



**Analyse the development of narrative voice in J. M. Coetzee's  
*Disgrace* using the Fowler-Uspensky model of 'Point of View' to  
 explore the construction of condemnation and conscience within  
 the text.**

**Alice Ratcliffe**

A novel which is 'rich and resonant enough to inspire fierce, competing interpretations, and unflinching enough to make some of them rather uncomfortable' (Theo Tait, *The Guardian*, 2009), *Disgrace* has been a controversial piece of work since its publication in 1999. Being labelled as 'chilly', 'shocking', 'exhilarating', and 'unforgiving' (*The Sunday Times*), it is a novel unafraid of addressing the moral complexity of post-apartheid South Africa through an uncompromising exploration of the violence existing in such a context. Unsurprisingly, then, it has met in certain cases with a heated reception, with some readers and critics seeing it as perpetuating the image of South Africa as the rape capital of the world through unnecessary brutality.

Yet what makes this novel so poignantly disturbing is not in fact the shocking content — rape, chemical attacks, robbery and animal slaughter — but rather Coetzee's development of a nonchalant narrative voice which aligns itself with the dubious protagonist, David Lurie, to ensure that despite his unethical, immoral actions he escapes the novel free of any condemnation from either narrator or reader.

One might expect at this point, then, that the narrative voice belongs to a first person speaker, indeed Lurie himself, allowing him to defend his own actions through unreliable recounts and biased evaluations.<sup>1</sup> However, this is not the case, as Coetzee employs instead a third person narrator and it is this voice — coming from outside of the narrative — that refuses to condemn Lurie's actions and in doing so, subtly defends him, even when he rapes one of his students, a young, black female called Melanie. This defence is particularly dangerous coming from an external voice as, traditionally, a reader would expect such a voice to be impartial and thus would be tempted to trust its judgement.<sup>2</sup> In this way, Coetzee exploits the authority and expected neutrality that comes with an omniscient narrative voice in order to manipulate the perception, and therefore the response, of the reader.

Critic Derek Attridge acknowledges this third person narrator, but shrewdly notes that, despite its presence, the reader of *Disgrace* is somehow 'locked into David Lurie's point of view' (Attridge, 2004, p. 18), a concept which I find not only hugely interesting but also essential to understanding how it is that this character escapes condemnation, for Coetzee somehow makes it impossible for the reader to form a negative judgement of Lurie as the narrative progresses.

<sup>1</sup> The trope of an 'unreliable narrator' is often used in first person fictional narratives and the experienced reader has grown accustomed to identifying it, realising that they have to look past the construction of unreliability in order to access the 'true' plot, or accept it as the plot itself.

<sup>2</sup> In instances where a third person narrator sways towards a subjective opinion, it tends to be that of irony, using the space created by free indirect discourse to mock or criticise the characters, a technique coined by Jane Austen in her novel *Emma*.

In order to understand how it is that Coetzee manipulates the reader's perspective so successfully, I will unpack the construction of point of view within the novel, using what has come to be known as the Fowler-Uspensky model of Point of View (Uspensky, 1973; Fowler, 1996 [1986]). This model, widely used in stylistic analysis for studying characterisation, tracks narrative perspective across four planes of understanding: the psychological, the spatial, the temporal and the ideological. According to Fowler, it 'focus[es] particularly on the ways individual sentences add up to a larger textual shape; on their power to suggest distinctive "mind-styles" in authors and characters; and on the relationships between voices within the novel' (Fowler, Preface, p.1), something which applies directly to Coetzee's construction of his narrative, particularly in terms of his creation of a 'mind-style' as, to come back to Attridge, it is this which the reader is 'locked' into.

In technical terms, the narrator of *Disgrace* is 'heterodiegetic', 'different from and external to the story' (Simpson, 2004, p. 28), but as the lines between narrator and protagonist are so thoroughly blurred, it is difficult to identify where exactly the narrative is being transmitted from and therefore even more difficult to fully classify the narrator as belonging to a 'different plane of exegesis' to the story (Simpson, 2004, p. 28). This ambiguity is largely due to Coetzee's employment of free indirect discourse, a technique which follows a character's thought process from an exterior vantage point and in doing so blurs the narrating eye with the experiencing eye. This focalisation nominates that experiencing character as the 'reflector of fiction' — so all events are communicated, if not exactly, via David Lurie, at least in relation to him; he is the 'focaliser' of the narrative. Paul Simpson explains that when using a third person framework an author has two options: 'either align the modality with the external narrator or locate it in the viewpoint of the character-reflector' (Simpson, 2004, p. 28). It is clear then that Coetzee has opted for the latter, not creating a personality for his external narrator, but rather exploiting him as a medium for translating the perspective of the protagonist, the effect of which can be analysed by looking at narrative construction in relation to the psychological plane of point of view.

