



J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace (Continuum Contemporaries)

By Andrew van der Vlies

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One of the most widely read novels by a South African-born writer or 'about' South Africa, Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee's (second) Booker Prize-winning novel, *Disgrace* (1999), is a firm favourite with reading groups and a fixture on many university-level courses on postcolonial or international literatures in English. Sometimes regarded as offering a bleak picture of post-apartheid South Africa, *Disgrace* has also been read as an ultimately hopeful novel about renunciation and redemption. **This introduction offers an indispensable guide to the historical contexts and critical ideas necessary for an informed and rewarding engagement with one of the most significant novels of the last quarter century. Offering an overview of the author's career, informed discussion of the novel's setting and references, this guide considers such issues as the representation of race, gender, the land, and animals, and its concern with language, power, music, confession, and allegory. It provides a discussion of the novel's critical and popular reception, a comprehensive guide to further reading, and questions for discussion.**

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- Sales Rank: #2080185 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2010-04-29
- Released on: 2010-04-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.60" h x .40" w x 5.42" l, .35 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 122 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Lively, succinct, and readable, Andrew van der Vlies's handbook of key themes, contexts, and intertexts is the best reader's guide to J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* on the market. Attentive to the politics of literary form and to the controversies of the novel's reception, Van der Vlies's companion will stimulate discussions in the classroom and beyond for some time to come." - Mark Sanders (New York University), author of *Ambiguities of Witnessing: Law and Literature in the Time of a Truth Commission*

"When it was first published in 1999 *Disgrace* opened up a uniquely challenging space in our times, the meaning of which we are still trying to grasp. Andrew van der Vlies's wonderful book is an essential guide for all new and not-so-new readers eager to find their own way through this vitally important, absorbingly labyrinthine fiction and the unfolding story of its effects."

- Peter D. McDonald, (Oxford University), author of *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences* (2009)

'His detailed account of central themes, alongside a narrative of *Disgrace*'s historical context and reception, will bolster the thinking of any casual reader.'

(*Times Literary Supplement*)

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(Sanford Lakoff)

About the Author

Andrew van der Vlies was born in South Africa and educated both there and at the University of Oxford, UK. He is author of *South African Textual Cultures* (2007) and associate editor of the *Oxford Companion to the Book* (2010). He teaches in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London, UK.

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