In the arena of cultural studies, the meaning of the body is equivocal, often ambiguous, sometimes evasive, and always contested by those who attempt to understand more fully its meaning. Philosophers from ancient Greece to the postmodernists have been preoccupied with attempting to understand and define the body. The body has been presented as an inter-play of opposites; it is simultaneously subject and object, physical and psychical, individual and social, ‘inner’ and ‘outer.’ It is also both active and passive, performing actions, engaging in events and having actions performed upon it. The distinction between what the body is and what it is not has become blurred. It thus becomes difficult to speak of the body as a clearly definable or locatable entity and delineate distinctly what lies outside and inside its boundaries.

Nevertheless, it can be said that bodies are at the core of the experience of the geographies humans inhabit. We live our life as embodied creatures, feeling, sensing and thinking through the body. Our relationships to space, place and land is inescapably shaped by the kind of bodies we have. It is through the body that we relate to other people and the world about us.

In the social world, it is impossible to separate our bodies from who we are and what we do. At all levels — individual, relational,
cultural — we can see that something as apparently ‘personal’ and ‘natural’ as the body is also intensely ‘social.’ Connections thus exist among the individual body, personal identity, and the social world. Introducing the question of space into ways in which we seek to speak about body in literature confronts us with issues of physical and social bodies. These bodies are ‘constructed’ so that there is what is called the ‘politics of the body.’ Michel Foucault, for instance, speaks of the production of ‘docile’ bodies by means of disciplinary apparatuses. Foucault (1984: 83) also notes that the body can be viewed as both “an inscribed surface of events” and an inscriber itself on its own and other surfaces. Several works of Coetzee can be seen to expose a body imprinted by history demonstrating the process of history’s intrusion of the body. In Coetzee, the body and its experiences involve a complex, multifaceted embodiment – embodiment at the level of human subjective experience, interaction, social organization, institutional arrangements, cultural processes, society, and history. Bodies thus become spaces where conflict arises, where, for instance, one comes face to face with the Other from whom one is trying to separate oneself.

The idea of the body as a significant site/space on which politics is played out and made manifest is a dominant theme of postcolonial discourse. In “J.M. Coetzee: Writing with/out Authority,” Fiona Probyn observes that Coetzee is able to ground his explorations of textuality and postcolonialism in the body, which is recognized as a politicized space or site of oppression and resistance. In many novels of Coetzee, it can be seen, the body plays a determining role; in fact its presence in Coetzeean writing is continuous and heavily significant. David Attwell’s
J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing (1993) illustrates Coetzee’s design to write South Africa in the broader context of postcolonial literature and general historical theory explaining how Coetzee creates a “politics of agency” (3). This ‘politics of agency’ is of course the narrative subject and his /her body. According to Barbara Eckstein, Coetzee belongs to a line of writers such as Adrienne Rich and Milan Kundera who ‘place the body at the centre of their political and literary thinking’ (1990: 181).

In Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews, Coetzee, in an interview with literary critic David Attwell, addresses the recurrence of the theme of the body in his fiction:

If I look back over my own fiction, I see a simple standard erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not ‘that which is not’ and the proof that is the pain it feels.' The body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trails of doubt. In South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. It is not possible, not for logical reason, not for ethical reasons …, but for political reasons, for reasons of power….It is not that one grants the authority of the suffering body: the suffering body takes the authority: that is its power. To use other words: its power is undeniable. (248)

In this passage, Coetzee characterizes the role of the body in his fiction in two ways. First the body is the “simple … standard” of his fictional texts, and second, the body is that which, through the experience of pain,
counters “the endless trials of doubt” — doubt as to the materiality of its existence. The body, thus, is the standard, whose materiality is proven by the pain it experiences. The pain it feels, “is evidence of the body’s existence.” The sensation of pain promises the materiality of body and explains the ubiquity of acts of violence in Coetzee’s fiction. To challenge the norm and write the history of a nation into the body is to describe physical pain. Coetzee thus seem to endorse the corporality of the body. He also transforms the body with its pain into a text that tells the history of South Africa, its regimes of repression and the new political equation that is emerging.

This discussion moves beyond seeing the body simply as a biological object to recognizing the importance of bodies in our lived experience of the world, in this case, imperialism/colonialism and its consequences in South Africa over the centuries. Body becomes a spatial construction upon which is performed various discourses. The vulnerable, mortal body becomes an agency: the skin and the flesh expose the body not only to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to acts of violence. In times of political conflict, like the apartheid years in South African history and earlier periods, it is the material body as flesh and blood that suffers and makes history. Imprisonment, torture, rape, abuse, injury, starvation, control, and genocide are variations on what touches the body irrespective of colour, under oppressive regimes. Under apartheid, black bodies were — among other things — segregated, disenfranchised, shot, imprisoned, and sometimes killed in detention. This reality gets reflected in Coetzee’s presentation of bodies in ‘The
Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ the second novella of *Dusklands, Life and Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace.*

These three texts portray body in a colonial/post colonial context. The novels foreground the body as a space in which colonial ideologies get written. South Africa which forms the setting of ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace* is not portrayed as a mere backdrop for the actions of the characters, but is seen to constitute the identities of the characters. This relationship is not one-sided: while the identities of the characters are determined by the spaces they inhabit, their identities in turn affect the way in which they experience their surroundings. This interplay between identity and space may be viewed as a symbiotic relationship, a mutual dependency creating meaningfulness. Master-servant dialect along with self/other relationship dominates in a discussion of the eighteenth century colonial body in Coetzee’s ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.’

Social space in life is never just an empty, neutral extension, but rather a place where bodies are named, demarcated, allocated, influencing identity construction. The marginalized and dispossessed like Michael K living in apartheid times of late twentieth century is an example of this element of naming, demarcation and allocation. The physical violation of the white lesbian Lucy in *Disgrace* demonstrates how the body gets marked by the backlash of historical forces proving body to be a site where politics is played out. Taken together, Coetzee’s projections of the body in these three works find the master-servant, self-other divide of the eighteenth century giving way to a tussle for existentialist identity in terms of the freedom of the individual in the in
the nineteen eighties to a reaffirmation of Black identity in the closing
decades of the late twentieth century. Coetzee has been able to capture
the pulse of South Africa in its many spatial manifestations under
imperialist power through the representations of the body, as ‘The
Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,’ Life and Times of Michael K and
Disgrace will demonstrate.

Discussion of the Coetzeean body, in this thesis is focused along
these lines. It is the body as a social organism in the context of
imperialism that comes up for review. The effort is to find embodied
meaning, particularly political, ideological and historical meaning. In this
context, a definition for embodied spaces as conceived by Thomas
Csordas in Embodiment and Experience becomes relevant. He defines
embodiment as something that is “about culture and experience insofar as
these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being- in the-
world” (1994: 36).

Embodiment as literary strategy is employed by Coetzee to
discuss the political and historical situation of South Africa. Coetzee
speaks through Elizabeth Costello, the eponymous heroine of his novel
by the same name about realism and embodiment:

Realism has never been comfortable with ideas. It could
not be otherwise: realism is premised on the idea that ideas
have no autonomous existence, can exist only in things...characters
give voice to contending ideas and thereby in a
certain sense embody them. (9)
Costello goes on:

The notion of embodying turns out to be pivotal. In such debates [about realism] Ideas do not and indeed cannot float free: they are tied to the speakers by whom they are enounced, and generated from the matrix of individual interests out of which their speakers act in the world. (9)

Indeed, ideas cannot be disassociated from the fleshy substance from whence they come. Thus, reading the embodied selves of Jacobus Coetzee, Michael K, Lucy or David Lurie, we come to get an account of South Africa and of the writer’s leanings.

Violence and racism are characteristic of imperialism and colonialism. A politically charged concept, imperialism is synonymous with domination, subjugation, or the exercise of control over the body by coercion. It may manifest itself through heinous acts like physical violation or torture. It has a strong association with Foucault’s notions of power and the use of power. It represents both hegemony, in all its forms, as an actual state and striving for the imposition of hegemony. Imperialism, as cultural thinkers have demonstrated, is synonymous with colonial expansion and colonial rule over non-European people using the instruments of force and ideology. Imperialist ideology is often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. In the Western world, this led to a form of proto-social Darwinism that placed white people at the top of the animal kingdom ‘naturally’ in charge of dominating non-European indigenous populations. Settlers often acted as surrogates of colonial...
power under the sway of this ideology. Often immediate authority was exercised by the nominees of colonial power. ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ can be taken as a case study to demonstrate how the colonial ideology of the purported ‘superiority’ of the white race determined the constitution of body spaces with disastrous consequences for the indigenous people of eighteenth century South Africa.

