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# Animals and Animal Metaphors in J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace

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**Animals and Animal Metaphors  
in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace***

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Mémoire de Master 2

Sous la direction de Madame Sandra Saayman,  
Maîtresse de Conférences HDR en littérature sud-africaine

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*“I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect. I am standing here as a Black lesbian poet, and the meaning of all that waits upon the fact that I am still alive, and might not have been” Audre Lorde.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

D            *Disgrace*

LA          *The Lives of Animals*

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## INTRODUCTION

Classified amongst the 100 most influential books by the BBC in 2019, J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* caused a stir in South Africa at its release, eight years after the end of apartheid.

Four years after the publication of his novel in which the South African writer observes social and racial tensions in all their components, Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. The press release of The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2003 stated that "at the decisive moment Coetzee's characters stand behind themselves, motionless, incapable of taking part in their own actions...It is in exploring weakness and defeat that Coetzee captures the divine spark in man." To do so, the author uses animals, in most cases dogs, as a metaphorical device to underline the actions or events the characters are going through.

The novel is set in 1997, in Coetzee's native country, South Africa, a country which had been ruled by a system of racial and legal segregation and discrimination against "non-white" people. It was called "apartheid", which means "separateness" or "the state of being apart" in Afrikaans. It was implemented from 1948 to 1991 and during those years, people were categorized into four racial groups<sup>1</sup>: The Whites, the Blacks, the Coloured, and the Indians. Several apartheid laws were implemented. For instance, black people, who were not even considered as legal citizens, lived in different residential areas and to go out from their areas or their "homelands", black people needed to carry a "passbook" to justify their movements and they had to obey strict curfews. The facilities were separated for white's and for non-white's use and interracial marriages were banned. Schools were also separated. Apartheid was also economically motivated as the white minority in power needed the oppressed to work in the mines. Needless to say, there was resistance to these oppressive laws. Protests were often led, like the Soweto riots in 1976, which caused the death of many protestors.

Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected president in 1994, which symbolised the official end of white minority rule.

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<sup>1</sup> The apartheid government identified four "racial" groups, namely the "Whites", "Blacks", "Coloureds", "Indians". This apartheid terminology is used throughout the dissertation, without quotation marks. References to "race" or "racial" groups should be read as references to socio-political groups constructed under apartheid.

Coetzee's novel is more than a simple illustration of contemporary South Africa or the transformation it underwent after the end of apartheid.

There are many themes united within this 220-page novel. The author deals with the question of violence, sexuality, family, masculinity, femininity, suffering and also the inhumane treatment of animals by human beings. Through these themes, what is described in the novel is the way people in South Africa, from different racial groups, deal with changes in the racial hierarchy which has been reversed now that apartheid is no longer the regime implemented.

*Disgrace* is centred on its main white protagonist, David Lurie, a divorced fifty-two-year-old Professor of Communication at the Cape Technical University. It is ironic to see how Lurie's own personal life is devoid of any kind of passion even though he teaches romantic poetry. He also has difficulty in communicating with people who are close to him, like his daughter for example.

As an admirer of Lord Byron, David Lurie thinks he has "solved the problem of sex rather well" (D 1) for his age. At the beginning of the novel, David goes to see a sex worker called Soraya to fulfil his sexual desires, but these weekly appointments stop when he tries to enter her private life. Therefore, driven by his image of a seducer, he pursues one of his students, named Melanie Isaacs. He has sexual intercourse with her, even though he knows that for her it remains "undesirable to the core" (D 25). But this time he is not able to ignore his desire as he could have done in the past. This affair soon becomes the main reason for his disgrace and ends his career as a professor when it becomes public and charges of sexual harassment are filed against him. The main reason behind it is his unwillingness to show repentance when asked whether he has regrets or not about having an affair with one of his students. He even states that the experience was "enriching" (D 57) before the hearing committee. He is excluded from Cape Town, despised on by many people. His professional fall from grace leads him to seek refuge in his daughter's countryside haven in Salem in her farm, far away from the Cape Town (see map in Annexe 1). It can be noticed that David does not share his daughter's point of view on the notions of sexuality and gender. While he is a strong heterosexual man, she is a lesbian and independent woman.

David meets Petrus at the farm. Petrus is a black neighbour of Lucy; he is the "gardener" (D 64) and refers to himself as the "dog-man" (D 64), even if he is already Lucy's "co proprietor", "since March" (D 62). He is now climbing the rungs

of the social ladder since the apartheid regime is over. Taking advantage of the situation, he will succeed in obtaining a substantial amount of land and will not be considered as the “dog-man” anymore.

During his stay with his daughter, she is attacked and raped by three black Africans at her home. David is locked up in the bathroom, his head set on fire and the dogs in Lucy’s kennel are killed. However, Lucy refuses to leave Salem and doesn’t tell the police about the rape. She even accepts to keep the baby after she gets pregnant as a consequence of the rape. Therefore, the atmosphere between the father and the daughter becomes increasingly tense as David tries to coax her into reporting the rape to the police, which Lucy refuses to do.

At the animal shelter where he starts helping out, David also starts an affair with Bev Shaw, the woman who runs the Animal Clinic on a voluntary basis. This woman is very different from him. She belongs to the country, contrary to Lurie who is more a man of the city. He starts working at the animal clinic more often.

However, as he cannot get on well with his daughter, because she refuses to report the rape to the police, he prefers to go back to Cape Town. On his way back, Lurie goes and apologizes to Mr. Isaacs, Melanie’s father. He however returns to Salem after finding that his home at Cape Town has been vandalized and that he has been replaced at the university. There is nothing keeping him from leaving Cape Town, where he is known as the professor who abused one of his students. The novel ends with Lurie, now back in Salem, as he watches over his daughter while she is working stooped over in the fields. He sees her as a peasant; he understands that all the centuries of white rule in the country belong to the past and that this is now a new period, that of a post-apartheid South Africa.

