CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
Literature is sometimes defined as an attempt to bring order out of chaos but in the writing of the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century it often orders itself to construct the people and shape their identities. There is an attempt to see how past has ordered the present and also an attempt to understand the complexity of the present. Writers of our age have probed deep in their native colorings. The creative works are backdrop to the socio-politico-economic life of their respective countries. The social life of our era has changed. As a social and moral document as well as a contained art form, novel from Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* through Joyce’s *Ulysses*, has responded more quickly and fully to new ideas than any other literary genre. Accordingly, the 20th century novel, following the rapid introduction of new modes of thought in psychology, natural sciences, and sociology, has reacted boldly to absorb and transform this material into literary communication. Moreover, the novel, while ever mirroring change in the larger world, has, like every other art medium, responded also to inner developments in its own form, demonstrating that tradition together with innovation are twin staff of the genre. The tradition and the new determine are the distinctive nature of the contemporary English novel; its difficulties are the difficulties of the age, and its ideas are those that have by now become common places in our society. For a long time Britain thought itself as the center of a huge Empire. For a long time writers who wrote English literature felt they did not need to think consciously about whether they were international or not. They could write about the smallest details of English society and it was, by definition, of interest to people in the far corner of the world because English culture itself was internationally important. But the idea changed sometimes after 2nd world war. And then suddenly people came to this realization that we aren’t the center of the universe. We are just this little backwater in Europe. If we want to
participate in the world, culturally speaking, we’ve got to find out what’s happening in
the rest of the world. The last half of the 20th century witnessed a monumental shift in
the character of both literary and national identity. The novel in English supplanted
the ‘English novel’ in significance and cogency. The English language novel is now a
genuinely international affair, with post-colonial Anglo-phone and ‘Black British’
works are as widely read and critically esteemed as the ‘British’ ones. The non-
English novelists now arguably dictate the parameters of literary debate and attract
the most interest as the English novelists. Though the English novelists are
important and will continue to be, it is the non-English novelist who have for the first
time have been able to gain eminence. As the novelist Emma Tennant, as early as
1978, declared, the majority of the important developments in the English language
fiction are as ‘likely to have come out of Africa or West Indies or India ‘as out of
Britain. Feroz Jussawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrock, in the introduction to their
illuminating volume of Interviews with Post-colonial writers, amplify this point:

The single most important development in literature written in English
over the past century has been its increasingly international –indeed,
global nature. Once the language of a few million people on a small
island on the edge of Europe, English is now spoken and written on
every continent and is an important language inside at least one-
quarter of the world’s 160 countries. Thus, English has become an
important international literary language (12).

It is no mystery why this shift occurred. World War II helped accelerate the
breakup of the British Empire and Britain’s abortive intervention in the Suez crisis of
1956, obliquely alluded to in Ishiguro’s words ‘the remains of the day marked the
demise of British imperial prestige’. If London dominated 25% of the earth’s surface
at the turn of the 19th century with control of nearly 4 million square miles, this
dominance, in the 30 years following the 2nd World War, would shrink to a tiny
fraction of that figure. India and Pakistan gained independence from Britain in 1947
with African nations of Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda following in the
years 1960-1963, and the vast majority of Britain held Caribbean island—among
them the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica and Jamaica—gained freedom between
1962 and 1963; closer to England, the Irish Free State was internationally
recognized in 1921.

Britain’s political Empire may be gone but its ‘linguistic empire’ is stronger
than ever. English has become an international language, paradoxically; the English
are responsible for this. As Jussawalla and Dasenbrock observers, “the sun may
have set on the British Empire, but that empire, in establishing English as a language
of trade, government and education in that sizeable part of the world ruled by the
Britain, helped to create what may be a more enduring ‘Empire’ of the global
language as a result of the physical colonization of a quarter of the globe by the
British” (15). They build the most extensive Empire the world has ever seen through
trade and conquest. For though English is an important foreign language in many
parts of the world never colonized by the British or the Americans, widespread use of
the language for imaginative literature has been restricted to former colonies of
Britain and the U.S. The process by which English was accepted as a language was
a deliberate of British imperial policy from the time of Macaulay, as it has been of
American policy. Macaulay wanted the Indians to be educated in English precisely to
put them in connection with Western civilizations, and this means that writing in
English often has political connotation and implications, something which we will
return to believe Rushdie eschews viewing that language as an unwanted imposition
on formerly colonized people, instead regarding it as gift of the British colonisers, a legacy that in any case ceased to be the sole possession of the English, some time ago. The British Empire was made up of two different kinds of places: dominions, where the majority of the population were European, largely British settlers; and colonies, where the majority of the population were the people who had always been there. The literature and culture of the dominions understandably demonstrated a much greater degree of continuity with that of Britain. After all, until very recently ‘home’ in these countries means ‘Britain’, and even though this orientation towards Britain has inevitably weakened across time, the literature and culture of the dominions remains essentially European in form and spirit. In this respect, they closely resemble the United States as English speaking countries that have left Europe physically but not culturally behind. The literature of all these countries shares a common heritage of exploration and a sense of being on the ‘frontier’ of a great wave of European settlement. The critic Peter Alcock used the term ‘informing the void’ to describe them.

But of course nowhere the British went, bringing their language and art forms as well as their ships and flag, was there really a void. There was always someone there first who spoke a different language, had a different culture and saw the world rather differently. The literature which interested the world is that of the descendants of those who were there before the British came. These are the writers who live in the most complex cultural space, inheriting the English language and much more from their rulers, yet in many cases drawing on their own received forms and languages as well. These are the post-colonial writers who now make up an ‘empire’ that is ‘writing back’.
In the second half of 20th century three terms came into prominence – Imperial, Colonial and Post-Colonial. In his Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Reymond Williams notes that ‘Imperialism ‘is variously understood as a “political system in which colonies are governed from an Imperial center, for economic and other reasons” and as an “economic system of external investment and penetration and the control of the markets and sources of raw materials” (164). Imperialism is thus both a set of practices wrought by an empire and an ideological ‘justification’ of these practices. If imperialism emphasizes the conquering and exploiting of ‘foreign’ territories for the purpose of securing political and economical hegemony, colonialism emphasizes the settling of those territories for the purpose of transforming the indigenous socio-economic and cultural order. As this description of colonialism would suggest ‘post-colonial’ defines a political and cultural order following the departure of the colonizing power and the birth of the independent Nation: a hybridized culture that mixes elements of the formerly invading power and that of the indigenous population. As Ashcroft Griffiths and Tiffin put it in their The Empire Writes Back, “post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity.” (39) It should come as little surprise, then, that decolonization would have a major impact on the English language novel of the period.

Today English language novels are divided in three broad groups, taking into account the history of contact including colonization, between the peoples producing them. In the 1st group are novels from countries in which the literature and culture are British or demonstrate a significant ‘degree of continuity with that of Britain’. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—British, yet maintaining discrete cultural
traditions—are conveniently considered, as far as the novel is concerned, with Australia, New Zealand and Canada, dominions in which the majority of the inhabitants were British settlers.

In the second group are ‘Post-colonial Anglophone’ novels, which emanated from formerly subject, British held colonies in which the majority of the inhabitants had been living in there for centuries. Such formerly colonized nations include among others present day- Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; and the many English speaking nations of the West Indies.

In the third group are novels written by formerly colonized people who subsequently migrated to Britain and whose works are frequently viewed within the context of multi-cultural British fiction. As Jussawala and Dosenbrock remind us, after the end of colonial migration occurred “as a result of the political and economic problems the new states of the nonwestern world experienced after independence” (18). This reverse pattern of migration resulted in an influx into Britain of large populations of formerly colonized Asians, West Indians and Africans. The novels of such formerly subject peoples who settled in Britain brought a revitalizing multicultural, international dimensions to English literature and are sometimes grouped under the banner of ‘Black British’ writing. Such novelists and novels also revitalized the accepted manner of studying and categorizing literature which had been within the context of a single, cohesive national literary tradition.

‘The Postcolonial Anglophone’ novel is a body of work deriving from countries recently liberated from British imperial domination, whose populations, are largely indigenous rather than British in origin. Post-colonial Anglophone novels tend to resist and interrogate the imperialist doctrines that sought to justify the unbalanced power relationship of the past colonial situation as well as to replace a national
identity and history of the Imperial power’s making. In Salman Rushdie’s now familiar formulation, such, literature is an example of the empire writing back to the center. Rushdie’s model of post-colonial writing back envisions a two way rather than a one way conversation; dialogue and cross-fertilization rather than the imposition of a single controlling colonial hegemonic voice. Instead of viewing the postcolonial author as a victim of the coloniser’s language Rushdie views ‘those people who were once colonized by English language as now rapidly remaking and domesticating it as carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers’. Jussawalla and Dasenbrock amplify this point by arguing that while such literature “uses the language of the former colonial power it also speaks in its own independent and quite original voice, often contesting the way it has been represented by earlier writers. The routine that emerges in this process issues from a remarkably complex combination of culture, as the postcolonial writers draw on indigenous traditions and languages of their own as well as on the resources of the tradition of writing in English” (19).

Postcolonial Anglophone novelistic output is full of richness and variety e.g. Some used coloniser’s language against them like Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and Salman Rushdie’s Midnight Children while some post-colonial novels ‘rewrote’ canonical British works for the purpose of countering British imperial ideology. As for example, West Indian writer Jean Rhy’s Wide Sagasso Sea revives Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre.

Due to this richness and variety it is very difficult to group this novelistic discourse. However, it may be subdivided into three groups; novels from Africa, from the Indian sub-continent and from the British West Indies—even if all such novels are united by their resistance to various forms of British political and cultural
dominance. Despite the fact that two South African writers have been awarded the Nobel Prize, South African literature is still in some ways an emerging field of inquiry and one that continues to require redefinition in view of the changed circumstances in the country. Yet its interest and relevance to current concerns in the literary academy seems beyond dispute. In his book, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond*, Rob Nixon has argued that the resistance struggle against apartheid was more fully globalized than any other struggle for decolonization and that (though interpreted and represented in locally specific ways) it served as a rallying point for several forms of resistance and political groupings. South African literature, likewise, has also been influential: it has shaped, as Nixon argues, the prevailing image of both cultural persecution and *écriture engagé*. Even in the highbrow realm of theory, the country's racial policy proved to be a galvanizing and sometimes contentious matter (21). It was, after all, with reference to apartheid and in response to a provocation from Nixon and Anne McClintock (then graduate students at Columbia) that Jacques Derrida offered what is perhaps his clearest statement on the political implications of deconstruction—a powerful answer to those who would accuse his theoretical work of an irresponsible evasiveness with regard to political matters. This critical exchange was, as Lars Engle has pointed out, a “kind of tribute to the importance of South Africa as a politically activating case” (43). It is true that with the demise of apartheid, the immediate and challenging ethical intensity of the South African situation has diminished; but given the vitality of postcolonial studies in the academy, it seems unlikely that the interest in the country's literature and culture will abate. South African literature, as J. M. Coetzee observed back in 1983, touches a nerve everywhere in the West because it offers such an “inexhaustibly fertile field for
writers and journalists interrogating the coloniser-colonized relationship.” Now that the sometimes suspicious moral frisson that apartheid provided is a thing of the past, South Africa should become even more important in the interrogation of this relationship, especially since it might suggest—in practice, rather than merely in theory—new possibilities of transcending the Manichean opposition of coloniser and colonized, and of moving toward a new culturally hybrid democracy.

It seems to me that we cannot adequately understand or appreciate the nature of colonial literature and the rise of the African novel until we study them within their generative ambiance. This is so for several specific reasons. Because the colonial writer was often involved in articulating the various theories—the white man’s burden, his civilizing mission, and so forth—which sought to rationalize the whole imperial endeavor, his literature tends to be replete with ideological valorizations of his colonial experience. Similarly, because the origin of the African novel lies in the transformation of indigenous oral cultures into literate ones and because this transformation is mediated by colonial occupation, the traumatic experience of that period is naturally reflected in the thematic preoccupations as well as in the styles and structures of the first generation of African novels. (JanMohamed 15).

Finally, the uniqueness of the colonial situation, due both to the trauma and confusion of its rapid social and cultural transformation and to the richness and complexity of its political and ideological contradictions, provides a fertile field for the study of socio-literary relations. Because an understanding of colonial experience is crucial to a study of its literature, it is best, before defining the scope and nature of this study, to begin with a description of the generic colonial situation. In South
Africa, two English language novelists; J.M.Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, have attracted worldwide attention for their anatomization of racial apartheid, a legal code that prevailed there between 1913 and downfall of the South African Nationalist Party in 1994. These Anglo phone novelists are white, the first from an Afrikaner background, and the second from a Jewish background. Nevertheless, both write from within a formerly colonized nation whose government and white minority in effect ‘colonized’ from within the nation’s majority black population. In an interview conducted in 1978, J. M. Coetzee remarked, “I'm suspicious of lines of division between a European context and a South African context, because I think our experience remains largely colonial.”

**History of South Africa**

The turn to history can still tell us something very interesting about a writer’s own time and the past. The novels participation in the making of cultural history is more justifiable in relation to those works that strike a chord in the public consciousness by virtue of those engagements with the present. It reveals a political understanding operating on the very structure of Coetzee’s work. History and past politics have had a huge impact on South African society. Like many states that came into being as a consequence of European expansionism and imperialism, South Africa is the product of a history of physical and epistemic violence in which, from the mid-17th century until toward the end of the 20th, different peoples coexisted in the same geographical space-sometimes peacefully, sometimes not—without fusing into a single social or cultural formation. Many historians of South Africa start the history books with a brief reference to the voyage of Vasco de Gama round the Cape of Good Hope in 1497-98 and rush onto the arrival of the first white settlers in 1652. However the pre-colonial history of South Africa is significant in its own right.
Over many centuries they had been developing social forms and cultural traditions that Colonialism, Capitalism and Apartheid have assaulted, abused and modified but never eradicated. However, they were not literate so it’s very difficult to reconstruct their history. In 20th century many African themselves began to write about their past. The hominid predecessors of modern humans originated in various parts of East and Southern Africa, as archaeologist have identified some fossils in Transvaal belonging to some three million or more years ago. Since then human communities had lived in this part of the world. By the beginning of Christian era, human communities had lived in South Africa by hunting, fishing and collecting edible plants for thousands of years. They were the ancestors of the Khoisan peoples of modern times. They had their own societal pattern called bands-made of 20 to 30 families living together. Elsewhere in the West, people were herding sheep and cattle. These pastoralists were similar to the hunters and gatherers, except they were somewhat taller. While in the East of rainfall area zone, lived mixed farmers. They occupied semi-permanent villages. Their political organization was stronger and more complex. They spoke Bantu language and had dark brown skins and robust physiques. These Bantu speaking mixed farmers were the ancestors of the majority of the inhabitants of present day Southern Africa. Europeans called the hunters-gatherers Bushman, the pastoralist Hottentots and mixed farmers Kaffirs. However the terms were used in derogatory sense. So ethnic terms are used for them like San for hunter-gatherers, Khoikhoi for pastoralist and Africans for Bantu speaking. The hunter bands had been small, herders formed larger community. The primary social and political groups were clans, composed of people who claimed decent from a common ancestor, but several clans were often joined in loosely associated chief dons that Europeans have called tribes. The hunters lived a mobile life and no desire to accumulate property
even their needs were very limited. When they became herders, they began to treat
material possessions—sheep and cattle as a form of wealth.

Between 4th century and late 18th century, Bantu speaking mixed farmers
consolidated their position in better watered Eastern region. They were creating
stable frontiers with pastoralists. They were occupying more and more of the country
suitable for agriculture. All South Africans had much the same basic economy and
culture. They learned practices to use material. The farmers, known as Nguni spoke
dialects of the same language, of which the modern survivors are Xhosa in South
and Zulu in the north while most of those on the plateau spoke dialect of another
language, of which the modern survivors are Sotho in the south, Pedi in the East and
Tswana in the West. Until 15th century, the hunting and herding people of South
Africa remained isolated from the wider world. However, the Portuguese mariners
were probing further and further from Europe along the western coast of South
Africa. In 1487, Bartholomew Dias anchored in Mossel Bay. Even Vasco de Gama
rounded the Cape and sailed along the coast of East Africa and reached Calicut.
However till 15th century, they didn't intend to settle in Africa. During the 16th century
the Portuguese government sent annual fleets round the Cape of Good Hope to
Indian Ocean. Portuguese established fortified bases at several places in East
Africa. From West Africa, they started the nefarious export of slaves. Europeans
landed in the Cape peninsula to take fresh water and barter sheep and cattle from
the local Khoikhoi pastoralists. However, in 1649, Dutch East India Company
proposed that they should occupy the place and three years later Jan Van Riebeeck
was send as commander with an intention that the colony would serve as a link
between the Netherlands and their Eastern Empire. In 1652, the Dutch East India
Company founded a station at present day Cape Town, which, at the southern tip of
Africa, was the most important supply point for their ships trading with East India. Actually modern South Africa began as a byproduct of the enterprise of these Dutch merchants. In 1657, company released nine of the employees from their contract and placed them on landholding at the Cape Peninsula as free Burghers. In the years that followed, the company discharged more men and even transported few peoples from Netherlands. After that the Burghers’ population grew partly by natural increase, partly through the company servant taking discharge and to a small extent by the manumission of slaves. Van Riebeeck and his successors intended that the free Burghers should practice intensive agriculture on the Dutch model, but they were disappointed. Many soon gave up agriculture and became artisans and traders in Cape Town.

