

Re-educating the Romantic: Sex and the Nature-Poet in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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It is perhaps the campus novel's greatest eccentricity that it spends so little time in the classroom. As a matter of fact, many of the reputed classics of the genre - from Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954) to David Lodge's more recent loose tetralogy, *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), *Nice Work* (1988) and *Thinks* (2001) - seem to be suggesting that life's real lessons have nothing whatsoever to do with books, ballpoints and blackboards. The hero of these fictions is usually the truant, not the student - be he a pupil or a teacher. Faculty staff are as likely to be spotted skulking in strip-joints or propping up the end of a bar as pontificating from the podium. Following their lead, learners, likewise, tend to be more interested in the *partouse* than in Proust. Clashes and meetings of the mind frequently serve as short-cuts to the bedroom. Literary references are more often bandied from writer to reader than from teacher to student. Lived experience, these novels maintain, is the best teacher. The campus novel essentially argues the oppugnant's case for the university's obsolescence.

When a campus novelist grants us entry to the classroom, though, we do well to pay attention. *Disgrace's* status as a campus novel is mootable; however its preoccupation with education - or better, with '[r]e-education. Reformation of the character,' as the book's protagonist, David Lurie puts it' - is not. J. M. Coetzee toys with many of the genre's trademark topoi - the philandering professor, the penny ante faculty squabbles, the devitalized university. He also appears to have named his protagonist after two of the campus novel's greatest recent exponents, Alison Lurie and the aforementioned Lodge. But even if one sees the first six chapters of the novel as a prolegomenous red herring, *Disgrace* is very clearly a novel of two campuses - the Cape Technical University and 'old Kaffraria' (p. 122). The Eastern Cape superintends the course of '[s]ensitivity training. Community service. Counselling' first decreed for David in the Vice-Rector's office (p. 43). It has no ivory tower,

but Petrus' new home, '[g]rey and featureless...stands on an eminence east of the old farmhouse...cast[ing] a long shadow' like Kafka's castle (p. 197). It is a place, Lucy avers halfway through the novel, that is every bit as small a world as the university campus (p. 133).

Disgrace is also of the campus, in the sense that it is written in a spirit of inquiry, not proselytism. Preachifying could not be further from Coetzee's intention as a writer, although it is true to say that stonewalling of this kind packs its own evangelical punch. It is hard to see his first novel *Dusklands* (1974), for example, as anything but a riposte to the activist-realist tendency in the fiction of apartheid South Africa. Likewise, a driving force behind the recent *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), as Hermione Lee has argued, 'is an impatience with the way famous writers are required to perform like rock-stars, or provide confessions or state their beliefs.'² One can only imagine that Coetzee holds with Chekhov's belief that the artist's only real obligation is to ask a good question.³ Novelists are not politicians, philosophers, polemicists or priests, nor do they resemble others charged with the job of promulgating clear-cut opinions. As John says of his author mother in *Elizabeth Costello*: 'A writer, not a thinker. Writers and thinkers: chalk and cheese. No, not chalk and cheese: fish and fowl.'⁴

In an essay on the late Saul Bellow, Martin Amis claimed that 'Books are partly about life, and partly about other books.'⁵ Coetzee's novels remind us that books and life do not exist in simple opposition, for never has a writer mobilized literature so well to service an investigation into his own contemporary reality. All of Coetzee's writings have the look of the bookworm about them, from the full-blown literary-biographical pastiches of *Foe* (1986) and *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) to the merely titular nods of the head - to Kafka, Tolstoy, Conrad, Fielding, Eliot, Balzac, Flaubert, and others - of *The Life and Times of Michael K.* (1983), *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) and *Youth* (2002). This is to say nothing of the defining influence Beckett's weighty breviloquence and Dostoyevsky's dialectical method have had on Coetzee's fictional output as a whole. His novels are much more clearly a conversation with other novelists than anything he has written for the *New York Review of Books* over the years, pieces which tend toward the linguistic. While one is hardly drawn to think

that Coetzee sees novel-writing, as Hemingway did, as a knockout fight against the literary heavyweights, it does appear that he writes to press shoulders with the greats. Coetzee seems to share Elizabeth Costello's desire to measure himself against the illustrious dead and pay tribute to the powers that animate him.⁶

