Geography in a simple sense is about space and place. As a discipline it has two main subsidiary fields: human geography and physical geography. The former focuses largely on the built environment and how humans create, view, manage, and influence space. The latter examines the natural environment and how organisms, climate, soil, water, and landforms produce and interact. Human geography as a major sub-field of the discipline of geography explores the relationships between humans and their natural environment and tracks the broad social patterns that shape human societies. It studies how the human community is organised and ordered about within a particular space. This space may take the form of nation, state, homeland, territory, landscape or region. All human activities have their spatiality, their spatial specificity, which confines or enable them. Within the national or regional space is the ubiquitous social space that plays a crucial role in the affairs of humankind and nation.

Edward Soja in his article “History: Geography: Modernity” speaks about the possibilities for a simultaneously historical and geographical materialism theorizing thus about the relations between
history, geography and modernity. Michael Foucault, in accounting for
his heterotopic spaces observes in “Of Other Spaces”:

We do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could
place individuals and things… we live inside a set of
relations that delineate sites which are irreducible to one
another and absolutely not super imposable on one another.
(1986: 23)

Foucault’s heterotopias are heterogeneous spaces composed of sites and
relations and are part of every society. It is a space which Henry
Lefebvre refers to as socially produced space in his *Production of Space.*
As he puts it:

Is space a social relationship? Certainly. [It] is inherent to
property relationships (especially the ownership of the
earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of
production (which impose a form on that earth or land);
here we see the polyvalence of social space, its 'reality' at
once formal and material. (85)

Land as geographical space is a central subject explored by many South
African novels. In Coetzee’s works land as space gets examined in great
detail. The real world of South Africa with its landscape descriptions and
factual, picturesque narration in painstaking details cannot be found in
Coetzee. As Rita Barnard, a Coetzee scholar notes in “Dream
Topographies: J. M. Coetzee and the South African Pastoral”:

what is at stake for him [Coetzee], is not place or
landscape as an object of mimesis, but the discursive and
generic and political codes that inform our understanding and knowledge of space. There is a deliberate unsettledness in Coetzee, which deconstructs, rather than assimilates to, any South African literary tradition, or any South African sense of place. (36)

Coetzee’s depiction of South African land, as Barnard asserts, takes a different tenor from other contemporary writings. Land has been explored as a deposit of myths, memories, and memorials, in many South African novels. In Coetzee, the markings on the landscape go beyond the surface. His works bear testimony to the ways in which contestations over land and what lies beneath it have shaped the forces which have formed the South African landscape. It is the colonial enterprise that changed the topography of the land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while the control of social and topological space by the forces of the apartheid in modern South Africa provoked further transformations. The end of the millennium once again showed new legislative forces at work which catalysed further topographical changes. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said points to how no human being is completely free from the struggle over geography, over territory, over space, and over place; this fact continues to be evident in the South African context. Coetzee’s works build a theory and critique of power and the development process by fusing geography, history, and political economy while maintaining a commitment to a scholarship of activism and critical engagement with the world. In his works he demonstrates how devastating the colonial project had been on both land and identity. Coetzee shows that the colonialis/colonized legacy has created split in
Chapter 2

the human space, mapped by geopolitical frenzical totalitarianism. This chapter discusses through the central themes presented in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace* the changing face of South Africa affected as it is by history and ideology.

Given his particular understanding of the historical process of which present day South Africa is both product and part, it is not surprising that Coetzee makes South Africa available as an object of knowledge in specific ways. Geography and history intertwine in his works as both Afrikaaner and indigene lay claim over the land. In Coetzee’s novels can be noticed South African land being reinscribed into diffuse networks of overlapping geographical linkages and historical layers. No doubt, Coetzee’s Jacobus Coetzee, Michael K, Petrus and Lucy all live in different eras of South African history, but uniformly display an attachment to the land that bespeaks not the poet’s eye, but the practical eye of surveying and establishing their identity in terms of entrepreneurial, imperialist or emotional attachment. Coetzee, without doubt, viewed South Africa as the product of imperialist divisive discourses, and interprets the country against the historical contest over land and belonging. In *Dusklands*, ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ describes from the point of view of a Boer pioneer the brutal acquisition of land from the original Hottentots and Bushmen, basically by extermination. *Disgrace* describes in prescient and chilling fashion how land is being steadily but remorselessly taken back by natives through encroachment, occupation and miscegenation. *Life and Times of Michael K* narrates the forms of resistance that are erected by the indigene to defeat and reclaim land that the laws of segregation keep him away from.
In his critical work, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), Coetzee refers to the South Africa of the earlier times as “the land of ease and plenty … the colony of the Cape of Good Hope was indeed a kind of Eden” (2). How this Eden became a dystopia is etched by Coetzee in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace*. If ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ witnesses the grabbing of land in the colonial context of the eighteenth century, *Life and Times* take the reader to the 1980’s when the civil strife between the natives and the Afrikaner whites was at its zenith. *Disgrace* pursues this theme further and takes the reader to post apartheid Africa of the nineteen nineties, an apocalyptic time for the white minorities, inscribed as it is with a history of violence and dispossession of land.

Perhaps it is because land is so many things – place, space, resources and practice – that it is also a powerful means of dominance and exclusion. The claim that South Africa, or a piece of it, ‘is our land’ has a long history and contested meanings. Colonial and apartheid rule have in their unique ways contributed to the control over land and the resultant land patterns. Legislation, forced removals and unequal development excluded the majority from most of the valuable farmland and from institutions of ownership. The conception of space which has been linked with the onset of colonialism is space as empty, empirical, infinite and homogeneous. The origins of this notion are philosophical and scientific and are connected to the works of Newton, Descartes and Kant. Capitalism used this notion of space to its advantage. Nigel Worden in *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid* (2000), refers to how private property, individual rights
and colonization are manifestations of capitalistic logic. They are part of the general ethos of accumulation. Powerful western European countries such as Portugal, Spain and England had explorers navigating the globe and searching for stockpiles of natural resources notably gold to begin with, but later there was a rush for land and for labour. They wanted to commodify the land, commodify the resources and set up a capitalist economy. Katz and Smith in “Grounding Metaphors” (1993) have described this period as the space of “capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism” (72). Explorers like Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan and James Cook were and still are in many instances, considered to have ‘discovered new worlds’. From the point of view of indigenous people and others such an understanding was and is ridiculous and clearly racist.

The literary texts under scrutiny understand “space” as an inclusive and abstract term and “place” as the more particular and qualitative term, referring to geographically situated locales that serve as physical settings for social, historical and political activity. One might ask why we have suddenly switched from space to place, what the difference between the two consists of. As John Berger says in his essay “Studio Talk”, “[a] place is more than an area. A place surrounds something. A place is the extension of a presence or the consequence of an action. A place is the opposite of empty space” (28). In the context of this argument, ‘place’ incorporates all the dimensions of lived experience. It is an inhabited space which is appropriated, interpreted, used and thus given meaning. At the same time, it is a part of space which is produced by society. It can be seen that, it is by acts of
inscription, through ‘naming and plotting’ that the South African landscape gets constructed in the works of J. M. Coetzee.

Cape Town and the Karoo are the two regions to which Coetzee returns again and again in his creative as well as critical writings. In general, two distinct topoi of this ‘troubled garden colony’ recur persistently in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ Life and Times of Michael K and Disgrace – land as open spaces in the form of wilderness and the veldt and land as closed, striated spaces, as areas of confinement, in the form of farms, cities, detention camps. Borders, territories, frontiers et al are also concepts that Coetzee problematizes in his delineation of geographical space. The farm is another space that recurs throughout his fiction in various guises. It crystallizes, in Life and Times, in the form of the abandoned acres of the Visagie homestead near Prince Albert in the Karoo, where, Michael K coaxes a handful of pumpkin seeds into life; as a smallholding in the Eastern Cape where, a disgraced David Lurie will stay with his daughter and as the enclosed area in the interiors of wild South Africa that functions with the labour of the enslaved indigene in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.’