Initially company did not envisage the slave labour in their society. However, gradually the Cape becomes a slave holding society. The slave came from more diverse background like Madagascar, Indonesia, India and Ceylon. By 18th century, slavery at the Cape Colony had acquired distinctive characteristics, and there were more slaves than free Burghers in Cape colony. Meanwhile, the indigenous South African, who called themselves Khoikhoi and whom settlers called Hottentots were bearing the brunt of the Dutch invasion. They had grown accustomed to visits by Europeans. The indigenous pastoral society started to disintegrate. They were unable to withstand the invasion. They lost their livestock and political system collapsed. The chiefs had become clients of the company. All these also affected on the integrity of their culture. The colony became a complex society then mere refreshment station. The town was growing on Table Bay where diverse religion, language and people jostled controlled by the Dutch officials.
A British expedition easily defeated Dutch officials in 1795. This is the beginning of the clash between Dutch and British for the control of Cape Colony. South Africa was significant for British as a stepping stone to Asia, as it was for the Dutch. From the Cape, the so-called Voortrekkers, in their Great Trek, looking for farming and grazing land and trying to get away from the English after their arrival and conquest of the Cape in 1795, began to trek deeper and deeper into the interior. On their way, they fought and pushed back the Khoi and Bushmen as well as the resident Bantu peoples. The promise of great profits through the mining of raw materials and the goal of national prestige started a great imperial contest, 'the Scramble for Africa', amongst the big European nations to seize the largest possible areas for their own colonies. At the same time, since 1795, Great Britain attracted more and more British settlers to the country, which led to conflicts between them and the Boers and thus later to the Anglo Boer Wars. After 1860s, British found rich mineral wealth which helped British economy. Even some British emigrants settled in South Africa during 1870s. In the beginning, British regarded themselves as temporary custodians and had no intention of tempering with status quo. However, afterwards they tried to establish British control. Various campaigns were carried out by them to conquer the black farming people of South Africa. British introduced further complexities into an already complicated colonial society. With their different language, tradition, and religion, they were culturally distinct from the earlier settlers. In the last three decades of the 19th century the growth of mining industries accelerated. The British army conquered the African Republics. The white population consolidated its control over the state, strengthening the grip on the black population. In the 20th century the politics was dominated by the question of relations between the two segments of the white populations-Afrikaners and English speakers. Though
they embroiled in internal quarrels, they dominated every sector of the capitalist economy. Black people were subordinated to white people. The Second World War, however, led to a higher self-esteem amongst the Africans, which induced the British and French to make extensive concessions. This encouraged the formation of national movements including the Pan African Movement. All over Africa, popular political parties and trade unions were founded. Towards the end of the 1970s almost the entire continent had become independent. All these events were proof to the Blacks and Coloureds in South Africa that they could have the same success there. Yet the situation in South Africa was different from that in other African countries.

In 1948, the National Party consolidated its power. They created new Parliamentary seats for representatives of white voters. Then step by step, it eliminated every vestige of black participation in the central political system. The Nationalist party used its control to fulfill Afrikaner ethnic goals as well as white racial goals. In 1961, the government transformed South Africa into a republic, thereby completing the process of disengagement from Great Britain. The government afrikanerized every state institute, appointing Afrikaners to senior as well as junior positions in the civil services, army, police, state corporation, medical and legal professions. The Nationalist Party was determined to maintain white supremacy. They extended and heightened up the racial laws.

**Apartheid**

South Africa is a country of great physical beauty but its soul is dead, strangulated by an ideology based on colour where to be white enables you to enjoy the goodness of the land and if black, you would be better off dead. The whites of South Africa are afflicted with a sickness that
blinds them to the suffering of the rest of us, blacks. (James Matthews, *Cry Rage*, 1972)

The most notorious political fact of South African history is the Apartheid policy which has inflicted massive social, economic, cultural and psychological damage on South African blacks. The term comes from the Afrikaans *apart heid* (to be apart) and stands for the political system of racial segregation in South Africa, where the white minority discriminated against and politically disenfranchised the black majority for decades. Apartheid (separateness), a socio-religious philosophy that furnishes tremendous economic benefits for its advocates, seeks to segregate the white community from the Africans, Coloureds, and Indians in every aspect of life, to deprive the non-whites of all legal, political, and economic power; to keep them subjugated as long as possible. Coercive Apartheid laws date as far back as 1856 when the Master and Servant laws made the breach of contract by or the ‘insubordination’ of a nonwhite servant or labourer a criminal offense. Similarly, the infringement of the Pass laws, which control the African's mobility and residence, and the nature of his work, became a criminal rather than a civil violation. Ludicrous as these laws may seem, they are rigorously enforced: for instance, in 1965-69 an average of 1,735 Africans were prosecuted each day for violating the Pass Laws. The steady attack on the few legal rights of blacks culminated in the abolition of *habeas corpus* in 1976.

In 1912, the first political organizations and parties were founded. To preserve their power, the Whites founded the National Party which pursued the goal of strict racial segregation, while the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which changed its name to African National Congress (ANC) in 1920, stood for the rights of the Blacks. The term Apartheid, however, soon developed from a political
slogan into a drastic systematic program of social engineering. Against the backdrop of the ANC beginning its defense campaign in 1952, D. F. Malan’s Afrikaner National Party that was elected to power in 1948 implemented the major apartheid legislation between 1950 and 1953 through which it endeavored to silence the political voice of South Africa’s marginalized majority. Black opposition, according to the historian William Beinart, reached its height between 1958 and 1960 (with the Sharpeville massacre), but in 1961 the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned and thus forced underground. The man highly responsible for that development was Hendick Frensch Verwoerd. He was Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966. During Verwoerd’s premiership, Apartheid became the most notorious form of racial domination. However, the first step towards the introduction of racial segregation was the *Natives Land Act* in 1913. This law was inherently self-contradictory as it allowed the Blacks to have cattle but not to possess land. Also, this and many other laws only granted the Blacks, who at that time made up about 75% of the population, 13% of the country’s territory. Blacks were politically disenfranchised from the beginning of racial segregation and retained their voting rights only in the Cape Province. This residual right was taken from them in 1936, and 20 years later, in 1956, the Coloureds in the Cape Province lost their voting rights, too. All the new laws passed, were aimed at the economical, political, territorial and social segregation of the different races. Interracial marriages were forbidden and thus considered a crime. Blacks were denied any proper education. They were forbidden to establish any independent trade-unions.

At the heart of the Apartheid system were four ideas. First, the population of South Africa comprised four racial groups—white, colored, Indian and African—each with its own inherited culture. Second, whites as the civilized race were entitled to
have absolute control over black interests; the state was not obliged to provide
Africans belong to several distinct nations or potential nations—formula that made
white nation the largest in the country. Soon after coming to power the government
began to give effect to those ideas various acts; the population Registration Act, the
prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act and the Immorality Act, created legal boundaries
between the races. The Nationalist Party also eliminated the voting rights of
Coloured and African people.

The election victory of the National Party in 1948 is the beginning of
institutionalized Apartheid. The government also transformed the administration of
the African populations. In 1951, it abolished Native representatives Council and
grouped them into eight territories. Each such territory became a homeland for
potential African Nation, administrated under white tutelage. In its Homeland, the
African Nation was to develop along its own lines with all the rights that were denied
it in the rest of the country. The government tried to herd into the Homelands nearly
all Africans, except those whom white employers needed as labourers. The influx of
Africans were prohibited by a law, could visit the town not more than 72 hours
without a special permit. The government also began to eliminate ‘black spots’ in the
countryside—that is to say, land owned and occupied by Africans in the white areas,
and, because they couldn’t enter the towns, most were obliged to resettle in the
Homelands. In many cases, areas that had previously been occupied by Blacks were
zoned for exclusive white occupation, though government claimed that these
removals were voluntary. Hundreds and thousands of Africans had been born and
bred in the towns and now they were thrown out. The removal resulted into a great
intensification of overpopulation problem in the Homelands. The government also
intensified its control on the educational system. It maintained parallel set of white
public schools throughout the country and made it compulsory for a white child to attend a public school. On the other hand, African education had been left entirely to the missionary institutions whose capacity to meet the needs of the large African population was constrained by lack of funds. Mission schools were transmitting dangerous, alien ideas to their African students and turning them, in Verwoerd’s words, into ‘Black Englishmen’. There were nine universities in South Africa in 1948. The Afrikaner and English medium universities admitted white students only, while Blacks were taught in either in integrated or segregated classes. From 1948 on, ‘whites only’ notice board appeared in every conceivable place. Laws and regulations confirmed or imposed segregation for taxis, ambulances, buses, trains, lavatories, parks, churches, halls and hotels. It was also official policy to prevent interracial contacts in sports. South Africa in Apartheid era was unique. It became increasingly distinctive from other countries as decolonization and desegregation spread elsewhere but not in South Africa. Still the society was divided based on legally prescribed biological criteria. Wherever White encountered Black, Whites were boss and Blacks were servants. Indeed, Whites were conditioned to regard Apartheid society as normal, its critics as communists. In the report to United Nations Children Fund, Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele drew attention to the fact that, “children may be socialized into vandalism or find themselves having to adopt violent measures as a matter of survival and in the process losing any sense of right or wrong. The impact on children’s mind is a matter of grave concern.” (34) They also mentioned widespread disorganization of family due to the migratory labour system. Actually the political, economical and powerless Black men endanger a frustrated rage in their houses, particularly against the women. Apartheid society was also ridden by mental stress and violence. Murder and suicide were
exceptionally frequent among Blacks. Tutu says “I want to make this perfectly clear. South Africa is full of violence, a violence which emanates from Apartheid, from the forced removals, the imprisonments without sentences, the mysterious deaths during the term of imprisonment, the inferior education, the existence of migratory labour and live-in positions of employment, which systematically destroy the lives and family life of the Blacks” (Winner 1990). Censorship, banning, detention, house arrest, solitary confinement, shooting, and torture—such were the royalties that awaited the writers/activist who dared to write/act against the state during the apartheid years. The writer was to be crushed by the white racist regime because he or she dared to express a sensibility and an outlook apart from, and independent of the mass direction. For apartheid, as Coetzee so clearly understands, operated from day to day as a means of distributing people in space and thereby of controlling the way they saw the world. The system strove to perpetuate itself by decreeing that certain spaces must be invisible: homelands, prisons, torture chambers, and black cities were deliberately hidden, removed from view. The beneficiaries of apartheid were not necessarily sadistic; but like all those who live at the expense of others, they/we preferred not to see those ‘consequences’.

There were some members of the enfranchised population who sought to arouse the conscience of their fellow whites against apartheid. They focused on the brutality of the apartheid state. The white liberals since Olive Schreiner, continuing down to the radicalism of Nadine Gordimer today, adopted various forms of realism as the unquestioned means of bearing witness to, and telling the truth about, South Africa. Leaders of the Church except Dutch Reformed church criticized apartheid. The English medium Universities, especially the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand were foci of opposition to apartheid. The National Union of South
African Students organized a series of spectacular demonstrations in 1959 against the closure of black students. They also organized conferences on the theme ‘education for African future’. Their attempts were directed merely at relaxing certain oppressive legislations and to allow Blacks into ‘a white-type society’. SASO was working for the liberation of the Black man first from psychological oppression by themselves through inferiority complex and secondly from the physical one accruing out of living in a White racist society. Apartheid also brought into being a women’s organization, The Black Sash. The white, mainly English speaking, middle-class members of the Black Sash devised a skillful method of embarrassing Nationalist politicians and attracting media attention. Wearing white dresses with black sashes, they stood silently with heads bowed in places where politicians were due to pass, such as the entrance to Parliament buildings.

In the early to the mid-1970s South Africa began to reap the whirlwind over apartheid. The period saw a number of developments that either heralded the possibility of major historical transformation or responded to such a possibility. From this period on, then, South Africa seemed locked into an opposing set of categories, ‘revolution’ or ‘reform’, both of which drew their defining features from the large scale historical momentum with which the decade had begun (Stadler 161). In 1976, three significant developments fueled a spirit of resistance. First, there was a vigorous movement in the arts. During the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, the magazine “Drum” was a vehicle for black criticism. During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s books like Bloke Modisane’s Blame me on History, Alex La Guma’s A Walk in the Night and the poetry of Dennis Brutus, evaded censors and brought a strong liberationist message to the townships. The exemplary book of the period was The Eye of the Needle (1972), and the exemplary life was that of its author, Richard Turner, who
was assassinated in 1977. Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* is a high point of the period, with its resistance to ‘the closing of the universe of discourse’ and its critique of the associations between Reason, technological rationality, and domination. A popular Black theatre movement made a strong impact on the Witwatersrand and in Durban. Nomsisi Kraai wrote, “Black theatre is a dialogue of confrontation, with black situation”.

Second, the rapid growth of the economy, vast increase in the number of black led to the development of class consciousness among black workers. The Black Consciousness position was one of self-recovery and self-affirmation in response to the negations of racism. The black world was posited as an organic unity, a trans individual mode of selfhood, and it was reinforced by a teleology of moral justice. The resources used by the early exponents of Black Consciousness were classic statements of black assertion such as Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Stokely Carmichael's *Black Power*.

Third, the government’s attempt to mold the minds of young black people through tight control over their education boomeranged. Black students were profoundly frustrated by the conditions. In 1968, Steve Biko led a succession from the white controlled Nations. Biko wrote in 1971:

> Black consciousness is in essence the relationship by the black men of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their subjection- the blackness of their skin- and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black I an aberration from the normal which is white… it seeks to infuse the black community with a new found proud in themselves… (Casalis 20).
The ideology of Black consciousness penetrated the urban schools. In 1976, thousands of black school children in Sweto demonstrated against the government insistence to teach in Afrikaner language. Some 575 people were killed. Government banned SASO. Police arrested and killed Biko. After this event, thousands of young black fled and joined military training in Tanzania and Angola. Ultimately, they were led to launch a guerilla war. By 1978, the apartheid state was in trouble. South Africa’s economic condition was not good after the 1961’s recession and the administration of complex apartheid laws was proving costly. The situations were changing rapidly. South Africa had been isolated by U.N. The black Americans supported the cause of South Africa. In 1978, Botha became the Prime Minister of South Africa. He attempted to adopt policy to changing situation without sacrificing Afrikaner power. The reformation started and for first time the blacks were included in the political process. The government also planned to change the geographical framework of the Verwoerd era. In 1986, it also eliminated some segregation laws and repeated the bans on multi-racial political parties and inter-racial sex and marriage. Thou, the reform process had distinct limits and school education remained strictly segregated. After 1977, the black resistance soon became more formidable. In 1983, a thousand delegates of all races founded the United Democratic Front to oppose apartheid. During next three years, there was vigorous resistance to the apartheid regime in every city and nearly every Homeland in the country. In 1986, Botha declared state of emergency. The government had restored to legalized tyranny, banned, arrested, and detained thousands of activists. Meanwhile the government was suffering setbacks abroad and the time had come for negotiations. Botha couldn’t bring himself to negotiate with Africans. However in 1989, he invited Mandela, who has emerged as the powerful black leader, to
presidential residence. Botha lost his post and de Klerk succeeded him. In 1990, F.W. de Klerk asserted: “The season is over. The time for reconstruction and reconciliation has arrived,” and Nelson Mandela’s release from jail was announced. De Klerk intended his statement as an endorsement of a new South Africa battling through the political fog at the end of many seasons of apartheid policy. In 1994 Elections were held and on May 10, 1994, 340 years after the Dutch East India Company formed a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope, Nelson Mandela took the presidential oath. Reconciliation was the dominant theme of his augural address, “Out of experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud…..Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another” (Kopytoff 29). The vision of ‘new South Africa’ triumphed.

**Literature**

South Africa was colonized by Europeans against the resistance of Africans and was for some time afterward a battlefield between Briton and Boer. Although South Africa became independent in 1910, the nation’s varied ethnic constituents have not yet been unified in a harmonious whole, and the tension arising from the unequal relations between blacks and whites is the authentic note of much South African literature. Indigenous South African literature effectively began in the late 19th century and became fairly copious in the 20th century. Much of the work by persons born in South Africa was limited in its viewpoint; often these writers only dimly apprehended the aspirations, perceptions, and traditions of South Africans belonging to a people other than their own. English-speaking South African writers are mainly urban and cosmopolitan; their culture is English, and they often have a wider audience among English-speaking communities abroad. By contrast, Afrikaans
writers belonged for many decades to a close-knit community—born of a defensive posture—with shared experiences (including rural roots), shared aspirations and religion, and a strong sense of nationhood. Only in the 1960s did a major break with this tradition become apparent.

The twin 20th-century phenomena of urbanization and apartheid greatly affected the psychological makeup and thus the literary expression of English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites, as well as of indigenous Africans. The moral and artistic challenges inherent in South Africa’s situation stimulated writing up to a point, but the South African preoccupation with “race” problems may ultimately have proven inimical to the creation of an authentic national literature. Although it was a long time coming, the ultimate rapidity of political and social change which has led to the emergence of a post-apartheid, ‘new South Africa’ necessitates a reassessment of the nature of the literary contribution to this change. With the overturning of the old structures of repression and the release of hitherto often-silenced black voices, the literary scene in South Africa is bound to reflect new issues and concerns. Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the change has been what may be described as a move inward, away from politics as drama and spectacle and social phenomenon towards internalization and interiority. Of course, in many works of fiction produced during the apartheid years there was already an awareness of a balance between the private and the public. But it would seem that narrative in the new era is being driven more by human and individual experience than by ‘the situation’, which may also imply a move from the sociopolitical towards the ethical and the subjective. This should not be construed as a rejection or a denial of politics, but much rather a process of reimagining the political, the social, the public. As happened under the influence of feminism, the private becomes the political. But the opposite is just as
true: the political is now being perceived more and more in terms of private experience. There is, as Sam Durrant indicates in his work on Coetzee and mourning, a ‘refusal to be conscripted’ (Durrant 1999).