This essay takes as its central concern one such encounter played out in *Disgrace*, the 'great' in question this time being William Wordsworth. Wordsworth is not the only old master of whom mention is made in the novel: I would go so far as to say that the running contestations with Byron and Kafka are equally critical. However, here I am predominantly interested in the way Coetzee invokes Wordsworth to give an account of the middle-aged, middle-class white male and his world-view. More specifically, I want to examine the way that Wordsworth becomes embroiled in David's disgrace. What is the nature of the legacy that the Romantic self has left behind? Does it carry any weight of meaning for the '[p]ost-Christian, posthistorical, postliterate' world, in post-apartheid South Africa (p. 32)? Is Romanticism dead or dying? Will we miss it when it has faded from memory altogether?

Despite the fact that, as adjunct professor of communications at Cape Technical University, David spends 'hours of each day' teaching 'Communications 101 "Communication Skills," and Communication 201, "Advanced Communication Skills"' (p. 3), *Disgrace* twice audits his one-off course on the Romantic poets. The first session is on Wordsworth. The class is discussing Book VI of *The Prelude*, the Alpine sequence of the poem, in which - in proto-campus novel fashion - the young Cambridgean thumbs his nose at 'College cares and study' and becomes 'a Wanderer' in the Alps.⁷ 'From a bare ridge,' David reads aloud:

we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be (p. 20)⁸

Why does the nature-poet find the first sight of Mont Blanc's peak so disappointing? David's linguistic approach to the question around the distinction between 'usurp' and 'usurp upon' alienates his students, but it is a revelatory moment for Coetzee's readers. Always one to 'eschew loosened abundance for impacted allegory,' as James Wood has said, the author has David's musings on Wordsworth carry the weight of a personality profile.⁹ So far as David is concerned, he is as he was and ever shall be, a claim the novel's present tense seems, in part, to substantiate. The conspicuously superannuated word 'temperament' - meaning, of course, an inborn and intransigent disposition or habit of mind - is used eight times in the first two pages of the novel. Half of these appear within the space of three lines, describing David. The four blunted sentences are made appositely muscle-bound by the repetition:

That was his temperament. His temperament is not going to change, he is too old for that. His temperament is fixed, set. The skull, followed by the temperament: the two hardest parts of the body. (p. 2)

If David is to be believed, his temperament has been cast from the mould of William Wordsworth. The connection between professor and nature-poet has been already established by this very early stage of the novel. In fact, it has been confirmed for us not once, but three times. On the fourth page of the novel we are told that David is the author of three books, 'the third one on Wordsworth and history (*Wordsworth and the Burden of the Past*)' (p. 4). Not long after, when Melanie admits to David outside class hours that she likes Blake but is 'not so crazy about Wordsworth,' he replies: 'You shouldn't be saying that to me. Wordsworth has been one of my masters.' *Disgrace* is widely renowned - and renounced - for its 'suspended' and unforthcoming third-person narration, however here it more than happily chimes in agreement: 'It is true. For as long as he can remember, the harmonies of *The Prelude* have echoed within him' (p. 13).¹⁰

The Prelude is, arguably, Wordsworth's signature poem, and its famous Book VI, in turn, has been described by the influential contemporary critic,

Alan Liu as 'capable by itself of representing the poet's work.'¹¹ For many commentators past and present, the poem is remarkable for the way that it remains wilfully narcissistic despite its dramatic changes of scene. The poet visits Paris just prior to the Reign of Terror, climbs to the top of both Mount Snowdon and the Simplon Pass and spends considerable time experiencing the 'blank confusion' of London's vast domain, yet his 'intense intellectual egotism,' as William Hazlitt wrote in 1818, 'swallows up everything.'¹² But to suggest that it does not much matter what it is that Wordsworth encounters is to miss the point. On the contrary, his project of internal pilgrimage *requires* an ever-shifting pageant of extraordinary externalities. As Wordsworth puts it in Book III of *The Prelude*, 'Traveller I am, / And all my tale is of myself.'¹³ A rover-style approach to life, the world, and everything allows him to be enriched, not bogged down or belittled, by his experiences.