From sexuality, human desires to racism and hatred for white people, shame, remorse, change, love i.e., the love the protagonist might feel for his daughter for example, Coetzee explores complex themes and depicts a gloomy image of South Africa after the end of the apartheid regime. He also explores human relations. He shows, for example, how one human abusive relation between David and his student could make him fall from grace.

When reading the novel for the first time, several questions may come to the reader’s mind and be confusing. Firstly, one could question the title of the novel. What significance does the title *Disgrace* bear? How do the different characters experience disgrace and can they go out from it? Concerning Melanie’s and David’s

relationship, one could ask oneself about the nature of their encounters: was it consensual? Why does Lurie give up his job without trying to defend himself? Why does he give up the dog at the end of the novel? Why does Lucy refuse to report the rape to the police and why doesn't she flee to Holland after the attack, as suggested by her father? Lucy thinks she has to accept the rape as a tax, but does anyone "deserve" that sort of treatment? What is the relationship between the two rapes? Does Coetzee's story represent the reality of South African society after apartheid? These questions are essential since they deal with the main themes of *Disgrace*.

The notion of animality is present throughout the novel, either through metaphorical devices or through the use of real, physical animals. They are at the centre of the novel.

When David Lurie goes to the farm, he comes into contact with animals for the first time, especially dogs, either at Lucy's kennel or at Bev's refuge. After Lucy's rape, her father's relation to dogs changes. As a result, we may wonder how the dogs contribute to Lurie's modification of character.

One of the essential questions would be: to what extent do animals, or Lurie's relationship with animals, reflect his mind?

Another crucial question related to animals is: how are the use of animals and animal imagery used in order to tackle and understand the novel's main themes?

The first part of this study will be dedicated to the animal metaphors in *Disgrace*. In his book entitled *Why Look at Animals?*, John Berger writes: "with their parallel lives, animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species" (4). Nevertheless, animals, and especially dogs, do not play only the roles of companions in *Disgrace*. Therefore, after explaining the importance of animals in Coetzee's works such as in *Age of Iron*, in *Boyhood* and in *The Lives of Animals*, the animal metaphors used in the novel under study and their meaning will be analysed, using Leech's definition of a metaphor. Gillian Gane's work will enable us to analyse animal metaphors applied to women in *Disgrace*. The end of this part will deal with the structural metaphor of the dog. Specific attention will be given to the reasons why David Lurie gives up the dog, or one could say "his" dog, at the end of the novel. Some clues will be found thanks to Louise Tremaine's and Tom Herron's works. Lurie's transformation in relation to animals will also be analysed in this part.

In a second part, I shall continue with having a look at the notion of silence, present in the whole of the novel. This notion is linked to the theme of animals as remaining silent leads to dehumanisation. Gillian Gane's work will be used to give some explanations for the silence in the novel. Then, given Narayan Prasad Chudal's work, the characters' silences will be interpreted as being the result of trauma. Silence can also be a choice, as pointed out by Catherine Coquio and Elizabeth Wilkinson.

Finally, our attention will be shifted to the theme of violence, recurrent in the novel. Violence is visible through some behaviour. It can be the result of different types of discrimination. This is the concept of "intersectionality", explained by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Gillian Gane's work helps us study this concept in the context of the novel. The notion of "agency", defined by Judith Butler, is also significant in this part as women's agency is attacked because of the intersectional discrimination and violence. Then, one must not forget that *Disgrace* is mainly the story of Melanie's and Lucy's rapes, which will be analysed as one of the worse forms of physical violence that can be perpetrated on an individual. Finally, the way men look at women, or "the male gaze", concept coined by Laura Mulvey, will be explained as being another type a violence, alongside with the concept of the "eye rape". John Berger's book entitled *Ways of Seeing* will enable us to understand the concept of the male gaze.

What is at stake in this dissertation is the way the animal metaphors and animal imagery help us read the difficult part of the novel, like the characters' disgrace, women's silence and violence perpetrated on them. As a matter of fact, animal imagery can be a "lens" through which the characters' changes, personalities, states of mind, helplessness or treatment by other characters can be revealed.

*Disgrace* is a shocking novel. Since its publication, it has been seen as a controversial work. The novel's complexity lies in the several important topics, and sometimes unspoken topics, explored by the author. It is just because of this complexity and richness of information that I believe this work deserves more attention. I have decided to focus on shocking parts of the novel as the notion of rape and silence, the concepts of the "male gaze" and "intersectionality" are contemporary issues.

Let us not forget the fact that the shocking aspect of the novel, emphasized by the way events are told, is mostly due to the internal focalisation used in the whole

novel. As narration appears to be significant to understand the novel's main themes, it will be analysed in the first part and in the third part in order to explain the concept of the male gaze.

## 1- ANIMAL METAPHORS

This part will be dedicated to the animal metaphors and then the use of animals in Coetzee's novel entitled *Disgrace*.

However, it is important to recall, in a first sub-part, the importance of animals in Coetzee's works before starting to focalise on animal metaphors (1.2) and the dog metaphor (1.3) in *Disgrace*.

### 1.1 - IMPORTANCE OF ANIMALS IN COETZEE'S WORKS

As a prize-winning South African writer, J.M. Coetzee has written many novels, amongst which some focus more on animals than others. Therefore, it is interesting to study his use of animals and the effect it has on the reader.

To structure this sub-part, I will focus my thinking on four novels written by Coetzee: firstly, on *Boyhood*, then *The Age of Iron*, *Disgrace* and finally on *The Lives of Animals*. Indeed, different use of animals can be noticed in these four novels.