Colonial conceptions of space and people was premised on the Cartesian logic that foregrounded the fantasy of an autonomous master-subject — often European and male — inhabiting a position outside of discourse in the ‘monarch of all I survey’ mode. The positional authority of this master-subject was constituted by the division of the world into subject and object with all the dualisms involved in the process, for instance, civilized/savage and mind/matter. In colonial discourse, the demarcation of social and cultural landscape went hand in hand with the creation of new subjects, subjectivities and duties. The body, in the process, was either placed or displaced in this encounter. In the colonial appropriation of space it is identity that risks being lost, as the imposition of an absolute threatens to oppress all it subsumes.

‘The Narrative’ depicting the beginnings of imperialist enterprise in South Africa unfolds through the ruthless pursuits of the elephant hunter turned entrepreneur Jacobus Coetzee, who effects a virtual genocide of the unsuspecting natives he encounters. The innocent and docile bodies of the natives have to weather the megalomaniac propensities of the imperial invader Jacobus. Coetzee’s depiction of the forceful subjugation of the body and thereby a nation, gets told in this novella through the colonial ideology of race, colour and religion. The
subjection of body spaces through cultural and ideological strategem explores the psychological actuality of power in this novella.

Modern European colonization of black Africa was made possible by the use of force in the form of technological superiority, for instance, gun power. But force functioned only as a temporary means of control. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon suggests that in contexts where imperial rule is not reproduced through force alone, the maintenance of colonial hegemony requires the *production* of specific modes of colonial thought, desire and behaviour which implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized body to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination. Colonialism in such instances functioned as a discourse. Colonialism functioned under the assumption that Africa had an inferior culture and Europe represented the only course of progress, whether in Africa or Asia. For the colonialists, power was self-validating. For them, there was only one way of progress, that was technological: only one civilization, that was Europe's; only one religion, that was Christianity. To justify their inhuman acts on the human body, colonialists portrayed Africa as an uncivilized jungle and Africans as akin to wild animals, as apes. The 'primitiveness' of Africa was endorsed also by anthropological Darwinism which in the evolutionary scheme of cultural hierarchy placed African culture at the bottom and Western culture at the top of the scale. It was necessary for the colonialist to present the colonized Other as opposite, negative, inferior and ugly so that exploitation could continue in the guise of bringing ‘light’ to the continent.
Chapter 3

The action in The Narrative’ unfolds through a narrative written by Jacobus Coetzee of his trip deep into the “land of the great Namaquas.” Jacobus Coetzee, during his expedition exhibits all the prejudices of the eighteenth-century Dutch frontier dweller in South Africa, prejudices that allow him to treat the native inhabitants of the country as an inferior, and if necessary expendable, species. Jacobus imagines himself a modern, separate, spectatorial master subject, an omnipotent body with a will of its own. The voice of the imperial explorer we hear in this narrative is full of arrogance, racism, self satisfaction and phony, self-deceived humanistic concern for his native servant Jan Klawer, and a nearly mad sense of his own significance and fury at perceived slights. In order to assert his individuality and his worth as a ‘superior’ human being, the colonizer in Jacobus objectifies and de-individualizes the colonized body of the native. In this way he seeks to transform the identity of the colonized. The discursive apparatuses of religion, education and other means of social control are introduced to establish the myth of white superiority and to justify conquest and legitimatize the continuation of the colonial presence and subjugation of native bodies.

Everything in the novella takes place through Jacobus, and therefore the entire narrative is coloured by his prejudice and deliberate misunderstandings. All natives to Jacobus are savages. The ‘civilized White’ and the ‘savage native’ seem to be his overriding world vision. Jacobus aims to assert his superiority and perpetrates his mantle of power with the help of the tongue, the gun and the Bible. He projects himself as ‘Master’/ ‘Father,’ as the superior self, who controls and thus exploits his environment.
The relationship between subject and object, self and other, the corporeality of the body and the incorporeality of the mind comes up for review in this exposition of the colonized bodies under imperialist domination. Jacobus Coetzee’s interaction with the native people serves to underline the colonial ideology in all respects. This arrogant white man of Dutch descent looks down on all black Africans, believing them to be less intelligent, less spiritual, and even less human than himself. A programme of imposing cultural imperialism is evident in Jacobus Coetzee’s agenda of controlling the body spaces of the other. In the master–servant relationship Jacobus assiduously seeks to maintain with the native in an effort to control their bodies and land, a cultural linguistic programme is charted out. The Hottentots are taught to address him as “Master,” the English language being employed with a view of making them incipient bilingual subjects. Through language and racial alterity, the native is made conscious of his inferior position in a master–servant relationship. The representation of Jacobus’ relations with his Hottentot servants particularly with Jan Klawer, is the first of many treatments in Coetzee’s fiction of the master-servant dynamic aimed at demonstrating how to control and subjugate the body of the other through language. A telling version of the self-other nexus in relation to the body is developed by Jacobus in his relationship with Jan Klawer to maintain supremacy. To perpetuate mastery over the Other, a number of additional issues are raised, among them trust, intimacy, and dependence, issues which the protagonist himself lacks as later events prove.

The deliberate manipulation of language employed by Jacobus Coetzee is imperialist cultural agenda in practice. ‘Us’ and ‘them’ are
terms used to demarcate the division of the White from the Black. These terms are evidences of the belief that ‘us’ (read, the superior White) and ‘them’ (inferior, animal like Black) are very much part of the imperialist ideology. Klawer, the native man servant is in his Master Jacobus’s words an “old-time Hottentot” one of “the breed, now dying, of the old farm Hottentot” (67). Not once but twice he is called “good, faithful old Jan Klawer” (75, 92). Level headed under pressure, willing to fight for justice, yet capable of regularly performing the most intimate of services for his master (supporting him while he empties his bowels into a gourd (77), cleaning the pus from his anal boil (82, 84), he seems an ideal example of the model black servant to Jacobus. When Jacobus waxes philosophical to Klawer, the servant excuses himself for not understanding: “He was only a poor hotnot,’ he said” (81). In this instance we are encouraged to believe that Klawer is acting a part demanded of him as the subservient Other. Klawer the native is presented by Jacobus in the novella as demonstrating his personal values and integrity by remaining loyal when the other servants desert him in Namaqualand. A point in the narration comes when master and servant set off on the arduous journey home after the initial expedition to Namaqualand. Reaching the river which Jacobus has ‘named’ the Great River, Klawer accidentally steps into a hippopotamus hole and is swept into deep water. Of this incident Jacobus comments:

With horror I watched my faithful servant and companion drawn struggling downstream, shouting broken pleas for help which I was powerless to tender him, him whose voice I had never in all my days heard raised, until he
disappeared from sight around a bend and went to his death bearing the blanket roll and all the food. (94)

As we read this sentence we find that ‘Companion’ after all, is part of the self-deceiving rhetoric of mastery, and the parenthetical comment about Klawer’s ‘voice’ is a further sentimentalization of an exploitative master-servant relationship. From the vantage point of this paragraph, the familiar discourse of the servant by means of which we have come to know Klawer — the “good, faithful old Jan Klawer” — is exposed, in retrospect, in all its conventionality as is the real nature and character of the White man.

Language, Foucault states, "can be both an instrument and an effect of power" (Foucault 1976: 101). Any act of language becomes an instrument for manipulation and control, a powerful tool which can create what it represents and, by so doing, becomes complicit in the perpetration of the system's power. Language, in fact, not only creates the other as an unwanted, menacing presence, but also — as Coetzee suggests in ‘The Narrative,’ hides the brutality exercised by power, and "depraves" people, leading them to believe in the myths of black inferiority and of their sub-human status. As Coetzee exemplifies in his novel, the coloniser needs these subject elements in order to have his mastery, his identity and his very existence recognised. Though on a conscious level, he totally rejects any identification and contiguity with the natives, Jacobus, no doubt shares irreconcilable and contradictory feelings of love and hatred towards the "savage breed."
Chapter 3

Jacobus’ certainties about the Hottentot mentality is intended to project the superior self/inferior other philosophy: ‘‘The Hottentot is locked into the present. He does not care where he comes from or where he is going’’ (57–58). Again:

No longer can you get a truthful answer to a simple question, his only study is in how to placate you, and that means little more than telling you what he thinks you want to hear. He does not smile first but waits until you smile. He becomes a false creature. I say this of all tame Hottentots, good ones like Klawer and spoiled ones like Dikkop. They have no integrity, they are actors. (65)

Yet another observation: ‘‘Boredom is a sentiment not available to the Hottentot: it is a sign of higher humanity’’ (85). The story of the hunt for ‘‘spoiled’’ Dikkop, the escaped Khoi servant is prefaced by Jacobus’ as, ‘‘But I know Hottentots’’ (62) and claims that, thanks to his fair but firm hand with the servants, ‘‘they saw me as their father’’ (64). Such claims to knowledge are false, terms which are made intentionally as barriers to knowledge about the indigene. Here we are able to trace mimetically the mental processes of an eighteenth-century colonial adventurer and the devices he sought to exert power and control over the ‘‘docile’’ bodies of the native Other.