In J. M. Coetzee’s work this has always been evident, from In the Heart of the Country (1977) and Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) to his last obviously South African novel Disgrace (1999). In Gordimer, the shift first appeared in My Son’s Story (1990) and The House Gun (1998), perhaps to become most poignantly interiorized in None to Accompany Me (1994). It is certainly a cardinal feature in Sindiwe Magona’s Mother to Mother (1998) in which an explicitly political act, the murder of the American exchange student Amy Biehl by young Azapo activists, is reinvented and re-inflected as an interaction between two mothers, one black, one white. And this kind of reinvention also characterizes such diverse novels as Achmat Dangor’s Bitter Fruit (2001) and Damon Galgut’s The Good Doctor (2003).

It seems plausible that a driving force in this shift has been the ripple effects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which, for all its flaws and inadequacies, was a watershed in recent South African history. The experience of thousands of victims of apartheid (as well as a number of perpetrators) testifying in public about the private horror they had lived through, individually or within their families or their circle of friends and acquaintances, significantly assumed the form of storytelling. Countless voices narrated for the first time in their lives – and for the first time in South African history—not any general or public version of an ‘acceptable’, officially sanctioned history, but the private and personal experience of ‘ordinary’ people previously bypassed by the codified forms of that history—forms invariably shaped by historiographers who were both white and male (J.M.Coetzee in Context and Theory, 13).
Femininity indeed offers a prominent domain of experience in recent South African fiction. This works not only through the predominance of female writers, both in Afrikaans (Joubert, Krog, Winterbach, Van Niekerk, and others), and in English (Gordimer, Jooste, Mann, Awerbuck, Watson), but also through an intensified exploration of the implications and challenges of femininity.

A significant introduction to an enquiry into this dimension of recent fiction is provided by two key titles from the years of transition leading up to the first free elections of 1994. On the one hand, there is the affirmation of femininity apparent in Ellen Kuzwayo’s *Call Me Woman* (1985); on the other, Mtutuzeli Matshoba’s rage and despair about emasculation and denial in *Call Me Not a Man* (1979). An entire chapter in history is encapsulated in these titles. In a way both of them may appear to point the way towards Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2003) in which the whole of colonial history becomes feminized in the image of the *Penelopeian*, waiting, lamenting and ultimately triumphant woman.

There are so many manifestations of the move towards explorations of the feminine as a kind of prow figure in post-apartheid fiction. These explorations may range from the quiet and delicate but profound assertions of the female gaze in Mary Watson’s *Moss* (2004), to the redefinitions of the ‘female domain’ in Miriam Tlali’s *Mihloti* (1984); from Elsa Joubert’s historical meanderings (1978/80), to the triumphant dissection of oppression and subservience, both explored as manifestations of femininity, in Marlene van Niekerk’s *Agaat* (2004). And then there is, inevitably, J. M. Coetzee whose explorations of the female experience range from the imaginings of Magda in *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) via the clairvoyance of the dying Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron* (1990) to the disconcerting multiple-eye-of-the-fly inquisitions of *Elizabeth Costello* (2003).
The reinvention of history is indeed another major current in contemporary South African writing. During all the turbulent centuries of colonialism in Southern Africa a specific—and all too familiar—pattern of historiography became prevalent, a master narrative (in every sense of the word) devised by white, male historians. Admittedly, the pattern was not quite as simplistic as in many other colonial situations, in that writing in Afrikaans presented a curiously ambiguous view. The Afrikaans language, shaped from the mid seventeenth century in the mouths of slaves (mostly Indonesian) and indigenous Khoisan peoples who could not speak the language of the colonizing masters (Dutch) properly, of course brought about fascinating processes of creolization. It became a vehicle through which, in Rushdie’s overused term, the empire could ‘write back’. However, at the same time Afrikaans gradually became more the language of the bourgeoisie, until towards the end of the nineteenth century when it was appropriated by an increasingly nationalistic community in opposition to English and Dutch, and assumed a new position of power within the colonial situation. It evolved into ‘the language of apartheid’. In this way historiography became fully the property and the tool of the ruling White elite. But that ‘other’ Afrikaans, the language of the deprived and the oppressed, still lurked behind the new and monstrous Frankenstein. It was only during the process of the dismantling of apartheid that the notion of ‘a South African history’ became broadened and diversified into a whole array of different histories. This happened in line with the global renewal of historiography in the wake of Emmanuel Le Roi Ladurie’s Montaillou, in which the traditional view of history as the account of the actions of emperors and kings, princes and generals and notables was replaced by what Njabulo Ndebele in another context would call ‘the rediscovery of the ordinary’: the lives of common people without whom—as Brecht so
unforgettably depicted it in his poem ‘Frageneineslesenden Arbeiter’ – the great and the famous could never have risen to the top (Le Roi Ladurie 1975; Ndebele 1991). So, in the literature of the new South Africa, a whole jigsaw puzzle of histories came into being. These include Griqua history in Zoe Wicomb’s *David’s Story* (2001), the Xhosa’s cattle killing in Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000; taken further in an as-yet-unpublished novel by Siviwe Mdoda), a redefinition of Afrikaner history in the Boer War by Christoffel Coetzee (*Op soekna Generaal Mannetjies Mentz*, 1998), and women’s history in Elsa Joubert’s *Isobelle’s Journey* (1995; 2002). There is also an amazing overview of the early years of Dutch colonization, as experienced by the Khoikhoi and Dutch colonists at the Cape, the Dutch masters in Holland, and the early settlers in Batavia and Mauritius, in Dan Sleigh’s masterpiece *Islands* (2004). Many of these reviews of history return to a pre-colonial Africa, to a world of myth and magic which shows fascinating parallels with the very origins of Western historiography in the inventions of Herodotus.

The exciting possibilities of turning history inside out to reveal its mythical underpinnings have inspired, in my own narrative explorations, a novel like *The First Life of Adamastor* (1993; allegedly the Khoi ‘original’ on which the Portuguese poet Camoens based his *Luciads*, an epic of the Cape of Good Hope). I think also of the retelling of the Landman family story in *An Act of Terror* (1991) or that of Kristien’s ancestry in *Imaginings of Sand* (1996), or more recently, *Praying Mantis* (2005). In this last-named the first Khoi missionary ordained at the Cape occupies a space between an ancient Khoisan mythology and the Christian world of the London Mission Society.

Whether realistic or fantastic, historical or contemporary, much of the vivacity and versatility of literature in the new South Africa is due to a heightened awareness
of language—language not merely as a vehicle for storytelling but as a remarkable encounter with meaning and truth at innumerable levels. Not just the story, but the process of telling it inspires our writers to a much larger degree than ever before, as we move from the reportage of apartheid towards invention, imagination and discovery. It is certainly a feature of much recent writing that the act and processes of writing themselves come under scrutiny. Dan Sleigh’s enquiry into the first years of Dutch colonization at the Cape acquire an intensity and acuity because the scribe, the Dutch East India Company secretary Grevenbroeck, is observed in the process of committing his memoirs (even his inventions and hunches) to paper (2004). It is the act of writing that gives shape to Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother* (1999), as it does to the narrating of her stories in *To My Children’s Children* (1990) or *Forced to Grow* (1992). Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2004) is writing which transforms painting into a new discovery of reality and its origins. Most of the fascinatingly complex text of Marlene van Niekerk’s *Agaat* (2004) is presented in the form of diaries, letters, poems, memoirs or the transcription of unuttered thoughts. In the work of Coetzee, much of the subtlety of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1990) may well lie in imagining the Magistrate as the narrator of his own story, not simply after the event but as part of the event, constitutive of the event. Certainly, in *Foe* (1986), the narrative action (and the interaction of narrators from this text and from Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana*) resides largely in the processes of verbalizing. And in *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) the text of the main character’s lectures determines the dynamics of the narrative and its evolution through question-and-answer sessions with her audience to its communication with readers ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the book.

The stunning variety of new trends in South African writing which have begun to manifest themselves in recent literature suggests that the country finds itself on the
verge of a veritable explosion of creativity. This is evident not only in the work of established writers but in an impressive spectrum of new voices; and in the almost frenzied pace with which students in Creative Writing courses at the University of Cape Town and other institutions are moving into publication.

Even in stark or dark tales there lurks a sense of wonder and of discovery: the sheer adventure of writing, whether flowing from the workings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or emanating from a multitude of other stimuli and sources. It is no longer inevitable, as it was so largely the case under apartheid, to be gloomy or dour in one’s exposition of horrors and depression. Writers appear to have (re-) discovered the simple truth that there are also reasons to celebrate and to affirm. Concomitantly, it is no longer necessary for commentators to evaluate a writer in terms of what she or he is against. What is relevant now is the quality of the writing as such. This quality is not, as yet, unambiguously beyond reproach. In some respects, as in the revisiting of the Black Holes of apartheid, the interminable evocations of a childhood in the shadow of apartheid can become predictable and cloying. (Though some of it may be moving and brilliant, like Jeanne Goosen’s Not All of Us, (1990), Pamela Jooste’s Dance With a Poor Man’s Daughter (1998), or Carolyn Slaughter’s Before the Knife (2002).) Just as there is much to be deplored in the socio-politics of the country today, after the initial euphoria, much of the writing may be mediocre. But the élan is unmistakable: the urge to create, the need to tell a story. And a surprising proportion of what is published is more than merely promising or encouraging. Much of it is exhilarating, often tremendously relevant and significant, reflecting the profound joy that resides in the rediscovery of literature, not just as an account or a reflection, but as an adventure and as an affirmation of the indomitable energy of the human spirit. Bliss is it in this dawn to be alive.
Life and context

Everything you write, including criticism and fiction, writes you as you write it. (DP 17)

The novel is the realization of individual characters coupled with an understanding of the historical dynamic, a representation of public and private realms in which one is not subordinate to the other: Instead there should be a dialectical interaction between public and private realms. Coetzee’s creative writing has repeatedly pushed at the questions that have been central to his life and times. He was born to Zacharias and Vera Wehmeyer Coetzee on 9th February, 1940 in Cape Town. He was first of two sons. The family were descended from early Dutch settlers dating to the 17th century. Coetzee also has Polish roots, as his great maternal-grandfather Balthazar du Biel was Polish immigrants to South Africa, came to South Africa to convert the heathen. Coetzee has often clarified the matter of his parents as in one of his explanations he writes:

I am one of many people in this country who have become detached from their ethnic roots where those roots were in Dutch South Africa or Indonesia or Britain or Greece or wherever, and have joined a pool of no recognizable ethnos whose language of exchange is English. These people are not, strictly speaking English South Africans, since a large proportion of them--myself included--are not of British ancestry. They are merely South Africans (itself a mere name of convenience) whose native tongue, the tongue they have been born to, is English. And as the pool has no discernible ethnos, so one day I hope it will have no predominant colour, as more people of color drift into it. A pool, I would hope, then, in which differences wash away. (Coetzee 1992: 342)
Although Zacharias grew up in Worcester, a rural Afrikaans community in Cape Town, he took advantage of the educational resources available to him and became a lawyer for the city government while Vera worked as a school teacher. Coetzee’s parents were ‘bloedsappe’, Afrikaners who supported General Jan Smut and dissociated themselves from the Afrikaner Nationalist movement that eventually came to power in South Africa in 1948. His father lost his government job in Cape Town as ‘Controller of Letting’, because of his opposition to the legalization of apartheid. The family moved back to the Coetzee family farm in Worcester. There, Zacharias farmed sheep and kept books for Standard Canners, the local fruit-canning factory. The family spent three fruitless years at Worcester. Although Afrikaans nationalism was at its height, the people were in the midst of an agriculture depression. So, the family moved back to Cape Town in 1951. Zacharias opened up a law firm, which failed because of his inability to manage money. Zacharias sank into debt and became a drunkard. The family became more and more dependent on Vera’s humble earnings. His father’s activity and life disgraced the family.

Zacharias’ family were Afrikaners, people of Dutch South African descent. The Afrikaners were Protestants belonging to Dutch Reformed Church and spoke Afrikaans, a Dutch South African dialect. Because of the political dissent between the English and the Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, the school systems for whites were segregated along linguistic lines. John however did not fit neatly into Afrikaans culture. He attended English-medium classes and claimed to be Catholic. He loved reading English literature and never fully identified with rural Afrikaans children, who, he found to be rough, coarse, and poor. Coetzee’s education was largely in English, as he obtained honours degrees in English and Mathematics at UCT, and studied literature and linguistics abroad ("Chronology" 15). On the other
hand, however, his Afrikaans heritage possibly increased his affinity with other Afrikaner intellectuals who had imported avant-garde or modernist discourses, enabling him to access these in his own writing (Wade 203).

As a result of his background, Coetzee is also something of an outsider to both English and Afrikaner culture, a position that affords him a critical and dissident relation to both Afrikaner Nationalist discourses, as well as to the glorification of ‘Little England’ symptomatic of Anglo-South African English studies (Wade 202-203). Coetzee’s mother is of German stock: her maiden name is Wehmeyer, but her mother was a du Biel from Pomerania. Though their political sympathies lie somewhat more with the German than the English side in World War II, they are English-speaking by choice, and thoroughly at home in the language: his mother’s English, the boy observes, "is faultless, particularly when she writes. She uses words in their right sense, her grammar is impeccable" (Coetzee, 1998: 106). The memoir, of course, reveals the young Coetzee to be--scandalously--his mamma’s boy; so, perfect English, coming first in English, is something he insists on for himself.

Coetzee spent most of his early life in Cape Town and in Worcester in Cape Province. Coetzee attended St. Joseph College, a Catholic school in Cape Town suburb of Rondebosch and later studied mathematics and English literature in 1960 and his Bachelor of Arts with honors in Mathematics in 1961. Like thousands of other South Africans before and after him, Coetzee turned to the metropolis of Western culture for a better life and further education. Coetzee relocated to U.K. in 1962, where he worked as a computer programmer, staying until 1965. He initially worked for I.B.M. in London before moving to International Computer Limited Bracknell, Berkshire. In 1963, while working in the United Kingdom, he was awarded a Master of Arts degree from the University of Cape Town for a dissertation on the novels of
Ford Madox Ford. His experience in England was later recounted in *Youth*, his second volume of fictionalized memoirs. Coetzee went to the University of Texas at Austin on the Fulbright program in 1965. He received a doctorate degree in linguistics there in 1969. His PhD thesis was on computer stylistic analysis of the works of Samuel Beckett. In 1968, he began teaching English Literature at the state university of New York at Buffalo where he stayed until 1971. It was at Buffalo that he started his first novel *Dusklands*. In 1971, Coetzee sought permanent residence in the United States, but it was denied to his involvements in anti-Vietnam war protests. In 1970, Coetzee had been one of 45 faculty members who occupied the university’s Hayes Hall and subsequently arrested for criminal trespass. He then returned to South Africa to teach English literature at the University of Cape Town. He began publishing fiction that not only draws on the European heritage—in particular, on novelists of high modernism and early postmodernism, notably Kafka, Beckett, Nabokov, and Robbe-Grillet—but that also continues to participate in some of the major intellectual currents of the West from the 1960s to the present, from the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics to Continental Structuralism and, finally, to post Structuralism. He was promoted to professor of General Literature in 1983 and was distinguished professor of Literature between 1999 and 2001. Upon retiring in 2002, Coetzee relocated to Adelaide, Australia, where he was made an honorary research fellow at the English Department of the University of Adelaide where his partner, Dorothy Driver, was a fellow academic. He served as professor on the committee on social thought at the University of Chicago until 2003. However in 2003, Coetzee became an Australian citizen.

J.M. Coetzee is one of only two writers to have been awarded the Booker Prize twice, first for *Life & Times of Michael K* in 1983 and then for *Disgrace* in 1999.
Among his many other literary and academic awards, including a 1988 nomination for the Nobel Prize for Literature, and was conferred the prize in 2003. He was awarded the Jerusalem Prize for Freedom in 1987 and, in the first words of his acceptance speech, articulated the paradox that “someone who…lives in so notably unfree a country…is honored with a prize for freedom.” His work has been translated into many languages and is widely studied at universities and high schools around the world. In South Africa, Coetzee has won the Mofolo-Plomer Prize, the CNA Prize (three times), the University of Cape Town Book Award, and the Pringle Prize for Criticism twice. Internationally, he has won the Geoffrey Faber and James Tait Black Memorial prizes, the Booker-McConnell Prize, the Prix Femina Étranger, and the Sunday Express Book of the Year Award. He is an honorary member of the Modern Languages Association and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature; he also holds honorary degrees from the University of Strathclyde and the State University of New York at Buffalo. In addition to being an academic (he holds the Chair of General Literature at the University of Cape Town), writer, and scholar, he is also an accomplished linguist, translator, cultural commentator, and one-time computer programmer.

**Literary Career**

I am not a herald of community or anything else . . . I am someone who has intimations of freedom (as every chained prisoner has) and constructs representations—which are shadows themselves—of
people slipping their chains and turning their faces to the light. I do not imagine freedom, freedom as such; I do not represent it.