The ways in which the European mind constructs the meaning of the farm is a major concern examined by Coetzee in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ Life and Times of Michael K and Disgrace. In this context, the genre of the plaasroman in relation to the farm is explored in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ Life and Times of Michael K and Disgrace in great detail. Despite being referred to as “Faulkner in the veldt,” as “Kafka of the Karoo” and even as “Beckett of the Boland,” Coetzee’s prose hardly makes any concessions to the visible topography
of the city, and never returns to a place once written. For instance, asked about the precise coordinates of his archetypal wanderer, Jacobus Coetzee’s great anti-trek north from the Cape, Coetzee remarked that his fiction’s geography is in no way trustworthy because “I don’t have much interest in, or can’t seriously engage myself with, the kind of realism that takes pride in copying the “real” world.” It is all these Coetzeean notions of land as space that gets dissected in the following pages.

In ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ the second novella of Dusklands, the geographical space is constituted of the wilderness of the South African inlands as the time depicted is the early years of the European colonial enterprise. Being a critique of the colonial exploits, there is also on the frontiers of this wilderness, a settler space in the form of a farm which Jacobus Coetzee has constructed, exploiting the labour of the ‘tame’ Hottentots whom he has enslaved. Many of the ideas the author discusses about land in White Writing come to bear upon this work of fiction. The Eurocentric notions of what constitutes civilization, the subject of native ‘idleness’ in Africa, the theme of Africa as a land of ‘silent, empty spaces’ and the African pastoral idyll reverberates silently as South African geographical space gets constituted in the affairs of the colonial explorer Jacobus Coetzee. In this novella, it is argued that Coetzee concerns himself with land as physical space inscribed with ideology, especially the ideology of colonialism and which gets depicted through the encounters of Jacobus Coetzee with the African wild.

To truly analyze the implications of Jacobus Coetzee’s African explorations, his manipulation of the human geography in the ordering of the land and its people, certain historical facts must be looked into. In
The Making of the South African Past (1988), Christopher Saunders speaks of how diverse African peoples have occupied southern Africa, some of them since the first presence of human beings on earth. San (Bushman) were the earliest. For nearly a thousand years, Khoi (Hottentot) people lived along the coast from Namibia to trans-Kei and along the Gariep (Orange River), herding cattle and fat-tail sheep and trading copper, iron and livestock with other African groups. From the 1480s they had to deal with Europeans making stops along the coast to obtain water and livestock, and who sometimes violated the land rights and integrity of groups and individuals, for example by using natural resources without negotiating the terms. After the Dutch East India Company established a station at the Cape in 1652, military conquest, trade and gradual expansion of farming by European settlers gradually dispossessed Khoi and other groups. The company generally assumed or asserted title ‘based on the capacity to exercise dominating control – a de facto feature of the South African land scene until at least the late twentieth century. ‘Raw might’, not ‘institutional frameworks’, shaped the competition over occupation of land. Migrating livestock herders of European descent (trekboers) increased the area of occupation tenfold from around 1700 to 1780. From 1834 to 1840 a large number of trekboers left the Cape Colony and settled in new areas to the north and east, including Namaqualand. A sense of racial superiority was manifest in the brutality with which these settlers fought for land, water sources and livestock. From the 1770s the colonial government and farmers were engaged in conflicts with Xhosa farmer pastoralists on the eastern frontier, involving violence and extreme racist justifications. Annexed
land was often regarded as Crown land unless otherwise claimed and recognized.

‘The Narrative’ is composed as the journal of Jacobus Coetzee as an explorer, who in 1760 embarked on a hunt for elephants, leaving from Piquetburg near the south west tip of the South African colony and travelling hundreds of miles into the interior towards north, eventually crossing the Orange River. His writing traces the stages of his journey and describes his meeting beyond the Orange River with the wild tribe of Namaquas having no previous experience of white men, his illness and recovery in the tribe’s camp, his desertion by several of his black servants, his journey alone back to his farm house, and his subsequent return to the camp of the wild Hottentots to take a bloody revenge for what he believes to be his former humiliation there.

Aime’ Ce’saire in his Discourse on Colonialism notes about colonization:

Neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontier of ignorance, disease and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit, once for all, without flinching at consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for
internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economics. (10-11)

In short, according to Ce’saire, at all times, the motive force behind colonialism was essentially an economic one. Behind it lies the desire for land, raw materials and cheap labour. Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Post colonialism* describes colonialism as the “conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (2). Early European colonial enterprise required the flow of natural resources and wealth from the colonies to the so-called ‘mother country.’ This involved, besides trade, a wide range of practices like plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions – activities that practically altered the African geographical space. Jacobus Coetzee’s exploits to conquer land in the African wilderness as narrated in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ are marked precisely by this policy.

Jacobus Coetzee is thus introduced as an eighteenth century Dutch explorer and adventurer who ventures deep into “the naked plains of the interior” (109). He is described in S. J. Coetzee’s *Afterword* as a topographer as well as a settler. An elephant hunter, Jacobus reveals his intention to acquire ivory from the ‘land of the Great Namaquas.’ In the same *Afterword* we are told of Jacobus Coetzee, on the banks of the Great River, dreaming "a father dream of rafts laden with produce sailing down to the sea and the waiting schooners" (120). The search for material wealth and the conquest of lands for its own sake moves Jacobus Coetzee. As is typical of a colonialist, he attempts to revive the earlier colonial practice of raid on natural resources followed by trade leading to conquest of the land and thereby the control of space.
The very opening paragraph of ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ deals with the social consequences of the shift in white settlement from burgher to trekboer in the political economy of the eighteenth century, consequences that involved a developing competitiveness between the Boers like Jacobus and Bushman over land and cattle. Jacobus reads the topographical space of Africa in terms of land and cattle, with his recounting of, at the beginning of ‘The Narrative,’ with the story of Adam Wijnand, the son of a servant who left home and established himself with "ten thousand head of cattle, as much land as he can patrol, a stableful of women" (57). This tale locates Jacobus Coetzee's bitterness at being challenged and outmaneuvered in the tussle for land and property by an indigene.

Jacobus has his own ideas about transforming the wilderness of the interiors of South Africa into a readable landscape. In this he is guided by the Western eye of imperial enterprise that surveys the land for acquisition and ownership. The topographer invader describes himself as “a hunter, a domesticator of the wilderness, a hero of enumeration” (80), and comments on his enterprise as follows:

We cannot count the wild. The wild is one because it is boundless. We can count fig trees, we can count sheep because the orchard and farm are bounded. The essence of orchard tree and farm is number. Our commerce with the wild is a tireless enterprise of turning it into orchard and farm. When we cannot fence it and count it we reduce it to numbers by other means. (80)
This is the first overt step in colonization aimed at containing the land, subordinating it to human will and rendering its infinitude finite by reducing it to an assortment of computable spatial acres. The wilds have to be contained and codified into manageable units through the European standards of the ‘orchard’ and the ‘farm.’ Even the introduction of orchard trees and stock animals forms part of this scheme of settlement of space, since they constitute a means of Europeanizing the native, foreign land which sustains the colonizer.