The Cartesian split of the body in terms of self and other, is in this manner taken up in the discussion of the body in ‘‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.’ In the Cartesian world view, the other person is not only outside the self but is, moreover, of an essentially different nature.
In Descartes’ view, the mind has access to itself, without the necessity of taking the other person into account. Coetzee was aware that writing about the colonisation of South Africa of the eighteenth century will involve a scrutiny of the gradual constitution of the self/other, master/slave dialectic, a philosophy and ideology that help to squeeze the natives to the margins of humanity. The dialectics of the master/slave and self/other is very much evident in all the actions of Jacobus Coetzee as his interactions with the native ‘savages’ show. To better understand the colonialist agenda of Jacobus Coetzee and how he sought to manipulate and control bodies, an explanation of Hegel’s theory of the master/slave and of the psychology of self/other will also be useful.

The master/slave relationship occupies a relevant and crucial section within Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977: 180). Hegel says that it is not easy to become a ‘Self.’ Every person goes through many stages during his lifetime, stages that constitute the ‘phenomenology of spirit.’ The ‘I’ has the desire for appropriations; it wants to encompass everything. The ‘I’ desires everyone to conform to its Will. Hence the presence of the other becomes an obstacle to its Will. The paradox is that, the Self wants to deny other subjects their subjectivity, yet needs the other subjects to validate the identity of the Self. At the same time, the other wants to deny the Self its subjectivity. The dialectic of the master and the slave is the collision of two wills where both the Wills want to dominate but there can only be one winner. This is the reason for violence, all the subjects fighting for domination and control. The other’s Will is an obstacle to Self’s desire to will. There is an inherent collision in this unstable relationship where both the subjects are trying to prove
there subjectivities. The essence of that subjectivity is the Will. Hence the Self will be willing to sacrifice the Body for the Will to triumph. Eventually the one who will be victorious will be the one who will be willing to do so and the person scared for his life will lose out because of his cowardice and concern for his life. Hegel says that one has to show that one is not afraid of one’s body. The self’s deepest aspiration is to assert its Will. The structure of consciousness is Self centered. This is Hegel’s explanation for the origin of violence in terms of the collision of the Wills for the sake of domination. The violence unleashed by the self on the other can be understood in the light of this explanation.

Coetzee seems to follow Hegel when he claims that the main effect of colonialism is to dehumanise the native; the coherent ‘I’ necessarily produces the "non-human Other.” Because to exist, means to be called into being in relation to an Other in the struggle for recognition s/he enacts. The individual demands and desires the other and its consideration and thus seeks to establish its identity. As Hegel teaches, the Master always needs a Servant in order to be recognised as Master, and it is because of this that the various systems must turn all others into the Other, the one who can endorse their position and acknowledge their identity and Self as dominant.

In many of his novels, Coetzee suggests that the consequences of the power of language can be witnessed in any situation where totalitarian and colonial systems are involved. From the Roman Empire to other oppressive systems such as Fascism and Nazism implicitly invoked through allegory in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, to USA’s involvement in the Vietnam war represented in *The Vietnam Project*, and
from the South Africa described in the second novella of *Dusklands*, to the Tsarist Russia of 1869 reproduced in *The Master of Petersburg*, the "I" of the coloniser turns to these inferior Others in order to be recognised as ‘Master’ and thereby achieve a "superior" identity. The significance of racial alterity in effecting a through division of the body into Self and Other is explored by Coetzee in all these works.

The second method of subjugating the body is theological. The reality that actually propels Jacobus, no doubt, is western mercantile capitalism. To actualize this, the colonizer represents the natives as careless, self indulgent individuals who lack forethought or reflection. The white man on the other hand, is presented as a man who has a life of reason, introspection and faith, one who intervenes, like the Almighty God, to civilize the savage Other. The indigenous people are constructed as moral and cultural inferiors. There are constant references to the moral ‘superiority’ of the Whites in ‘The Narrative.’ “The one gulf that divides ‘us’ from ‘them’ Hottentots is our Christianity. They become Christians too, but their Christianity is an empty word” (57). Although the Hottentots and Boers share similar circumstances and therefore also share a particular way of life, Jacobus states that the main difference between the two groups is Christianity — the Hottentot are Christian while the Boers are not. Even if the Hottentots are converted, their Christianity is nothing but an “empty word.” The Hottentots, Jacobus believes, use Christianity in order to gain favours from the whites:

They will gladly sing you hymns if it means they can spend the rest of Sunday stuffing themselves on your food. For the after life they have no feeling at all… The Hottentot is
locked into the present. He does not care where he comes from or where he is going. (57)

The nature and intensity of belief in God is scrutinised to highlight the ‘superior’ white from the ‘inferior’ other. Jacobus would rather compel himself to view the Hottentots as servants and guides and dependent on him, and at hand at all times. They are mere ‘watchdogs,’ wild sub-human beings, distinguished not by the essence that characterizes ‘higher humanity,’ but by their ‘animal soul.’ Jacobus’ reflections on the Hottentots and Bushmen, originate not from a philosophy of knowledge but from a theory of absolute domination of the Other.

This categorical emphasis on racial, social and cultural difference is then enforced in subsequent descriptions of raids against the Bushmen (58-61) as part of the expansionist agenda of the colonialists. The Bushman, for Jacobus is merely "a wild animal with an animal's soul" (58). Jacobus describes how the white people set traps for the Bushmen, much like they set for animals.

He offers instructions on how to kill them and thus clear the countryside of them:

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.... It will not be difficult to stamp the Bushman out, in time. (58 -61)

The body, seen in terms of Master/savage, also gets measured in spatial, mathematical terms. Cold blooded murder of a human being is described thus:
The relation of master and savage is a spatial relation. The African highland is flat, the approach of the savage across spaces continuous. From the fringes of the horizon he approaches, growing to manhood beneath my eyes until he reaches the verge of that precarious zone in which, invulnerable to his weapons, I command his life. Across this annulus I behold him approach bearing the wilderness in his heart. On the far side he is nothing to me and I probably nothing to him. On the near side mutual fear will drive us to our little comedies of man and man, prospector and guide, benefactor and beneficiary, victim and assassin, teacher and pupil, father and child. He crosses it, however, in none of these characters, but as a representative of that out there which my eye once enfolded and ingested and which now promises to enfold, ingest, and project me through itself as a speck on a field which we may call annihilation or alternatively history. He threatens to have a history in which I shall be a term. Such is the material basis of the malady of the master’s soul. (80-81)

The malady of the master’s soul, the soul of mastery rather than mutuality, has its material basis in a body attached to the prosthesis of gun.

Jacobus also feels that “a bullet is too good for a Bushman,” (60). He speaks of seeing a Bushman tied "over a fire and roasted"(60). The treatment of native women is no different. Unlike the colonists’ daughters who are linked to the white male by “a system of property relationships,”
a “wild Bushman girl is tied to nothing’” (65). This is how Jacobus views the subject of native women:

By connecting yourself to the girl [Dutch] you connect yourself to a system of property relationships. Whereas a wild Bushman girl is tied into nothing, literally nothing. She may be alive but she is as good as dead. She has seen you kill the men who represented power to her, she has seen them shot down like dogs. You have become Power itself now and she nothing, a rag you wipe yourself on and throw away. She is completely disposable. She is something for nothing, free. She can kick and scream but she knows she is lost. That is the freedom she offers, the freedom of the abandoned. She has no attachments, even the well known attachment to life. (65)

A ‘rag’ ‘abandoned’ and without any ‘attachments,’ a literal’ nothing’ something that is ‘as good as dead’. This in a nutshell codifies the colonial body of Coetzee’s world of indigenes. The master – servant ordering of space in terms of the body suggests how Africans and other ‘natives’ have been tabulated and classified by the West throughout colonial history. The colonizer’s strength springs from his belief that he represents civilization and possesses superior power. It is a power that can be used to persuade the native to imitate and obey. It is evident that it is not merely profit making that motivates the colonizer. He is greedy of a certain psychological satisfaction, a perverse affirmation to his individuality, in terms of racial alterity.
The third method adopted by the colonizer to subjugate the body of the other in the wilds of Africa is force with the technical aid of, in this case, the gun. The gun is a very obvious and real instrument of force and Jacobus by an internal poetic logic, imagines what that means:

The instrument of survival in the wild is the gun, but the need for it is metaphysical rather than physical. The native tribes have survived without the Gun. I too could survive in the wilderness armed with only bow and arrow, did I not fear that so deprived, I would perish not of hunger but of the disease of the spirit…. Now that the gun has arrived among them, the native tribes are doomed, not only because the gun will kill them in large numbers but because the yearning for it will alienate them from the wilderness. (80)