(J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*)

Coetzee’s novels are generally seen as representing a break from the prevailing narrative forms of white South African writing—those of romance, Pastoralism, and realism—to a self-conscious narrative form that enacts problems of authorship and authority, freedom and determination, and the colonizing nature of language itself. He has published thirteen novels, from his first novel *Dusklands* in 1974 and *The Childhood of Jesus* in 2013. His non-fiction books include *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), a seminal study of South African literature; a collection of essays, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996), *Strange Shores: Literary Essays, Here and Now: letters, 2008-2011* and others. The collection of Coetzee’s essays and his thoughts on their composition in the form of interviews with his co-editor, David Attwell, entitled *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (1992) chart his writing life. While Coetzee’s *Boyhood, Youth* and *Summertime* are categorized as memoirs, presenting events and incidents from his life. The novels and non-fiction of J.M.Coetzee are characterized by an intense though oblique involvement with the political, intellectual, aesthetic and philosophical issues of our times. His works raise the most fundamental questions not only about literature, but also concerning current ethical debates. His works address themes and issues pertinent to the (post)colonial and apartheid situations: colonial discourse, the other, racial segregation, censorship, banning and exile, police brutality and torture, South African liberalism and revolutionary activism, the place of women, the relationship of South Africa’s peoples to the land and, not least, the ethico-politics of writing all figure prominently in the oeuvre. The question of how the
world and a literary text—how a text and its context—come together has been a continual and deep-seated source of inspiration for him. The mutual relationship between literature and world is part of the constant background of his work. For Coetzee, writing is clearly a response to what he describes as his feelings of helplessness before the fact of suffering in the world. His novels seem to replay the agony of his implication in apartheid. In this sense, then, his novels would seem to be manifestations of a melancholic or even masochistic repetition compulsion. At the same time, however, they are a mode of protesting this forced affiliation. They are thus minimal, highly qualified forms of action; as a mode of waiting for the end of apartheid, they too hover undecidably between activity and passivity. Affected by the South African history of apartheid, civil war and suppression, his earlier novels depicts the mechanisms of social hierarchies and touch the post-colonial notion of the self and the other. Written during the 1980s, at the height of the apartheid era, these novels testify to the suffering engendered by apartheid precisely by refusing to translate that suffering into a historical narrative. Rather than providing a direct relation of the history of apartheid, Coetzee’s narratives instead provide a way of relating to such a history. They teach us that the true work of the novel consists not in the factual recovery of history, nor yet in the psychological recovery from history, but rather in the insistence on remaining inconsolable before history (Durant Sam, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*, 24). “Coetzee does indeed position his writing in a way that belies his own long-held quarrel with forms of thinking grounded in logocentric premises”. (Peter McDonald, *The Writer, the Critic and the Censor: J. M. Coetzee and the Question of Literature*, 2004)

White writing in South Africa maintains a debatable status, since it sides with the suppressed and writes out of the social security of the former suppressor. This
conflict of the author, who finds himself at once to be observer and part of the observed social construct, encroaches the problem of representing otherness in a just way exceeds the literary realm and becomes an ethical principle whose traces can be found in both Coetzee’s literary and critical works. Though Coetzee’s earlier novels seem more influenced with the relation between the self and the other, an analysis of how society is represented in his novels can provide a view on the underlying mechanisms of stabilization and repression. An excursus on Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* links this mechanism with language and explains how the suppression of the other is achieved by furnishing it with cultural and historical implications. Since literature is a linguistic as well as a cultural construct, and, moreover, a product of author and reality, it can take a decisive role in the representation of otherness. For this reason, literature and the writer form an integral part in Coetzee’s novels. Attridge points out that writing in support of the ‘ethics of otherness’ comes from an author who is “excluded from history in the name of which he professes to act” (Barthes, *Mythologies* 157). Coetzee constantly permutes between his bonds to reality and to the other and tries to “reconcile reality and men; between description and explanation, between object and knowledge” (Barthes, *Mythologies* 159). The mutual relationship between literature and the world is the part of the constant background of his work, but specific histories occur and reoccur. The complex relationship to South African history is shown in *Life and Times of Michael K.* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, both located in African and postcolonial context. Experiments with the form and the ethics of representation, in *Foe*, for example, align the work with arguments made through the constellation of philosophical ideas known as postmodernism. The approaches to gender and sexuality in *Disgrace*, *Elizabeth Costello* and *Slow Man* and in the autobiographical
work are interventions in global discussions of gender and its changing representation. Coetzee's writing reverberates at the cutting edge of debates across the public sphere and in the humanities now. Controversies over animal rights and over eating meat circle around the lives of animals: accounts of trauma and torture draw on his waiting for the barbarians. Warning about global state power, atrocity, about international war and empire—for lack of better words—sound throughout his work from the first novella, Dusklands, to the most recent publication Diary of a Bad Year, and have loud contemporary resonance. The novels, both before and after the end of apartheid, demonstrate his continuing preoccupation with the recalcitrant presence or residue—particulars, bodies, realities—of South Africa: his work is concerned again and again with the nature of embodiment. Coetzee has worked and studied in the western world however, in South Africa he writes not as a citizen of the first world but of the third—or perhaps the first within the third—and therefore, like other white South African writers, he faces the problem of cultural authority. His relationship with the European canon entails an accusation in a history of domination. Coetzee's response to this situation is to interrogate the specific form of marginality he represents. His novels are nourished by their relationship with canonical Western literature; it is equally true that through his complicated Post-coloniality he brings that situation to light and finds fictional forms wherein it can be objectified, named, and questioned. As Derek Attridge correctly puts it, speaking of Foe:

A mode of fiction that exposes the ideological basis of canonization, that draws attention to its own relation to the existing canon, that thematizes the role of race, class, and gender in the processes of cultural acceptance and exclusion, and that, while speaking from a
marginal location, addresses the question of marginality—such a mode of fiction would have to be seen as engaged in an attempt to break the silence in which so many are caught, even if it does so by literary means that have traditionally been celebrated as characterizing canonic art. (217)

Dominic Head while discussing the novels of Coetzee divides them into two broad divisions, the novels written during apartheid and the novels written in the post-apartheid period. According to him, the dividing line does identify an important shift of emphasis that is becoming clearer with hindsight. Coetzee has concentrated on the life in South Africa. In these novels the recurring ideas cannot be fully understood in isolation from that context.

**Dusklnds**

Coetzee started writing *Dusklnds* in the United States of America when he was living in Buffalo, New York, where he lived from 1965 to 1971. However it was completed in South Africa, when he finally returned to South Africa. The novel was published in 1974. In the cultural estrangement of Texas, and linking different threads of his personal history and current situation, Coetzee brought aspects of his graduate studies to bear on the question of colonialism. The decision to return to his native country of origin was more or less forced on him. His application for permanent residence in the United States was repeatedly denied, partly because the terms of his visa required him to return, but possibly, too, because he had been arrested during an antiwar imbroglio on the Buffalo campus. *Dusklnds* introduces the characteristic Coetzee style, in which an interrogation of the chosen modes is an integral aspect of the fiction. In this novel the interrogation is straightforward, relating to different discourses of imperialism and is parodied in the novel. J. M. Coetzee has
baffled many of his readers by juxtaposing two apparently discrete narratives: ‘The Vietnam Project’ narrated by Eugene Dawn, an American propagandist writing in the early 1970s, and ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’ narrated by a line of South African Coetzees. The most prominent of this line, Jacobus Coetzee, J. M. Coetzee claims as an ancestor (DP 52). However, ‘The Vietnam Project’ serves as a lens or reading practice by which to read the more oblique mythologizing in ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’.

The novel is divided into two novellas, but since the whole dependent on the interrelationship of these two narratives— for example, through the development of theme and motif— the book is clearly a unified and single entity. The first section, ‘The Vietnam Project’, traces its narrator’s progression into insanity, as the discourse of US imperialism overwhelms him. Eugene Dawn works in the Mythography section of the Kennedy Institute in the United States. Eugene Dawn is compiling a report called the New Life Project that covers the role of propaganda used by the United States during the Vietnam War. His department is responsible for the psychological warfare in the Vietnam War. Eugene undertakes an extensive study of the United States attack on Vietnam and its mental effect on the Vietnamese people. However the formal journal, intended to justify turns into the realistic document as Eugene close study reveals many hidden truths. He affirms the naturalness of the Vietnamese subjection to America, ascribing it to a mythical past; and by stating ‘we wished only that they would retire and leave us in peace’ (DL 18), he suggests that the Vietnamese’s desire to remain on their land and maintain their culture intact is, from a colonialist perspective, illegitimate, but not from their perspective. His supervisor is not quite pleased with the report. Coetzee, the supervisor suggests that Eugene rewrite his report. Eugene leaves the office depressed. He tries to rewrite
the report in the basement of the library. He researches topics related to the culture of Vietnam. Eugene pays special attention to the father voice and how it works to control the common citizen as well as how it fails as a device of propaganda. He underlines the fact that the superiority and alleged power of Western society correspond to an improved destructive ability, facilitated by technological progress on the one hand and the new war strategies adopted by the American army on the other: the use of PROP12, a gas which poisons the soil and destroys the land for years to come (DL 29), and the psychological war carried out by them. Eugene contemplates all these tactics in his report, where he reveals that for the powerful warlords the fact that many innocent Vietnamese were killed during the conflict is a minor detail. Through his (metatextual) account of his preparation of the *Vietnam Report*, written in the basement of the Harry S. Truman Library, we learn of his troubled relation with his superior ‘Coetzee’; his sense of dis-ease with his vocation; his failing marriage to his wife Marilyn; his mental collapse culminating in his kidnapping and stabbing his son Martin; and finally, his committal to an asylum. Coetzee has exposed the fact that language is responsible for the concealment of the horrors perpetrated by colonisers.

The second section, ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’, is followed by the words ‘Edited, with an Afterword, by S.J. Coetzee. Translated by J.M. Coetzee’, is based on the colonial travel writing of European adventurers in the cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the fact that the original Jacobus Coetse was a distant relative of the author adds great resonance to the theme of complicity in the novel. The title is followed by Flaubert’s quotation, “What is important is the philosophy of history” (DL 53). This brief quotation and the title of the section suggest the main concern of the text. The section consists of three documents—*Het Relaas*
(the narrative), the Afterword and the Appendix. The first document is presented by
J.M.Coetzee as a translation from the Dutch into English. In it the second degree
narrator, Jacobus Coetzee, a colonial explorer in South Africa in 1760, details his
three expeditions: the first “beyond the Great River” and the two journeys to “the land
of the Great Namaqua” (DL 61; 66; 100). On the second of the three journeys
Jacobus falls ill and is nursed by the Namaquas, who effectively hold him captive.
The third mission—the second to the Great Namaqua—led by Captain Hendrik Hop,
is primarily to capture and punish Jacobus Coetzee’s runaway servants. The reader
is confronted with the subjective narration of Jacobus, who relates everything in
internal focalization.

The second document, Afterword, is a translation from Afrikaans into English.
It is followed by end notes by Dr. S.J.Coetzee, a lecturer at the historically Afrikaner
Stellenbosch University who is a distant relation of Jacobus Coetzee and father of
the (fictional) translator ‘J. M. Coetzee’. The “Afterword” by S. J. Coetzee is part of a
series of lectures given annually to the Van Plettenberg Society between 1934 and
1948, on the eve of the Afrikaner National Party’s ascendancy to power. The mission
of Jacobus is revised and retold by S.J.Coetzee, using third person singular. The
endnotes are a sort of subtext, presenting many imprecise and misleading
references. They expose the fact that the version of truth propounded by Afrikaner
institutions is a mere forgery.

The third document, ‘Appendix’ is also introduced by J.M.Coetzee, followed by
disposition signed by Jacobus to be given to the Governor.

The two narratives invite readers to draw parallels between contemporary US
imperialism in Vietnam and the historical origin of Afrikaner domination in south
Africa; embedded in this parallel, and the modes of discourse Coetzee appropriates,
is a debate about authorial power and complicity, which, through historical association, is rendered personal for Coetzee. In both novellas, however, the white man’s superiority corresponds to the forced imposition of his will, and his power finally coincides with his aggressiveness and his possession of highly destructive weapons. ‘Savages do not have guns. This is the effective meaning of savagery’ (DL 80), states Jacobus, confirming that in his vision ‘superiority’ and ‘power’ simply consist of the ability to kill. In *Doubling the Point* J. M. Coetzee indicates that the book is his response to the Vietnam War and to South African history (DP 27) – not only colonialism, informed by the author’s reading of the “annals of the exploration of southern Africa”, but also apartheid because Jacobus Coetzee’s narrative is retold by Dr. S. J. Coetzee at the moment immediately preceding the election of the Afrikaner National Party into government in 1948.

**In the Heart of the Country**

Coetzee’s second novel, *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), takes place on an isolated farm in South Africa. The novel is told through the perspective of an unmarried white woman, Magda who takes care of her father. Magda’s father is the callous ruler of the farm. His character and isolation of farm life in South African desert have a decided effect on Magda’s psychology. When her father takes a black mistress, Magda’s reactions are extreme. She is jealous of her father’s mistress. She is so angry that wishes to kill her father and his mistress. So Magda writes this journal, in which she lets her mind flow, describes the plans she makes to assassinate the concubine and cries for her frustrated desire of becoming a woman. She informs how she actually killed her father and had sexual encounter with servant
Henrik. In the end, she has lost her mind, left alone in her home in the middle of nowhere. She does not actually recounts what has occurred, but rather what she wishes to occur, or perhaps fantasizes such situation.

The preoccupation of this novel is the female colonial writer’s psychic struggle with identity, through the portrayal of an author figure who descends into madness. She struggles with the legacy of the political father and with the pathological master-servant relations of the family farm. She is unable; finally, to satisfy her desire for association and community, and the novel ends with Magda constructing stone icons addressed as chimerical sky-gods. Hegel’s master-slave dialect lies behind much of Coetzee’s ethics and epistemology in this novel, as it had informed parts of Dusklands.

**Waiting for the barbarians**

*Waiting for the Barbarians*, published in 1982, records the confessions of a magistrate in an outpost of a nameless empire that is waging war on the denizens of the remoteness beyond. The novel deals with that moment of suspension when an empire imagines itself besieged and plots a final reckoning with its enemies. The title of the novel is inspired from a poem by C.P.Cavafy. The poem offers an image of the Roman Empire in decadent stasis, awaiting the arrival of 'the barbarians' who will take over the mantle of government - the legislative process - as well as the titles and trappings of high office. The barbarians, in failing to arrive, in ceasing to exist, can no longer offer 'a kind of solution'. Coetzee’s novel stages this dependency, dramatizing the terroristic drive of the imperial state to achieve mastery.

The Magistrate, who narrates the story, is the administrator of a settler outpost of an indeterminate place and time and which thus constitutes a kind of temporal no-man’s-land or ‘interregnum’. This term, co-opted by Gordimer from the
Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s reinterpretation, denotes a transitional period between regimes when, in Gramsci’s words, “the old is dying, and the new cannot be born” (qtd. in Gordimer, *Essential Gesture* 263). The Magistrate’s authority is usurped by Colonel Joll and his sidekick Mandel when they arrive with a relief battalion to protect the outpost. In the interim the Magistrate forms an obsessive relationship with an enigmatic barbarian girl who has been tortured at the hands of Joll (only consummated on the journey to return the girl to her people). As a result of this undertaking, which the Magistrate construes as a moral obligation, Joll accuses him of treason for supposedly colluding with the enemy and, like the captured barbarians, he is imprisoned and tortured. From the outset the Magistrate is conscious of the mechanics of Empire’s (discursive) power; he and Joll “pause, savouring from our different positions the ironies of the word ‘civilization’” (*WFB* 13). His torturers show him ‘the meaning of humanity’ (*WFB* 126): Empire’s henchmen, he says, are the ‘new barbarians’ (*WFB* 85). The novel suggests that nurturing the fear of the threat of the barbarians is Empire’s means of defining the ‘civilized’ self.

The novel ends with the abandonment of the settlement by the Third Bureau garrison: they have been out-thought by those they interpellate ‘barbarian’, the elusive nomadic people (who have avoided direct confrontation, but have undermined and sabotaged the Empire’s operations by stealth). The novel closes as a reduced population at the settlement (many have fled), now abandoned by their supposed protectors, remain waiting for the barbarians. The efforts of the children, representing future generations, in the closing dream sequence to build what the Magistrate evaluates as ‘not a bad snowman’ offers only the barest hope of redemption for the settler community

*Life and Times of Michael K*
The problem of the individual should be situated in relation to history becomes the driving concern in *Life and Times of Michael K*. The title calls up a narrative tradition, which embraces non-fictional modes such as the political memoir as well as the novel, in which individual engagement with social and historical events is the principal point of interest. Coetzee’s novel then ironically undermines this association by portraying an anti-hero whose ‘raison de etre’ is to resist all forms of social connection and political affiliation. This does not make the novel apolitical: its setting evokes the social breakdown and political unrest of South Africa in the 1980s very clearly. The novel is set in modern South Africa, at a time of revolution. “The scenes of the novel evoke the social breakdown of post-Soweto South Africa in the 1980s, just as the novel's themes represent governing fears and concerns of the time” (Gallanger 136). The operations of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (the military wing of the ANG) are of especial significance. The most dramatic action, in a campaign of strategic bombings, was the attack against the SASOL oil-from- coal plants in June 1980, part of a series of acts of symbolic resistance which are representative of the historical background evoked through the setting of guerilla warfare in the novel (John Pampallis, *Foundation of New South Africa*, 264). In short, the novel, in the manner typical of the auvre, is constructed in such a way that it simultaneously alludes to, and withdraws from, its context. *Life and Times of Michael K* is constructed in such a way that it alludes to its context whilst avoiding a direct engagement with it.

Michael K is a simple South African— the reader infers he is non-white subjected to the oppressions of the apartheid while finding ways of eluding the mechanisms of state control. As the novel is set at a time of violent social
breakdown, the instruments of control appear to have become intensified, and yet not fully effective, creating the space for a Michael K to live in the gaps.