In *Boyhood*, published in 1997, one can learn that Coetzee has a specific relationship and affection towards animals. Indeed, when he used to get closer to bees, he "would like the bees to recognize that he, when he visits, comes with clean hands, not to steal from them but to greet them, to pay his respect" (*Boyhood* 98). Later in *Boyhood*, there is a paragraph dedicated to the slaughtering of sheep and when Coetzee was young, he thought that they seem to accept their fate without rebelling or trying to escape, as if they were resigning and giving up. This can be linked to the character of David Lurie in *Disgrace*, who does not really see any reasons why the sheep must be slaughtered for Petrus's party.

In *The Age of Iron*, a novel also written by J. M. Coetzee and published in 1990, the use of animals is remarkable. In this novel, the author uses animals in different ways. At first, it seems that animals do not have important roles in the novel. Indeed, there are only cats and dogs (Mrs. Curren's cats and Vercueil's dog). They clearly refer to physical animals.

Nevertheless, characters start to have more animal traits and they are described in words usually used to describe animals. Indeed, Vercueil is described as having "cariou fangs" (*Age of Iron* 3).

On top of that, the pet's personality seems to coincide with the owner's personality. For instance, at some point in the novel, Mrs Curen does not want to eat, she has no appetite because of her cancer (which will be interestingly described as a crab), and it happens that her cat has no appetite as either. In her Master thesis entitled "The Importance of Animals in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*", Goossens Froukje Nicole described the pet as being "allegory of their owners" (9) in *Age of Iron*.

So, Coetzee uses animals in *Age of Iron*, as literal animals, real living beings who are their owner's companions. They are also present to draw a comparison between their characteristics with their owner's behaviour or state.

In *Disgrace*, the use of animals seems to be much more important, and mainly the use of the dog and metaphors related to dogs, which is a recurring and structuring theme in the novel. On the front page of the Vintage Collection, one can even see a dog (see annexe 2). However, dogs are not the only animals which are being referred to throughout the novel. It is necessary to point out that there are "two types" of animals in *Disgrace*: literal and figurative animals. In others words, there are references to real dogs but also dogs in a figurative way as used in the metaphors.

In her work entitled "Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender Implications in *Disgrace*", Elleke Boehmer thinks the novel is divided into two halves: the first part is dedicated to Lurie's life in Cape Town as a University professor while the second half deals with his time on his daughter's farm in the Eastern Cape. I agree with her insofar as from the moment Lurie goes to his daughter's farm, he starts growing awareness of new elements like animals' feelings. One can also make the distinction between the first and the second part of the novel because of the presence of animals in both parts. In the first one, many mentions of animals who are not real and present in real life are made; they are not physical animals.

They are referred to in metaphors by the University Professor to reveal how he sees people and mainly the women around him. It is a very romanticised way of seeing and describing people. Those metaphors are mostly what we could call "predator/prey metaphors". A further analysis of those metaphors will be explained later in our study.

David also often identifies with dogs and when taking a closer look at it, one can say that every character of the story will be at least one time compared to a dog. Indeed,

Petrus, a black man helping Lucy at her farm, is at first known as the “dog-man” (“I am the gardener and the dog-man” (D 64)). This animal defines him and his position. David Lurie will also take the place of the dog-man “Well, now he has become a dog-man: a dog undertaker, a dog psychopomp, a harijan” (D 154). The term “dog-man” is actually degrading and illustrates the state of disgrace these two characters found themselves in and how they are seen at some point in the narrative. Towards the end of the novel, Lucy will also be compared to a dog, which has nothing left. This will be analysed later in the first part of our dissertation.

In the second part of the novel, when David arrives at the farm, there are mentions of real and physical animals like geese, sheep, ducks, and dogs as Lucy runs a dog’s shelter. He will start to be more and more aware of his affection towards animals. Indeed, Petrus’s two sheep for his party are likely to be slaughtered and this impacts David Lurie. The sheep are tethered (D 123) without food and water. David thinks it is not a good way to treat them and recommend that they could “tie them where they can graze” (D 123). As Petrus will not do anything, David Lurie “unties them and tugs them over to the dam side, where there is abundant grass” (D 123). He feels an affection for these sheep he was not used to feeling before for animals, as a University Professor who was not close to animals:

A bond seems to have come into existence between himself and the two Persians, he does not know how. The bond is not one of affection. It is not even a bond with these two in particular, whom he could not pick out from a mob in a field. Nevertheless, suddenly and without reason, their lot has become important to him (D 126).

He starts to ask himself questions about animals’ life: “When did a sheep last die of old age? Sheep do not own themselves, do not own their own lives? They exist to be used [...]” (D 123).

David seems to be against cruelty for animals, above all when it is not necessary, like the treatment of the sheep in the novel.

It is worth pointing out that Coetzee is the patron of an animal rights organization in Australia called “voiceless”. As a vegetarian, he acknowledges that eating meat is not something natural. Indeed, in her book entitled *J.M. Coetzee: Countervoices* (2013), Carroll Clarkson points out, that in his essay entitled “*On the Slaughter of Animals*”, J.M. Coetzee remarks that “we are so used to seeing cooking programmes on television, that the process of transforming raw food into cooked

“looks perfectly normal”; we have become habituated to this daily practice to the extent that it appears natural.” (Clarkson 110).

According to Carroll Clarkson, a recurrent theme in Coetzee’s fiction is “the question of voice and voicelessness within an ethical context of human relations to animals: on what basis can one relate to animals other than human, when they are voiceless in human terms?” (Clarkson 106). In other words, Coetzee reflects on animals and the fact that they cannot speak for themselves, like David Lurie in *Disgrace* who reflects on the topic and concludes that the sheep, or we can guess all the animals, “do not own their own lives” (D 123). I believe that a parallel can be drawn between animals and women in the novel, who do not own their lives too. Firstly, their being silenced, as we will study later, the gaze imposed on them by men, and the fact that they should satisfy men make them very close to animals in the novel. The metaphors emphasize these animal-like characteristics.