The African geographical space is thus perceived in terms of a schema of social and economic use keeping the Eurocentric notions in mind. This mode of description is once again evident in Jacobus Coetzee’s ‘discovery’ of the Orange River. “He saw that the banks, clothed in trees might furnish timber for all the wants of colonization” (120). As this mercantile reverie makes clear, the wilderness is not expressed by the white colonizer in terms of its beauty or natural geographical order, but in terms of the western colonial principles of economic gain. Here, once again, colonial space is being carved in terms of European expansionism, of capitalist future. For Jacobus Coetzee, the future consummation of the colonial project and with it the victory of the European order in Africa is always extant in the moment of observation: instead of seeing wilderness, he sees orchards; instead of a river, a channel of trade. The colonizer’s act of seeing, of the ‘gaze,’ then projects European hegemony into the future — hence Jacobus boasts that his journey implicates the discovered world in history. “Every territory through which I march with my gun becomes a territory cast loose from the past and bound to the future” (80).
When Jacobus leaves “civilization” and ventures forth into the unsettled wilderness of Africa, he encounters a world of things which he prefers to refer to as “undifferentiated plenum, without polity” (101). This African natural world is elsewhere referred to by him as consisting of “interspersed plena and vacua” (83), and is depicted by this white imperialist as a void, a world of silent, absent spaces, the antithesis of all human sign–systems. To Jacobus, the interior of Africa is just nameless wilderness. The South African landscape is represented by adventurers like Jacobus as monotonous, not because it is so, but because a preconception reigns that Africa is static, sunk in aeons of slumber, or indeed as William Burchell, the anthropologist and natural historian whom Coetzee quotes in *White Writing* suggests, because an eye trained in Europe sees no variety in the veldt. The African landscape is in reality, vast, wooded and challenging. The fauna is rich with elephants, giraffes, bustards and the like — wild life, the like of which cannot be found in a European setting. This natural African reality is being redrawn by him through an imperialist discourse in an effort to maintain a boundary — physical and ideological — that will separate “a region of order and culture, i.e., the Colony — from the barbarian wilderness” (*White Writing*: 49).

Michel Marais in “The Hermeneutics of Empire” notes that: “rather than creating a world anew, the imperialist subject derives a world by imposing the codes of recognition of his culture on what he assumes to be the uninscribed geography of colonial space” (69). The topography of the African wild is transformed by Jacobus into human constructs, a transformation described as follows: “In his way Coetzee
rode like a God through a world only partly named, differentiating and bringing into existence” (116). Jacobus’s expedition seems to suggest that Africa was invented by him; not found! The colonial habit of geographical perception evinced by Jacobus Coetzee implicates Africa in the European plot of colonial history. It is therefore not surprising that, when colonial territories are claimed, it is being defined as empty space. Whatever forms of native knowledge may have existed are being supplanted by a special mode of thought, the ‘enlightenment’ understanding of what constitutes knowledge.

“The wilderness,” Coetzee writes in *White Writing*, “has been conceived in the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a world where the law of nature reigns, a world over which the first act of culture, Adam’s act of naming, has not been performed” (49). The wilderness was thus a realm over which God’s sway did not extend. This conception of wilderness in contrast to the European ‘orchards’ and ‘farms’ has played a part in the history of South Africa associated as it is with European colonialism and the effort to maintain borders.

Under the heavy, mute spell of the African wilderness into which he ventures, Jacobus writes:

In the wild I lose sense of the boundaries …. The eyes are free; they reach out to the horizon all around. Nothing is hidden from the eyes. I become a spherical reflecting eye moving through the wilderness and ingesting it. Destroyer of the wilderness, I move through the land cutting a
devouring path from horizon to horizon. There is nothing from which my eyes turn; I am all that I see. (79)

Here the eyes become the primary means of assigning value to the land. Vision, whether subjective or objective, and the invention of the landscape, is no doubt, attached to picturing, mapping, mirroring and representing land in the only way that Jacobus the colonist knows. Thus landscapes get invented. The white colonizer, surveying the landscape, finds it "empty" and hence proceeds to settle and develop it, to justify his claim to the land. Characterized by its difference from Europe, the South African wilderness threatens European cultural boundaries and is accordingly assimilated by the imperialist eye. Territorial space is thus reduced and value coded. Jacobus Coetzee’s actions verify this fact.

In ‘The Narrative,’ a subversion of the idea of the pastoral is clearly delineated in the account of a people with a culture different from the European notions of life. If for the colonizers the interiors of Africa offer nothing but undistinguished wilderness, for the indigene, it provides an Eden like existence. In *White Writing*, Coetzee draws a picture of South Africa before the advent of colonization. In the introduction to *White Writing*, he argues that, Cape of Good Hope "walled in by oceans and an unexplored northern wilderness ... was indeed a kind of garden" (3). Here, as often in several writings about South Africa, the idea of the land as a possible Paradise is invoked, suggesting a Utopian space.

In most South African writings the white pastoral inscribes itself on the colonial South Africa by exhibiting black labour as nothing but a shadowy presence in settler farms. Slavery is a subject of absences in
Jacobus’ preamble, but it exists in an uneasy balance in his farm which is hailed as the oasis of “civilization” on the borders of the wild. The idyllic existence of the “wild” Hottentots in their natural abode is contrasted with the life of the “tame” ones in captivity at Jacobus’ farm. Jacobus speaks of the Bushmen whom he has subjected to servile bondage akin to slavery in his farm with condescending derision. All work at the farm is done by black people whom he has ‘tamed’. The farm which can be viewed as an enclosed space must have been cleared by force, by driving out the original inhabitants. The enclosing of land in the form of a farm for instance, is crucial to Jacobus as it allows him greater control over land than would otherwise have been possible. At the beginning of the narrative can be found details of the most efficient methods for slaughtering the Bushman, a kind of savagery even the so called ‘savages’ do not practice: “The only sure way to kill a Bushman is to catch him in the open where your horse can run him down… It is only when you hunt them as you hunt jackals that you can really clear a stretch of country” (58-9). This is a hint at the technique of mass murder. It reveals the connection between racism and sadistic masculine egotism and in a way reflects upon the equation between the scant disregard for the life of the natives as against the craving for land and property exhibited by the pioneer colonialists in their effort to establish a settler colonial farming society.

Bushman girls are nothing but “a rag you wipe yourself on and throw away…. She is the ultimate love you have borne your own desires alienated in a foreign body and pegged out waiting for your pleasure”(61). Rape is of course part of the colonizing activity. It is a violent method by which
physical resistance to slavery is broken. This is the civility that is practised in the farm! An adequate labour force has to be created to control land and, rape served to keep a defenseless populace under emotional terror and physical subjugation by demeaning their very existence. The white settlers used physical violence in this manner to maintain and drive into the psyche of the indigene the status quo that should exist in the master-slave relationship. Beyond the boundaries of the Western civilization and the known, deprived of the various sanctioning mechanisms of society, all sorts of things that would have been unthinkable within the sphere of the known, of the mapped, become possible.

The Eden like existence of the Namaqua people in the hinterlands of Africa is ruthlessly torn apart during Jacobus’ second expedition to Namaqualand to take bloody revenge for what he believes to be the humiliation suffered there. The organized, cold blooded slaughter of the indigenous men, women and children, including his former servants exposes the strategy of genocide. The genocide that is unleashed on an unsuspecting folk is reminiscent of the Third Reich; mass murder and horrific rape of young Hottentot girls are orchestrated in a most gruesome manner. The gory adventures of the violently insane Jacobus Coetzee reveal not only the sadistic psychology of this colonizer, but also the larger agenda of the colonization process for the control of land. Genocide is an essential ingredient of any form of imperial conquest. The Namaqua village is plundered and set on fire and its inhabitants ruthlessly murdered. The men are killed in a most gruesome manner, by the executioners of the ‘civilized’ world. A blind eye is turned towards the rape of innocent children and women. Of these killings, Jacobus writes:
No more than any other man do I enjoy killing; but I have taken it upon myself to be the one to pull the trigger, performing this sacrifice for myself and my countrymen, who exist, and committing upon the dark folk the murders we have all wished. All are guilty, without exception…. I am a tool in the hands of history. (106)

The ignominious aspects of Jacobus’ expedition are to be seen in the broader context of ‘heroic’ colonial expansion. The romantic myth of the free, courageous adventurer — of the ‘free’ man over the slave, the Christian over the atheist, the white man over the black is torn apart as South Africa gets partitioned. The cynical motive of colonialism gets demythologized as Coetzee rewrites the colonialist enterprise. What the novelist does in ‘The Narrative’ is to demythologize the colonization agenda, by dramatizing the cruel and inhuman exploitative programmes on which the geographical expansion is based.