All of this, of course, lies at the heart of David's classroom discussion of the usurp/usurp upon distinction in *Disgrace*, which, in turn, reveals the determining core values of David himself. Having spent his entire career, as he thinks back on it later on, 'explaining to the bored youth of the country the distinction between drink and drink up, burned and burnt,' to the present bunch of incurious students he details the rhetorical device of the polyptoton once more (p. 71). He tells them that 'usurp' - 'to take over entirely' - is the perfective of 'usurp upon' - 'to intrude or encroach upon.' The '[W]ordsworthian or egotistical sublime,'¹⁴ as Keats called it, depends upon usurping upon. The Romantic temperament craves exposure to novel sense-impressions because of the elixir-like self-invigorative powers they supply. The imagination must have something to work with. But it must, at the same time, take pains to forestall total usurpation by them. 'The question is not,' David contends, 'How can we keep the imagination pure, protected from the onslaughts of reality? The question has to be, Can we find a way for the two to coexist?' The Wordsworthian solution to this problem is casual encountering, 'the sense-image, kept as fleeting as possible, as a means toward stirring or activating the idea that lies buried more deeply in the soil of memory' (p. 22). The Romantic is a rover.

David's explication of what is at stake when man meets mountain, however, ignites no flash of revelation of its own in the classroom. Stares of

'[b]lank incomprehension' from his students have David searching for an easy - and very revealing - analogue:

'Like being in love,' he says. 'If you were blind you would hardly have fallen in love in the first place. But now, do you truly wish to see the beloved in the cold clarity of the visual apparatus? It may be in your better interest to throw a veil over the gaze, so as to keep her alive in her archetypal, goddesslike form.' (p. 22)

According to David, being in love is rather like the Wordsworthian sublime: it requires a voluptuous object, an instant of recognition and the freedom of the imagination to do its own thing. It is a state of imposition, not relation. That there is a connective link between the workings of the Romantic imagination and David's predatory sexuality is made even more explicit later on in the novel, when Melanie's sexual harassment charge has circulated widely enough to become copy for the Cape Town newspapers:

The report is on page three: 'Professor on sex charge,' it is headed. He skims the first lines. '...is slated to appear before a disciplinary board on a charge of sexual harassment.... Lurie (53), author of a book on the English nature-poet William Wordsworth, was not available for comment.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), nature-poet. David Lurie (1945-?), commentator upon, and disgraced disciple of, William Wordsworth. Blest be the infant babe. No outcast he. Blest be the babe. (p. 46)

For proof that sex is a real subject of *Disgrace*, we need only turn to the novel's first page. Coetzee abandons the customary 'beginning of term' scene-setting - the campus novel's staple opening since *Pnin* (1954), made use of as recently as Wolfe's *I am Charlotte Simmons* (2004) - for a peek at David's regular Thursday afternoon rendezvous with the prostitute, Soraya. But as in the Nabokov novel, the intent behind the telling is, at once,

descriptive and destructive. Coetzee, to be sure, wants to give us a sense of how things stand but he cannot stop himself from making comment. The novel's first sentence serves as an almighty hook for readers; it is also a wonderment of ironic characterisation: 'For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well' (p. 1). David, we know from the start, is cocksure about sex but has no right whatsoever to feel complacent. Not since the late novels of Henry James has a cartel of well-positioned commas and clauses done so much connotative work.