The novel consists of three parts. The first and third parts are presented to us by a heterodiegetic narrator. This narrator tells us the story of Michael K, a 31-year old gardener, born with a hare lip and a mind that is ‘not quick’ (LTMK 4). After having spent his childhood in Huis Norenius, a boarding school for “afflicted and unfortunate children” (LTMK 4), he gets a job as a gardener at the municipal services of the City of Cape Town. Because of his disfigurement (and the reactions of other people), he feels more at ease when he is alone and lives his life as a gardener in solitariness. On Sundays he visits his mother, Anna K, who works as a cleaning lady for a fortunate family and lives in an apartment below their house. Anna felt that K resigns from his position, before being made redundant. He then sets out a quest with his ailing mother to find the farm near Prince Albert where she had grown up. When his mother asks Michael K to take her to the country, to Prince Albert, where she grew up, he agrees to go with her. He builds a cart for his mother and takes her by foot, because they do not have a permit to leave. After a first attempt that fails, because they run into a convoy of the army, they eventually succeed in getting quite far. However, near Stellenbosch his mother becomes very ill. Michael takes her to the hospital and there she dies. After her death, he roams the streets around the hospital for a while, not knowing exactly what to do with himself, but eventually decides to go to Prince Albert by himself. Bearing his mother’s ashes, K starts his journey towards Prince Albert. He has a few encounters with police that sets him to work. Even some strangers take care of him and feed him. At last, Michael K arrives at a deserted farm in the Prince Albert district, which may or may not be the one his mother described. He decides to bury her ashes here. He starts trying to make a
living here by killing animals, drinking water from a pump near the farm and starts planting seeds. Although his future is dark and he feels weird thinking about it, he finds a certain kind of happiness in cultivating the land. One day, a stranger appears who turns out to be the grandson of the Visagies. He has deserted the army and wants to hide out on the farm. He thinks of Michael K as the family’s servant and treats him as such. Michael therefore runs away into the mountains. In the mountains, Michael tries to live off eating lizards and flowers, but nearly starves to death. When he realizes he is bound to die if he goes on like this, he descends the mountain and into the town of Prince Albert again. Weak and starved, he is forced to work on a railway labour gang for a short period of time, and he is later picked up by the authorities and taken to the Jakkaldrif camp in which the unemployed are interned to form a labour pool. He is told it is no prison, but the people inside are not allowed to leave. Inside the camp many people live their life, including families. Although Michael is an outsider in the camp and does not like to be surrounded by other people, the regime in the camp seems to be livable. However, one day the police arrive. The captain decides to take over the camp and announces a much stricter policy from that day forward. Michael therefore escapes and returns to the Visagie farm. When he arrives back at the farm, it seems the grand son has left. Michael takes up his work on the land around the farm again. He begins to sleep during the day time and works on the land at night. He gets very weak, for the only things he eats are pumpkins. Too weak to watch out and hide, the police discover him. They blow up the farm and take him away.

In the second part of the novel, we encounter a homodiegetic narrator, the medical officer of the camp to which Michael has been brought by the police after taking him away from the Visagie farm. He is very interested in Michael and touched
by his different way of thinking. It makes him wonder about the meaning of his own life. When Michael eventually escapes, the medical officer convinces the camp leader to register Michael as having died, so he can be free. In the end of the second chapter, the narrator describes how he would have desired to go along with Michael; to let Michael guide him towards a different mode of existence. His preferred way of living now.

Finally, in the third part of the novel, again narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, Michael K is back in Cape Town and goes back to his mother’s old apartment. Here he finds traces indicating someone has been sleeping there. Then the novel ends with Michael fantasizing about how he would convince this stranger into going back with him to the Visagie farm and how he would show the stranger in what way he would manage to get water from the depth of the earth, by using a teaspoon.

Michael K experiences are punctuated with episodes of state interferences or institutionalization. *Life and Times of Michael K* proclaims itself as having an involvement with the *Bildungsroman* tradition in which the individual life is held to interact intimately with social and political development.

**Foe**

*Foe* was published in 1986. *Foe* can be regarded as one of J. M. Coetzee’s significant pieces of postmodern writing. Coetzee has targeted Daniel Defoe, who is a major figure in English and European fiction, and his distinguished piece ‘*Robinson Crusoe*’, dispelling the colonial imply, androcentric tendencies as well as the validity of patriarchal writing and literary classics, finally to arrive at the purpose of questioning the creditability of literary narration. *Foe*’s main character Susan Barton attempts to write about her time stranded on an island but cannot because of her low
status as a poor, single woman. She lacks the confidence in her writing abilities. She says, “a liveliness is lost in the writing down which must be supplied by art and I have no art” (F, 40). She wrote letters to Foe, for Foe has disappeared; he left his house and no one knows where to find him. Susan had taken the other survivor, a Brazilian-African dumb manservant with her. This dumb servant’s name is Friday and Susan is keen to turn him into a free man. On the island where Susan is stranded she also lived with the servant’s master called Crusoe, who is an old man and some sort of antithesis of the young, adventurous and courageous main character of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. Crusoe dies in the process, and Susan and Friday return to England. However, Susan can’t establish any relations with Friday since he’s his tongue in the island. She has been informed by Crusoe that slave-trades have cut his tongue. In the meantime, Susan feels she cannot stand it to be around Friday any longer. She wants to set him free and give him the opportunity to ship back to Africa. They travel by foot through the country and finally arrive at Bristol, where Susan tries to find a captain that wants to take Friday to Africa. However, she notices that the people that are willing to take Friday are not being honest and have the intention to sell Friday again as slave instead of setting him free. She decides he should not go, but stay with her in England. At last, Susan and Friday are able to find the house of Foe. They went to stay with him. After listening to the story told by Susan Foe suggests that they need to make some changes in the story as it is too boring and readers would not like such a boring story. However, Susan wants Foe to write down her story exactly as she has told him and nothing more, while Foe tries to explain to Susan that if one wants to write a book, one needs to add more exciting elements. Trying to convince Susan to include her story of Bahia within the story of the island, he tells her:
The island is not a story in itself,” said Foe gently, laying a hand on my knee. “We can bring it to life only by setting it within a larger story... The island lacks light and shade. It is too much the same throughout. It is like a loaf of bread. It will keep us alive, certainly, if we are starved of reading; but who will prefer it when there are tastier confections and pastries to be had? (Foe 117)

Foe ties to explain how Susan’s story should be adjusted by adding elements to make it tastier. But Susan holds on the necessity of a true account, she does not want any lie. She thinks, “If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it?” (Foe 40) This leads to many discussions between Susan and foe on the way in which the story should be told. In the end of the novel, there does not seem to be a clear outcome on whose story eventually prevails. The struggle remains struggle, there does not seem to be a winner.

**Age of Iron**

*Age of Iron* was written during the years 1986-1989, and was published in 1990. It was Coetzee’s last novel to be clearly written within the apartheid era, its evocation of ‘heroism’ finally conditioned by the historical juncture it confronts. The central organizing idea of *Age of Iron* (1990) is to give voice to the oppressed other. *Age of Iron*, then, as its title suggests- drawing on a classical myth about human decadence and anarchic self-destruction- is a narrative of last things, a South African ‘thanatophany’, as Mrs. Curren calls it, a revelation of death. Significantly, however, the novel draws back from the sensational gratifications of apocalyptic ending- a move slyly foreshowed by the rearrangement of the traditional mythic sequence when the narrator imagines that terminal age of iron may be succeeded by the softer ages of bronzes, clay and earth (AI 50). Mrs. Curren writes:
I will draw a veil soon…. I will not show to you what you will not be able to bear: a woman in a burning house running from window to window, calling through the bars for help (AI 170).

The novel narrates the story of a retired lecturer of classics, Mrs. Elizabeth Curren. She has remained willfully blind to the violence and degradation around her. She has written many letters to her daughter during the death throes of the apartheid system, in which she attempts to see clearly both the present and those pieces of past that she has chosen not to examine. One day it is diagnosed that she is suffering from terminal bone cancer. She wishes to post the letters but is helpless. However, one day the vagrant Vercueil comes to her house as an uninvited visitor. He is her angel of death, her heraldic messenger angelus. Mrs. Curren entrusted him to post the letters or painstaking notes about her dying days, written to her beloved daughter, who has left behind spiteful South Africa for the strange shores of an American exile.

While Elizabeth Curren struggles for and with the Western classics to gain a perspective on her despairing situation, Vercueil appears as the presumably coloured derelict of an equally anachronistic social order. She undergoes a kind of personal dissolution which is also a form of qualified political enlightenment. Coetzee thus inverts the usual form of the novel of personal development to make Mrs. Curren’s progress dependent upon her acceptance of her own unimportance as she approaches death. Mrs. Curren’s confessional narratives appear to be for her only. To the extent that Vercueil is her confessor, as her companion, he fulfills this role only because he can give no gift of redemption; and, in another inversion of convention, Coetzee implies that this is what makes Mrs. Curren’s confession genuine. Her moral growth is accelerated by the deaths of two black boys, Bheki, her
maid Florence’s fifteen-year-old son, and his friend, both of whom are shot by police. Bheki’s friend, who calls himself ‘John’, is killed at Mrs. Curren’s house, while hiding in Florence’s quarters. It is a fact that accelerates her understanding of her complicity in the political structure. There are a number of direct references to the political context in this novel. Coetzee gives 1986-9 as the dates of composition, and scenes of township violence clearly evoke the unrest in Cape Town of 1986. The novel also registers a key contemporaneous principle of black opposition: that of non-white solidarity and non-cooperation. An increasingly militant youth, promoting a new wave of school boycotts, is a marked feature of this phase of black resistance, and this kind of attitude is reflected in Bheki’s stance. In a broader historical context, Mrs. Curren understands that it is colonial history, and specifically Afrikaner nationalism, that has produced this political interregnum of resistance, this ‘age of iron’, in which normal human relations are distorted. According to Head, Mrs. Curren stands for South Africa, the cancer with mirroring the diseased society without. The most dominant literary theme, however, is the novel’s investigation of the confessional mode, for it is this aspect that conveys a sense of Mrs. Curren’s development towards relinquishing personal authority, despite the sense of her continuing intellectual intransigence in the face of social and political change that sometimes upsets her enshrined liberal values. *Age of Iron* seems to have been constructed in such a way to confront the problem of double thought and the tainted confession. As Mrs. Curren is dying essentially alone, any suspicion of self-interest may be absent in our reception of her narrative. She abandons her plan to turn her death into a public gesture through suicide, the kind of willful act that might raise the suspicion of double thought. It seems that Coetzee is trying to construct a narrative situation that comes as close as possible to this confessional ideal, and to the
revelation of truth. On her journey to some form of salvation, Mrs.Curren’s ‘first confession’ concerns her inability to love ‘John’, Bheki’s unlikeable comrade; she senses that ‘he is part of my salvation’. The failure of her initial response is redressed after his shooting, and the way in which his final moments come to haunt her and to assume the status of a form of heroic final reckoning to parallel her own. This is another moment that speaks back to Coetzee’s reflection on confession, and the difficulty of establishing authority in the moment before death. The balance of authority and death is reconfigured, here.

**The Master of Petersburg**

*The Master of Petersburg* (1994) marks turning point in Coetzee’s career. It was published in the same year of the first multiracial elections in South Africa; it is composed in the run-up to the final demise of apartheid, in the final phase of interregnum, following the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the unbanning of ANC in 1990. Written at this historical juncture of transition, it is in many ways Janus-faced. Its deliberation about revolutionary activities evoke many of the contemporaneous political concerns in South Africa faced by the prospect of being ruled by a party headed by revolutionary leaders rather than practiced politicians.

The setting is nineteenth-century Russia and the protagonist of the novel is Fyodor Dostoevsky. The book begins with the return of this fictionalized Dostoevsky to St. Petersburg on October 1869. He has been staying in Dresden to avoid his creditors. The point of the journey is to collect the personal effects of his stepson Povel, who has died in suspicious circumstances. Povel’s papers, however, include a terrorist hit list and are in the hands of the Tsarist police, with whom Dostoevsky becomes entangled in the kind of brush with authority that is familiar from the earlier
novels. He moves into Povel’s former lodgings, there commencing an affair with landlady, and becoming fascinated with her daughter. He attempts to learn from the landlady’s daughter, Matryona, exactly how his stepson died, and lived.

Dostoevsky is interrogated by P.P. Maximov, a judicial investigator who insists that Povel was murdered by fellow revolutionaries. Maximov attempts to induce Dostoevsky to help track them down. The revolutionaries’ leader, Nechaev, tries to convince Dostoevsky that Povel was murdered by the police and to recruit the author for service in insurgency. Dostoevsky was tormented by opposite thoughts. He reads fragments of fiction that his stepson has left behind. He begins writing his own fiction, describing the dead man’s imagination and elements from father-son discord, as well as from Dostoevsky’s relationship with Anna, Maximov, and Nechaev.

Coetzee is not entirely faithful to his biographical sources, but he does rely on actual events and historical figures, most notably the nihilist and revolutionary Nechaev, who was linked with the murder of a fellow student called Ivanov, who left Nechaev’s group and may have been seen as a threat, as a potential informer. At the heart of the novel is the confrontation between Nechaev and Coetzee’s ‘Dostoevsky’, and this confrontation links the novel’s central ideas pertaining to questions of ‘fathering’, authorship, and morality. The real Ivanov was killed in November 1869, and this was the event that sparked Dostoevsky’s novel ‘the Devils’, or ‘The Possessed’, or ‘Demons’. In The Master of Petersburg, there are a number of correspondence, or partial correspondence with these sources- for example, there is a character called Ivanov who is murdered in November 1869, possibly by Nechaev.

Coetzee adopts the idea of being possessed, and gives it a clearly secular inflexion; but he also draws on Dostoevsky’s critique of ideological conditioning. The
manipulative Nechaev, who tricks Coetzee’s Dostoevsky into making a statement about his stepson’s death, is the ideologue for whom consuming ideas drive out all logic or reason, and who is displaced from any system of socialization or debate. Thus the character, Dostoevsky, retains the writer’s vision- and moral authority- even though he feels he has lost his argument with Nechaev. The focus of the debate between Dostoevsky and Nechaev is the function of words, authorship, and the articulation of history. Dostoevsky places emphasis on the responsibility taken on by the author of ideas, while Nechaev promotes a heady freedom in which there is no necessary connection between speech and thought to hinder the unpredictable acceleration of history: “I can think one thing at one minute and another thing at another and it won’t matter a pin as long as it act” (MP 200).

In the clash between Nechaev and Dostoevsky, Coetzee produces a powerful representation of the confrontation between writer and censor, which necessitates a self-confrontation for the writer who must identify his demons. Coetzee sees the way in which the oppressed individual is tainted by the activities of the oppressor to be paralleled in the clash between writer and censor. Thus Coetzee has given a particular postcolonial inflexion, and one which speaks particularly to the position that Coetzee inhabits. The confessional mode is the vehicle for a treatment raising questions of voice and contamination. In the final chapter, Dostoevsky writes in Pavel’s empty diary variations of scenes described in Stavrogin’s confession, a form of betrayal of the stepson that casts a shadow over the authorial role, and which compounds the mistrust of Dostoevsky fostered by his predatory sexuality. On the whole ‘The Master of Petersburg’ insists on the compromised ground, the divided authorial self, it is an extended form of honest confession in itself. Coetzee’s work acknowledges the power of contemporary politics to restrict the imagination of the
writer, even while each novel to this point participates in his ongoing struggle to resist the dominance of political over the literary, rivalry with history.

**Disgrace**

*Disgrace* was published after the master of Petersburg in 1999. In this novel Coetzee has shown his explicit engagement with post-apartheid South Africa. According to Anne McElvoy, the book is a "mirror to the fate of a country locked into required rituals of self-examination, but unable to find true repentance or comfort in the process" (McElvoy, Anne. "Our Past Still Disgraces Us," 2). If Salman Rushdie shows how the dynamics of honour and shame operate in contemporary Pakistan, Coetzee focuses attention on respect and disgrace as similar fault line in South Africa’s post-apartheid culture. The focal point of the novel is the rape of a white woman by black men. The novel is more realistic than Coetzee’s earlier novels. *Disgrace* tells the story of a white academic and his long, fall from grace in post-apartheid South Africa. Having spent years teaching romantic poetry at the University of Cape Town, David Lurie finds himself outdated and old, no longer representative of new South Africa growing up all around him. He is 52, divorced twice, and no longer attractive. Increasingly desperate to find some beauty in the world, he has an affair with a young student. But the relationship turns sour; Lurie is denounced and brought before an employment tribunal. Obstinate to the end, he refuses to repent publicly, preferring to retire, and make himself a martyr for all that has passed. He decides to stay with his daughter, Lucy, living on a ranch in the heart of the rural veldt in the Eastern Cape. But they are victims of a vicious attack. Lucy is raped by three men, he is beaten and burned and the dogs are shot dead. Lurie could not save her from the disgrace. He requests her to come with him to town but Lucy is not ready to leave the place. Lurie struggles hard to recover from the shock
and find his place in this new country. He helps at an animal-welfare clinic with feeding, cleaning and treating animals- and with the killing of unwanted dogs.

*Disgrace* begins with a fall. The fall at the heart of *Disgrace* consists of two rapes: the rape of Lucy, Lurie’s daughter; and the rape of his student, Melanie Isaacs. Though the rape of Lucy is clearly rape in any moral or legal sense of the word, she resolutely refuses to report it to the police, choosing to struggle alone with what she characterizes as something entirely personal. Even the rape of Melanie is entirely personal wrong. In their first sexual encounter Melanie is described as “passive throughout” (*Disgrace* 19), and in the third as “quick, and greedy for experience” (*Disgrace* 29). It is the second encounter that the narrative, with brutal honesty, employs the term rape.

Head in his book, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M.Coetzee*, points out that there is important development of the theme of absolution- or the secular equivalent of absolution- that is so prominent in both *Age of Iron* and *The Master of Petersburg*. In those novels, however, Coetzee had been experimenting with the confessional mode, whereas here he approaches the problem rather differently. Confession then becomes a tool for the regulated society to imprison individual consciousness, and is thus emptied of its true purpose. When Lurie is brought before the committee convened to consider the complaint brought by Melanie Isaacs, the student with whom he had an affair, he is forced to make a confession of guilt by the member of the committee.