This, then, effectively, is South Africa of the eighteenth century as the land gets colonized. The grabbing of land, slavery, economic exploitation and genocide have resulted in altering not just the physical geography but the human geography as well of this ‘Eden.’

In the nineteen eighty three novel, *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee conducts a very precise dialogue with South African reality with the geographical locale set in a recognizable South Africa. Coetzee focuses on the city of Cape Town and the arid plateaus of Karoo in the South in this work set in the nineteen eighties. It is through the protagonist Michael K’s attachment to the land and his experiences of the
apartheid policies that the geographical space of South Africa is unraveled. The social, spatial control exercised by the apartheid government of South Africa in the 1980’s becomes evident in *Life and Times*. It is against this system that K wages his personal war and establishes his affinity with earth.

Through the technique of naming and plotting Coetzee constructs a space that is identifiably Cape Town and its surrounding areas. Cape Town, Prince Albert, Sea point, Stellenbosch, and Karoo along which K. traverses are all real places in South Africa. The camps for the displaced such as Jakkalsdrif and Kenilworth and the institutions for the underprivileged such as Hous Norenious are also representative of the realistic landscape of Africa. Fence posts, barbed wires and national roads dot the twentieth century landscape. Within these wired enclosures are the farms captured by the Afrikaaner white minority. Thus *Life and Times* draws conspicuously on the conventions of realism, by its insistence on a South African location. In “Two Interviews with J.M Coetzee 1983 and 1987,” given to Tony Morphet, Coetzee explains his idea of realism:

I don’t have much interest in, or can’t seriously engage myself with, the kind of realism that takes pride in copying the ‘real’ world …. The option was… to invent a world out of place and time and situate the action there… *but what would have been the point this time around?* (455)

From the last section of the statement, it is fairly evident that the geography of South Africa drawn in *Life and Times* is real as far as the
topography is concerned. But the mimetic details are restricted by Coetzee to these place names and broader topographical details.

In this text, the geography of the land is not, as in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ a site of imperial narratives where the archetypal hunter — explorer Jacobus Coetzee treks through the wilderness, naming it and claiming it as he goes along. The protagonist K on the other hand, is virtually left on the exterior Cape landscape; he is lodged within a landscape that has already been chartered by the apartheid rulers. As Coetzee himself acknowledged in the interview to Tony Morphet, “the whole surface of South Africa has been surveyed and mapped and disposed of” (456).

Presented initially as a gardener employed at the municipal parks in Cape Town the strange peregrinations of Michael K take him from the Cape to the Karoo with the sick body, and then the ashes, of his mother: a pilgrimage that is blocked at every point by army and military police, and which leads to his triple internments as vagrant and suspected guerilla in prison, camp and hospital. There is a war, civil or revolutionary, going on in the background of his journey and is fought according to the camp commandant, “so that minorities can have a say in their destinies.” This is no doubt a reference to the ruling white minority keeping their “say” to hold on to power. K, who barely knows that there is a war on, is out of it because he is busy existing on his own marginal terms, unresponsive to historical determinants which to him are unreal.

In examining the idea of geography in Life and Times of Michael K four topographical planes become clearly evident, they being the city
of Cape Town, the countryside of Karoo, the detention camps and the garden. The city and the camps stand in structural opposition to the veldt and the garden. The control of space and people through Foucault’s concepts of power and knowledge can be seen executed in Coetzee’s depiction of urban South Africa. Foucault’s technologies of domination — lines, registration permits et al contain and control the lived spaces of Michel K. Whether he is in the city, the countryside, the camp, or the veldt K’s experience of place and space are felt geographically, mentally, socially and politically. While asserting its textuality, *Life and Times of Michael K*, is equally concerned with land and as Dominic Head has suggested, in *J. M. Coetzee ‘the control of social space’* (104).

Racialized urban space is what Cape Town offers us in *Life and Times*. The protagonist navigates through a highly policed environment in Cape Town. Military jeeps, riot troops, looters and guards, shots and sirens, shuttered windows and abandoned houses are the everyday reality of Cape Town of Michael K. It is a picture of darkness that the city holds for the poor. Public shelters where the poor huddle for warmth and shelter, drifting rural population that come to the cities hunting for jobs — this is the reality of South Africa of the nineteen eighties. Here, in the city, space and land ownership is being prescribed in terms of race and power. Dispossessed of their traditional lands, the natives are driven to the townships reserved for the blacks in cities. White institutions and officials regulate all facets of their lives including physical movement. The policy of training the natives as domestic servants, a fact attested by Michael K’s mother and menial laborers through state institutions of which, for instance, K is a product, provide an insidious form of social
and spatial control. The management of race relations and the maintenance of white supremacy in the interest of capitalist expansion were central to South African state power. This meant that all residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial space was racially determined and controlled. The racial segregation of residential space and public services was a feature of the apartheid policy. Space here becomes a geographical notion that exposes racial inequalities. Apartheid, as Coetzee so clearly understands, operates from day to day as a means of distributing people in space, and in the process, of controlling them. It is this city that, Michael K and his mother desperately desire to flee.

K succeeds in slipping through the regulated urban net into a space that is fluid and ambiguous — The Karoo that forms the countryside. The place he seeks, the farm of his mother’s childhood resided in the recollections of his now dead mother. The Veldt and the deserted Visagie farmhouse where he temporarily settles down in the countryside is for K a flight from the planned spaces of the city. Here, he lives far from the regimented city spaces that characterize the world of men and women and ekes out an anonymous existence unfettered by visible boundaries like walls and fences. In the open veldt of the Karoo, surrounded by stillness and the

...warmth of the sun, K muses how he could live here forever’ or “till I die” (46). Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before…. and he wondered whether there were not forgotten corners and angles and corridors between the fences, land that belonged to no one yet. (47)
The veldt provides K with a diverse set of experiences altogether. As an indigene, K’s experience of being his own master, away from the regimented strictures of apartheid control, bring out in him a new feeling for the land — a sense of ‘belongingness,’ an emotional attachment, that only absolute sense of freedom can bring into being. His days in the veld teach him to read the landscape in a different way, beyond the Eurocentric schema to which his eye has been trained: “I am becoming a different kind of man” (68). Alone in the wilderness of the veld, Michael K realizes that Wynberg Park in Cape Town which is land “tamed” by the colonizer is “more vegetal than mineral … I have lost my love for that kind of earth … It is no longer the greens and the brown that I want but the yellow and the red” (67), as he inserts himself into the ecology of the land. Rejecting the colonizer’s project of land acquisition: “he could not imagine himself spending his life driving stakes into the ground, erecting fences, dividing up the land” (97), K becomes hyper-aware of his habitat, and exists, if only temporarily, in symbiosis with it.

In the veld Michael K displays an affinity for his geographical environment when he likens himself to “a termite boring its way through a rock” (66), a “speck upon the surface of an earth too deeply asleep to notice the scratch of ant-feet, the rasp of butterfly teeth, the tumbling of dust” (97), “like a flower” (99), a “parasite dozing in the gut,” a “lizard under a stone” (116). Like the noble savage enjoying a primordial existence, K experiences the pure and rarified sensation of merely existing. K is here personally closing the Cartesian divide between man and nature, between subject and object as he tries to arrive at an understanding of himself through interactions with land.
Farm, in Coetzee’s texts in general, is representative of a controlled commoditized space. Like Jacobus Coetzee’s farm, the Visagie farmhouse can also be viewed as a complex symbol of white authority; of settlement, ownership and mastery. Farm as space is located within the history of the development of controlled and commodified property in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. K is conscious of this fact of history and hence his initial experience of the farm and land is a mediated one. The farm, for him is a place that provides him with a sense of belonging. Initially he takes up residence in the farm house but later abandons it as its original owner, the Visagie grandson takes up residence, having deserted the army. K, instead of residing there in subjugation prefers what he builds with his own labour, the burrow on earth, a space he can without doubt call his own and where the grandson cannot dictate terms. Coetzee has always been fascinated by Kafka’s short story The Burrow, and views this metaphorical burrow of K’s as a space for freedom where a person has free choice to move or act. K assumes that in the burrow, he can bypass the turmoil of history and the tyranny of power that force individuals and groups to conform to the desire of others.