Uspensky identifies that a narrative is internalised when 'the authorial point of view relies on an individual consciousness' (Uspensky, 1973, p. 52), and this is certainly apparent here, that individual consciousness being David Lurie's. There are a number of stylistic indices which can alert a reader to when an omniscient narrator has become subjective and given over their 'authority' to a character, and these are regularly seen in play throughout *Disgrace*. A rich passage to study in relation to these indices comes when David first invites Melanie back to his house and attempts to woo her [see Appendix 1]. The reader is thrown straight into his internal psyche as the passage bursts with what Uspensky refers to as 'verba sentiendi' (Uspensky, 1973) — verbs which 'denote thoughts, feelings and perceptions as embodied in mental processes' (Simpson, 2004, p. 124) — so, '[David] wills the girl to be captivated too. But he senses she is not' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 15) or 'Smooth words...at this moment he believes in them' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 16), and despite the fact that the narrative is in the third person the reader knows exactly what a character is feeling. Coupled with this, the use of definite articles — 'the gate' 'the door' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 12) — presupposes a familiarity with the experiencing eye, making their subjective perspective the only perspective, thus aligning the reader with their internal viewpoint. The rhetorical questions which litter the passage are another key indicator: 'Do the young still fall in love, or is that mechanism obsolete by now, unnecessary, quaint, like steam locomotion?' and 'In the most roundabout of ways, is she warning him off?' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 13), as Coetzee uses free indirect thought to track David's inner doubt and let the reader know that he knows just how 'out of touch' he is with this young girl. This insight, in a bizarre way, endears David to the reader, for it allows us to understand that he doesn't view himself as some sort of smooth-tongued Lothario but rather as a dated old man, and with this self-deprecation established it

then becomes far more difficult to criticise him, as he has already criticised himself so thoroughly. More insidious to the narrative than these signposted rhetorical questions are the evaluative interpolations that are consistently proffered by the narrator on behalf of David by means of the modal pattern 'positive shading' in terms of using his senses, thoughts and feelings as the reflector to relay the narrative. As Melanie enters his house, we learn that 'He stares, frankly ravished' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 12). The behavioural verb 'stares' indicates 'consciousness as a form of behaviour' (Simpson, 2004, p. 23), and such an action might imply longing, lust, anger or confusion — depending on context — giving the reader a chance to guess at David's inner-feelings as portrayed by an external marker. However, Coetzee removes the guesswork as he takes it one step further through use of free indirect thought, allowing us to know for certain that David is 'frankly ravished' — something we would probably rather not know in relation to this young student, particularly with the sexual connotations that the word 'ravished' carries.

But by being psychologically affiliated with David in this way, we are encouraged to see the 'man behind the monster' and, through this, rather than rousing up a feeling of anger, it is instead one of sympathy that Coetzee creates for this man — confusing the reader's innate sense of judgement and blurring what would otherwise be seen in black and white.