Coetzee has written extensively on the way in which South African plassroman, or farm novel, evinces an anxiety about the rights of white ownership in the colonial context- an anxiety which is evident in the excision of the curse of black labour from the pastoral idyll that is conventionally invoked by texts in this genre.
This “silence about the place of black labour”, Coetzee suggests, “represents a failure of imagination before the problem of how to integrate the dispossessed black man into idyll”. *Disgrace* consequently creates a tension between the unequal economic and race relations which have determined the course of events that constitute South Africa’s colonial history, and a desire to transcend, or withdraw from this history.

Lucy Lurie’s description of her relationship with Petrus as one that is divested of racial economic consideration of power is therefore placed of a history that has been defined by that imperial permutation of the master-servant bond: the relationship between coloniser and colonised. And as the novel proceeds, it becomes increasingly apparent that this history of violent conflict is still in progress and that it is played out, in miniature, on the smallholding. There are numerous suggestions that Petrus may be implicated in rape of Lucy and at the end of the novel, she is on the point of handing over her title to him in exchange for her protection.

**The Lives of Animals**

Coetzee uses fiction to present a powerfully moving discussion of animal rights in all their complexity. This novella is actually the two part lecture that Coetzee gave at Princeton in 1977. Here Coetzee presents the topic of human cruelty towards animals through fiction. This brief book is the story of an aging novelist who is invited to give lecture at a famous university. Instead of talking about some literary subject or about her own novels, she talks on an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, our treatment of animals. She gives one lecture on the philosophers and the animals, and then the next day on the poets and the animals. It is now an old and troubling notion, this
analogy between the death camps and the meat business, but it is compelling for Costello: she is troubled by our willed ignorance of the past and present existence of slaughterhouses, the sickness of soul that denies any creature the sensation of being alive, our poverty of sympathetic imagination. “The horror is that the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims . . . They do not say ‘How would it be if I were burning?’ . . . In other words, they closed their hearts” (Lives of Animals 45). Coetzee is obviously aware of the potential noxiousness of this terrain (the poet Abraham Stern scorns Costello’s use of the analogy: “You misunderstand the nature of likenesses; I would even say you misunderstand willfully, to the point of blasphemy”), and he uses it with provocative intent. Self-evident, though, is our collective failure of nerve to unleash the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are questions, interchanges and issues raised, both during the talk and afterwards. The protagonist is a vegetarian; the story is told through the eyes of her meat-eating son, who has married a meat-eating wife (Norma) who is completely hostile to Elizabeth. Costello’s son calls her beliefs ‘propagandist’, whiles his wife, Norma, calls ethical beliefs ‘opinions’ and emphasizes their supposed “sentimentality” (Lives of Animals 17). According to Martha Nussbaum, “a substantial part of Coetzee’s animal ethics is based on emotions: the lives of animals are to have an emotive impact on human beings. We can understand other animals, and our relations with them, only by taking emotions into account Costello has put great emphasis on sympathy, which she calls the capacity to “share the being of another” (Lives of Animals 34-35), and which she links with imagination. Identification and imagination form an integral part of Coetzee’s animal ethics. Costello states that we ought to try and see the animal’s world via its bodily, living experiences. She criticizes the claim ‘cogito ergo sum’ and
maintains that existence is not based on 'a ghostly reasoning machine' but rather on experience. Experience consists of “fullness, embodiment, the sensation…of being alive to the world” (Lives of Animals 33).

The philosophical, poetical and literal approaches to Costello’s chosen subject are many layers within the novel. Morality and ethics come into question, but the story itself is not just a clear-cut animal rights argument; on the contrary, Costello’s lecture on animal cruelty has anything but a solid conclusion, or even solution. There seems to be more at work here that what Coetzee presents on the surface. The novella is thought provoking and mysteriously crafted narrative. It questions the morality and empathy of human beings in our treatment of animals, but also engages us on a more cognitive level. As Marjorie Garber says in her essay,"In these two elegant lectures we thought Coetzee was talking about animals. Could it be, however, that all along he was really asking,' what is the value of literature?'"

The real question the book raises, can we as vegetarians have any dialogue with the meat-eating world at all? Or are the divisions so deep that neither common academic training, nor common culture, nor even familial ties can bridges the gap? Perhaps, Coetzee implies, rational thought, lagging behind sympathy, will follow its lead if powerful fictions and images can trigger our fellow feelings. Coetzee takes no prisoners; there is always suffering on the road to salvation. That includes Costello’s painful relationship with her son, a terrain so emotionally and it makes the skin crawl. The book concludes with four commentaries—by literary theorist Marjorie Garber, philosopher Peter Singer, religious scholar Wendy Doniger, and primatologist Barbara Smuts—that add touchwood, and a measure of windiness, to Coetzee’s ethical tinderbox.
Slow Man

*Slow Man* was published in 2005. The novel begins with an arresting but simple narrative situation: Paul Rayment, a sixty year old ex-photographer is hit by a car whilst cycling. He survives, but his injuries result in his having a leg amputated above the knee. He lies in the state of helpless in his flat in Adelaide. He deliberates and wishes to replenish his loveless life with half dream and half reality. His life is thrown into further turmoil when he falls in love with the nurse he employs to care for him- a married Croatian woman called Marijana Jokic. Paul manages to complicate matters by trying to help the family: he offers to pay for the son’s schooling, helps the older daughter out of a jam, even lets the son live with him for a while. Marijana is tempted by what he can offer, but its clear his place won’t be in the bosom of this family, he is stranger, a well-meaning old fool. Paul at last declares his love but Marijana walks out. At this point, a new character appears: Elizabeth Costello, who claims to be writing a book about Paul and feels frustrated by Paul’s inability to move the story forward. In order to add some action in Paul’s life, Costello arranges a sexual encounter with a blind woman and Paul’s ex-girlfriend, but Paul fails to disperse his disbelief at his situation. Meanwhile, Drago comes to stay with Paul and tells about the marital spat between his parents. Paul sets up a trust fund to help him. He also saves the third child of the family from being prosecuted for shoplifting. One day, Drago altered one of the pictures of his rare photographic collection which infuriated Paul and the relationship suffers setback. Paul thinks and fusses as usual over the matter. This time he acts. He travels to Jokics house to confront the family.
There he finds out that reality is often more benign than assumptions and prejudices. He returns to his flat with some new experience under his belt.

*Slow Man* is, on one level, a book about writing, and perhaps this that Coetzee has juggled the best. Paul is indeed, a slowman, and Costello- with her suggestions and actions- too fast. An author can create a character, but inevitably moves beyond him, the character left behind, stuck fast on the page, frustratingly unchanging and unchangeable.

**Diary of a Bad Year**

*Diary of a Bad Year* was published in 2007. It is a challenging meta-fiction. In a recent study of Coetzee’s works entitled *Old Myth- Modern Empire*, Michela Canepari- Labib makes reference to the strong inclination that Coetzee has for ‘rethinking the same issues in different ways’. This tendency is most evident in his latest work, *Diary of a Bad Year*, which contains many of the topics recurrent in his previous fiction and essays, and emphasizes a few which his present circumstances probably help magnify. A conventional novelistic structure would not have enabled Coetzee to have included such a large number of topics and ideas that seem crucially important for him at this moment. In this book, we find J.M.Coetzee the novelist, the intellectual, the critic and the human being in a kind of the multi-faceted figure. *Diary of a Bad Year* is an example of non-sequential writing. It offers three texts visually separated on the pages, but with a dynamic organization of the topics. The first is still the opinions of Senor C; the second is Senor C’s agonizing infatuation with Anya; and, the third is Anya’s troubling balancing of not wanting to hurt the feelings of the old Senor C and keeping her boyfriend, Alan, at bay from confronting the innocent flirtations made by the eminent writer. Each of these narratives informs and is part of the other, but each is also in its way distinct from the
other two. In *Dairy of a Bad Year* the theme of writing is present in each of its three texts. In this collection, Senor C is committed to give a response to ‘the present in which he finds himself’. He feels compelled to comment on what is wrong with today’s world. The part one of the book comprises of 31 mini essays written by ‘JC’. ‘JC’ is the projection of Coetzee himself as both are South African writers, newly resident in Australia, and JC’s books are also Coetzee’s. He mentions *Waiting for the Barbarians* as my novel, which clearly suggest the relation. JC’s strong opinions are those of Coetzee. The mini essays are written for German publisher, who has invited six writers to compile a book, *Strong Opinion*. The first five chapters of Coetzee’s book consist of pages divided by a single, horizontal line. The text above this horizontal dividing line appears to be the journal entries of a man, Senor C, writing about current political issues: the origin of the state, democracy and terrorism, to name a few. Below the horizontal line is the story of the man who composes the journal entries. After the fifth chapter a second horizontal line is introduced along with a third level of text. The new, third level of text is the story of the woman, Anya, who transcribes Senor C’s entries. The first is a meditation on the origins of the state:

Every account of the origins of the state starts from the premise that “we” — not we the readers but some generic we so wide as to exclude no one — participate in its coming into being. But the fact is that the only “we” we know — ourselves and the people close to us — are born into the state; and our forebears too were born into the state as far back as we can trace. The state is always there before we are. (3)

The second, however, appears at first to be concerned with an utterly alien issue — a man watching a young, attractive woman sort laundry at the laundromat:
My first glimpse of her was in the laundry room. It was mid-morning on the quiet spring day and I was sitting, watching the washing go around, when this quite startling young woman walked in. Startling because the last thing I was expecting was such an apparition; also because the tomato-red shift she wore was so startling in its brevity. (3)

The condemnation of anti-terrorist legislation in the USA, Britain and Australia is a focus of JC’s anger in his essay *On Terrorism*; this is a straightforward political commentary that might well be Coetzee’s. Anya’s view that JC ‘can’t get away from Africa’ can be plausibly taken as a piece of authorial analysis. Head in his ‘introduction to Coetzee’ points out that the structure of this book affords Coetzee the luxury of a platform to express his own strong opinions, and much of this focuses on the ‘war on terror’ and the sense of dishonor that descends upon civilian population where governments penetrate atrocities in their name. For Brian Worsfold it is a ‘late confession’. The first of JC’s strong opinion entitled *On the Origins of State*, gives a wide referential frame for the analysis of the book as a whole. In this section, Coetzee has tried to reflect historical reality within the mode of the novel.

The diary element in part one comprises the thoughts of this JC about a beautiful young woman Anya, whom he encounters in the laundry of his apartment block, develops an infatuation for, and subsequently employs as his typist. These reflections are given beneath the mini-essays in a split page format; and, on page twenty-five, the page splits into three, when Anya’s own first-person narrative is added into the mix. Part two of the novel follows a similar format. JC’s mini-essays here are more personal and philosophical, but they are similarly juxtaposed with two other sections, though here the voice of Alan, Anya’s boyfriend, is also heard, through the reported speech of a dinner party at JC’s flat. Once Anya agrees to work
for Señor C, a third narrative is introduced. At the bottom of the page appears a second horizontal line, below which one finds the internal monologue of Anya. Her first words are in themselves very seductive:

As I pass him, carrying my laundry basket, I make sure I waggle my behind, my delicious behind, sheathed in tight denim. If I were a man I would not be able to keep my eyes off me. Alan says there are as many different bums in the world as there are faces. Mirror, mirror on the wall, I say to Alan, whose is the fairest of them all? Yours, my princess, my queen, yours without a doubt. (25)

At the conclusion of *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee’s narrator returns to the possibility of novelistic authority. He cites Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as having uniquely set “before us with such indisputable certainty the standards toward which any serious novelist must toil”. If novelist-authorities exist, then surely the great Russian writers are models by whose ‘example one becomes a better artist’, and the narrator ends with this Melvillean proclamation: “They annihilate one’s impurer pretensions; they clear one’s eyesight; they fortify one’s arm” (Coetzee 227). But these Russian models do not finally retain their authority untarnished (any more than the narrator has the last word of the Diary). Instead, it dissipates in the final, insubstantial musings of Anya, the narrator’s erstwhile secretary who calls him Senor C behind his back (shorthand for Senior Citizen), and whose far less weighty thoughts and speech—both as he imagines them and as she seemingly represents them—are juxtaposed with his on every page in three stacked panels of text. Thus we hear the Russian model differently but simultaneously invoked in Anya’s closing allusion to having modelled ‘nightwear’ on www.sunseasleep.com.au, as well as in her suggestion, as she imagines herself serving as Senor C’s last caretaker and the
custodian of his posthumous reputation, that he has a weakness for a pornographic publication entitled Russian Dolls (Coetzee 2007: 223, 226). But if the mechanical doubleness of crosscut thoughts shreds its authority on every page and in so doing threatens to undermine the concept or dream of literary authority altogether, the doubling of characters across novels seems to hold out the possibility of some partial restoration.

Indeed, in *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee moves on two different planes. Senor C, as the writer of *Strong Opinions*, revises and broods over many of the conflicts of the world of today, but as a protagonist of the narrative, he appears as an ordinary old man concerned with his increasing limitations and facing an uncertain future. At the personal level what is most important for him is the feeling he now has of being redundant. He poses this question: “Are old men with doddering intellect and poor eyesight and arthritic hands allowed on the trading floor, or will we just get in the way of the young?” (144). That is a question that Coetzee may have been tempted to pose to himself, but in spite of the doubts that Coetzee, as an aging human being, may have, his self-imposed duty as a writer outstrips them. Once more Coetzee shows his moral strength by writing. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, J.M. Coetzee, once more, from an ethical angle, deals with the evils of the present world and with the basics of human existence. Throughout his work, Coetzee gives the reader the chance to question and expiate; at the same time he creates a fitting space for debate and hope in the mode of literature.

**Essays**

Throughout his works, both fictional and non-fictional, Coetzee develops what might call a philosophy of writing. His interviews and essays reflects his engagement with a literary-philosophical figure is distinct: whether he is speaking about other
novelists, or about poets, or linguists, or literary critics, or even scientists or philosophers, Coetzee treats them as fellow-writers. In these essays Coetzee has demonstrated the example of comparative method. He has attempted to balance historicity with aesthetics and there is also a strong emphasis on issues of translation. ‘I don’t think or act in sweeps. I tend to be rather slow and painstaking and myopic in my thinking’ (DP, 246). Coetzee’s periodical publications of literary criticism and reviews are numerous, and his major book collections include “White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa” (1987); “Doubling the Point” (1992), essays and interviews with David Atwell; “Giving Offence” (1996), a study of literary censorship; and “Strange Shores: Literary Essays, 1985-1999” (2001). Furthermore, Coetzee has also been active as a translator of Dutch and Afrikaans literature, as well as of French and German literature.

In “White Writing”, Coetzee has collected his critical reflections on the mixed fortune of ‘white writing’ in South Africa, a body of writing different from black writing but ‘generated by the concerns of people no longer European, yet not African’ Shaun Irlam observed in MLN. The seven essays concern a wide range of works written in both English and Afrikaans, discussing writings from the late seventeenth century to the present, through which Coetzee examines the foundations of modern South African writers’ attitudes. He reads a range of texts, in various genres, which represent the endeavors of white writers to come to terms with the South African landscape and their tenuous place within it. Their projects, Coetzee argues, are vexed by the various ways in which the South African context resists the writers’ scheme of representation, and their efforts at its domestication. South Africa simply will not conform to their desire for a new Eden or to their demand for rustic idyll, and it is in the forge of their estrangement that much early white South African literature
was created. A writer has to interpret the real in order to unveil the significations behind or within reality and give it a structure of meaning. For some writers, the order of signification was linked to a moral order. The main themes of Pauline Smith are virtues and vices of peasant life. Olive Schreiner depicts the farm as an entity. Sarah Gertrude Millin is obsessed by the tragedy of mixed blood. Among others, the nineteenth-century travel writing of William Burchell, which compares the landscapes of England and South Africa, always to the latter’s detriment, is discussed in relation to subsequent engagement by Thomas Pringle, WEG Louw, WC Scully and Roy Campbell. This leads on to a study of the plasmroman and its precursors, culminating in a chapter concerning the novels of the prolific and popular, CM Van den Heever. For Heever, the unit of life is the lineage, not the individual. But inheritance divisions are creating too small and unviable farms. His main themes are inheritance strives, unscrupulous land speculators, landless farmers drifting into the mining towns or class boundaries between the landed and the landless. Coetzee dissects the social, political, racial, cultural and geographical themes in the prose and poetry of white South African writings before World War-II. These in depth analyses of regionalist writing are also reflection on literature, colonialism, language and mankind in general.

“Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews” is a collection of 25 critical essays, written between 1970 and 1990. The essays are an essential compilation for scholars of Coetzee’s novels not only because these disparately published essays are most accessible, but has been carefully assembled by Attwell, assumes the task of inquiring further into the connections between Coetzee’s fictional and critical writing. Attwell has organized these intellectual absorptions into eight thematically related sections: 'Beckett', ‘The Poetics of Reciprocity', ‘Popular Culture’, ‘Syntax',

The first section, ‘Beckett’, is a selection of three essays begun as part of Coetzee’s doctoral thesis, a stylistic analysis of Beckett’s English fiction. Coetzee’s continued interest in linguistics and stylistics is represented again in the fourth section, ‘Syntax’. Two important essays are included here, ‘Rhetoric of the Passive in English’ and ‘The Agentless Sentence as Rhetorical Device’, both of which move from a delineation of various linguistic features in specified environment to a discussion of the implications of these operation in terms of rhetorical transactions. In 'Agentless Sentence,' for example, Coetzee concludes, in a comment descriptive of his own practice, that the "agentless sentence, as a form that says much by saying little, is wide open to misunderstanding by an audience not attuned to its nuances" (DP, 180). Essays of this kind (several more are included in the section 'Poetics of Reciprocity”) suggest that the sources of Coetzee's own spare, exact, often aphoristic utterances, with their Beckettian resonances, are derived, more fundamentally, from Coetzee's preoccupation with the rule- governed structures of positionality- linguistic, syntactic, rhetorical, and discursive. This connection between linguistic categories and their relation to issues of reciprocity and identity (DP 58) is also examined in the essay Achterberg's 'Ballade van de gasfitter: The Mystery of I and You' and in the Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech. In the latter, Coetzee traces the impossibility of reciprocity in South Africa to the white South African's "failure of
love" (DP 97), a failure manifested in a much-professed love of the land that is in turn nullified by the many articulations, legal and other, which deny fraternity or which, more deeply, reveal the pathological mixture of desire and revulsion operative beneath the structures of apartheid. The result, says Coetzee, is a "literature in bondage" (DP 98), a literature whose expressions of the inner life suffer from a 'stuntedness and deformity' from which there is no escape-not even through willed acts of the imagination. The way out for South Africa Coetzee states unequivocally: fraternity must be paid for, and "The very lowest price is the destruction of the unnatural structures of power that define the South African state" (DP 97). (Critics who count evasiveness among Coetzee's faults might turn first to this essay.) The way out for South African writers Coetzee suggests: refusing the Nietzschean dictum that "we have art so that we shall not die of the truth," Coetzee asserts that "In South Africa there is now too much truth for art to hold, truth by the bucketful, truth that over-whelms and swamps every act of the imagination" (DP 99).

Coetzee's suggestion here is that there is something unrepresentable about South African history, unrepresentable, at least, in terms that would satisfy materialist critics or others who see the codes of literary realism as fundamental to any act of truth-telling. This suggestion is related to his insistent attention to the political implications of form (reflected especially in his essays on South African writers, particularly Alex La Guma) and to the allied issues of authority and positionality. Responding, for example, to Attwell's proposition that "contemporary white South African writing ... as an ethical and marginal enterprise" is "a form of late modernism" (198), Coetzee resists entering the discussion in the terms designated by Attwell's question. To give even such preliminary assent, Coetzee contends, would automatically relegate his response to an oppositional position which would
contribute toward marking the ethical, against the political, as ‘the pole with the lack’ (DP 200). Coetzee will not make this gesture and responds, instead, in the following manner: I neither claim nor fail to claim that my reservations open up for me a third position. I neither claim nor fail to claim that there can be a third position. I do say that if I speak from a pole-position, from the negative pole, it is because I am drawn or pushed there by a force, even a violence, operating over the whole of the discursive field that at this moment (April 1990) we inhabit, you and I. (DP 200) That discursive formations legislate positionality by pursuing their own internal laws of coherence and by adhering to their own logic and grammars imposes for Coetzee “a duty (an ethical duty perhaps) not to submit to powers of discourse without question” (DP 200).

The other essay which figures prominently in making connections between Coetzee's critical and (especially later) fictional writings is ‘Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky’, to which Attwell allots one entire section. In this essay, which he considers to be ‘pivotal’ (DP 391), Coetzee explores the relation of the confessional or autobiographical act, dominated as it is by ‘self-interest’ (DP 392), to truth-telling. In moving from Tolstoy, whose work (The Kruetzer Sonata) Coetzee reads as "short-circuiting self-doubt and self-scrutiny in the name of an autonomous truth" (DP 263), to Rousseau, where the project of confession raises "intractable problems regarding truthfulness" when the "subject is at a heightened level of self-awareness and open to self-doubt" (DP 274), to Dostoyevsky, for whom the tendency is for self-consciousness "to draw out confession endlessly" (DP 275), Coetzee examines these secular confessions in order to see how these authors "confront or evade the problem of how to know the truth about the self without being self-deceived" (DP 252). The problem for all of them is the same one that Coetzee
confronts repeatedly in his later novels, particularly *Foe* and *Age of Iron*—how to confess ‘with authority’ (DP 264).

The essays are an impressive range of intellectual work. The value and character of Doubling the Point is rather more difficult to pinpoint. It is, as the subtitle announces, a collection of critical essays and interviews. But it is perhaps primarily an autobiography of sorts; and while, the collection frequently reveals Coetzee's connections to the modernist tradition; it has to be seen as a rather postmodern autobiography. It offers only a few moments of conventional first person recollection (notably in the essay ‘Remembering Texas’), as is consistent with Coetzee's suspicions about any claim to self-presence—a suspicion that makes him favor the mode of the interview, "as a way of getting around the impasse of my own monologue" (DP 19). What we end up with is, therefore, fragmentary and dialogic; and, while the collection does conclude with a very revealing retrospective statement in the final interview, this too is rather self-deconstructive. Written in the third person, it identifies, as the pivotal moment of the intellectual life. The essay on “Confession and Double Thoughts” is a skeptical exploration of the infinite nature of confession, of the impossibility to ever tell the truth in autobiography.

The idea of a personal ‘history’ is from the start problematic. As the final essay states, there is little distinction to be made between the writing of fiction, of criticism, and of autobiography: all of these are modes of storytelling—and in Coetzee's hand stories are always fictions that will claim no final closure, that are skeptical even of skepticism. “Doubling the Point” is thus an intriguingly contradictory text: authoritative (the rigor and range of Coetzee's intellect inevitably give it that austere quality) and anti-authoritarian.
These essays and interviews, documenting Coetzee’s longtime engagement with his own culture and with modern culture in general, constitute a literary autobiography. Centrally concerned with the form and content of fiction, doubling the Point provides insight into the significance of certain writers, the value of intellectual movements, and the issues of political involvement and responsibility—not only or Coetzee’s own work, but for fiction writing in general. In interviews prefacing each section of the book, Coetzee reflects on the essays to follow and relates them to his life and work. In these interviews editor David Attwell prompts from Coetzee answers of depth and interest. The result is the story of a fiction writer’s intellectual development, and of an intellectual’s literary development. It is the story of how one writer has moved through the scholarly and political trends of the last 30 years, carefully assessing their applications and limitations, and through this experience forged for himself a unique and powerful literary voice informed in equal parts by life and learning.

“Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship” is a collection of Essays. It was published after ten years, “White Writing” appeared. The essays, collected in “Giving Offences”, were written over a period of six years. Coetzee discusses three regimes: Nazism, Communism, and Apartheid; and, drawing upon his training as an academic scholar as well as his experience as a fictional writer, argues that the censor and the writer have often been ‘brother-enemies, mirror images one of the other’ in their struggle to claim the truth of their position. Coetzee has presented a coherent, unorthodox analysis of censorship from the perspective of one who has lived and worked under its shadow. The essays collected here attempts to understand the passion that plays itself out in acts of silencing and censoring. Coetzee’s essay deals not with the politics of censorship but with its psychological and moral effects—on
both the censors and censored. The opening chapter is a broad survey of both censorship and pornography, its common target. Chapter two sets the tone for the rest of the volume, considering the psychological damage does to writers, the dangers of paranoia and megalomania. The other ten chapters are critical studies of writers who were subject to censorship, who theorized about it, or who wrote in justification of it. The subjects are Catharine McKinnon’s claims about ‘the harms of pornography’, Erasmus’ *In praise of Folly*, Osip Mandelstom and his Stalin ode, Soviet censorship and Solzhenitsyn, and the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert. The essays engage with his signature modernist, double-edged critique of Doubling the Point. In “Breyten Breytenbach and the Reader in the Mirror” he explores the ways in which Breytenbach’s mirror writings are structured by notions of contagion and complicity, embodied in the figure of the censor as doppelganger: locked in the defining self/other dialectic, censor and censored metamorphose into dark twins or ‘mirror-brothers’ (GO 228; Breytenbach, Confessions 260). Writer and text (‘mirror/page’) reproduce the dynamic between ‘cooperative prisoner’ and interrogator (GO 228). In “Erasmus: Madness and Rivalry” Coetzee draws upon René Girard and Michel Foucault to reformulate notions of ‘madness’ that in Enlightenment discourse have been read as antithetical to reason and served as a means of state control. In the hands of the apartheid regime ‘reason’ is itself irrational and therefore ‘mad’ and madness and rationality (unreason/reason), as forms of ‘mimetic violence’, are reduced to ‘warring twins’ (GO 90-92). In “Apartheid Thinking”, Coetzee understands the writing of the progenitor of apartheid ideology, Geoffrey Cronjé, as a kind of insane confession that allow us to “follow the ravings, from inside” (GO 165). Turning to his native South Africa, Coetzee writes about the madness of Judge J.C.W. Van Rooyen, Andre Brink’s models of censorship, and the poetry of Breyten
Breytenbach. He focuses on the ways these authors have historically responded to censorship. He argues that a destructive dynamic of belligerence and escalation tends to overtake the rivals in any field ruled by censorship.

“Strange Shores” is an outstanding collection of twenty-six essays, consists mainly of book introductions and reviews, devoted to significant authors and worthy works from all over the world. However, Coetzee has focused on Dutch and south African literature. But he also reaches considerable beyond these. Other contemporary authors like Josef Skvorecky, Salman Rushdie, Aharon Applefeld, Amoz Oz and Naguib Mahfouz has also been discussed. Even the classical writers like Turgenev, Defoe, and Samuel Richardson has been included. Several of the reviews consider newly re-translated works. “Translating Kafka” takes the publication of a new translation of The Castle to re-examine the original Kafka translators, the Muirs, and the influence their work had on Kafka reception. Coetzee has reviewed Jorge Luis Borges, the first complete version of his fiction by a single translator, Andrew Hurlay. In each Coetzee compares previous version with the new, and makes observations. The reviews include detailed summaries. In some cases Coetzee retells of the story. Many of the authors discussed either suffered or witnessed oppression, and clashes of cultures also define them, as for example, A.S.Bates’ Babel Tower. In “Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship” Coetzee argues against MacKinnon, against censorship, basing his argument, in the end, not on the rights of readers but on the responsibility – may we say even the desire – of the author:

Neither legal bans on pornographic representation nor the chilling climate of censure or social disapproval . . . will prevent serious writers
from exploring the darker areas of human experience. The question is simply: ‘at what cost to them?’ (74).

**Fictional Autobiographies**

All autobiography is story-telling, all writing is autobiography. (DP, 397)

J.M. Coetzee considered himself not as a public figure but has begun to expose intimate details of his life especially in hybrid works that inhabit the border between fiction and autobiography, *Boyhood*, *Youth* and *Summertime*. It is comprehensible that these texts – *Boyhood*, *Youth* and *Summertime* – form a continuum in Coetzee’s life-writing or as David Atwell puts it, a ‘life of writing’. The novels reconstruct with vividness the difficult path towards the achievement of an identity by retelling his childhood and adolescence. Sue Kessow considers these fictions as the fictions of ‘self’. Coetzee has given a subtitle, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, to his first fictionalized memoir *Boyhood* (1997). Youth did not have this subtitle at the time of publication, although it is clearly the next stage in the series of autobiographical texts by Coetzee. It is inevitably linked to Coetzee’s apartheid era South African identity. It echoes William Cooper’s autobiographical trilogy (*Scenes from Provincial Life*, *Scenes from Metropolitan Life*, and *Scenes from Married Life*) or Honore de Balzac’s *Comedie Humaine* in which one section is titled, *Scenes from Provincial Life*. Clearly, there is some reference, too, to Tolstoy’s fictionalized autobiographical trilogy, *Childhood* (1852), *Boyhood* (1854), and *Youth* (1856). The provincialism of *Boyhood* lies in its setting in a new housing estate in the town of Worcester and its protagonist’s uncertain identity. In *Youth*, it is the painful and shameful nature of his South Afrikaaness as well as his sexual ineptitude that mark him as a provincial, a colonial other in swinging London of the 1960s. *Summertime*
presents the shame of his enforced return to the provincialism of South Africa after having failed to secure green card in the United States; a return from the relative freedom of living overseas to a place of restriction from which he has grown apart and a return to living with his father in unwanted domestic intimacy.

*Boyhood* is the journey to his adolescence. It is made up of short chronological ‘scenes’, nineteen in all, tracing the young Coetzee’s memories of life in the countryside and the briefly in Cape Town in the 1940s and early 1950s. *Boyhood* is in many ways a story of negotiating with authority, parental and in a larger context social. Family and school occupy the center of attention. Throughout *Boyhood* Coetzee emphasizes the uncertainties and the ambiguities which distinguishes the growing-up process of John, underlying the sense of marginalization and alienation caused by the awareness of not belonging to the land and by the split, which living in two separate worlds entailed from a linguistics, a cultural and a political point of view. It traces some formative experiences of the writer. The memoir explores a profound ambivalence about what in most respects looks like a routine middle-class boyhood. Coetzee collects stamps and toy soldiers, builds Meccano models, worships cricket stars, smokes candy cigarettes, and watches Errol Flynn at the bioscope on Saturday afternoons. But terror and disgust lie just beneath the surface. The memoir opens with this evocation of a disease that strikes the family's chickens;

The hens develop gross swellings on their legs, like elephant skin.

Sickly and cross, they cease to lay. His mother consults her sister in Stellenbosch, who says they will return to laying only after the horny shells under their tongues have been cut out. So one after another his mother takes the hens between her knees, presses on their jowls till
they open their beaks, and with the point of a paring-knife picks at their tongues. The hens shriek and struggle, their eyes bulging. He shudders and turns. (B 1)

It ends with the funeral of Auntie Annie and his resolution to keep all the books in his head. “And if he does not remember them, who will?” (B 1) Between the crude beginning and firm resolution, Coetzee recounts how he was formed by his surroundings and the role of his mother in his emotional development. Boyhood begins with mother and a portrait of her strange ways. He is too close to his mother; his mother is too close to him. Boyhood is dominated by Coetzee’s complex relationship with his mother. She loves him, favors him even, and so he has the luxury of pushing her away. That is the reason why, despite the hunting and all the other manly things he does, his father’s family has never taken him to its bosom. His father’s likes almost resembles with his likes- the United Party, cricket and rugby, yet he does not like his father. He does not understand this contradiction. He recalls certain incidents which have strengthened his love for his mother. Once a year, Boswell’s Circus comes to Worcester. They plan to go on the Saturday afternoon. His mother buys tickets only for him and his brother as she does not have enough money. She waited outside. When they emerged at the end of the show, she is still there. Her blinding, overwhelming, self-sacrificing love, for both him and his brother disturbs him. She loves him absolutely; therefore he must love her absolutely. Never will he be able to pay back all the love she pours out upon him. He knows that she is the pivot point of his life, that she loves him totally, would sacrifice everything and anything for him.

His mother loves him, that he acknowledges; but that is the problem, that is what is wrong, not what is right, with her attitude towards him.
Her love emerges about all in her watchfulness, her readiness to pounce and save him should he ever be in danger. Should he choose (but he would never do so), he could relax into her care and for the rest of his life be borne by her. It is because he is so sure of her care that he is on his guard with her, never relaxing, never allowing her a chance (B 25).

His mother is unpredictable. She judges others harshly. He is ashamed of his mother for the crudeness with which she talks about money. ‘You must become a doctor or an attorney’, she tells him. ‘Those are the people who make money’. However, at other times she tells him that attorneys are all crooks and doctors are not interested in patients. She says so many different things that he does not know what she really think.

His family has to move to Worcester. He and his mother do not like the place. His mother always desires to escape the confines of their house on a newly built bleak housing estate outside the town of Worcester. His mother is feeling restless. She does not want to be a prisoner in the house, bought a bicycle. Her initial fruitless attempts to ride the heavy bicycle are met with ridicule by the narrator’s father: “Women do not ride bicycles, he says” (B 3). His heart turned against her. He joined in with his father’s jeering and laughing. He is well aware what a betrayal this is. “Now his mother is all alone” (B 3). The childish notion of taking sides, ganging up with men against the woman to keep her in her place, is counter balanced by a sophisticated awareness of the way this behavior has defeated her and that he “must bear part of the blame” One day, she stopped riding bicycle. “He doesn’t want her to have a desire of her own. He wants her always to be in house” (B 5)
In this case he belongs with the men. The betrayal continuous and he shares nothing with his mother. His life at school is kept tight secret from her, despite his awareness of her strong need to protect him. At the new school, boys are flogged over with a cane. Every teacher at his school has a cane and is at liberty to use it. For one thing, the boy’s fear of the cane is more a matter of humiliation than pain. He often thinks of committing suicide or murder if ever touched by the teacher’s cane:

If it ever so happens that he is called out to be beaten, there will be so humiliating a scene that he will never be able to go to school; in the end there will be no way but to kill himself. (B 7)

That is why he never makes a sound, that’s why he is always neat, why his homework is always done. He sits in the second row from the back, the most obscure row. Coetzee tells about an expedition which changed his life. They are taken for a scout expedition. They have to swim across the river and back. By midstream he is exhausted but is saved by another boy named Michael. From that day onwards he knows there is something special about him. He should have died but he did not. Despite his unworthiness, he has been given a second life.