As David gets closer to animals in the second part of the novel, he also starts to think about animals having a soul or not: “The Church fathers had a long debate about them, and decided they don’t have proper souls,” he observes. “Their souls are tied to their bodies and die with them (D 78).

Lucy replies, stating that human beings may not have a soul ‘That’s not true, you are a soul. We are all souls. We are souls before we are born’” (D 79).

Nevertheless, his conviction will start to change as the story goes on. For instance, at the dog refuge where he works with Bev Shaw, he thinks about dogs in human terms: “They are very egalitarian, aren’t they” (D 85) and even believes that one dog has an “intelligent look” (D 85) which is a human characteristic in general. However, he immediately thinks that it is nonsense and believes that “it is probably nothing of the kind” (D 85). It reveals that his thought is changing but that he might be afraid of changing too much. However, towards the end of the novel, one can notice that at the refuge he gets really close to a three-legged dog. This dog listens to him playing the banjo and a specific link is created between them. He even thinks that putting a dog in his story would be a good idea: “Would he dare to do that: bring a dog into the piece, allow it to loose its own lament to the heavens” (D 215). It could mean that he now believes that animals can have things to say and their right to express themselves as beings which have souls. One can even notice that if he thinks about the idea of putting a dog on stage, it means that animals and human beings do not have many differences and yet he used to think that human beings have souls but

was not sure about animals. However, he still is a bit doubtful about it as he does not give the dog a name like Bev Shaw who refers to him as “Driepoot” (D 215).

All in all, in *Disgrace*, Coetzee uses animals in a different way than he does in *Age of Iron*. In *Disgrace*, animal metaphors are used in the first part to describe the protagonist’s way of seeing himself and his relationships with women.

Animals also help him change his mind in a pastoral scene, which is his daughter’s farm. Finally, animals even make the protagonist wonder about their lot, about the fact that they may have a soul like humans or not. Therefore, animals play a major role in this novel as it makes David Lurie reflect about topics he would not have considered back in Cape Town.

Finally, the use of animals by Coetzee in *The Lives of Animals* (1999) reflects the debate topics Coetzee might be interested in. It is mostly a lecture about the animals, animal rights and animal relationships. The narrator is a novelist called Elizabeth Costello who is expected to deliver a speech on her subject which is literary criticism or literature. Nevertheless, she:

surprises her hosts by not delivering lectures on literature or literary criticism [...]. Rather, she takes the opportunity to discuss in detail what she views as a “crime of stupefying proportions” [i.e., the inhumane treatment of animals] that her academic fellow human beings routinely and complacently commit: the abuse of animals (Amy Gutmann in LA 3).

Elizabeth Costello compares the slaughter of animals with the holocaust:

Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them (LA 21).

It recalls Coetzee’s thought that eating meat is not something natural. By depicting Elizabeth Costello’s compassion for animals and thus her alienation from humans, one can notice once again the writer’s interest in animal life. She is a vegetarian, like Coetzee himself. As Elizabeth Costello’s way of thinking and Coetzee’s are similar, one could argue that he makes her speak for him. It is also worth noticing that according to what Coetzee said in an opening interview of *Doubling the Point*: “in a larger sense all writing is autobiography: everything that you write, including criticism and fiction, writes you as you write it” and “all writing is autobiography” (Clarkson 21). In other words, he puts his idea and his thoughts in his

novels and each novel might tell a part of his story.

In conclusion, throughout these four novels, one can notice Coetzee's growing awareness for animals and animal rights.

Used as either stylistic devices (metaphors) or important themes of reflection, it reveals the power of animals and the relationship they can have with humans, who might not be very different from them. Indeed, *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals* offer the opportunity to think that animals may have souls.

## 1.2 - ANIMAL METAPHORS AS REVELATORS OF POWER RELATIONS IN *DISGRACE*

M.H. Abram, an American literary critic and university professor, defines a metaphor in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1957) as being “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or idea that is used in the place of another to suggest a comparison between the two” (35). It is an “implied” (37) comparison. In other words, a metaphor implies two things, two objects, which share a common point or common points. However, this common point is usually not obvious. That is why M.H. Abram talks about “an implied comparison” to define a metaphor.

According to the *Dictionary of Literary Devices, Definition and Examples of Literary Terms*, a metaphor is:

A figure of speech that makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics. In other words, a resemblance of two contradictory or different objects is made based on a single or some common characteristics (web).

This definition is quite similar to the one of M.H. Abrams. It insists on the fact that in a metaphor, the “two things” that are being related do not have, at first sight, any related characteristics. The two objects are even “contradictory” and there should not be obvious reasons for someone to draw a comparison between the first object and the second one or even to make a relation between the two objects.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee compares animals and human beings and the way they behave. If one considers that in a metaphor, there is not necessarily a direct link between the two things or beings which are being described, one could infer that the metaphors made in the novel *Disgrace* may hide some deeper meanings, as we will see in this study.

According to Geoffrey Neil Leech in *A Linguistic Guide of English Poetry*, metaphors are made of three main parts: the “tenor”, which is “the literal part of expression”, the “vehicle”, which is “the figurative part of the expression” and finally the “ground”, which is “the likeness perceived between tenor and vehicle” (Leech 151). The ground stands for the characteristics that associate the tenor and the vehicle, and it may be the dryness or the lack or romanticism. Therefore, “metaphor,

in these terms, may be seen as a pretence – making believe that tenor and vehicle are identical” (Leech 151).

He categorises the metaphors into three main categories: the “animalistic”, the “humanising” and the “concretive”.

For instance, when David Lurie compares his sexual intercourse with Soraya to the copulation of snakes, he and Soraya stands for the tenor while the copulation of snakes or the snakes are the vehicle.