This build-up of intimacy between reader and protagonist is reinforced more physically in the alignment of the spatial plane of perspective — which 'dovetails' and 'shades into' (Simpson, 2004, p. 80) the psychological plane — sometimes referred to as 'the narrative camera angle' (Simpson, 2004, p. 79). This notion of a camera is particularly relevant to *Disgrace* as the consistent use of the present tense — something which will come under scrutiny later on — gives the narrative a 'filmic quality' (Harvey, 2006, p. 86), as events are played out before the reader's eyes, much like in a movie. This ties in with the wider thematic plot of the novel, in terms of 'watching' and, indeed, voyeurism — the present tense being also 'the tense of the gaze' (Harvey, 2006, p. 80) — as Lurie is established as predator, and views his 'prey' — young Melanie — from afar. This is where an analysis of the spatial plane of perspective becomes important, for it is where the reader is positioned in terms of viewpoint that determines which information and what picture is made available to them, and thus which perspective they are forced to take. Being already allowed access into David's mind, it is clear that spatially we are positioned alongside him too, in his proximal range, and thus by associative alignment we are forced to share his gaze and join him as predator — whether we want to or not. Coetzee establishes this spatial organisation by nominating Lurie as the 'origo' within the story, the focal point around which all other events circulate. So, much the same as with the mental perception of events, this character again acts as the focaliser of the narrative, this time in relation to a spatial perception. A perfect example of this concept comes in the scene when David first spots Melanie on his walk home one evening [see Appendix 1]: 'he notices her' 'on the path just ahead of him' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 11), with the first construction immediately setting him up as the subject and she as the object — he the viewer and she the viewed — and the use of the locative expression 'ahead' positioning her as away from the central point of narrative perspective, away from the origo. To turn to Simpson again, he states that the spatial plane of point of view is one which 'has palpable grammatical exponents in deixis' (Simpson, 2004, p. 79), and with this knowledge it is easy to recognise David as the deictic centre of the novel, as all deictic markers move outwards from him: Melanie is 'ahead', then he 'catches up' with her, and when he speaks she smiles 'back' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 11), reinforcing his position as deictic anchor and reflector of fiction, thus putting him at the centre of both the psychological and spatial plane of perspective.

Crucially, this centralisation forces the reader to inhabit this space with David, sharing his point of view of events. In this way, Coetzee privileges David's perspective over all others and therefore makes it very difficult to sympathise with anyone other than him. This is particularly relevant in relation to how our judgement is skewed in his favour, as he is the character we are intimately connected to, whereas Melanie is just a hollow object in the distance of our perception. Thus, by being brought into a state of intimacy with David, both psychologically and spatially, the reader is obliged to know and understand him, making it much harder to condemn him in cold blood.

Yet, what is most striking about Coetzee's manipulation of these two interlocked planes of perspective is the way he so abruptly shuts the reader out from them at crucial points of the narrative. To look at the psychological plane first, this 'shutting out' can be pinned down quite specifically through the mapping of a shift in verb types. As it has become clear that a lot of the action of the narrative occurs inside David's head, so it follows that the most passages are littered with the previously analysed 'verba sentiendi', such as 'thinks...feels...knows...' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 15). However, in the scene where David rapes Melanie at her apartment, arguably the crux of the narrative [see Appendix 2], there is a prominent swing away from the mental and into the physical. He turns up at her door uninvited, and as the events unfold the reader slips into his psychological perspective, as we learn that he 'finds' Melanie's slippers 'silly and tasteless' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 24) — the internalisation of a reaction verb coupled with evaluative adjectives — and join him in his voyeuristic stare as Coetzee employs the blazon technique and slowly moves down the girl's body from her 'crumpled t-shirt' to her 'cycling shorts' to the 'absurd...slippers in the shape of comic-book gophers' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 24). However, this insight is quickly and violently cut off as Lurie is overcome with lust for the girl and the verbs abruptly snap into material processes as he 'thrusts', 'takes', 'carries', 'brushes' and 'kisses' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 25) — no longer a man plagued with doubt and self-deprecation but instead some seemingly unstoppable force, a machine or an animal, which the reader is now only allowed to watch from a distance as he performs action after action.

Later on in the novel, Lurie describes himself as a 'servant of Eros' (Coetzee, 2004, p. 52) in the sense that he is neither responsible, nor accountable, for the desire he feels for a beautiful female form. And so perhaps Coetzee is using grammar here, and playing with the psychological plane of perspective, in order to emphasise this wider thematic point, for, sure enough, as soon as David's passion ends, the verbs return to either behavioural or mental constructions as he 'slumps' in his car, 'overtaken with such dejection', and has to 'rouse himself' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 25) to drive away, as if only when his carnal need is satisfied can his mind be clear and open again, and only then is the reader led back to him. Crucially, they have been spared the discomfort of sharing his headspace with him when he is at his worst.