However, David's flawed solution to 'the problem of sex' is worth exploring for it is, ultimately, what lands him in hot water with Melanie, and outs him as a 'disgraced disciple of William Wordsworth.' It reveals, in other words, the composition of his 'fixed, set' temperament. That he conceives of sex itself as a 'problem' is, of course, *the* problem. But the way David chooses to manage his erotic life lays bare for us the reasons for this problem. Coetzee knows this, and obliges us with a full chapter's elaboration.

David's solution, in short, is paid sex with Soraya. Men's use of women prostitutes in novels is often an unconscious form of acceptable homosociality - as it is in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) - but in *Disgrace* it is David's way of cutting out the problematic middle-man - the woman herself. His sexual appetite is egoistically motivated, in much the same way as a Wordsworthian ramble. David routinely solicits Soraya's services because sex with her approaches (but, crucially, does not amount to) onanism. Behind the door of No. 113 Windsor Mansions, self-aggrandising intrusion and encroachment are possible. The purlieu of the paid sex scenario permit David to 'usurp upon' Soraya at no cost to himself. The shuttered room, the stolen hours, the uncomplicated taking off of clothes mean that Soraya remains, as she is described in the *Discreet Escorts* books, 'Exotic' (p. 7). She is kept 'alive in her archetypal, goddesslike form.' Four hundred Rand buys him ninety minutes with Soraya's 'honey-brown body,' but the real nature of his trespass is imaginative, its real intent and purpose narcissistic. He need not take her into account. His transcendence is achieved at the cost of hers. The entire framework of the encounter is exploitative, even when considered from her side. Like nature for Wordsworth, she is the sensuous given which is made to abide his questions.¹⁵ Coetzee's ever-judicious wording bears this out:

Because *he takes pleasure* in her, because *his pleasure* is unfailing, an affection has grown up *in him for her*. To some degree, *he believes*, this affection is reciprocated ...

His sentiments are, *he is aware*, complacent, even uxorious. Nevertheless *he does not cease to hold them*. (p. 2, my italics)

The right individuals have to represent or speak for others, or to demand that others represent and speak for themselves is a relentless theme of the Coetzee *oeuvre*, fiction and non-fiction alike. In *Disgrace*, David feels a sense of entitlement to think and speak for Soraya where the third-person narrator displays no such confidence. It is this false consciousness that allows David, for example, to trust in the mutual pleasure of their liaisons in the face of her clear lack of effusiveness in bed. For their arrangement to work - for 'the problem of sex' to be solved - Soraya must remain a cipher upon which David's oversized and overactive imagination is free to roam. It flounders once he catches a *bona fide* glimpse of her life without him - her everyday life of grocery shopping and fast food lunches with her two young children - but it is made impossible once his thoughts turn to the boy's father, the 'real' husband (p. 7). David's arrangement with Soraya ends when she calls a stop to it, significantly when her voice erupts in the novel for the very first time, in quotation marks: 'My mother is ill. I'm going to take a break to look after her. I won't be here next week... You had better phone first.... Phone the agency. They'll know.' (p. 8)

For Susan Sontag, a trait of the pornographic imagination is that it 'tends to make one person interchangeable with another and all persons interchangeable with things.'¹⁶ It is in this way, then, that Soraya gives way, briefly, to another escort named 'Soraya', to Dawn, a new secretary from David's department, and, finally, to a young student, Melanie. Melanie turns up at a time of crisis for David, when his solution to the problem of sex has come undone and thoughts of aging and impotence are playing on his mind:

He ought to give up, retire from the game. At what age, he wonders, did Origen castrate himself? Not the most graceful of

solutions, but then ageing is not a graceful business. A clearing of the decks, at least, so that one can turn one's mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die.