The gun is a weapon of domination. The human body can be controlled and checked at will by the use of the gun. The effect of the gun is such that “every territory through which I march with my gun becomes a territory cast loose from the past and bound to the future”(80). Without the gun, and the eye for a camera in the wildness, the trekker would not only be imprisoned in time, but would also be enslaved to space. Jacobus continues:

Savages do not have guns. This is the effective meaning of savagery, which we may define as enslavement to space, as one speaks obversely of the explorer’s mastery of space. (81)
Chapter 3

Jacobus has his own theory about the Gun and what it signifies. He calls it the “metaphysics” of the gun:

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 eye turns, I am all I see. Such loneliness! Not a stone, not a bush, not a wretched provident ant that is not comprehended in this travelling sphere. What is there that is not me? I am a transparent sac with a black core full of images and a gun. (79)

Jacobus considers himself a subject conceived not as an embodied, vulnerable and especially dependant being with a body, but a supreme eye, a transparent sac, its world locked away inside it as a core of images, a Cartesian subject locked up inside itself. The imperial gaze, the initial colonial project of spatial ordering is caught not only in physical delineation and mapping but also in a vision that proclaims the superior Self of the White conqueror.

The body is Self to Jacobus. This self is evident only in the creation of the other. Jacobus Coetzee’s existence is moored in his conception of Self. The gun is viewed as an extension of the self, an appendage to the body. To look, is to shoot — shoot is to kill — To kill means, the shooter is alive. By creating Otherness, the self is created – no other, no self. The Other is constituted as dead by being shot so that the Self is constituted as living. Jacobus seems to state that without the death
of the other, there would be no life of the self. The dead other, constitutes the living self. ‘The other is dead, therefore I am living,’ Jacobus Coetzee seems to say. The gun, he feels, is designed primarily for shooting and killing literally the corporeal. Jacobus continues:

But as for a gun, a change of shot into a tree means nothing, the tree does not bleed, it is undisturbed, it lives on trapped in its freeness, out there and therefore in here. Otherwise with the hare that pants out its life at one’s feet. The death of the hare is the logic of salvation. For either he was living out there and is dying into a world of objects and I am content; or he was living within me and would not die within me, for we know that no man ever yet hated his own flesh, that flesh will not kill itself, that every suicide is a declaration of the otherness of killer from victim. The death of the hare is my metaphysical meat, just as the flesh of the hare is the meat of my dogs. The hare dies to keep my soul from merging with the world. All honour to the hare. Nor is he an easy shot.”(79)

The Other dies that the Self may live. Shooting an animal or another human for that matter with a gun, keep the soul from merging with the world. The gun keeps the shooter and shot distant from each other. The gun is a metaphysical weapon of defence against the preternatural wilderness. By taking gunshots at its inhabitants, the wild trekker creates a present of this moment in time. Without the device of the gun for creating events of death in the present he would be cast loose on, and drowned in, the sea of linear time of past, present and future alienated from
the cyclical time of the wilderness. Colonialism can be seen as an extension of this idea of the self sufficient and masterful Self; and its assertion can only count as successful by this test of power. The body becomes meaningful only when the inner world of the Self thrives.

Having been abandoned by all but Klawer after a disastrous encounter with the Namaquas, he returns two years later to take his revenge. A genocide follows. He explains:

I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way. As for my servants, rootless people lost forever to their own culture and dressed now in nothing but the rags of their masters, I know with certainty that their life held nothing but anxiety, resentment, and debauch. They died in a storm of terror, understanding nothing. They were people of limited intellect and people of limited being. They died the day I cast them out of my head. (106)

In his search for identity, Coetzee's character is actually compelled to eliminate the natives — by killing them, he draws a precise distinction between himself and the natives, and thus obtain evidence of his "being" which, by surviving the death of the "savages," can be perceived as an independent reality and therefore provides him with a sense of identity.
At a fundamental level, Jacobus Coetzee’s consciousness is such as to dispose him to try to master the world by dissolving it into an image or projection of his own subjectivity. Anything that resists this process, anything distinct from this subjectivity, including his own body, is consequently a source of exasperation, anxiety and loathing. For Jacobus, the Other is one whose independent existence as a centre of consciousness should be denied and demeaned. At the same time the Self in Jacobus has to appeal to the Other to affirm its own existence. The basis of Jacobus Coetzee’s relation, the violence he unleashes on the Hottentots could be summed up in these terms: when your (i.e. the Other’s) response does not confirm to my (Jacobus’) desires, when it does not affirm me in my conception of myself, why, then, only in killing the other will I find confirmation of my existence.

An analysis of the relationship between the body and the Self/Mind leads us to conclude that, without the guarantee of a conceptual Other with which to construct world reality, the existence of the material body becomes questionable in the case of Jacobus who represents the imperialist psychology. Through the figure of Jacobus Coetzee, the novella embraces a binding thread in the mental dualism between mind and body prompted by imperial expansion and conquest. ‘The Narrative’ demands that the reader pay close attention to the sets of associations and connections that it establishes between the known Subject and the incomprehensible Other.

Descartes’ theory of the mind and body is also relevant in understanding Jacobus. The French philosopher’s famous aphorism *cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am,” points to an independent nonmaterial
soul inhabiting and finding expression in a mechanically operated body. His theory of the duality of the mind and body or that, the mind and soul are separate from the body was later revised in his Meditations to state that they work in harmony. The reality of the body needs no proof, the reality of the soul does. Coetzee’s Jacobus shows us how the ideological and philosophical thought patterns of imperialism changed the constitution of a nation utilizing the body as a site or space for the implementation of its devious designs. Jacobus’ body functions seamlessly only when his mind conjures up visions of his glorious ‘superior’ self as against the abject body of the native Other.

If Jacobus Coetzee is the epitome of the white body as Self in ‘The Narrative,’ Life and Times of Michael K takes up the theme of the body from the perspective of the Other as Self. The body here is about oppression, resistance and resilience of the Other in the face of racism and marginalization in the apartheid state of South Africa of the nineteen eighties. Through the body of Michael K, Coetzee introduces another aspect of body space — body as a site of resistance — of the power of the body to challenge hegemonic powers by deploying passive resistance as a weapon. The body of the marginalized Other acts as a space for the voice of the wronged indigene. In Michael K’s case Foucault’s comments about the body becomes prophetic: “the body is . . . directly involved in a political field; power-relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (The History of Sexuality: Vol. I. In Discipline and Punish: 25).
Michael K’s body is the personification of deprivation and survival. The novel obsessively probes the relationship between the body and physical space, between the individual psyche, spatial arrangements and the historical processes which produce power structures within society. It explores the connection between the political climate of the nineteen eighties with its policy of apartheid and consequent civil strife and its toll on the common, marginalized and deprived Other.

Inequality and disenfranchisement related to class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity inevitably produce alienated and marginalized individuals. The normal state of things is exacerbated during periods of acute national crises, when struggle between marginalized and dominant groups in society is thrown into relief. Michael K, the eponymous hero is the epitome of alienation and cultivates his isolation in an attempt to resist the tumult of South Africa where the iron rule of apartheid persists. K’s body can be read as a space that resists inscription whether, as Stephen Watson has observed in ‘Colonialism in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee,’ “it is the colonisation of the body through labour camps or the colonisation of the mind through charity”(376). The configuration of identity is closely connected with the struggle of the body for freedom and liberation. In this struggle for liberation, the figure of the Other, hitherto silent and effaced, makes claims to speak, indeed to speak back, disrupting the realm of politics in radical ways. Identity, in this manner gets refigured and reshaped by social and historical forces.

In Michael K’s South Africa, indigenes like him were engaged in a desperate struggle for political rights, for land, for a place and space within the nation’s economy and society. Identity and self representation
becomes vital elements of the political platform for such people. K through self-abnegation and voluntary starvation of the —body and refusal to speak prefers to make a political statement about his kind of resistance — the passive model of resistance.