This intentional dislocation between intimacy and detachment is then mirrored along the spatial plane of perspective, for in nominating David, a character with a restricted viewpoint, as the reflector of fiction, so Coetzee ties the reader into a restricted viewpoint too. This restriction is based primarily on David's spatial location in the sense that if he can't see something, then neither can we. This notion of attenuated focalisation is exploited most powerfully in the scene where attackers descend on his daughter's house and he is locked in the toilet while she has to fend for herself outside [see Appendix 3]. In being locked behind a closed door, David is rendered 'blind', and as a consequence, so is the reader. The vast majority of narrative information in this passage is transmitted either via David's ears — 'he hears a car start', 'the barking of the dogs grows louder again' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 97) — or through his imagination — 'a vision comes to him of Lucy struggling with the two in the blue overalls, struggling against them' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 97) — both of which fail to provide a coherent picture of events, something exacerbated by consistent use of unspecific references

— 'a sound', 'a car' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 97) — that purposely provide no concrete detail. Thus, by removing the omniscience of a third person narrator, Coetzee has limited what the reader is allowed to know and in doing this has opened up the awful potential for them to hypothesise about what might have happened without ever knowing for certain if their deepest fears are justified.

This creation of awful ambiguity ties into certain critical opinions on the presentation of rape in postcolonial narratives. In her essay 'Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J M Coetzee's *Disgrace*', Lucy Valerie Graham says that 'the stifling of rape narrative is a feature of the entire novel' (Graham, 2003, p. 433), identifying, as I have done, that the two key moments of the narrative are the parallel incidents of sexual abuse — first Melanie at David's hands and then David's daughter at the hands of strangers — and yet 'in each case the experience of the violated body is absent, hidden from the reader' (Graham, 2003, p. 434). This claim is supported by a stylistic analysis of the novel, as both Melanie's and Lucy's stories are kept from the reader as a result of attenuated focalisation. Because David is Coetzee's nominated reflector of fiction, we are never allowed to access the intimate minds of any of the other characters (because David wouldn't be able to access them), thus we never read Melanie's report of the abuse and we only see Lucy once the attackers have left, in a dressing gown with wet hair — leaving only suggestive implications about what might have happened.

This stifling of certain aspects of the narrative seems to get to the crux of *Disgrace* in terms of guilt and conscience, or indeed the denial of these two things. Guilt and remorse do not feature as themes in this novel and their absence, in the context of events, is noticeable.

This idea of powering on without any shackles of culpability is reflected in Coetzee's manipulation of the temporal plane of perspective, something which specifically looks at 'the way relationships of time are signalled in narrative' (Simpson, 2004, p. 29) in the sense that it is written entirely in the present tense. Over the years, the present tense has been used very sparingly in fiction, perhaps for speech, universal aphorisms or 'real-time' opening sentences — 'I'm writing this down so you can understand what happened' — before the reader is 'ushered into the narrative proper' (Harvey, 2006, p. 73) and the familiar comfort of the past tense. No such 'ushering' occurs in *Disgrace*, however, as the reader is held in the 'exploded reality' (Barthes, 1967, p. 36) of the present instant for the duration of the novel. In a temporal sense, this removes the 'safety net' that automatically comes with a retrospective narrative, as the events are constantly unfolding — rather than having already unfolded — meaning the narrator's omniscience is compromised, as they are stripped of the advantage of hindsight. Moreover, this immediacy works effectively in thwarting the judgement of the reader, for it robs them of the distance that is needed to form a balanced opinion about a past event; indeed there aren't any past events: as soon as the rape has happened we are already in David's car driving away and then in the next sentence it is the next day and we're standing in a Literature class — and so the narrative charges relentlessly forward with no time to stop and reflect upon itself. John Harvey, when writing about choice of tense in narrative, sees it as directly interlinked with a Christian sense of conscience (or perhaps on a secular level just morality in general): the reporting and then reading of past events is a way of coming to terms with their resonance and accepting responsibility for them. With this in mind, then, Coetzee's construction of narrative across the temporal plane, in terms of holding it entirely in the present, could be seen as an attempt to ignore conscience, avoid responsibility and deny Lurie the guilt that should come with raping a young student. With this self-reflective feature removed from the narrative, then, it becomes somewhat clearer as to why the reader struggles to condemn David as the story is going on: the urgency of the temporal perspective just doesn't allow them time.