Might one approach a doctor and ask for it? A simple enough operation, surely: they do it to animals every day, and animals survive well enough, if one ignores a certain residue of sadness. (p. 9)

But instead of accepting a metaphorical gelding - bare life without sex and its accompanying 'residue of sadness' - David launches upon a last vanity seduction. Almost as a reflex action, David mouths the tired refrains of romantic persuasions to love in the direction of Melanie, whom he bumps into quite by chance one Friday afternoon in the old college gardens. As he explains later to a male colleague, the fling with Melanie is serious only in the sense that '[a]fter a certain age, all affairs are serious. Like heart attacks' (p. 42). Spying on Melanie rehearsing a play directly after the class on Wordsworth, David thinks of his behaviour as '*letching*' (p. 24). The word has more than a whiff of encroachment and intrusion about it. In fact, contemplating Melanie's performance from a vantage point in the remote back row of the auditorium, David's assumption of a position of eminence mirrors the standard practice of the nature-poet in search of sublime feeling. Distance lends enchantment to his view, and David comes away 'astonished by the feeling [Melanie] evokes' (p. 25). But Coetzee's depiction of the sexual encounter that follows leaves us in no doubt how closely Romantic-style 'usurping upon,' when it comes to men and women, resembles rape. As Coetzee writes in *Stranger Shores* (2001), 'Lovelace the rapist-revenger is the dark side of the coin of which Dante the pilgrim-lover is the bright, ideal side.'¹⁷

He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, her limbs crumple like a marionette's. Words heavy as clubs thud into the delicate whorl of her ear ... But nothing will stop him ...

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes ...

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. (p. 25)

That Coetzee is at least provoking us to think of Melanie's 'undesired' seduction, her 'not quite' rape, in terms of the European colonialisation of Africa, there is little doubt. The meaning of Melanie's name - 'Shift the accent. Mélanie: the dark one' (p. 18) - links her explicitly to the 'compliant, pliant' 'honey-brown' Soraya, and to a wider constellation of rhetorical associations that have long figured Africa as the 'heart of darkness.' If Romanticism was Enlightenment reason's poetical mode, then Imperialism was its political programme. Likewise, David's incorrigible womanising is understood as an offshoot of his role as a high priest of white man's greatest cultural achievements, poetry and opera.

More difficult to unravel, though, is whether David's sexual misdemeanours are playing mirror or foil to Lucy's rape later on the novel. The diptych structure of the novel has us wondering if David's behaviour as a 'disciple of William Wordsworth' in the first part of the novel is really any different from the actions of the three young black men who, as David himself understands it, are responding to a 'history of wrong' that has come down to them through their ancestors (p. 156). Coetzee is not for one minute interested in stitching up an answer to this question for us. As I suggested at the beginning of this essay, *Disgrace's* main bone of contention is whether or not it is possible to teach an old dog new tricks - whether or not the Eastern Cape can re-educate the Romantics Professor from Cape Town Technical University. Should we regard David in the same way that Elaine Winter, chair of David's department, does - 'as a hangover from the past, the sooner cleared away the better' (p. 40)? Or is it that we losing something vital and precious with the inevitable passing of 'dinosaur' David? If we cannot help but carry the culpable past within us, how can we change our world for the better? By fusing together stories about sex from the university campus and the Eastern

Cape, Coetzee sets his question correctly without solving a single problem - as Chekhov deemed it should be done - and satisfies completely.

One thing we can be sure of, though, is that *Disgrace* is a thoroughgoing critique of retributive violence, which for Coetzee includes cycles of brutality, judgement and confession. Both David and Lucy exhibit a deep suspicion of the presumed liberative effects of public testimony and defend the right of individuals to some small sphere of privacy. David's sexual harassment committee hearing is an overt satire of the aims and practices of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, for instance. But only David is naïve enough to think that rampant individualism incurs no necessary cost to others, that living in a community providing certain rights and privileges entails no personal 'downsizing.' By insisting that Lucy go to the police and press charges against her attackers, David is, as he sees it, standing up for the role of Eros - rather than Mars - in matters of sex. To his mind, desire has rights that a history of deprivation does not, and to some extent it is hard to disagree with him. However, he does not see any inherent contradiction in his position: he appears not to see in Lucy's silence his own distrust of prescribed admissions of wrongdoing, nor to realise that he is inadvertently defending Melanie's right to prosecute him.