Since his earliest memory, K had passively accepted his marginality, born as he was to a wrong racial category and with physical deformity. The body of K was thus subjected to state regulation and placed in state care from early childhood. The reason for his body’s exclusion is evident from the very beginning: “The first thing the midwife noticed about Michael K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had a hare-lip” (3). In his early years, the rejection he faced in life was due to his facial disfigurement, the harelip, as also his undistinguished intellect. His apparent ‘simple mindedness’ and other worldliness besides the physical impairment forced him into voluntary silence. The harelip and self imposed silence is as is later made evident suggestive of the voiceless subaltern in a time of war. Later, there is racial marginalization, the result of his socio-economic status as a “disenfranchised” “cape colored” and as a vagrant, as also by his position as a fatherless child. Thus from the very start Michael has accustomed himself to the social estrangement arising from his constitutional inadequacy and racial origins. His preferred mode is one of isolation, and throughout his life, with varying degrees of success, he tries to wean himself from the necessity of social interaction, even to the point of starving himself in a cave in the mountains of Karoo (65). Thus Michael K who hovers on the margins of social life is a counterpoint to the world of intellect and power. Though K tries to eclipse himself by keeping to the margins Coetzee compels him to tell a story that is not just his own, but the
story of the wider history of a country and of human condition. Michael K’s enunciation of the body tells the story and history of an underclass race, of segregation, apartheid and exploitation.

The body, as Coetzee draws it in his novels, has to bear witness to events unfolding around itself living as it is in a South Africa splintered by racial segregation. The issue of the colour of the skin is a major element that defines South Africa, its politics and its people. In apartheid South Africa it is a crime to be born a coloured. Under apartheid, discrimination against people of colour was not only acceptable, but legally entrenched, with whites having priority to housing, jobs, education and power. Apartheid, no doubt is a political policy aimed at containing and controlling bodies. In this work, the question of ‘colour’ of Michael K’s questionable heritage decides his status in society. Nevertheless, K possesses an awareness of his body and its needs. He makes a distinction between the physical body and the mind. To K who desires to live ‘outside history’ the mind is what he fosters and concentrates on. The body is neglected in keeping with his philosophy of minimalist existence and policy of passive resistance. K hungers after freedom, the worth of which he fully knows. Rene Descartes’ Cartesian Dualism, most especially the distinction between the mental and the physical, is very germane to this discourse too, and his coining of the ‘I’, the incorporeal yet reflective substance of his proposition, “Cogito Ergo Sum” (I Think, therefore, I am), is relevant in understanding K.

As a child K had spent his time in institutions where he learnt to exist in silence. As a gardener of the municipal grounds, he had managed to keep himself among the vegetative world, finding joy in tending to the
plants. It is when his mother falls ill and expresses her desire to return to the country farm house of her childhood memories that the real odyssey starts. The box like room that was his mother’s living space as a domestic servant suffocates K and he too dreams of escaping to the countryside. The death of his mother on their journey, the helplessness of the dispossessed poor which he feels when he realizes his inability to relieve his mother of her bodily pains with better medical facilities inures his mind to a passive acceptance of his condition.

As K continues his journey to the countryside to bury the ashes of his dead mother he is taken in by a sense of bewilderment. Why do men carry guns and build prison camps, when the nurturing earth is made for freedom is an unexpressed thought foremost in his mind. The inequalities of the situation in South Africa strike him and K subconsciously develops his own strategies of resistance. Keeping to the margins of the civilized society is an attempt at refusal to engage in a dialogue with the oppressive regime. Michael K strives to find for himself a mode of existence and a space where the aggressors will not turn him into a predictable subject whose life and suffering might be controlled by them. Although he cannot avoid victimization, he tries to preserve his dignity and independence and, despite his vulnerability, derides and defies oppression in his own terms by fighting with his body and mind.

It is in the countryside of Karoo lulled by the wide expanse of nature that K comes into his element. Michael K can be seen, beginning to believe that the Self/Mind is to be preserved, even at the risk of the body itself being sacrificed. Nothing should threaten Selfhood, not even the safety of the rehabilitation camps or the comforts of hospitalization offered by the
regimented society. In the veld Michael K goes through cycles of fasting and abstinence, trying to detach himself from his body. In natural surroundings, in the wilds of Karoo, K consciously interacts with nature, makes minimum demands on his body, see his body as a natural organism and himself in terms of earth. In the arid wilderness he remembers the earth he tilled as a gardener in Cape Town, seeing himself become more and more like the wilderness: “smaller and harder and drier every day” (93). In the mountains his body is free of the forced social interaction, forced labour, regulated hours, rationed food. In his interactions with nature the body–as-object becomes simultaneously body-as- earth, life giving and life receiving in a way that bypasses human institutions to discover new self justification. His desire in apartheid South Africa is to remain inconsequential, like “the tumbling of dust” or “the rasp of butterfly teeth” so that he can finally vanish from the face of earth in an act of defiance. It is this thinking on his part that prompt him later to neglect his body and its wants. The body comes to be seen as an object. The schizoid desire to allow the body to go, the rejection of the body, may be seen, paradoxically as a desire to preserve the self.

Perhaps the only genuine vision of freedom which a South African non-white can construct is one which travels through negation of the body. This negation may be the consequence of a terrible tumult of the mind, a ‘sickness’ of the mind that results in the person withdrawing from everything which is conventionally held to be normal. Amidst the background of a sinister history and the collapse of human institutions in anarchy, the Self desperately hopes for preservation in a minimal reduced manner. As a child, K had spent his years at an orphanage, Huis Norenius, and as an adult he is incarcerated in the Jakkalsdrif labour
camp and the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp. Fiona Probyn (2002) in her article elaborates on Coetzee’s strategic evasions of authority. She demonstrates that the positions of weakness in which Coetzee places his protagonists paradoxically become a source of their strength. The perplexing locations liberate the characters from imposed discourses and give them the power to resist oppressors, despite their victimization. Negation of the body though starvation is the power K displays to overcome the tragedy of his circumstances and to fight his own battle against racial discrimination.

Though branded a simpleton, K is politically conscious of the times that he lives in:

What a pity that to live in times like these, a man must be ready to live like a beast. A man who wants to live cannot live in a house with lights in his windows. He must live in a hole and hide by day. A man must live so that he leaves no trace of his living. That is what it has come to. (99)

K is no simpleton as this observation of his makes clear. His personal decision to reject or pay scant attention to his bodily needs stems from the realization that “to live in times like these” one has to leave no trace of his living. K’s resistance and rejection of the social and political in South Africa hence takes the form of total abnegation of the body. His desire to isolate himself from society by refusing to take part in the civil strife against apartheid policy is his personal method of revolt; a revolt against the internment camps and forced confinement and all other inflections of injustice.
In this novel there is the colonization of the body through labour camps and the colonization of the mind through charity. In the labour camp K learns that the spirit/mind suffers if the body’s autonomous existence depends on another’s Will. This is a “camp,” not a “holiday resort, or “a convalescent home” as another fellow inmate reminds K:

It is a camp where we rehabilitate people like you and make you work! You are going to learn to fill sand bags and dig holes, my friend, till your back breaks! And if you don’t co-operate you will go to a place that is a lot worse than this! You will go to a place where you stand baking in the sun all day and eat potato-peels and mealie-cobs, and if you don’t survive, tough luck, they cross your number off the list and that is the end of you! So come on, talk, time is running out, tell us what you were doing so that we can write it down and send it to Prince Albert !...” He closed his mouth obstinately, the mouth that would never wholly shut, and glowered back. (138-39)

K’s silent disapproval and passive rebellion to the apartheid system and how the human being is nothing but “a number to be crossed off” at will in racial South Africa is evident in his body language – his ‘obstinately’ shut mouth and ‘glowering eyes.’

After K is arrested and taken to a military hospital, the narrative is taken up by the camp doctor. Finding K’s vanishing act in the refusal of food a scandalous affront to his scientific knowledge —“The body I have been taught, wants only to live” (164) — he attempts to feed K against
Chapter 3

his will. K demonstrates a will to resist this attempted colonisation of the body and mind by questioning the doctor’s desire towards charity: “Why do you want to make me fat? Why fuss over me, why am I so important?” (135). Despite his historical positioning as marginal, he wants to thwart the imperial desire to subvert, control and silence his body and mind. The medical officer is aware of the fact that K had exercised a strong will at an earlier time to build a cart, leave Cape town and tend the farm; Michael K’s mind then had been a dominant force, controlling his body. By refusing food when K is once again in the bondage of civil life, his body and mind are simultaneously engaged in a combined combat against the forces of history in the only way he knows — voluntary starvation.

Michael K subconsciously considers his body to be a point of resistance. Resistance may take different forms, is spread over space and time at varying intensities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in definitive ways, inducing certain types of behaviour. It can happen through the individual body or through the collective social body. In K’s particular method of resistance, neglect of the body through refusal of food provided by the state highlights the effort of the silenced Other to speak and be heard.