In Coetzee’s works, there is the systematic debunking of such received concepts as ‘Truth’ and ‘Law.’ The law in its official version constantly exerts pressure on individuals, forcing them to act against their will. The farm thus, more than a pastoral idyll metamorphoses into a geographical space where the nature of power and law gets enacted. K’s flight from a planned to a lived space allows him to escape the nets of law, to a silent turning away from the glare of a regimented and
discursive social space and bringing about his own version of space and geography. By doing so, Michael K subverts what is essentially a violent history of containment initiated by the laws of apartheid.

In this work also, Coetzee’s observations on the pastoral genre and the implications of the farm as geographical space is enlightening. In *Countries of the Mind*, Dick Penner points to Coetzee’s considerable “interest in and erudition concerning the farm in history and in fiction” (1990: 100). Coetzee acknowledges the pastoral as a genre with the potential to engage with questions of land, and the politics of the land. In elaborating the significance of the *plaasroman* in Coetzee's novels one must acknowledge that farm stories provide the author with a medium to develop understandings besides physical, of the social, cultural and political hues of the South African landscape. How the pastoral developed over time and in particular the way the tradition developed in South Africa may be examined to really understand Coetzee’s concerns with this form as its reverberations are felt in all the three texts under consideration.

The pastoral set in an idyllic rural environment celebrated the pleasures of rural life and is often represented as a garden. In South Africa it came to be represented by the farm. The South African farm novel or the *plaasroman* usually by white writers is nostalgic and looks back to an idyllic time of the European imperialists on the farm. The landed gentry usually constituted of the English society reflected a growing consciousness, albeit benign, of the idle ease of consumption as opposed to labouring for sustenance. The role of Christianity which was combined with classical myth further reinforced this myth of the estate as
Eden, bountiful and generous to all who subsisted on it. The land was primarily sanctified through those who owned and controlled it, namely the European imperialists. The pastoral in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England as in South Africa excised the role of indigene labour and the working classes from the rural economy, society and landscape. In the twentieth century, in South Africa, the pastoral, and literature generally, reflected the issues of the day. Land held commercial as well as sentimental value. Race and labour, together with land, became significant symbols of class and identity. Coetzee locates the South African pastoral tradition as a problematic encounter with history and colonization. The disturbing realities of land and labour, questions of justice and power, questions of legal succession and personal relations between masters and servants are what Coetzee chooses to address in his interpretation of the pastoral form, something rarely visible in other white writings.

The *plaasroman* genre, with its central image of the garden as the essence of innocence, of the so called Eden of domesticity, is briefly visible in K’s tending of the garden in the Visagie estate. It is the same peace the Namaquas experienced before the advent of the European settlers. The farm in *Disgrace*, where the central action takes place, is initially viewed as the embodiment of benign pastoral serenity by the city dweller David. In the Visagie farm when Michael K spreads the ashes of his mother, fertilizing the ground to plant his pumpkin seeds, he “begins his life as a cultivator” (59), a totally new and alien experience for him. Farm to him is a world where the “stubby pumpkin leaves push through
the earth, one here, one there; where the water washes the field, turning the earth dark” (63).

It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature …. The impulse to plant had been re-awoken in him; now …. He found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there. (59)

This is Michael K, the dispossessed, landless, historically oppressed indigene’s inscription on the land — an imprint etched on land with the help of his progeny of fruits. An instance that can be seen as reclamation of the ‘Eden’ that is Africa by its native inhabitant. Here, K is trying to reaffirm the bond between the soil and the life it brings forth. By engaging with the land as a cultivator and living life on his own terms Michael K, the indigene can for a time transcend the historical and political narrative which throughout threatens to enmesh him in his motherland. Coetzee, through K articulates the sustaining and nurturing value of earth, which only an indigene can discover and experience. In defining his existence through tending the garden, K is actually giving shape to resistance against the discourse of oppression. At a later stage, the Medical Officer who treats K at the camp believes that the crop of melons and pumpkins Michael K has nurtured on the patch of land is virtually the “bread of freedom” (163–64), “a food that no camp could supply”(146).

K’s garden is presented by Coetzee as a sanctuary that keeps the idea of freedom alive. In gardening, in cultivating and tilling the land and
making it bloom with the toil of one’s labour and resourcefulness, the indigene can discover his minimal yet irreducible sense of self and freedom. Nadine Gordimer (1998), in her essay titled “The Idea of Gardening” reiterates this:

Because enough men had gone off the war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over; whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children. (144)

K emerges as a man of the earth, an agriculturist as his ancestors had been like, and his heart’s desire is to go on affirming his identity with the land.

Although K is positioned as ‘other’ by the state and history, Coetzee chooses not to cast Michael in the role of freedom fighter, as a guerilla, but rather to set up a 'rivalry' to the historical process by creating an allegorical myth in which he is able to resist the forces of history by keeping 'the Idea of Gardening' alive, as a cultivator of his native land. Through the use of strategic silence and the personal 'awakening' in his own garden space, K. (for a time at least) is a free man, outside the sphere of colonial history. With reference to Michael K, Gallagher suggests that:

... his story provides a prophetic guideline for the new order that will emerge from the ravages of the war. In keeping alive "the idea of gardening," Michael posits a new history for his land. (160)
It is the history of the sense of belonging to the land, a feeling so different from the minority whites’ pride in the possession and ownership of land. This is the material space elaborated by Henry Lefebvre in *Production of Space*. The sense of belonging opens up the space of experience and of perception to physical touch and sensation. These material realities entailed by the vegetative and mineral world are then abstractly represented by the ruling class through words, graphs, maps, diagrams, pictures etc. By highlighting K’s intense sense of belongingness to land, Coetzee exposes simultaneously the Afrikaner’s transactions with the land based primarily on mere legal possession of property and the maintenance of existing social relations.

K has a dislike for fences and borderlines and the repressive apartheid structures they symbolize, preferring open and smooth spaces to striated ones. To Michael K, free at last on the vast arid plains of the Karoo, land takes on a pan-African, space-for-all ideal in which all space exists as one undivided whole. Michael K envisions an African landscape so empty “it was not hard to believe at times that his was the first foot ever to tread on a particular inch of earth” (97). Coetzee criticizes the policy whereby the colonizers through a process of fencing in farms, and forcing of nomadic hunters off the land set the historic power relations of dominance in motion. The African landscape on which humans and nature co-exist was disturbed by the aggression of the colonial cultivators. Coetzee also seems to be hinting that, when people are systematically alienated from their 'own' space to wander about without a place of their own within the 'colonial' landscape and the process of
othering,’ alienation, dispossession and marginalisation sets in, resistance and protest are naturally bound to surface.

K, who consciously and deliberately removes himself from the active, revolutionary processes at work is able to wander on his journey across farmland unimpeded by the fences framing each pocket of the colonial space. A striking fact that he notices as he crisscrosses the Karoo is that the fences are constantly being repaired. This is no doubt, a hint at the white settler’s ongoing compulsion to reinstate and reaffirm boundaries and maintain borders.

In apartheid South Africa detention camps are all about injustice and the gross violation of human rights. This iniquitous system is the byproduct of apartheid reflecting the racist assumption that certain people are less human than others. White colonial rulers in South Africa set aside almost eighty seven percent of the best land for themselves. They wanted the labor of the majority indigenous Black population, but viewed Black Africans as a “demographic problem” whose numbers and movements had to be strictly controlled. European settlers wanted the land of South Africa for themselves, but they needed the labor of the indigenous population. Black workers were forced to live in “townships” or labor camps and earn only a fraction of the wages paid to White workers. The government controlled the movement of Black people and eventually “Coloreds” by making them carry passes which determined where they could live, work and travel. If they were found in the “wrong place,” they would be arrested. In the 1950s, laws divided the thirteen percent of the land that Whites had reserved for Black people into ten African “homelands” or Bantustans. An agenda of the apartheid system
was to deprive the natives of the majority area and confine them to these fragmented and impoverished “homelands.” It is against these painful historical realities of apartheid South Africa that we should read Michael K’s impressions and experiences of the camps as spaces of confinment.