In *Disgrace*, the protagonist uses metaphors and as stated by Tom Herron in his article entitled “The Dog Man: Becoming Animal in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”: “commonly he employs the language of predation [...]” (Herron 476). According to Herron, this comes in “apparent contradiction to his professed lack of interest in animals” as he is “in fact rather fond of describing himself, and more pointedly his relationships with women, in terms drawn from the animal kingdom” (Herron 476).

The first part of the novel, i.e., before David Lurie goes to Lucy’s farm after his dismissal from the university, is full of animal metaphors. David Lurie is the focaliser of the story. In opposition to the external focalisation, the internal focalisation is a vision from the inside. It is a subjective narrative as Gérard Genette affirms in *Nouveau Discours du Récit* (1983) :

En focalisation interne, le foyer coïncide avec un personnage, qui devient alors le « sujet » fictif de toutes les perceptions, y compris celles qui ne concernent lui-même comme objet : le récit peut alors nous dire tout ce que ce personnage perçoit et tout ce qu’il pense (Nouveau Discours du Récit 50).

In other words, events and thoughts are mediated through the point of view of the focaliser. One must not forget that, as a white and educated man, David Lurie stands for the white minority in power in South Africa at the time of the apartheid regime and yet Coetzee chooses to show us the world through David Lurie’s eyes.

Indeed, the readers only “see” what he sees and see Lucy or the other characters in the novel only through his judgment. As readers don’t get an exhaustive depiction of the story because of the restriction due to the internal focalisation, one can say that the narration is unreliable as readers never get to “see” the story, to perceive things through Lucy’s eyes, or Melanie’s or Petrus’s. Because of the internal focalisation used in this novel, there is a selection or restriction of narrative information. Indeed, it is as if the readers were reading the story through David’s eyes, through a pair of

glasses. Elements that readers get to “see” are selected.

One could even say that we are reading David Lurie’s experience at one particular moment in his life. For instance, the reader learns that he uses metaphors implying animals to describe his behaviour when being around women, and specifically when they are having sexual intercourse. These metaphors make us think of the relation between a predator and his prey.

According to Dörte Griesse in her essay entitled “*Dog-man or God-man? Animals Issues in J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace*”, analysing the animal metaphors applied to women by David Lurie is revelatory of “his devotion to Romanticism” (Griesse 5) and is “crucial for an understanding of Lurie’s interpretation of (sexual) politics” (Griesse 5).

Therefore, his behaviour towards people and nature surrounding him can be full of “arrogance and a sense of lasting, profound superiority which he acts out accordingly” (Griesse 5) and this can be seen in his relations towards other people.

The first animal metaphor David makes use of in the novel is when he compares having sex with the sex worker Soraya, whom he sees every week, to the snakes engaged in copulation. It means that he draws a comparison between his love making with Soraya with that of snakes which are therefore similar from his point of view: “Intercourse between Soraya and himself must be, he imagines, rather like the copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest” (D 3). Snakes usually evoke negative feelings and can seem scary for many people mainly because they can be dangerous, depending on the different species of snakes. The reader is led to think that their sexual intercourse is similar to the one of snakes. Indeed, even if they are “wrapped” together as one, like snakes who seems to be “mixing” during copulation, there is no real feeling of love between the two characters.

Later on, David Lurie pursues with another metaphor implying animals in which he categorises himself again in the role of a predator. For instance, after the end of his relationship with Soraya, one can notice the metaphor of the pursuit. Indeed, he pursues her by paying a detective to “track her down” (D 9), but she breaks off all contact and suggests that they should stop seeing each other and therefore he thinks: “But then, what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen’s nest, into the home of her cubs?” (D 10). He calls himself the predator. Interestingly, he qualifies Soraya as a predator as well. However, she remains a mother who wants

to protect her children from David, standing for her “dark” life, her life as a sex worker. Indeed, according to Andrew Van Der Vlies in his work entitled *J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace*, the fact that David follows her in town “seems to change the nature of their encounters: she calls them off, he tracks her down, and she reacts angrily, which leads David to sleep with another prostitute also called Soraya” (Van der Vlies 23).

Through these two metaphors, David appears like the predator, firstly as a snake and then through the second metaphor the reader is led to think that David is a danger for women, here for Soraya.

One must not forget about, “Dawn” (D 9), the new secretary of his department at the university with whom he has sexual intercourse which he qualifies as being “a failure” (D 9) as he finds that her “bucking and clawing [...] repels him” (D 9). In a book entitled *J.M. Coetzee’s Austerities*, Myrtle Hooper wrote a chapter entitled “*Scenes from a dry imagination: Disgrace and Embarrassment*”, in which she argues that David’s sentence about Dawn makes “the woman become horse-like, mare-like” (134).

Later on in the novel, David continues to systematically include metaphors in his thoughts when he is around women, and mostly around woman he has intercourse with and each time he is described as the predator, the one who leads. When being with Melanie, he describes the intercourse as follows:

“Not rape, not quite like that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go a slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit, when the jaws of the fox close on its neck” (D 25).

Melanie “perfectly matches Lurie’s predatory pattern: she is young, black, and strikingly beautiful” (Griesse 8). The fact that he finds Melanie and Soraya both attractive would be in a logic following apartheid’s trend. Marianne Devoken interestingly shows how important this point is in a context of gender relations in a segregationist society in her article entitled “Guest Column: Why Animals Now?”:

It is important to Lurie’s sexual fantasy of Melanie that he shift her name in his mind to “Melani: the dark one”. With both Soraya and Melanie, Lurie enacts the classic realization of the erotic object for white men in gender – and race – hierarchical cultures, and also the classic incestuous sexual-social structure of male-dominant cultures, in which older men seek and are able to obtain young women for sexual pleasure (850).