The final plane identified in the Fowler-Uspensky model, and perhaps the most difficult to pin down, is that of ideological perspective: ‘the way a text mediates a certain set of beliefs’ (Simpson, 2004, p. 78). For some stylisticians, this plane is too broad to offer any productive analysis of point of view; indeed Paul Simpson identifies it as something of a ‘bucket category’ (2004, p. 78) and the Fowler-Uspensky model has received some criticism on these grounds. However, I might argue that for this exact quality of being ‘broad’ the ideological plane is perhaps the most important of all, in that it brings together the other three planes under an overarching umbrella that attempts to establish the point of view of the work as a whole. Undeniably this can be a messy process, particularly so in this case, as Coetzee so thoroughly blurs the source of transmission: is it him as author, is it the external narrator, or is it David Lurie — who does the ideology belong to? Before attempting to answer that question, it is important to identify what that ideology is and here is where the spatial, psychological and temporal plane are pulled together in terms of conscience and condemnation, for the belief system established by the construction of these perspectives seems to be one of ambivalence towards violence, in particular rape. As an ideology then, this is partially highlighted by Coetzee’s use of a paratactic narrative style where sentences tend to come one after the other as self-contained entities without any cause and effect pattern: ‘He unlocks the security gate, unlocks the door, ushers the girl in. He switches on the lights, takes her back. There are raindrops on her hair’ (Coetzee, 2000, p. 28). With the lack of an effect-pattern creating a tone of numbness, void of any emotional evaluation, something which translates through to the wider thematic scope of the work. This principle of detachment is further emphasised by the absolute absence of the word ‘sex’ from any passages relating to that act. When David abuses Melanie [see Appendix 2], Coetzee purposely uses abstract references such as ‘everything done to her’ (Coetzee, 2000, p. 25) to refer to what is going on, and the indirect pronoun ‘it’ — ‘after it was over’ (Coetzee, 2000, p. 25) — rather than labelling the act as a proper noun: ‘intercourse’, or indeed ‘rape’. In this way, he allows David to avoid taking full responsibility for what he has done and exacerbates the dislocation between a sympathetic character and an evil act, something furthered by the fact that he refers to David as ‘the intruder’ during this exchange [See Appendix 2, line 3]. The use of the concrete noun ‘intruder’, rather than his name, here widens the divide and actually works towards creating two Davids: one who thinks and one who acts, one we know intimately and one we don’t even recognise. This intentional distancing and confusion makes it very difficult for the reader to form a thorough judgement of David and his actions and through this, Coetzee transmits an ideology that says people aren’t always held accountable for the things they do.

In direct relation this concept we can turn to Fowler, who states that ‘a novel gives an interpretation of the world it represents’ (Fowler, 1996, p. 130), and in *Disgrace* Coetzee arguably presents post-apartheid South Africa as a world where white people are not ready to take responsibility and address their guilt. However, he also implies that they will be punished for their actions — for David Lurie does pay eventually, not in remorse, but in shame, as he ends up living a lonely, jobless old man in a ransacked hovel with no electricity and only a half-finished opera for company. So although Coetzee allows him to escape condemnation as the novel moves along, in the end he is still damned. And for the reader, the guilt they feel for failing to condemn Lurie comes only after they have closed the novel, although by then it is too late — we couldn’t condemn him in his own world, as a living, breathing predator, so it is futile to convict him now, as a mere character in the pages of a book.

And so Coetzee manipulates the narrative perspective to compromise the moral position of the reader and so reveal us to ourselves, in that despite the wickedness of David’s

actions we never challenge him, and so perhaps we are just as wicked as he is, and therefore perhaps some of that final punishment should be ours.

The way Coetzee makes this point is really quite expert, as he does it not through patronising didactic content, but rather a subtle exploitation of narrative point of view, something which resonates far more powerfully with the reader and, as stated at the beginning of this essay, makes this novel far more poignantly disturbing. A stylistic analysis has successfully revealed this exploitation and to this end the Fowler-Uspensky model has been hugely valuable in pinning down what would otherwise be an abstract feeling or concept. However, Uspensky himself said of the model that 'the...division into planes is characterised by a certain arbitrariness...and although these planes appear to be fundamental in our approach, the possibility of discovering some new plane which is beyond our schema is in no way excluded' (Uspensky, 1975, p. 7), showing how important it is not to take this particular analysis as exhaustive and to bear in mind that other linguistic frameworks — potentially M. A. K. Halliday's Transitivity Model to study presentations of rape in relation to agency, or Leech & Short's work on speech and thought representation to track the psychological perspective of Lurie more intensely — could certainly offer an equally valuable interpretation of this rich and complex piece of work.

