Coetzee are almost always derived from the realities of South Africa. His documentation of the humiliation of blacks and colored people in South Africa are truly insightful. As an artist, he is
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concerned about the extent to which the majority of South African people could tolerate the apparatus of state power, censorship and apartheid in particular. His preoccupation with the colonial domination and its politicized aesthetics draws our attention to the miscellaneous postcolonial situations in South Africa.

Coetzee’s spatial practice as is found in these works can be seen as an interface between ideology and history, text and context. The use of political and ideological aspects of space in these works ratify Henri Lefebvre, who defined and redefined space as a political process (‘Reflections’: 31). As noted by him, space has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. A social product, the concept of space is both political and ideological. By politicizing and prioritizing space, Lefebvre and Edward Soja emphasize a way of knowing the world other than by statistical frameworks. As a writer, Coetzee is deeply involved in the dynamics of the South African society. Ideological circumstances are seen to have direct bearing on the form and content of Coetzee’s works. Coetzee's concentration on issues of race and colonialism in ‘The Narrative,’ *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace* accommodate and incorporate the definition of space proposed by Lefebvre and Soja. A distinctive understanding of colonialism emerges from this study, and provides a framework for understanding contemporary South African society.

Colonialism in Coetzee emerges as a medium for the construction of colonial subjectivities. The coloniser/colonised dyad reproduces a representation of South African society in terms of a Manichean struggle between the races. South Africa exhibits all the symptoms that
oppres sion and discursive control bring about in a totalitarian state. Coetzee's novels can be viewed as providing a particular, stabilised model of South African reality under apartheid. What the writer programmes within the narrative is an account of the varied physical, ideological and cultural confrontations that assault the afflicted nation, people and institutions, as power changes alliances. Coetzee displays an ethical concern for the subordinated racial other, a concern that is closely connected with the apartheid history of the country. His novels can be read as raising a cry for those who have been silenced. In Coetzee’s hands literature truly becomes a dynamic event that recovers the potential to condition a sustained political response to lived experience, a political response based on the ethically charged act of story-telling, of testing and of self-questioning.