Camps as heterotopic spaces appear in different forms. A camp, in a sense is a form of human settlement. It may take the form of concentration camps, of ghettos, as refugee camps or as transit areas for asylum seekers or illegal immigrants. In all these cases, we can see that this particular heterotopic space arises when the civil society gets suspended. The camp is in short, a space outside the nomos, a space that is not like a prison, an extension/institution of the law, but rather a space that is extra-territorial to the nomos, a space where the law is suspended. The camp is, in other words, the situation in which the division between private and public is suspended. It is the space where the city is annihilated and the citizen reduced to bare life. Today, we see such situations arise around us in the figure of the illegal immigrant, and in the extralegal/post-human-right status of the inmates of Guantanamo. In the urban landscape we observe the rise of similar ‘terrain vagues’ and twilight zones, such as the camp sites where ‘fourth-world’ people dwell in a ‘permanently nomadic’ situation. In that respect both camp and heterotopia are two phases and faces of the after-life of a ‘welfare’ state.

In *Life and Times*, we find K spending virtually the major part of his life in camps. K’s is the story of an individual’s life in an era fraught with conflict and confinement. Indeed, K’s life can be defined as a series of encounters with the persistent and invasive onslaught of power in its various guises to control the right of freedom and movement. For
example, after Huis Norenius, during his journey to Prince Albert and, then, in his evasion of the authorities, K faces a constellation of actual or concrete structures of confinement, such as the Stellenbosch, Anna K’s room under the stairs at the Côte d’Azur, forced labour at Touws River, the Jakkalsdrif resettlement camp, and the rehabilitation camp at Kenilworth. These camps or confinements can all be read as manifestations or embodiments of the military, the police, and the government, and even medical personnel’s wielding of state power and the control of social and personal space.

Michael K’s life is thus represented as intricately entwined with the conditions of apartheid and its forms of confinement. At the novel’s conclusion, K mentions the manner in which apartheid has divided the landscape into a variety of camps:

Now they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and people with little heads, camps for people with no visible means of support, camps for people chased off the land, camps for people they find living in storm-water drains, camps for street girls, camps for people who can’t add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night. Perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all the camps at the same time. Perhaps that is enough of an achievement, for the time being. How
many people are there left who are neither locked up nor standing guard at the gate? (249)

As suggested by this meditation on the confined state of being and life that accompanies times of apartheid and civil strife, *Life and Times of Michael K* does indeed tell ‘the story of a life lived in cages.’ In reading the novel, the reader accompanies K through and consequently delimits a variety of concrete and conceptual spaces, some of which resemble confined cages, others, contained enclosures. It appears, therefore, that the novel is saturated with images of confinement, as well as of containment. Through the life of Michael K, the reader is made to reflect on the question of how a life and the history of a race, is subjected to perpetual imprisonment in a variety of concrete and conceptual spaces.

If in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ and *Life and Times* Coetzee contemplates the South Africa of the time of its emergence from centuries of colonialism and settler racism, *Disgrace* portrays South Africa as a complex society wrestling with the aftermath of apartheid in the late nineteen nineties. In the British press, *The Guardian* describes *Disgrace* as ‘a dark meditation on the new South Africa’. Quoting Gerald Kaufman, chair of the 1999 Booker Prize judging panel, the article reports that *Disgrace* was “the most beautifully written, most beautifully constructed novel” of the six short listed, and the perfect millennial book in that, it rounded off the colonial era and showed how the balance of power had shifted. In the new post apartheid Africa, there is a complete reversal of roles and redefinitions of social space as Blacks usurp the white hegemony. As new definitions of social space emerge, power
relations manifest themselves through the tussle for ownership of land between the minority whites and the Blacks.

Under Nelson Mandela, the legal system of racial segregation called apartheid had ended officially by the early nineteen nineties, but South Africa was still dealing with the lingering effects of such social architecture. Farm space as land becomes a violently contested boundary in post apartheid South Africa — a site where the repercussions of the erstwhile laws of the apartheid are still enacted and contested. Farm as geographical space becomes an instrument for interpreting the new South Africa as, in the new dispensation, the redefined territorialization of space illuminates instances of new territorializations of power. Indeed, land possession and land restitution seems to be the key issues under the new regime. For the blacks, the issue is not about how to domesticate the land which they already know, but rather how to reinstate themselves on the land; not as marginalised figures as demonstrated in earlier versions of South African literature, but as fully-rounded characters in their own right. Disgrace reconfigures the concept farm in the context of the South African reality by subverting the structures of space and place postulated by the pastoral farm novel. The farm presented in Disgrace is a historically contested space in which the reality of the consequences of colonialism and apartheid are brought to the fore. In examining the significance of land in new post apartheid South Africa, the argument takes up the claims on land projected by Lucy, a white settler woman, and Petrus, the black indigene.

Though the African National Congress under Nelson Mandela came to power in 1994, life in post- apartheid South Africa was by no
Chapter 2

means idealized. As can be gleaned from the several reports in the media, violence increased significantly in the country. Incidents of car stealing and rape increased, and many commercial white farmers either emigrated or gave up farming because of violence committed against them. The changing landscape prompted many of the wealthier South Africans to move into gated communities. Lucy’s farm in Eastern Cape Province is a microcosm of the new South Africa. Pockets of prime land are still in the possession of the minority whites as an uneasy calm reigns over the land. People like the German settler Ettinger in Disgrace have fortified their farms with barbed electric fences and alarm systems. It is clear that the old systems of control in South Africa are eroding. The whites now find themselves in the same situation that the blacks faced till a decade back. Disgrace deals with this changed reality foregrounding land as the central point where the racial tensions are played out.

The metropolitan city space and contemporary rural suburbs of South Africa figure in Disgrace. Both the city and countryside of post apartheid Africa in the nineteen nineties are decolonized but not apolitical spaces; racial tensions run very high as the legacy of apartheid still haunt South African politics and society. The question which animates Disgrace is whether post apartheid South Africa will in fact allow an untroubled pastoralism to emerge. A new era has arrived, Coetzee seems to contend, and it is an era, not just of political reform and of land restitution but also of retribution and reconciliation.

The plot of the novel progresses from Cape Town to a farm in the Eastern Cape. Coetzee deliberately sets the geographical locale of Disgrace on a “smallholding,” which is, a farm on a small scale, in the Salem area of
the Eastern Province of South Africa. The Eastern Cape border has been a prominent site of historical conflict between white colonists and the indigenous black population. Since the 18th century the region has been associated with resistance against colonial invasion, strife over livestock and boundaries, and most notably, disputes over control of land. Gareth Cornwell in “Disgraceland: History and the Humanities in Frontier Country” points out that, ironically, Salem — the name of the area on the Eastern Cape border where Lucy's smallholding is situated — means “peace.” The contradictory implications of this name are intensified by the fact that Salem is not an invented place but a real one. Furthermore Salem has much historical and symbolical significance as the nine Frontier Wars between the British and the Xhosa people were fought in this region in the 19th century. Coetzee, it seems, has chosen his locale wisely.