Lucy's refusal to speak about her rape reveals, in part, the author's own unwillingness to encroach and intrude upon her pain, or to exploit it for the sake of the story, an intent also keenly evident in the treatment of the 'interrogation' scenes in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). But Lucy's reticence can also be understood as a radical intervention - as a personalised intercession into both her country's ongoing interracial disputes as well as her father's recurring problems with women. By insisting that her rape 'is a purely private matter' in a place with the highest number of racially-motivated sexual assaults in the world,¹⁸ Lucy enacts 'a refusal and an introversion of retributive violence, a refusal so deliberate, so conscious, and so powerful that it overwhelms any interpretation.'¹⁹ In choosing silence, Lucy subjects herself rather than recirculate the explosive trope of the white women's rape at the hands of the black man in South Africa. Right from the start, Lucy also emphatically refuses to issue her father the right to tell of her experiences, despite the fact that he was also a victim. Her secretiveness ensures that she

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avoids being usurped upon either by hardline white interests or by her father, a serial offender when it comes to infringing upon the thoughts, feelings and bodies of women.

As David's daughter - a filial bond that includes love but precludes sex - Lucy is left with the task of teaching him a thing or two about the problems of the overreaching imagination when it comes to women. Hounding her to leave the Salem farm for her own protection, Lucy, in frustration, forces him to confront the ubiquity, the ordinariness, the familiarity of the rapists' state of mind compared with his own:

'Hatred ... When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me any more. Maybe, for men, hating a woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange - when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her - isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood - doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?' (p. 158)

Where beforehand the accusation '*You weren't there. You don't know what happened.*' 'baffled' and 'outraged' David (pp. 140-1), Lucy's tutelage helps him admit to both an affinity with the rapists and an associated failure of the imagination that has governed his relationships with women. It is in this way that 'Lucy's secret [is] his disgrace (p. 109).'

'You don't understand, you weren't there,' says Bev Shaw. Well, he does understand; he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself. The question is, does he have it in him to be the woman? (p. 160)

Lucy's silence succeeds where Melanie's complaint and Rosalind's reprimand (p. 44) failed: it makes David ask the question that makes suspect the pleasures of 'usurping upon' forever: What is it like to be the other, the woman? The

first twinges of empathy make him see Romantic encroachment in a wholly new light:

He thinks of Byron. Among the legions of countesses and kitchenmaids Byron pushed himself into there were no doubt those who called it rape.... From where he stands, from where Lucy stands, Byron looks very old-fashioned indeed. (p. 160)

Suddenly, David seems himself as more Byron than Wordsworth, as less '*mighty*' than '*fallen*' (p. 167).

But Coetzee is too much of a realist to have this sobering self-knowledge change him beyond recognition. And so in a matter of a few pages David remonstrates against Byron and fantasizes about a threesome with the Isaacs sisters in the presence of their father. Likewise, sex with Bev Shaw seems on the one hand to suggest that David has rejected his former conviction that 'dumpy little women with ugly voices deserve to be ignored' (p. 79): however he walks away from it thinking he has done her a service. David's attempt to write an opera around Byron's 'plain, ordinary' mistress, Teresa fails, too, because he cannot imagine any music for her beyond a 'halting cantilena' (p. 214). And the novel ends with David preferring to render Lucy's farm life from a distance as a 'scene ready made for a Sargent or a Bonnard' and Lucy herself as '*das ewig Weibliche*', despite all that has happened (p. 218).