**Bibliography***Primary Texts*

Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace*. London: Vintage.

Fowler, R. (1977). *Linguistics and the Novel*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Uspensky, B. (1973). *A Poetics of Composition: The structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*. California: California University Press.

*Secondary Material*

Barthes, R. (1967). *Writing Degree Zero*. Published: Jonathan Cape.

Carter, R., and Stockwell, P. (2008). *The Language and Literature Reader*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 19-28.

Graham, L. V. (2003). 'Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J M Coetzee's "Disgrace"', in *Journal of South African Studies*, 29.2. Oxford: Carfax Publishing.

Harvey, J. (2006). *Fiction in the Present Tense*. London: Routledge.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1967). *Journal of Linguistics: Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English: Part I*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Leech, G., and Short, M. (1981). *Style in Fiction*. London: Longman.

Simpson, P. (2003). *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge

Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.



### Appendix I

J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*. London: Vintage, pp. 11-16

He is returning home one Friday evening, taking the long route through the old college garden, when he notices one of his students on the path ahead of him. Her name is Melanie Isaacs, from his Romanticism course. Not the best student but not the worst either: clever enough, but unengaged.

She is dawdling; but he soon catches up with her. 'Hello' he says.

She smiles back, bobbing her head, her smile sly rather than shy. She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes. Her outfits are always striking. Today she wears a maroon miniskirt with a mustard coloured sweater and black tights; the gold baubles on her belt match the gold balls of her earrings.

He is mildly smitten with her. It is no great matter: barely a term passes when he does not fall for one or other of his charges. Cape Town: a city of prodigal beauty, of beauties.

Does she know he had an eye on her? Probably. Women are sensitive to it, to the weight of the desiring gaze.

It has been raining; from the pathside runnels comes the soft rush of water.

'My favourite season, my favourite time of day' he remarks. 'Do you live around here?'

'Across the line. I share a flat.'

'Is Cape Town your home?'

'No, I grew up in George.'

'I live just nearby. Can I invite you in for a drink?'

A pause, cautious. 'OK. But I have to be back by seven-thirty.'

From the gardens they pass into the quiet residential pocket where he has lived for the past twelve years, first with Rosalind, then, after the divorce, alone.

He unlocks the security gate, unlocks the door, ushers the girl in. He switches on lights, takes her bag.

There are raindrops on her hair. He stares, frankly ravished. She lowers her eyes, offering the same evasive and perhaps even coquettish little smile as before.

[...] 'Are you enjoying the course?' he asks.

'I liked Blake. I liked the Wonderhorn stuff.'

'Wonderhorn.'

'I'm not so crazy about Wordsworth.'

'You shouldn't be saying that to me. Wordsworth has been one of my masters.'

It is true. For as long as he can remember, the harmonies of *The Prelude* have echoed within him.

'Maybe by the end of the course I'll appreciate him more. Maybe he'll grow on me.'

'Maybe. But in my experience poetry speaks to you either at first sight or not at all. A flash of revelation and a flash of response. Like lightning. Like falling in love.'

Like falling in love. Do the young still fall in love, or is that mechanism obsolete by now, unnecessary, quaint, like steam locomotion? He is out of touch, out of date. Falling in love could have fallen out of fashion and come back again a dozen times, for all he knows.

'Do you write poetry yourself?' he asks.

'I did when I was at school. I wasn't very good. I haven't got the time now.'

'And passions? Do you have any literary passions?'

She frowns at the strange word. 'We did Adrienne Rich and Toni Morrison in my second year. And Alice Walker. I got pretty involved. But I wouldn't call it passion exactly.'

So: not a creature of passion. In the most roundabout of ways, is she warning him off?

[...] 'Don't go yet.' He takes her by the hand and leads her to the sofa. 'I have something to show you. Do you like dance? Not dancing: dance.' He slips a cassette into the video machine. It is a film he first saw a quarter of a century ago but is still captivated by. He wills the girl to be captivated too. But he senses she is not.