Great secret of his school life is that he has become a Roman catholic, for practical purposes. Of course they are South Africans but not everyone who lives in South Africa is a South African or not a proper South African. On the first morning, a teacher asks,”what is your religion?” Coetzee coming from a family that does not practice religion is unable to respond properly. He says, ‘Roman Catholics’. As a Roman Catholic he need not attend assembly. However other boys didn’t smile at him and called ‘jood’. He felt that he has clearly made a mistake, hope that the next day, would be given another chance to make a new choice.
Infatuation to Letters

From early on, he shows a distinctly writerly imagination. Choosing sides in the cold war, he picks the Russians over the Americans. When the Russians and the Americans were first set before him as antagonists between whom he had to choose, he chose the Russians as he chose Romans because he likes the letter ‘r’, particularly the capital ‘R’, the strongest of the letters. He threw himself into reading about Russians. He read the three volumes history of World War-II. He adopted everything Russian. In a box in his cupboard, he keeps the book of drawings; he did at the height of his passion for the Russians in 1947. The drawings show Russian planes shooting American planes out of the sky, Russian ships sinking American ships. His loyalty to the red star sets him absolutely apart. His parents and his friends disapproved his liking, the Russians were not part of a game, it was not allowed. Coetzee muses that there is something that goes wrong. Whatever he wants, whatever he likes, has sooner or later to be turned into a secret. So he decides to keep his Russian past a secret. He spins glorious fantasies of Troy and of British valor at Dunkirk; contemplates Zeno's paradox while awaiting the ball in cricket; lives in books. "So young and yet you know so much," says an aunt. "How are you ever going to keep it all in your head?" (B 54) His mother's name is Vera, with its icy capital V, an arrow plunging downwards. Vera, she once told him, was a Russian name.

Coetzee reveals the secret love he used to feel for Voelfontein (Bird-fountain), the Karoo farm owned by his paternal uncle:

He loves every stone of it, every bush, every blade of grass, loves the birds that give it its name, birds that, as dusk falls, gather in their thou- sands in the trees around the fountain, calling to each other,
murmuring, ruffling their feathers, settling for the night. It is not conceivable that another person could love the farm as he does. (B 80)

There is not enough time in a single life to know all of Voelfontein, know its every stone and bush. No time can be enough when one loves a place with such devouring love. (B 91)

It is impossible to forget, when we read about the young Coetzee’s attachment in every stone, every bush, every bird, or about his belief that “farms are places of freedom” (Boyhood 22), the hard-hitting words of his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech of 1987:

At the heart of the unfreedom of the hereditary masters of South Africa is a failure of love. To be blunt: their love is not enough today and has not been enough since they arrived on the continent; furthermore, their talk, their excessive talk, about how they love South Africa has consistently been directed toward the land, that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers. (DP 97)

While confessing through his life-writing his fierce love for the farm, he is also aware of it as a source of contention in the tug of war between his parents and thus of the need to keep it secret. Thus, “he cannot talk about his love for the farm… because she too comes from a farm, a rival farm… but because she is not truly welcome on this farm” (B 80). The idea that place in and of itself can lie at the heart of both belonging and contestation is played put in the text both in the context of his parents rival family backgrounds, and also in the context of apartheid South Africa, where his people are “uneasy guests”. His instinctive awareness that one day the
farm will be “wholly gone wholly lost” and that he is already “grieving at that loss”, signals a distinctly unchildlike perspective. Thus, the theme of betrayal is linked not just to his fluctuating loyalties to his parents but to the wider issue of disputed national belonging.

**YOUTH**

*Youth* is a semi-autobiographical novel, published in 2002. It is not a straightforward *Kunstlerroman*, in which the artist is ‘enriched and strengthened’ (Y 66) by his experiences in order to write the work we are reading, and in which the success of this achievement retroactively valorizes these experiences. It also is not a confession that congratulates itself on its conversion into an understanding of the vanity of these experiences. There is nothing to be said ‘for its having nothing to be said for it’ (*Youth* 164). It is this radical chastening that prevents the impasse that Coetzee in ‘Confession and Double Thoughts’ has called ‘a potentially infinite regression of self-recognition and self-abasement in which the self-satisfied candor of each level of confession of impure motive becomes a new source of shame and each twinge of shame a new source of self-congratulation’ (Coetzee and Attwell 1992: 282). It is subtitled as *Scenes from Provincial Life II*. William Deresiewicz considers it as the sequel to the boyhood. It sets out to represent the provincial presuppositions of its protagonist during his years in the metropolis. The indirection of the subtitle alerts the reader to the fact that *Youth* is actually a meditation on the relationship between literature and place. In the novel, John leaves a troubled South Africa in search of a new life and a new identity in London. This involves getting ‘rid of his old self’ (*Youth* 111), or his erstwhile South African identity. He thinks that South Africa is backward and primitive, and when he writes a story (involuntarily) set in South Africa he reacts thus:
It disquiets him to see that he is still writing about South Africa. He would prefer to leave his South African self behind as he has left South Africa itself behind. South Africa was a bad start, a handicap... He does not need to be reminded of South Africa. If a tidal wave were to sweep in from the Atlantic tomorrow and wash away the southern tip of the African continent, he will not shed a tear. He will be among the saved' (Youth 62)

The apartheid policy and the evils of it that has distanced the people of South Africa, has left a permanent mark on the young mind of Coetzee. In fact he has turned negative towards his own native land. Possibly in an act of over-compensation, John tries to distance himself as much as possible from political issues, to be free from the ‘fury of politics’ (Youth 85). However, as South Africa in the 1960s was historically polarized between the blacks and whites, John feels impelled by the occasion to take a stand and decide his allegiance. It becomes quite clear in the novel that he does not like the Afrikaners and their apartheid policy, but he also feels excluded and threatened by the radical resistance movements such as the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress). He interprets their message as: ‘Africa for the Africans! [...] Drive the whites into the sea!’ (Youth 38). Under the apartheid regime, a hybrid identity was not a real option, and John, clearly influenced by this view, thinks that the only solution to his ethnicity and loyalty problem is to flee the country and start over somewhere else.

Set in the early 1960s, the novel describes how John escapes the riots in his native Cape Town to pursue his own literary ambitions. He has a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics, and gets a job at IBM in order to make a living. He convinces himself that London is the place where he can become a poet. He tries to write
poetry during his free time, but finds it more and more difficult, and eventually he is not able to write anything at all. He still hates his mother; he still loves her as well she is overbearing, over concerned and over loving whilst, he needs to break away from her mould. He has discovered that he is not as clever as he was in his boyhood in schools; mathematics is interesting though not something he really wanted to do. His relationships with the women don’t last long. He needs to get to London, to find his inspiration in form of love, and then to become a poet; as he believes all artists need true love to motivate them, so does he wait for his love and his moment to besiege him. But London is not as John imagines it to be. Instead of being a ‘city of romance’ (Youth 44), London is a cold place where he feels both lonely and alienated. In a miserable English winter, longing for South Africa hits him: "If he were there he could be on Strandfontein beach, running over mile after mile of white sand under a great blue sky" (Youth 102). Months later, exhausted by the struggle with his MA thesis, "he allows himself the luxury of dipping into books about the South Africa of the old days"(Youth 135).South African place-names have an almost talismanic quality: sitting in the British Museum, the young John is deeply affected by thoughts of the country of his birth when he reads the South African place-names in the early travel writings of the likes of Barrow and Burchell:

It gives him an eerie feeling to sit in London reading about streets – Waalstraat, Buitengracht, Buitencingel – along which he alone, of all the people around him with their heads buried in their books, has walked. But even more than by accounts of old Cape Town is he captivated by stories of ventures into the interior [...] Zwartberg, Leeuwrivier, Dwyka: it is his country, the country of his heart, that he is reading about. (Youth 137)
This leads him to the crucial recognition: "it is his country, the country of his heart that he is reading about" (*Youth* 136-37). It is at this point that the reader needs the memories of Boyhood, where the child reflects on the Karoo farm: "there is no place on earth he loves more or can imagine loving more" (*Youth* 79). There follows a chapter on the life of the farm. It is not idealised, and the strange relationship, in part serf- and-master and in part equal, between the farm workers and the owner is described. But the whole chapter depends on the admission of love and belonging. He must work to live. He must work like a normal man, earning daily bread. Though he lands a luxurious job, he is still awaiting his love, his inspiration and his moment when he will set out to write the poetry he always dreamed of. The book also describes his gradual interest in prose. He understands that the fiction writer is a located creature, perhaps even "a person unable to live without a country" (*Youth* 137). He tries to find a new, ‘pure’ identity and a literary voice, influenced only by Western modernist writers such as Ezra Pound and Samuel Beckett, but the attempt to escape his South African identity and background leads to further alienation and loneliness. To write literature influenced by both his South African affiliations and the Western literary tradition is not a viable option for John. He has a partial revelation of the fictions that he will write:

Were it not for this handful of books, he could not be sure he had not dreamed up the Karoo yesterday. That is why he pores over Burchell in particular, in his two heavy volumes... If Burchell's travels are proved real by *Burchell's Travels*, why should other books not make other travels real, travels that are as yet only hypothetical? The logic is of course false. Nevertheless, he would like to do it: write a book as convincing as Burchell’s and lodge it in this library that defines all
libraries. If, to make his book convincing, there needs to be a grease-pot swinging under the bed of the wagon as it bumps across the stones of the Karoo, he will do the grease-pot... The difficult part will be to give to the whole the aura that will get it onto the shelves and thus into the history of the world: the aura of truth. (Youth 137-38)

In *Youth*, John takes this cultural bias against hybridity even further. He imagines that he must write in either a Western or a South African context in order to write good literature, and to be able to do so he must choose between a Western and a South African identity. Which of these two identities he prefers is made evident early on in the novel. There is a special kind of logic in the dichotomist division of races and nations illustrated above. But it must also be mentioned that his tense relationship with South Africa is connected to a sense of complicity, a kind of historical guilt, on behalf of the white population’s treatment of the native Africans:

> Between black and white there is a gulf fixed. Deeper than pity, deeper than honorable dealings, deeper even than goodwill, lies an awareness on both sides that people like Paul and himself, with their pianos and violins, are here on this earth, the earth of South Africa, on the shakiest of pretexts (Youth 17).

This passage is a telling example of how complicated and deep-rooted the conflicts of South Africa are. All the happy moments in *Youth* (as when John reads Beckett’s *Watt* and finds himself rolling on the floor with laughter) are ones in which we see him edging toward his true vocation. And all the fresh insights he stumbles on—the ones that rupture the memoir’s rehearsal of his disabling truisms about poetic life—reveal something about the craft of fiction and prefigure the work Coetzee was eventually to write. The most crucial of these insights arises from
John’s initial venture into fiction: a short story about a young man who discovers by the subtlest of signs that his love has been unfaithful to him. Much to the young author’s dismay, the story turns out to be set in South Africa. It takes place on a beach, which is not, as we are led to understand, described in any detail, since John’s conscious interest in the piece lies in creating a quasi-Jamesian drama of psychological recognition. Nevertheless, the setting seems obscurely important to him: English people, he feels, will not understand the story, because for them the word “beach” would bring to mind a “few pebbles lapped by wavelets” rather than breakers crashing against a rugged cliff and seabirds shrieking as they fight the wind. The story, he sadly concludes, is unpublishable. But the experience of writing it yields the understanding that while “poetry may take place everywhere and nowhere,” prose seems “naggingly to demand a specific setting” (Youth 63). Thus the youth who arrives in London eager to remake himself as a literary cosmopolitan ends up discovering the geographical and generic territory he is to claim for his own, however ironically, in his first novella, ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’.

In Youth, John never finds a literary voice connected to his hybrid identity and background, but the book itself is an expression of such a voice. And herein lays the crux of Youth: the book is itself a solution to a problem its protagonist is unable to solve. As it is a hybrid product, it is also a critique of a colonial discourse where hybridity threatens the logic on which this discourse depends. Homi Bhabha expresses this elegantly: ‘Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority’ (Bhabha 1994: 111). In other words, hybridity is able to dissolve the binary
logic of colonialist discourses such as Orientalism, and show that this logic is a flawed construct.

**Summertime**

Summertime is narrated by a biographer supposedly after Coetzee’s death. This book is part novel, part fictional biography, part memoir, part alternative history, and an obituary for a living writer. It covers the years 1972-77 of the writer’s life, and comprising interviews with people who apparently knew the writer. Coetzee has taken up the question of bad faith and conscience in the *Summertime* in the context of South African border killings recorded in the notebook entry of 1972.

The first section covers eight notebook entries from August 1972 to June 1975. The text opens: “How to escape the filth: not a new question. An old rat-question that will not let go, that leaves nasty, suppurating wound” (ST 4).

This is the first journal entry which speaks about his dissatisfaction with living in South Africa. He speaks of the borderlands, murders followed by denials and how he feels soiled by all this. He has conflicted and complex feelings about the corrupt leadership in Africa and the violence correlative with the new apartheid.

Four of the five interviews he conducts are with women — two lovers, a cousin and the mother of a former student. The first person interviewed by the biographer is Julia, a therapist with whom Coetzee had a brief and relatively dispassionate affair. Julia describes Coetzee as “scrawny, he had a beard, he wore horn-rimmed glasses and sandals. He looked out of place, like a bird, one of those flightless birds; or like an abstracted scientist who had wandered by mistake out of his laboratory. There was an air of seediness about him, too, an air of failure” (ST 8). It is she who seduces Coetzee and she questions her motivations as “he had no
sexual presence whatsoever. It was as if he had been sprayed from head to toe with a neutering spray" (ST 8). Further, he is not a good talker. She perceives John as incapable of love and self-absorbed. “Sex with him lacked all thrill” and had an “autistic quality” (ST 12). At one point, John brought her a copy of his first published book, *Dusklands*. She was not impressed with it but “simply surprised that this intermittent lover of mine, this amateur handyman and part-time schoolteacher, had it in him to write a book-length book and, what is more, find a publisher.”

Julia is very surprised at John’s need to write and his belief that books give meaning to life. John wants books to provide him with immortality. Julia is more pragmatic. Rather than continuing to write, she recommends that John find a good wife. She uses her therapeutic background to analyze John’s books which she views as having a recurrent theme of the woman not falling for the man. “My guess, my highly informed guess, is that it reflects his life experience. Women didn’t fall for him – not women in their right senses. They inspected him, they sniffed him, they even tried him out. Then they moved on” (19). She finds it very odd that a man who is hardly capable of intimacy makes his living writing books about ‘intimate human experience.’

The biographer interviews John’s cousin Margot about their annual family get together. In his family group, John is like a lost sheep and his relatives, except for Margot, view him with disdain and disapproval. His family are Afrikaners but, since John has been schooled outside South Africa, he is no longer accepted as one of their own. He is viewed as odd, bookish and stuck up. Margot is puzzled that John has learned Hottentot, a Khoi language, all of which are considered dead languages. John states that he’s interested in the things we have lost, not the things we have kept. Margot wonders who John can speak to with these languages. He answers,
“the dead . . . who otherwise are cast out into everlasting silence.” (26) Her memories of a reunion at the family farm in the bleak Karoo tells us something about the agonised bond Coetzee feels with the land of his forefathers. But even she judges him a ‘lightweight’, ‘who ran away to the big world and now comes creeping back to the little world with his tail between his legs.

Like Julia, Margot sees John as without male aura. She cannot think of him as a man. She considers him a failed man and a failed son, unable to decide what to do with his own life and incapable of caring for his father. ” He doesn’t have plans. He is a Coetzee. Coetzee’s don’t have plans, don’t have ambitions, they only have idle longings.” John longs to be a writer and to set his father up in a home separate from his own. Like Julia, Margot thinks John would be better off having a wife. However, she doesn’t think any woman would have him. Julia and Margot both feel a responsibility for John but are weighed down by his inaccessibility and melancholy.

Further interviews ensue. One is with a woman with whom John had an unrequited love and who detests John to the point that she feels stalked by him. The other two interviews are with his colleagues at a Cape Town university. One of these colleagues is male and the other is a woman with whom John had an affair. The woman who despises John talks about how unsuited John is for marriage and describes him “like a man who has spent his life in the priesthood and lost his manhood and become incompetent with women” (ST 39) She acknowledges that he might have been a decent writer but he still was not anybody. At any rate, she did not read his books. With John’s male colleague, similar descriptions of his personality come to light. He’s described as a mediocre teacher, reserved, a misfit, incapable of intimacy, and socially inept. This colleague makes a striking point – “It seems strange to be doing a biography of a writer while ignoring his writing.” (ST 42)
All of these interviews take place in the background of a changing South Africa and point to Coetzee’s conflicted feelings about the struggles that his country is facing. “He accepted that the liberation struggle was just. The struggle was just but the new South Africa toward which it strove was not utopian enough for him.” He yearned for a ‘coloured’ South Africa where everyone was ethnically the same but again he feels outcast with his Afrikaner heritage and history. His female colleague and lover says, “I think he was happiest in the role of outsider. He was not a joiner.” She talks about John’s Nobel Prize and acknowledges that he must have earned it. However, she is not a fan of his writing.

He had no special sensitivity that I could detect, no original insight into the human condition. He was just a man, a man of his time, talented, maybe even gifted, but frankly, not a giant. (ST 78)

The interviews are bookended by what Vincent tells us are excerpts from Coetzee’s notebooks, written during the period in question and unsuccessfully revised some 25 years later. The half-finished excerpts themselves — fragments of memory and anecdote — are like parables from which even the late Coetzee himself was unable to extract the meaning. Even in the notebooks, he does not grant himself the subjectivity of the first person; and if this is a manifestation of the dry repression that others found so frustrating and off-putting in Coetzee the man, it is also a shrewd technical maneuver by Coetzee the storyteller. There is always something suspect about the mea culpa — particularly in the first person, particularly when one is making art out of it. Thus it is one thing, as Coetzee surely recognizes, for him to write of himself that he was unattractive or awkward or a fool, and quite another to hear such assessments voiced much more credibly by, say, Adriana, the Brazilian widow, with whom Coetzee ultimately becomes so smitten that he enrolls in a dance
class she teaches: “He moved as though his body were a horse that he was riding,”
(ST 56) she remembers contemptuously, a horse that did not like its rider and was
resisting. Only in South Africa did I meet men like that, stiff, intractable, unteachable.