The weekly market at Salem where Lucy sells flowers offers an open frontier of decolonized space. Structured racial paradigms are not visible among the stall holders as whites and the indigene share market space. While Lucy has washed potatoes and flowers to sell, the native Koos and Miems display a variety of typical Boer kitchen products and anonymous African women have "milk, masa, butter to sell" (71). While the wares of the whites come from the settler farms, the latter group sells goods from rural villages. But this democratic space belies the realities of contemporary South Africa. The time-honored associations attached to the terms “country” and “city” are destabilized as Lucy and her father David will soon discover: the idea of the country as a place of moral simplicity, from which a critique of the city may be staged, is upset and rendered untenable in the new dispensation. Nor does it become possible any longer for whites to view the
city as the locus of progress and the country as the locus of the “backward, nostalgic glance” of the pastoral mode.

Coetzee thus situates Lucy’s small holding firmly in a history of conflict. Her land becomes a subversive and liminal space where the legacy of the white "pastoral" farmer and his lineage is erased and overwritten with the legacy of the dispossessed indigene and exposing itself in the process as a site of both social transformation and power struggles.

In Lucy’s smallholding Petrus, the black indigene helps her cultivate the land. What David Lurie calls "the old landliche way of life" (113) is not to be found in this post-apartheid South African space. David, refers to his daughter as a "sturdy young settler" (61) and "a frontier farmer of the new breed" (62), initially taken in by the pastoral rhythms of life on the farm. To his city bred eyes harmony seemed to be in the air. Lurie’s romanticization of his daughter’s role as cultivator of the land reflects an objectifying European notion of the pastoral, of rural landscape as endemic to the breed of colonialism in South Africa. But Lucy senses a different Africa, the reality of which is of a quite different order. She refutes the traditional definition of what a farm is and what it means to farm when once she declares "Stop calling it the farm, David. This is not a farm; it's just a piece of land where I grow things" (200). To borrow the description of the Karoo farm in Life and Times of Michael K, Lucy wishes to make of her smallholding a "pocket outside time" (82), to erase the memories of colonial and apartheid history. Unlike David who initially entertains patriarchal notions of white superiority, Lucy is sensitive to the scarred history of apartheid and hopes to transcend the
binaries of living in South Africa by establishing an equal and friendly relationship with the society around her. It is her desire to consciously resist the ideologically laden implications of the farm and open up the concept of farm to new possibilities of alternative definitions and interpretations, more befitting. In her interactions with Petrus, initially in the role of settler-owner and later as co-proprietor and finally as a peasant, a ‘bywoner,’ living and working on land owned by a black man we find a reflection of the changing equations of power and the remapping of geographical spaces in post apartheid South Africa.

The ways in which Lucy and Petrus treat the farm in the narrative vary. Whereas Lucy seeks to establish a less proprietorial, more reciprocal relationship in the sharing of land with Petrus, the latter’s interactions are coloured by the memory of the colonial history of dispossession of land. The new generation Petrus understands the erstwhile colonialism as a spatial and geographical enterprise, one whereby the South African spaces were dispossessed and stripped of their preceding significations and then rechartered according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration. The mission for this new generation representative is clear. He must undo the wrongs of the past by using land as an exploitable resource. The new black peasantry is scheming, efficient and modern — very “unlike Africa” in Lurie’s stereotypical conception. Petrus, privileged with his Land Bank grant and founder’s ambitions, savors the term “forward-looking.”

In his first appearance, Petrus would seem to be a representative of the countryside. David immediately notices his physical features: "A lined, weathered face; shrewd eyes. Forty? Forty five?" (51). With a face
that's lined by the outdoors, it's hard to tell exactly how old he is.” Petrus introduces himself to David in terms of his occupation, which is comprised of distinctly rural duties: "I look after the dogs and I work in the garden. Yes…I am the gardener and the dog-man." He reflects for a moment. "The dog-man," he repeats, savouring the phrase. (55) Although Petrus's speech and appearance parodies the imperial way of seeing Africans, he has chalked out his own strategy to acquire legal title of Lucy’s land. What is clear in this description is that Coetzee focuses on Petrus’s "intentions and behaviour," his "historical role as a paysan, peasant, a man of the country" (117) as well as his historical mission of becoming a landowner rather than on any crude racial stereotypes. Lucy describes her relationship with Petrus in terms that are nominally divested of power, that is, as her "assistant" and "co-proprietor" (62). Later, she says that she is unable to "order Petrus about" because "[h]e is his own master" (114). For Petrus, farm is a site entrenched in the issues of race, racism and race relations and as such he poses a ‘danger’ to white people like Lucy and David.

Lucy is realistic about the new social, political and topological spaces she has to accede to Petrus. She notes:

He got a Land Affairs grant earlier this year, enough to buy a hectare and a bit from me. I didn't tell you? The boundary line goes through the dam. We share the dam. Everything from there to the fence is his… By Eastern Cape standards he is a man of substance. (16)
Through the land transfer from Lucy, Petrus becomes an example of the changing opportunities for blacks in South Africa after the apartheid years. David, a white patriarch, seems uncomfortable with this shift of power. In fact, the shift of power dynamics, of the inversion of the racially determined master–slave relationship, is one of the more important issues in the novel that Petrus helps to illuminate.

David, as the tenure of his stay with his daughter lengthens, is compelled to assist Petrus in the performance of tasks in the farm, instead of the other way around: "Petrus has emptied the concrete storage dam and is cleaning it of algae. It is an unpleasant job. Nevertheless, he offers to help"(119). David is forced to acknowledge here the "historical piquancy" (77) of the situation, which is exemplified even more when the African requests David to help him fit a regulator. While doing so, David realizes what Petrus expects of him: "Petrus needs him not for advice on pipefitting or plumbing but to hold things, to pass him tools — to be his handlanger, in fact" (136). Petrus' role thus changes from that of labourer or "dog-man" (64) to that of "bywoner," and from there develops to that of co-owner and neighbour, and ultimately to that of owner. The role reversals are incidences that "happen[s] every day, every hour, every minute ... in every corner of the country" (98). Land and its possession indeed play a crucial role in determining the new contours of South Africa. By giving Petrus authority, Coetzee comments on the new power structures that are being forcefully emphasized in South Africa. The writer also breaks away from the literary tradition of the South African pastoral in which black people were portrayed by the Afrikaner writer as a mere ‘shadowy presence’ with only minor tasks to perform on the farm.
on which the white Afrikaner was the ruler. By foregrounding the racist attitudes and the manner in which the white minority population retained power and authority vis à vis the blacks in South Africa during the apartheid years in the form of a binary opposition is also hinted at here in the Petrus- Lucy- David triangular relationship.

Lucy's smallholding is portrayed as temporarily idyllic: flowers are in bloom, the aromas of baking waft through the house, and Lucy seems to fulfill the myth of a 'return to the farm.' Her intension is to farm the land ‘properly’ as ‘she had fallen in love with the place.’ To David, Lucy is ‘no longer a child playing at farming but a solid countrywoman, a boervrou’ (60). She has created a simple rural life for herself making a living growing flowers and vegetables for a Saturday market; she also runs boarding kennels for dogs. This pastoral paradise however is a false idyllic state as this African space is heavily laden with historical implication. “In the old days, cattle and maize. Today, dogs and daffodils” is how David sees the new Africa. On this new South African reality David’s observations are really unnerving. When David voices his concern that Lucy is alone on the smallholding an intriguing dialogue ensues which throws the narrative forward into 'real' historical time:

There are the dogs. Dogs still mean something. The more dogs, the more deterrence. Anyhow, if there were to be a break-in, I don't see that two people would be better than one.

That's very philosophical. "Yes. When all else fails, philosophize." But you have a weapon.
I have a rifle. I’ll show you. I bought it from a neighbour. I haven’t ever used it, but I have it. (60)

The farm, no doubt, is vulnerable to the violence occurring in other parts of post-apartheid South Africa. Lucy’s declaration that ‘dogs still mean something’ point to the volatile atmosphere in South Africa. All these dogs are watchdogs. Lucy refers to “working dogs on short contracts,” a duty she undertakes at the farm. There is also the occasional pet in between, especially in the summer, but it is clear that Lucy earns most of her money with dogs that are predominantly used for the protection of Whites and their property against the dangers the new South Africa delivers. In another instance, Lucy describes dogs as “part of the furniture, part of the alarm system” (78), which further manifests the main purpose of dogs in South Africa.