The above analysis underlines David's racist and patriarchal behaviour.

When looking at David's metaphors, one can see that Melanie has been chased by David Lurie, who represents the fox. She has failed now that he has his "jaws [...] close on its neck" (D 25). Melanie appears like a prey for David Lurie, as a rabbit would be a prey for a fox. Even if David knew that Melanie did not want to have sexual relations with him, he tried to catch her and once it is done, he could not let her go like a fox with his jaws on a rabbit until his death. Even if Melanie was not consenting, she could not do anything but wait until it is done, as if she were accepting her fate. Indeed, David Lurie acknowledges her passivity i.e., the way "she is passive throughout" (D 19) and understands how she turns away from him and is cold, but it does not stop him. He even finds "the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into blank oblivion" (D 19). Through these metaphors, one can deduce that David Lurie associates sexual desire with animality. Melanie appears like a lifeless animal, which is enduring its fate.

There is another metaphor in which David Lurie appears like a predator, like for example during his trial when he had been accused of immoral relationship with his student, Melanie. The committee does not express it explicitly but the reaction of the member of the committee is described from David's viewpoint in the following way: "what does she see, when she looks at him, that keeps her at such a pitch of anger? A shark among the helpless little fishes?" (D 53). Here again, David Lurie is compared to a predator when faced with the "helpless little fishes". The "helpless little fishes" stand for the students at the university who can be the victims of David Lurie. What makes him appear all the more dangerous for the students is the use of the two adjectives "helpless" and "little" which describe how they must feel defenceless when faced with a man who cannot control his impulses - like a predator.

Similarly, he thinks of Melanie as being a "poor little bird" (D 32). The use of the free indirect discourse by the author in italics enables the reader to know that by thinking of Melanie, David Lurie calls her "My little dove" (D 34). Melanie, just like the other eventual victims of David Lurie referred to as "helpless little fishes", seems to be the prey, when faced with an almost "fatherly" predator she cannot escape from. It looks as if he wanted to protect her as he refers to her as his "little dove" (D 34) or his "poor little bird" (D 32) and yet he gets to have sexual intercourse with her even if he knows it is unwanted, "undesired to the core" (D 25). As a result, it evokes a paedophile imagery. In other words, David Lurie seems to be aware that Melanie is

still a very young girl, almost a child like a “little dove” (D 34) but it looks as if he could not restrain his desire. Indeed, later on in the novel, by using the example of a dog which could not help getting excited as soon as he sees a female dog, the reader is led to think that for David Lurie, having desire as a man is something normal and it has to be fulfilled thanks to women who have the “duty” (D 16) to “share” their beauty.

In the passages with Melanie (and in the whole novel), the reader has to cope with the unreliability of the narrative, which is internally focalised. Melanie’s state of helplessness is emphasized because of the way David describes her, as a “marionette” (D 24).

Melanie’s father uses images of predatory animals to describe the situation when he talks to David. “If we can’t trust the university, who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers” (D 38). Vipers refers to danger. One usually dreads getting a venomous bite from those reptiles. Melanie’s father means that David Lurie is one of the vipers and that he can’t be trusted, all the more now because of what he has done to Melanie. Here again, David is described as a predator, contrary to Melanie who appears like the victim.

Nevertheless, David is not always described as the predator. Indeed, when leaving the committee hearing, he is surrounded by students. There is the presence of animal imagery, when David is being questioned by those students. He is like the one who is being chased by hunters as soon as he goes out of the room. They ask him several questions and “circle him like hunters who have cornered a strange beast and do not know how to finish it off”. (D 56) Here, in that case, he can appear like the victim of all these students around him and therefore the prey.

Apart from the animal metaphors, there are indeed other elements showing that David acts like a predator. For instance, he tells Melanie that “a woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone” and that she “has a duty to share it” (D 16). According to Andrew Van der Vlies, “this sounds very much like sexually predatory heterosexual man’s argument for an entitlement to expect sexual favours from any woman he finds attractive” (*J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace* 23).

What is more, David Lurie thinks that he is still a seducer and attractive to women. Indeed, he thinks that “he makes love to her” (D 19), but she is described as being “passive throughout” (D 19), afterwards “averting her face” (D 19) and leaving swiftly. David and Melanie have sex three times altogether. She is said not

to “resist” during their second encounter, but does not “avert herself” (D 25) and while Lurie thinks this makes the act of intercourse “not quite” rape, he senses that it is nonetheless “undesired to the core”, it is as if she died “within herself for the duration [...]” (D 25). According to Andrew Van der Vlies, readers are clearly able to infer from this description, focalized through Lurie, that Melanie is an unwilling sexual partner, that she has perhaps been raped. Critics like Lucy Graham (2002) and Rosemary Jolly concur with this interpretation” (Van der Vlies 23). In that sense, David Lurie has no other role but the one of the predator or fierce beast, who chases his defenceless prey. A commentary that his daughter Lucy will do later on in the novel also emphasizes the fact that men are like predators and it includes David as he is a man. In addition to that Lucy says that as a man, David “ought to know” with how much hate and violence a sexual intercourse can be done. Lucy asks him whether having sex with “someone strange” is “a bit like killing” (D 158). It can remind us the feeling David had after having sex with Melanie. He felt that Melanie dies “within herself for the duration” (D 25), during that undesired act of intercourse.

So, despite all the metaphors implying animals, both predatory and defenceless, to describe David’s relationships with women, there are other elements showing that he acts like a predator. However, it will not be part of this part of the study, which only focuses on the metaphors implying animals and their impact.

So far, the metaphors studied implied that David Lurie is a predator with animalistic sexual drive. There are other metaphors using animals in the novel. For example, David Lurie justifies his actions by comparing himself to a dog he knew in the past, the dog of his neighbours, who would get excited every time he sees a “bitch” passing by. He said:

one can punish a dog, it seems to be, for an offence like chewing a slipper. A dog will accept the justice of that: a beating for a chewing. But desire is another story. No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts (D 90).