However, David's experiences with the dogs at Bev's clinic do seem to help him resign himself to the idea of dying, even if it is hard to see his role as 'dog-undertaker' as anything but self-servicing and sentimental. As James Wood says of the last 'lesson' in *Elizabeth Costello*: 'Our mortality is animal mortality ... [T]o think about animal death is to think of our own death.'²⁰ Lucy ends the novel saying she will henceforth live life '[I]like a dog' (repeating the final words of Kafka's K. in *The Trial* (1925)), but David resigns in order to die like one. So does David change at all, then? Does the Eastern Cape 're-educate' him, prove itself a better teacher than the university campus, and successfully 'cure' him of his 'inappropriate desires' (p. 43)? Or

is he as much the infant babe of Wordsworth as ever before? His final gesture - not sparing but surrendering his favourite dog, 'the dog who likes music'- has puzzled many readers. I see it as a final rejection of his 'out of date' roving ways. The dog will not exist, live or die, for the sake of his needs: 'Yes, I am giving him up,' he says (p. 220).

NOTES

- 1 J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (1999; Vintage: London, 2000), p. 66. All subsequent references to the novel will appear in parentheses within the essay itself.
- 2 Hermoine Lee, 'The Rest is Silence' [review of *Elizabeth Costello*], *Guardian*, 30 August 2003, <http://books.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4743041-99930,00.html>.
- 3 Anton Chekhov, Letter to A. S. Souvorin, 27 October 1888, in *Novelists on the Novel*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 99.
- 4 Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (New York: Knopf, 2003), p. 10.
- 5 Martin Amis, 'The American Eagle' (1995), *The War Against Cliché: Essays and Reviews 1971-2000* (Vintage: London, 2002), p. 448.
- 6 Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 26.
- 7 William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), in *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 375-590.
- 8 The passage cited is *The Prelude*, Book VI, ll. 452-6: see *William Wordsworth*, ed. Gill, pp. 461-2.
- 9 James Wood, 'Coetzee's *Disgrace*: A Few Sceptical Thoughts,' *The Irresponsible Self: on Laughter and the Novel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 235.
- 10 I want to make it clear here that I take Louise Bethlehem's point that *Disgrace's* narrative voice is 'strung out between the experiencing or focalising consciousness, Lurie's, and that of the narrator anterior to him, possessed of all the traditional narrative authority of the third person.' It may not be true, then, that Wordsworth that the harmonies of *The Prelude* do, indeed, echo within David, but the narrator is more than willing to confirm that this is certainly the way *David* has seen it 'for as long as he can remember.' See Bethlehem, 'Pliant/Compliant; Grace/*Disgrace*; Plaint/Complaint,' *Scrutiny*2, 7:1 (2002), 20.

- 11 Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 4. It is interesting to note that the title of David's book on Wordsworth recalls Liu's, which also chews on Book VI's 'strong use of the figure "usurpation"' (pp. 26-7).
- 12 Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book VII, ll. 696-7; William Hazlitt, 'Mr Wordsworth' (1818), <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Hazlitt/SpiritAge/Wordsworth.htm>.
- 13 Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book III, ll. 196-7.
- 14 John Keats, Letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821: Volume 1*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 387.
- 15 Harold Bloom, 'Introduction,' *William Wordsworth's The Prelude*, ed. Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Press, 1986), p. 4; M. H. Abrams, 'Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Crisis-Autobiography' in *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 92.
- 16 Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination,' *Styles of Radical Will* (1966; London: Vintage, 1994), p. 53.
- 17 Coetzee, *Stranger Shores*, London: Secker & Warburg (2001), p. 40.
- 18 As Lucy Graham notes, 'In the period leading to the publication of *Disgrace*, Interpol reported that South Africa had the highest number of reported rapes of all countries selected for a survey' and that 'the country still has levels of sexual violence comparable to those in a war zone.' See Graham, "'Yes, I am giving him up": Sacrificial Responsibility and Likeness with Dogs in J. M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction,' *Scrutiny*2, 7:1 (2002), 5-6.
- 19 This is how Coetzee describes Jesus' crucifixion. See Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 337.
- 20 James Wood, 'A Frog's Life' [review of *Elizabeth Costello*], *London Review of Books*, 25:20, 23 October 2003, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n20/wood02_.html.

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