[...] 'You're very lovely,' he says. 'I'm going to invite you to do something reckless.' He touches her again. 'Stay. Spend the night with me.'

Across the rim of the cup she regards him steadily. 'Why?'

'Because you ought to.'

'Why ought I to?'

'Why? Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it.'

'And what if I already share it?' In her voice there is a hint of breathlessness. Exciting, always, to be courted: exciting, pleasurable.

'Then you should share it more widely.'

Smooth words, as old as seduction itself. Yet at this moment he believes in them. She does not own herself. Beauty does not own itself.

[END]

## Appendix II

J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*. London: Vintage, pp. 24-25

At four o' clock the next afternoon he is at her flat. She opens the door wearing a crumpled T-shirt, cycling shorts, slippers in the shape of comic-book gophers which he finds silly, tasteless.

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. 'No, not now!' she says, struggling. 'My cousin will be back!'

But nothing will stop him. He carries her to the bedroom, brushes off the absurd slippers, kisses her feet, astonished by the feeling she evokes. Something to do with the apparition on the stage: the wig, the wiggling bottom, the crude talk. Strange love! Yet from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves, no doubt about that.

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she lies under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him.

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away.

'Pauline will be back any minute,' she says when it is over. 'Please. You must go'.

He obeys, but then, when he reaches his car, is overtaken with such dejection, such dullness, that he sits slumped at the wheel unable to move. [END]

**Appendix III**

J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*. London: Vintage, pp. 94-97

He is in the lavatory, the lavatory of Lucy's house. Dizzily he gets to his feet. The door is locked, the key is gone.

He sits down on the toilet seat and tries to recover. The house is still; the dogs are barking, but more in duty, it seems, than in frenzy.

'Lucy!' he croaks, and then, louder: 'Lucy!'

He tries to kick at the door, but he is not himself, and the space too cramped anyway, the door too old and solid.

So it has come, the day of testing. Without warning, without fanfare, it is here, and he is in the middle of it. In his chest his heart hammers so hard that it too, in its dumb way, must know. How will they stand up to the testing, he and his heart? His child is in the hands of strangers. In a minute, in an hour, it will be too late; whatever is happening to her will be set in stone, will belong to the past. But now it is not too late. Now he must do something.

Though he strains to hear, he can make out no sound from the house. Yet if his child were calling, however mutely, surely he would hear!

He batters the door. 'Lucy!' he shouts. 'Lucy! Speak to me!'

The door opens, knocking him off balance. Before him stands the second man, the shorter one, holding an empty one-litre bottle by the neck. 'The keys' says the man.

'No.'

The man gives him a push. He stumbles back, sits down heavily. The man raises the bottle. His face is placid, without trace of anger. It is merely a job he is doing: getting someone to hand over an article. If it entails hitting him with a bottle, he will hit him, hit him as many times as is necessary, if necessary break the bottle too.

'Take them,' he says. 'Take everything. Just leave my daughter alone.'

Without a word the man takes the keys, locks him in again.

[...] From behind the house comes the sound of voices. The barking of the dogs grows louder again, more excited. A car door slams. He recognises the sound: his car.

[...] Footfalls along the passage, and the door to the toilet swings open again. The second man stands before him; behind him he glimpses the boy in the flowered shirt, eating from a tub of ice cream. He tries to shoulder his way out, gets past the man, then falls heavily. Some kind of trip: they must practice it in soccer.

As he lies sprawled he is splashed head to foot with liquid. His eyes burn, he tries to wipe them. He recognises the smell: methylated spirits. Struggling to get up, he is pushed back into the lavatory. The scrape of a match and at once he is bathed in a cool blue flame.

So he was wrong! He and his daughter are not being let off lightly after all! He can burn, he can die; and if he can die, then so can Lucy, above all Lucy!

[...] A vision comes to him of Lucy struggling with the two in the blue overalls, struggling against them. He writhes trying to blank it out.

He hears his car start, and the crunch of tyres on gravel. Is it over? Are they, unbelievably, going? 'Lucy!' he shouts, over and over, till he can hear an edge of craziness in his voice.

At last, blessedly, the key turns in the lock. By the time he has the door open, Lucy has turned her back on him. She is wearing a bathrobe, her feet are bare, her hair wet.

[END]