Lucy does not understand what he means, and does not “see the point” (D 90). She replies by saying “So males must be allowed to follow their instincts unchecked. Is that the moral?” (D 90). As a woman, she does not get what her father means, she even seems to be very surprised and maybe disappointed by such a comparison. David thinks that, like the dog he knew in the past who would be beaten even if he could not restrain his desires, men could not be blamed for feeling desire

for a woman, because it is in their nature and that women has the “duty to share” (D 16) their beauty as he said to Melanie at their first meeting.

According to him, restraining one’s desires as a man is wrong and justifies what he did when Lucy asked him about it that his “case rests on the rights of desire” (D 89); he also uses the example of the dog. While making relations to animals, and here to a dog, it is as if the protagonist was given more legitimacy.

The metaphors analysed above reveal the way Lurie sees power relations between himself and women. Through all those metaphors implying animals and their symbolisms, the reader can understand that in David’s worlds, it looks as if they were two kinds of people: men who stand naturally for predators and act as such, and women, who are compelled to share their beauty and to give their self and their body to men and then who have no choice but to accept to behave like prey. It is normal and legitimate for men to have sexual desires.

All in all, through the metaphors he uses, Lurie appears like an old-fashioned character, a “moral dinosaur” (D 89), whose “relations to others, particularly woman, are characterised by a complete lack of concern” (9), according to Michael Marais in his article entitled “Impossible possibilities: Ethics and choice in J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace*”. Like I have said before, a parallel can be drawn between woman and animals in the novel as the fact that he described them using animals’ features reveals his “zoomorphism” (Griesse 6), which consists in “equalising women with animals, at least on a metaphorical level” (Griesse 6).

It is important to notice that as Melanie is both a woman and a woman of colour, she was classified as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy during apartheid. Paul Patton notices in his essay entitled “*Becoming-Animal and Pure Life in Coetzee’s Disgrace*”, that critics like Salman Rushdie “have criticized the novel for its apparent pessimism about the possibility of progress toward a non-racist and non-sexist society” (Patton 109). While I agree with him concerning the women in the novel, I do not think it is the case for Petrus, a black man in the story. Indeed, if Melanie appears like the victim in a post-apartheid society who has difficulty in moving from her position as a coloured woman and mainly because of David’s behaviour towards her, Petrus, Lucy’s black employee at the farm, ends up being a land owner, which was not possible during the time of apartheid. It is all about the legacy of the patriarchal society. When Petrus acquires Lucy’s land, that patriarchy reasserts itself. If one considers, like Robert Bahlieda in his article entitled “The

Legacy of Patriarchy” that “human experience has been characterized by a history of male domination, control, and violence” (Bahlieda 15), the fact that Petrus takes over Lucy’s land questions the evolution of equality between men and women after the apartheid regime.

It is clear that Lurie participates in this segregationist society, which encouraged the racist and discriminatory treatment of women of colour during apartheid and even post-apartheid. Indeed, what we can understand from David’s animal metaphors is that all his relations with his sexual partners are not based on equality. They are not on the same level and this was part of the thinking of the white minority during apartheid.

### 1.3 - THE DOG METAPHOR

#### 1.3.1 - David Lurie’s Disgrace

I agree with Elleke Boehmer who divided the novel into two main parts as in the second part Lurie’s interest for animals is growing. On the contrary, in the first part of the novel Lurie has a really Cartesian view that animals do not have reason and soul. Indeed, “they are part of the furniture, part of the alarm system” (D 78) as Lucy notices and David states that “The Church Fathers had a long debate about them, and decided they don’t have proper souls” (D 78). However, in the second part of the novel, his views on animals will change as he will live alongside different animals, amongst which are dogs. Indeed, his daughter runs a dog shelter.

First and foremost, let us define the role of dogs in South Africa. From the book cover, one can see that the Vintage Edition depicts a dog and then deduce that dogs are likely to have a major role in the novel (see Annexe 2).

In general, dogs are known to be owned for security purposes. In the novel, when introducing the farm to her father, Lucy affirms the following: “Dogs still mean something. The more dogs, the more deterrence” (D 60). Maybe she means that the more dogs one person owns, the more protected he or she is. In other words, when

seeing dogs in front of a house, people will undoubtedly be a bit more reluctant and afraid to enter without permission. David sees his daughter as a “sturdy young settler” (D 61), earning her life in a “simple” (D 61) way “from the kennels, and from selling flowers and garden produce” (D 61). It means that in the country, one can get a simple and happy life alongside dogs. When David Lurie arrives at the small farm, there are “five, solid built” pens which have been constructed whereas there was only one on his last visit. The pens are occupied by dogs as “Dobermanns, German Shepherds, ridgebacks, bull terriers, Rottweilers” (D 61). Lucy describes them as “watchdogs [...] working dogs, on short contracts [...]” (D 61). So, Lucy earns most of her money thanks to dogs, or one should rather say “watchdogs”, which are mainly used for protection usually by white people, maybe on their properties in the new post-apartheid South Africa. It is all the more obvious that dogs can be used for protection in South Africa as Lucy says that dogs are “part of the furniture, part of the alarm system” (D 78), which describes the main purpose of dogs in South Africa. Dogs help people, and mostly white people to remain safe and protected from the other racial groups. This description of dogs as being tools of protection and oppression for white people against people from other racial groups recalls a 1953 sign warning “Natives, Indians and Coloureds” against entering a property under pain of having their body devoured by dogs. (See Annexe 3)