Historically, dogs have been introduced by the Europeans to South Africa, who brought them in for home and family protection. The Boerboel, a dog who has been “bred and employed” in South Africa since 1652, has “traditionally been used for homestead defense, against intruders both two and four-legged.” Without a doubt, the homes defended by these and other dogs were or still are not those that belong to the Blacks of South Africa but are instead those of Whites such as Lucy or her even more careful neighbour Ettinger. The latter one secures his property (or better, “fortress”) by bars, security gates, a perimeter fence (113) and never goes anywhere without his Beretta (100). Another proof for this reading of dogs can be found in a statement by David, who, while digging graves for Lucy’s dead dogs, states that dogs (in South Africa) are bred “to snarl at the mere smell of a black man” (110).
In the new South Africa, violence is released in new ways, and David Lurie and his daughter Lucy become its victims. As Lucy gets raped by three unidentified black assailants the whole tenuously created goodwill gestures at the farm gets upset. This “forward looking lady” refuses to report the racially motivated crime to the authorities and maintains a studied silence. In a conversation with David soon after the farm attack, Lucy makes the distinction between “another time … another place” and the particular post-apartheid space the characters inhabit, in order to explain to David why she refuses to report the rape to the police. “In another time, another place [what happened to me] might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not” (112).

In her refusal to abandon the farm after this bodily violation, is to be read the commitment Lucy makes to the farm as home, as the site of her labour. It also demonstrates her ultimately insecure ownership of the place she considers her home. The battle between the races is clear as the reclamation of land takes on ugly dimensions. In the annals of colonialism, the expropriation of the land has been reiteratively characterized through sexual registers — virgin territory, penetration, rape. The process of colonisation is here reversed as Petrus and his cohorts employ the same techniques of intimidation adopted by Jacobus Coetzee against the Bushmen in the eighteenth century. Though she disconnects herself from the lofty pastoral vision of the farm by insisting that it is “just a piece of land where [she] grow[s] things,” we find that Lucy has a love for the land that matches the intensity the indigene has for the same physical space. Her attachment to the land does not falter
even as her existence and stability is being threatened by this physical assault.

In the wake of his attack and Lucy’s rape, David urges Lucy to go to Holland to escape the physical threat and underlying racial tensions that they have encountered. Lucy, however, resists, accepting such a threat as part of her existence:

Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level …. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. (205)

Lucy thus demonstrates her ties to the land despite her violent experiences, her willingness to work from the bottom to create a home out of the site she has inhabited for quite a while. The farm, for white settlers like Lucy has lost its status as retreat and refuge, for it has proven not only a setting for physical threat but also the unlikely site of racial tension. It will remain so in this new South Africa for “people no longer European, not yet African” (11). In *White Writing*, Coetzee recognizes the tension between Pastoral as retreat and Pastoral as home. Whereas the pastoral symbolizes retreat in Romantic literature, which previous white South African literature seeks to emulate, it historically constitutes home for black South Africans. With the end of apartheid, however, and the coexistence of black and white South Africans in equal political standing, comes a shift in the portrayal of pastoral. The pastoral no longer equals retreat for white South Africans but ideally becomes home, alongside that of black South Africans though racial tensions continue to complicate the
notions of retreat versus home, as illustrated through the different experiences of Lucy, David, and Petrus.

The threat of losing the land — and therefore also one's sense of self--alluded to by the pastoral farm novel, becomes a reality in *Disgrace* when Lucy concedes to sign the land over to Petrus and become a "tenant .... A bywoner" (204) on land which she owned. Having accepted Petrus’ ‘deal,’ Lucy hands over not just the title deeds but also agrees to a marriage of convenience and the rights to her unborn child to him in exchange for his protection. Property, security, freedom, personal rights — all become entwined in this issue of land as space. Since land ownership in South Africa remains much as it did in the final years of the apartheid; the white population (14% of the population) owning around 85%, Lucy’s landless state is not indicative of an actual change in land tenure patterns in South Africa following the 1994 elections. Perhaps Lucy has been able to develop a relationship with the land which is not based on personal private ownership. Nowhere do these forces, the deprivations of the past, the ideological sustenance of the present and the anticipations for the future collide so meaningfully as in the bleak buildings on the Eastern Cape border: in the dog kennels, at the market and, most importantly, on the divided smallholding. It is here where past, present and future are grappling awkwardly with one another as Lucy and the historic *bywoner*, now co-owner, Petrus, battle unequally in their new relations to each other. In the changing dispensation, after all, Lucy's last resort is Petrus' new beginning: the slow dying and recasting of liberal virtues, the birth of the black land-owning class.
In *Disgrace* there is no united ‘Rainbow nation’ to be found. For Petrus, the idea of protecting his family and his people stands above the law and thus above a law-system the Whites, or Westerners, have imported to South Africa. Petrus does not even try to understand the way in which a Western society works, as we can see in statements uttered by him concerning the rape. Also, even though he probably knows quite well which members of “his family” were involved in the incident, he states that it is his job to keep the peace and that “we can leave it to the police to investigate and bring “the boy and his friends to justice” (137). Of course, he probably knows that the police do not stand a chance without any cooperation from the public, but this does not matter to him as he probably rejects the whole concept of the police in the first place. In the David – Petrus - Lucy triangle of relationship the reader once again comes across the reversed situation, as blacks dictate their own terms over what is theirs by birthright. This story gets transmuted in Coetzee’s hands as he raises various questions that prove South Africa to be still a dystopia despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The empowerment of the blacks and the repossess of land coincide with the decline of white patriarchal power.

In South Africa, the affairs of the land are still is affected by the history of apartheid mentality and policy. Society is no longer legally confined to what Coetzee once referred to as “vertical intercourse,” or the giving and receiving of orders between masters and serfs, but decades under such a structure has produced the socio-economic and spatial disparity.
Chapter 2

South Africa is in many ways a traumatized, divided country. In terms of land, in terms of people it is a fractured society, split from within. In many instances the native is a tenant on his own land. When a native is colonized, he loses, not just his land; he is stolen of his life, his freedom, his peace of mind and his future plans. Through the representation of land as physical space, the analysis finds Coetzee bringing to the forefront the split and fractured nature of the South African landscape. The writer highlights the intersection of space and colonial ideology as a prominent element of the way land is valued and negotiated in South Africa.

All the three works participate in and comment on the contested nature of material space. There is a re-appropriation of the complex nature of physical space as land gets encoded and decoded. Space as urban and rural, as open and closed, colonized and decolonized, still imprisoned and clinging to the misery and antiquity of the colonial past is depicted by Coetzee. Coetzee finds the South African space as fractured and contested as the relationship between ideology and physical space constantly shifts, contracts and expands. He is all too aware of the all encompassing privilege enjoyed by the settler white minority, the virtual utopia they have created for themselves in the gated communities that keep away the blacks.

Always arising as a corollary to this Utopia is the dystopia evolved over the centuries — the random massive pass raids of the contemporary times; the mass shootings and killings; mass economic exploitation and the sprawling monotony of life in African locations that are pictures of poverty and oppression. These two opposite but mutually
inclusive spaces exist, as Coetzee notes, not next to, but across one another. They are present in the same space at the same time. The land seems to shift and buckle as rival ideologies/ topographies engage one another in the same space, at the same time.

Coetzee’s texts also relates to the issues around land reclaims and violence on farms in South Africa. They are issues where the claims of the settler's entitlement directly confront the demands of the equally entitled but excluded 'native,' with violent results. Land thus opens up a space where history, geography and ideology intertwine in distinct and unique ways. Coetzee has many times tried to shake off the label of “South African author” and all the assumptions it entails, yet can he in some sense be regarded as a regional writer, a writer in and of the Cape? As suggested by ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ Life and Times and Disgrace, it is a question which simultaneously tempts and resists.