The effect of hegemonic power on the silenced and marginalised in its various manifestations is explored by Coetzee through the rare occasions when K opens his heart to the doctor. K draws the doctor’s attention to his mother’s experience:
My mother worked all her life long,” he said ….But when she was old and sick they forgot her. They put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her in the fire. They gave me an old box of ash and told me, ‘Here is your mother, take her away, she is no good to us. (97)

His mother’s life had been nothing but a history of suffering. It is a bodily reality, the suffering of the afflicted. The indemnity of belonging to the deprived working class, the long working hours, all had taken its toll on her body and the swollen limbs and constant bodily pain are reminders of her ordeal. K’s filial devotion, his attempt to wheel her back to the home of her childhood is an attempt to set right the history of wrong done to her person and body. However after her death at the hospital, when the corporeal is suddenly translated into a packet of ashes at the hospital incinerator and into historical oblivion, the experience proves highly traumatic to K. He infers that she, like him, is one of a whole class of people the State would rather forget, a people whom the state would rather lock out of sight in camps. As a fellow worker explained to K, they are a set of people whom the State would have “come on tiptoe in the middle of the night like fairies and do their work, dig their gardens, polish their pots, and be gone in the morning leaving everything neat and clean”(82).

K’s attempt at spreading the ashes of his mother at the farm, his belief that his mother lives through the flowers and the plant life of the countryside is his poignant yet futile way of keeping both her memory and her body alive. It is also his form of protest and active resistance of the state apparatus. The focus on his mother’s large body and how difficult it
is to fit in the wheelbarrow and transport it is an echo of the motif of the body as bulk. In the box of ashes that is her body, the space she occupies is minimized and folded and all that remains can be ironically fitted into a box. Michael K wishes to blow these ashes over the plenum so that they may transform themselves into a world of pumpkins and survive impervious to the maladies of the apartheid human world.

The body as a coherent theme in Coetzee’s fiction is very much a part of the political environment. ‘The suffering body’ is a metaphor for the interventions of the outside forces and bears shades of the social and historical to it. K’s attempts to become no more than a “speck upon the surface of earth”(97), by digging for himself a hole in the Karoo and entering into a state of hibernation in which his body literally begins to disappear, is a mute articulation of his refusal to be remembered and of his desire to be forgotten by the apartheid state.

Though the powers be would prefer total annihilation of the undesired bodies of the Other, Michael K is conscious of the material body’s irrevocable desire to exist, and the difficulty of eradicating the body’s traces completely:

[w]hen people died they left bodies behind. Even people who died of starvation left bodies behind. Dead bodies could be as offensive as living bodies, if it was true that a living body could be offensive. If these people really wanted to be rid of us, he thought (curiously he watched the thought begin to unfold itself in his head, like a plant growing), if they really wanted to forget us forever, they
would have to give us picks and spades and command us to dig; then, when we had exhausted ourselves digging, and had dug a great hole in the middle of the camp they would have to order us to climb in and lay ourselves down; and we were lying there, all of us, they would have to break down the huts and tents and tear down the fence and throw the huts and the fence and the tents as well as every last thing we had owned upon us, and cover us with earth, and flatten the earth. Then, perhaps they might begin to forget about us. (94-95)

The political reality that the indigene majority faced is evident in this observation. Though they are ‘living bodies,’ the culturally dictated, racially marginalized body is a dispensable object to those in power. K finds himself in a South Africa where the “human [Other is] reduced to [a] meaningless pile of blood, bone and meat” (Waiting for the Barbarians: 85). Political power dictates that certain undesired bodies be deemed the site of a loss or disappearance. All these politically undesired bodies, nevertheless contain “a story with a hole in it” (Life and Times of Michael K, 110) through which the subject seem to disappear.

K remains his own person to the very last. He becomes, in the socially symbolic field of the novel’s engagement with South Africa, a valiant figure of resistance. Coetzee dramatizes through Michael K the body's stubborn persistence in the face of assimilation into a definable system. In Michael K, the body and the self become two distinct entities, both waging a personal battle against colonisation, segregation and control. Though relegated as the Other, K does his best to avoid being
classified in Foucault’s terms as just a ‘docile body.’ K displays his own version of the struggle for identity. It implies that he, as an individual, has a history capable of development, as part of a process of work, growth, and maturity to which only Europeans had seemed entitled until now. The self of K refers to the subject and the social values acquired by him as an individual to position himself within a construct. The cultural construct race place havoc with his sense of identity. In the unlayering of the self is born identity. The Self moves within the construct of race implicating and evolving an identity in the process. Through his body, the protagonist seeks to assert his own individuality against the thrust of colonialism and imperialism which endangers his existence and threatens his survival.

To conclude, the ‘total-man’ concept is relevant to K’s ideology. He maintains his statement of faith by resisting with his body. He insists on scripting his life on his own terms. K’s struggles find a reflection on his body as he wriggles to generate meaning out of a seemingly meaningless life in a racialized society. He is able to excise himself from frustration, oppression, marginalization by waging a personal war with the only weapon in his possession — his body.

Disgrace with its post apartheid background presents another version of the body. The violence involved in the transformational politics of post apartheid Africa is searingly portrayed through the experience of the gendered body of the female in this work. The South Africa at the millennium’s end is not a country that experiences a benign transformation. National independence and the overthrow of repressive apartheid regime is a costly affair, as the whites are finding out. Complex
forms of racial conflict take the form of rape, the most intimate form of violence. The body of woman becomes a cultural and political weapon for invoking the agendas of retribution.

In any nation, citizenship is assumed to be universal and ensures rights to its inhabitants. Yet, in practice, in post apartheid South Africa, its meanings and values become differentiated in bodies and their politics, reflecting the social, spatial, gendered and still racial nature of society. The negotiation of living and being part of South Africa becomes fraught with many adjustments and equations that lie outside the parameters of law. In *Disgrace*, it is argued, this emerges into a reflection on the negotiation of shifting power relations via the medium of the body. The female body provides a powerful symbolic cultural space through which a new political and social equation is being forged.

Body culture can be defined as the ways in which we understand, perform and make meanings *through, with, and on* our bodies. The spatial environment in which bodies are positioned may be natural, cultural, and political. The body is essentially affected by this environment. In the process, the body becomes a constructed being, the product of the forces that act upon it. To be precise, what comes to define a body is the relation between dominant and dominated forces. As Giles Deleuze (1983: 40) has observed, “every relationship of force comes to constitute the body.” The body thus tend to become not a singular unified homogenous entity, but a field for the clash of forces. The female gendered body in *Disgrace* can be seen to assume this dimension.
In Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, bodies are sites of inscription as they are agents of power. This text discusses topics such as sexuality, violence, history and power. Coetzee, here does not merely show bodies merely as victims of power discourses. In *Disgrace*, the discursive practices show bodies as active agents in the process of creating meaning in the writing of history. The body in this account of South Africa is used to frame the political questions that frame the country in the aftermath of apartheid. Physical violation of the white body in the form of rape opens a virtual Pandora’s box. The novel, through the physical violation of Lucy’s body presents the shocking idea of rape as historical reparation, which, on the surface, is insulting both to its victims, who are deemed to deserve it historically, and to its agents, who are no more than historically determined, and perhaps even racially determined to keep on exacting it. Rape performed over the body is viewed as an act/exercise of power. The novel however, does not stop with depicting how abstract forces like history and power literally inscribe themselves upon the body. These violent inscriptions, on the other hand, lead to the construction of individual subject spaces. Lucy uses the norms that are inscribed upon her body in a self assertive manner and redefines herself through it. In Judith Butler’s terms, one might say that she ‘quotes these norms subversively’. Lucy can be seen to exert power by turning her body into a subjects that is knowable and readable to herself and to others.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life and Times of Michael K* — indeed, in all of Coetzee’s works — political and historical forces blow through the lives of individuals like nasty weather, bringing with them a destruction that is cruel, as it is impersonal. The action in this story
centres around the disgraced university professor David Lurie and his
daughter Lucy as they grapple with life in post-apartheid Africa after
the bodily violation of Lucy by three black assailants.

Sexual misconduct with a student at the University in Cape Town
finds David Lurie fired from his position as teacher and temporarily taking
up residence with his daughter, Lucy at the farm. One afternoon, Lucy’s
farmhouse is robbed by three blacks who also rape her and try to maim
Lurie by lynching. They also massacre the dogs and steal Lurie’s car.

The rape of Lucy by black assailants forms the epicentre of the
events in the novel. The sexual violation of Lucy and the resultant events
bring out the racial conflict at the heart of South Africa. David, still
oblivious of the changed power equations lodges a complaint for his car
at the police station; an action that proves futile as later events will prove.
Lucy, who is more grounded about the reality of South Africa, refuses to
speak or register a complaint against those who physically assaulted her.
David cannot understand this self-enforced code of silence on the part of
his daughter and her adamant refusal to go to the police on the subject of
rape. Meanwhile, Coetzee, the writer, brings the strained racial dynamics
in South Africa to the surface when Petrus, her black neighbour, who
also helps out at the farm is implicated in indirectly facilitating the raping
of Lucy, the ransacking of her house, the shooting of her dogs and setting
Lurie on fire. Since Petrus disappears during this disgraceful incident and
comes back with building supplies to renovate his house only after the
incident, Lurie becomes suspicious and confronts him which serves only
to make the racial division more glaring. To complicate matters further,
far from seeking justice, Lucy decides to bear the child she is carrying as a result of rape.

Lucy also takes a quite a different perspective from her father on how to continue with their lives after the physical violation. She seems willing to accept personal casualties, such as her rape, as if it is part of South Africa’s transition to a more equanimous state. She acknowledges that something terrible has happened, but does not believe that any action should be taken in response to her rape. “This is South Africa,” she says. “Maybe they see me as owing something” (158). Rather than exacting vengeance against the attackers, Lucy is more concerned with the developing social order of the country, and moving forward. Retribution is important both to David and to Lucy, but they differ widely, almost generationally, in their conceptions of justice. Lucy flatly rejects her father's views in going after ‘justice’. Committed to the land, Lucy reconciles herself to going forward with the forces of social change simmering in the new South Africa, refusing to adopt the siege mentality of reactionary farmers like Ettinger by turning her farmhouse into a fortress.

As one ponders over the implications of the story, important issues like race relations in post apartheid South Africa, human rights, animal rights and social and political injustice present themselves in a glaring manner. The body once again is fore-grounded. In a society where, “all values are shifting” Coetzee engages the complex social relations of the ‘new’ South Africa through sexuality as a code for or vocabulary of change. The rape of the white woman by Blacks has a historical character. The rape of the body is not just the case of a male
wanting to subjugate and dominate a female, rather, it is presented by Coetzee as the sin of the crimes of the past returning to haunt and visit the present — the present being the new post apartheid South Africa of the 1990’s. Thus body spaces are once again being determined and inscribed by the colour of history. Political questions that frame the country are addressed through the representation of body spaces. Women become "a terrain of struggle — a battleground," a neutral territory where men of differing races can wage their battles. The rape is to be seen, not as an attack on Lucy the individual, but as a reminder to white men of their dark history of sexual exploitation.

From 1948 until the early 1990s, white South Africans ruled the country through the system of ‘apartheid' which means ‘separateness' in the Afrikaans language. In other words, apartheid is the policy of ‘separate development' involving racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against non-white groups that prevailed in South Africa until 1990. It allowed the small, white population of South Africa to control the country's large, black population. The blacks could not vote or hold certain jobs or live near whites. ‘Segregation' denied blacks many basic rights and compelled them to live in separate areas and go to different schools. In different ways, the whites exercised their power over the blacks. In brief, apartheid consisted of numerous laws that allowed the ruling white minority in South Africa to segregate, exploit, and terrorize the vast majority of blacks. However, though the law of apartheid came to an end on December 22, 1993, post apartheid South Africa was by no means idyllic. Rape and violence became the external manifestations of the racial tensions of post-apartheid South Africa.
By depicting the rape of Lucy, Coetzee implies the role-reversal between colonizer and colonized. The black men having been reduced to objects (to the value of their labour) by apartheid, now attempts to reduce the white man and woman to objects in the changed situation of South Africa. As an object, David is of little use; he is therefore disposed of, burnt, during the break-in at their home. As an object, Lucy is put to the same use as black women have been in the past — she or her body is treated as an object of sexual use. Foucault’s observations on how the body has been imprinted, branded, inscribed and stigmatized by history rings true in this case.

Though the novel is written from David Lurie’s perspective, it is Lucy, her body, that figures at the most crucial moment of violent inscription in the text. It is on and through her body that the terms for white ‘remembering’ are sketched. There seems an abject submission in Lucy’s apparent passivity to her bodily violation. The decision of Lucy not to report her violation throws up several political and ideological issues. The white female gendered body is presented as a space that invites ‘penalty’ for the ‘guilt’ of the past. Lucy’s body can be viewed as being inscribed with the guilt of the Whites. Friedrich Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1967) theorises about pain and punishment that results from the inscription of guilt upon the body. The body is used to ‘pay’ for the ‘debts’ of the past. To repay this ‘debt,’ the body should be subjected to pain; only through smouldering physical pain can society be compelled to ‘remember’ its tainted past:

> If something is to be remembered it must be burnt in. Only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory” – this
is the main clause of the oldest (unhappily also the most enduring) psychology on earth… blood, torture and sacrifices… all this has its origin in the instant that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics. (61)

The body thus becomes a notepad for ‘debts’ that must be paid, for rules that must be obeyed.

Nietzsche (1969) also discusses social order and the body in the light of a commercial transaction involving a ‘creditor’ and a ‘debtor.’ In this transaction, the body is ‘made’ to pay. For what must not be forgotten a corporeal note shall be made, so that even in the case of seeming bankruptcy, the debt is still retrievable from the body of the debtor.

An equivalent is provided by the creditor’s receiving, in place of a literal compensation for an injury … a recompense in the form of a kind of pleasure, the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely on one who is powerless… the enjoyment of violation …. In punishing the debtor, the creditor participates in a right of the masters… (65)

The debtor - creditor relationship and its accompanying lust for cruelty is, in Nietzsche’s theory, the basis of all other social relations, moral values and cultural production. In other words, the concept that ‘somebody’ is guilty, that somebody ‘owes me’ and must be corporeally made ‘to pay’ is a foundational notion in society and discourse. The act of exacting that payment is an enactment of power: exquisite dominance.
In *Country of my Skull*, the South African novelist Antjie Krog (2000) notes Thenjiwe Mthint-So's opening words at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's “special women's hearings” held in Gauteng:

Because always, always in anger and frustration men use women's bodies as a terrain of struggle as a battle-ground ... [b]ehind every woman's encounter with the Security Branch and the police lurked the possibility of sexual abuse and rape. (271)

In the aftermath of apartheid, in the economic and ideological reconstitution of South Africa, Lucy's body becomes a “terrain of struggle.” She verbalizes her experience of this ‘struggle’ and its “anger” to her father:

“It was so personal,” she says. It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was ... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them. (156)

Lucy, unwilling and unable to report her rape to the police, instead grapples, slowly, with the deciphering of what has been done to her. Lurie offers a reading by which he attempts to comfort Lucy and which outlines a Nietzschean perception of the underpinning of society:

It was history speaking through them,' he offers at last. “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors.” ‘That doesn't make it easier. The shock simply
doesn't go away. The shock of being hated I mean. In the act.' (156)

Lucy, rather, her body, has been inscribed with the guilt of `history'. Her womanly flesh is the notepad on which the debt of colonists is written and payment extracted. Despite the intensity of her experience, the multiple rape is not viewed as ‘personal.’ Her bodily experience is, despite her denial, intensely personal and Lucy carries the burden of the hate and its inscription of shame.

In one of his earliest writings on body, Foucault (1977: 148) argues that ‘the body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires, failings, and errors. Foucault argues that the stigmata of past experiences are manifested in and on the body, and that the body is also the surface of expression for the wounds inflicted on the mind. A person can be marked by the hereditary stigmata of poverty, of work, of toil, of colour discrimination. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (3059) gives two related definitions for ‘stigma’ in the singular and for ‘stigmata’ as the plural. A stigma is ‘a mark mode on the skin by pricking, cutting or (especially) branding as a sign of disgrace or subjection. The subjection of subjects as subjects is marked on the surface of bodies. The subjection of the earth is marked on the surface of the earth in the survey lines and fences of private property and in the grid of streets, roads and railways of city and country. Bodies bear the branding of ownership by and ownership to a class, gender, an ethnicity, a sub culture, a religion, a style, a fashion.
It is primarily the combined stigmata of race and colonial oppression which prevents her from reporting the crime, as she feels it to be, too closely, “her crime”:

[A]s far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place, it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not ….This place being South Africa. (112)

It is Lucy's identity as a white woman in post-apartheid South Africa that renders her personally implicated, perhaps complicit, in the conditions which enabled her attack. She feels that ‘there is another way of looking at it:

What if ... what if this is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? (158)

Lucy's articulated perception reflects much of what her father has said: she is paying with her body, through its violation, the debts of the white colonists/settlers. She is their “territory" and they will be back to ensure that whites remember “history." What differs in Lucy's account is a harrowing, fledgling acceptance of the terms. She suggests a completely new brand of “settler," one who acknowledges her debts and, rejecting the safety of white hegemony, will attempt to face the price. “Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation" (159).
Violent rape of the body is one strategy by which lived spaces are being reclaimed and redrawn. The white corporeal body is being contained in a manner that reminds us of how in a different context, at the height of apartheid, coloureds like Michael K had been checked, contained and in some instances, eliminated. In The Body of Nature and Culture (2008) Rod Giblett suggests that:

What is done to the body is an event. An event in philosophical terms is an occurrence happening at a determinable point in time and space. The body is the point of intersection of doer and deed, doer and done to, that constitute an event occurring at a particular point in time and place in space, in a grid of space-time coordinates. (8)

The event of Lucy’s bodily violation and her subsequent conceiving of racially mixed child bespeaks of the many unspoken laws in the South African apartheid society. The violation of Lucy only points to the hardening of barriers between the communities. Rather than keeping the ‘blacks in line,’ the blacks have learnt to keep the whites ‘in line.’ Another paradox is that, the sexual relations between individuals of different racial designations challenge the very boundaries which the apartheid system had attempted to demarcate. The existence of racially-mixed children undermines the notion of absolute otherness that justifies the radical inequities in power within the apartheid state. Lucy may be subconsciously asserting through this, a kinship that is denied by the state. The presence of the racially mixed’ child, no doubt is an instance of undifferentiated bodily boundary and consequently undifferentiated racial boundary. The refusal to report the violation and the decision to bear the progeny of inter-racial union
is an effort at correcting the social, political, legal, economic, cultural, sexual system of apartness that apartheid professed.

The violent bodily assault of the white woman also brings to the forefront yet another aspect of the apartheid policies of South Africa; its queer logic of disclaiming any similar experience of the black community and of its women. The logic behind this is linked to the right of the individual. The apartheid state effectively rendered all claims to authority by black men and women illegitimate — in as far as such that, the rape of black women does not constitute a violation of the patrimony of black men, because no such patrimony is recognized by the state. Thus, both the kinship of black women and the kinship of black men within the state family and within the domestic family are denied in the act of sexual violence.

Lucy symbolises the white, ruling colonizer community. If she has been assaulted, it is to be seen as retributive justice against a historical wrong that goes back to centuries. Through the violation of the body of Lucy, Coetzee, is obliquely trying to frame the political questions that face the country. Ethical questions about the female body are raised, questions that are bound up with race, social history and culture. It is to be assumed in the light of the new political dispensation that, the new powers, the blacks will subjugate white women, as whites once did the indigenous people. Lucy, as a minority white has made her decision — not to mention the ‘truth’ of what happened to her, in order to keep peace. She would rather choose to see this violation of her body as part of deep societal changes happening in South Africa.
Foucault explores the concept of “docile bodies” in his book, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1979). For Foucault, “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved,” and the methods that “meticulously control” its movements are called “disciplines.” The aim of ‘disciplines’ is to make the body more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely, to make the body more useful as it becomes more obedient (136-38). He describes “docile bodies” while elaborating the history of the French penal system, but his concept may be applied to the control of the human body in any socio-political institution. However, Foucault does not question the feelings of the individual involved in such a hierarchical power apparatus. These ideas find fertile ground in the unique situation that prevails in South Africa. Lucy’s body is ‘docile’ in the sense that it is being contained and disciplined with specific objectives in view. It is a private space that is being forcibly subjected to violation and being hurled into the public domain /space embodying a message.

Female body, in the text, is viewed both as an historically inscribed object and as commodity. The humiliation and subjugation she encounters does not end with the violation and subsequent pregnancy. Towards the end, we find her body being reduced to the value of her farm when Petrus offers her protection in the form of marriage. Lucy willingly submits to turning herself into an appendage in the business of land exchange too. By her own admission her behaviour is not motivated by metaphysical “abstractions” such as “guilt and salvation” (112). Discouraging her father's interpretation that it is “some form of private salvation” she is searching for, Lucy explains in unequivocal terms that
what she is accepting from Petrus is essentially a strategic alliance, a "deal" or calculated exchange in which:

I contribute to the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game. (203)

Here once again, there is a reversion to the patriarchal order of African societies. Lucy, a modern twentieth century woman is accepting the patriarchal standards of the African world, learning to be dependant and subservient to the norms of the male fiefdom. A new social structure is being decided, a framework that accepts the polygamy in return for protection and right to live in a land that one loves. In the feudal system, whether in Africa or elsewhere, women are viewed as goods or property that belongs to men. Within the feudal order, based on patriarchy, there is contempt for women as owners of property and land. Petrus, the black patriarch demonstrates his power through his ability to utilize her body — for pleasure, for revenge and for profit by bargaining in terms of property ownership. Lucy stakes out a private space, which she purchases at the price of a certain inscrutability, striking a compromise in the process between stoic dignity and a self-abasing acceptance of her victimhood.

With respect to Lucy, the body is not just an object — a physical machine capable of providing labour or sexual pleasure. Coetzee recognizes the authority of the body, a recognition that has to do not in its utilitarian functions in its ability to provide labour or sexual pleasure but precisely in its non-utilitarian functions of prompting pity and horror at the evils of this world. Violence has been part of African societies and
during the many years of colonial history. It has often been used as a political tool. South Africa is a country with a past where violence was justified by the struggle for liberation.

The fight against domination started with a non-violent, passive resistance and turned into hostilities, which left the country with much to reconcile with. The colonial past has cast its shadow on the contemporary present. The body has been imprinted, branded, inscribed and stigmatized by history. The body has acted in history and remains marked and affected in the process. Thus the body is not just a biological entity but a social and psychological being that is affected by the values and laws it subscribes to and that are inscribed on it. It is affected by the institutions and traditions in which it is positioned.

The body can be seen represented in all the three works keeping the unique situation of South Africa in context. Violent acts of containment and marginalization are the constant realities of the indigenous people in South Africa. The body becomes the site of conflict for control and subjugation in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.’ Jacobus Coetzee, the white explorer of the wilds can realize his identity and selfhood only when he defines himself in terms of the European Self and non-white Other. European explorers have paved the way for colonialism. European travellers’ first perception of the Other was based on the white man’s distinction of the physical characteristics of his body. The body of the Other had been stripped to its most physical form and had been transformed into the mere signifier of the difference — an explanation of the ‘savagery,’ ‘wildness’ and intense ‘sexuality’ of the colonized. Under colonialism such representation offered important self-
justifications. For what the body conveys is instinctual and is by
definition dumb and inarticulate. As it does not (itself) signify, or signify
coherently, it may be freely occupied, scrutinized, analyzed, and
resignified. This representation carries complete authority; the Other
cannot gainsay it. The body of the Other can represent only its own
physicality, its own strangeness, nothing else in this colonial set up.

Michael K’s body uncovers how apartheid social order dictates
that the coloured body is the major object of victimization and
colonisation. By the turn of the modern twentieth century the other has
managed to start registering its protest at the colonisation of its body and
land, Coetzee seems to suggest. K’s choice of demeaning the value of
his body by refusing food is an act of rebellion and protest at this
attempted subversion. He turns his body into a battleground for freedom
and liberation subverting the attempts at marginalization and segregation.
It is his personal way of challenging the white man’s authority and
attempts at colonisation of his body. K’s rejection of food also
exemplifies his refusal to occupy the space allotted to him by colonial
systems and to comply with the systems themselves. His self abnegation
is his way of communicating the personal distress publically through the
body. Being provided no other ways of asserting himself and given no
power in the social sphere shaped and controlled by whites, Michael K
converts his physical body into a powerful tool of resistance. His silent
resistance through the body space becomes a stunning proclamation in
the name of African nationhood. It is paradoxical that in K’s case, the
more the body tries to obey the system through passivity, the further it
succeeds in retreating from the powers that intend to dominate it. As the
Body Spaces

medical officer indicates, the originality of Michael K’s resistance lies in the fact that he does not resist at all.

*Disgrace* takes the reader to the question of whether it is possible to evade racial history in the new South Africa of the post apartheid times. Coetzee explores this question by imaginatively analyzing the implications through the physical violation of the body of the white settler Lucy. Dispensing justice becomes a public act and it is achieved through the violation of the white female body. In the new societal order that is variously hostile, inscrutable, painful and unpredictable to the minority white settlers, Lucy finds her body being buffeted by a wave of collective hatred that is retributive in nature at the historical wrongs done in the past. The political reversal in the new South Africa and the corresponding social change should be read into the rape of Lucy’s body. As the power-play has been inverted after the abolition of apartheid, Lucy realizes the helplessness of the whites in this black world and psychologically accepts her predicament, knowing well that she would not get justice. Lucy comes to see the rape as a sort of retribution for historical racial injustice committed by her white historical forefathers. She completely capitulates to cultural determinations of justice. The unborn child that Lucy bears is the legacy of shattered race relations. In agreeing to a polygamous arrangement by becoming the third wife of Petrus, Lucy sacrifices her freedom and individuality, notions that were considered ‘savage’ and uncivilized by the western world. The changes in her life reflect the atmosphere of South Africa, which is being altered politically and socially after the abolition of the law of apartheid. Thus, ironically, because of racial identity, Lucy must expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present through her body.