In *Disgrace*, dogs have different roles. They do help David and Lucy protect themselves, as it is shown by their behaviour before the attack. When David and his daughter came back from their walk, they discover that three men have been waiting for them next to Lucy’s house. The younger boy “hisses at the dogs and makes sudden, threatening gestures” (D 92). Therefore, the dogs are barking and snapping “in a rage” (D 92). “The dog at Lucy’s side tries to tug loose. Even the old bulldog bitch [Katy], whom he seems to have adopted as his own, is growling softly” (D 92). As watchdogs, their behaviour should have been a warning for the Luries and they should have understood that the three men could be dangerous. However, Lucy gives one of them the permission to enter her house (“Come in” (D 93)). They did not feel threatened at first and Lucy even “releases the two Dobermanns into [their pen]” (D 92). The reader has access to David’s thoughts: “A brave gesture, he thinks to himself; but is it wise?” (D 92). When Lucy is in the house with two of the men, he seems to feel the danger “Something is wrong, he knows at once” (D 93). So, David in a sense believed the dog could have helped them by asking himself if releasing the

dog into the cage was a wise idea. When Lucy is in the house with the two men, David stays outside with the bulldog and the boy. As soon he realises that something is happening to Lucy, he lets go the bulldog's leash and chases the dog after the boy who defends himself with a stick while David tries to enter the house. Later on, the boy turns out to be Pollux, a relative of Lucy's neighbour Petrus, who reappears in the narrative and once again clashes with David (D 206), when David chases the same bulldog upon Pollux as he did before. The second encounter turns out much worse for Pollux, who fails to defend himself and gets bitten by the raging dog. Indeed, "her teeth close over his elbow, she braces her forelegs and tugs, growling" (D 206).

All in all, it is clear that dogs stand for protective device in South Africa, mainly for the white population as described in this realistic novel.

However, the dogs in *Disgrace* have much more important roles. Firstly, Lucy cares a lot for the bulldog named Katy:

Poor old Katy, she's in mourning. No one wants her, and she knows it. The irony is, she must have offspring all over the district who would be happy to share their homes with her. But it's not in their power to invite her. They are part of the furniture, part of the alarm system. They do us the honour of treating us like gods and we respond by treating them like things (D 78).

While acknowledging that people see dogs as objects, she also feels some pity for Katy. David seems also to be drawn the most to this dog:

The younger dogs are delighted to see him: they trot back and forth in their cages, whining eagerly. But the old bulldog bitch barely stirs. He enters her cage, closes the door behind him. She raises her head, regards him, lets her head fall again; her old dugs hang slack. He squats down, tickles her behind the ears. "Abandoned, are we? He murmurs... (D78).

She is the first animal to whom David has shown affection and this may be because she has been "abandoned", just like he has been abandoned by the University and his life back in town. David possibly identifies here with Katy here. Later on in the novel, he identifies with a dog one more time as he tells Lucy about a dog he used to know before. This dog would get excited as soon as he saw a bitch passing by – and then get beaten by its owner. David thinks that this dog's treatment was not justified since "no animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts" (D 90). While identifying with this dog, he means that he should not be

punished for his affair with his student because it is part of his nature as a man, and that his “case rests on the rights of desire” (D 89).

During the attack described in the eleventh chapter of *Disgrace*, while his daughter is probably being abused and raped in the house, David is being dragged and locked in the toilet, and his head is even set on fire. This moment illustrates the most his fall from grace and I believe David can be compared to a dog at this moment. As a matter of fact, when he lost his job at the Cape Technical University, his fall from grace was only standing for a professional “fall”. He fell from the rungs of the social ladder after he found himself in the middle of a scandal after Melanie Isaacs, one of his students filed a complaint of sexual harassment against him. He loses his job and waiting for the scandal to blow over, retreats in his daughter’s smallholding in Eastern Cape. It must have already been a shame for him to leave the city where everyone knows what he did and go to the countryside. However, the passage of the attack is all the more disgraceful for David Lurie as he is unable to help his daughter. He is a prey, whereas he has always been used to being the one who leads, mainly with women, and at the top of the pyramidal structure of the society during apartheid. His fall from grace is not just professionally anymore. It happens in his everyday life as well; in his life he is supposed to master as a grown-up. No matter how intelligent and civilized he may be, no matter how well “he speaks Italian, he speaks French” (D 95), he is “helpless” in this situation faced with the three black men and “Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa” (D 95).

Therefore, another role of dogs and dog metaphors in the novel would be to depict the states the characters are in, or the developments they go through. Indeed, in the following analysis of some of the elements of Lucy’s attack, the fact that David was reduced to an animal, similar to a dog, will be explained. Even if dogs are living beings and should not be ill-treated, the three black men during the attack killed six of the dogs. They treat David Lurie in almost the same way, without any consideration for him, as if a feeling of hate was pushing them to hurt David and Lucy, who are white people. The fact that they do not kill David as they killed the dogs leads the reader to think that they did it on purpose, to make him suffer, endure the harsh situation, and see his daughter in the hands of strangers, who feel some hate for people like them.

In the chapter 11, David is trying to help his daughter Lucy but in vain, he does not control the situation at all.

What is at stake in this passage is the way the internal focalisation through David Lurie's point of view influences the picture we get of this moment of the attack. To begin with, the narrator is not the focaliser in *Disgrace*. As said earlier, David Lurie is the focaliser throughout the whole novel. Thus, readers perceive the story through his eyes. Therefore, as in the whole novel, the attack is seen through David's point of view. But if David Lurie is the focaliser, he is not the narrator. The narrator is a third person narrator throughout the novel. Gerard Genette differentiates narrative voice (who speaks?) and perspective (who see or perceives?) (Genette 189-194). So, if David Lurie is the one who sees, who perceives, he is not the one relating the story. Therefore, the narrator is called an heterodiegetic narrator, which means that he is not a character in the story. As the reader perceives what is seen by Lurie, when he is locked in the toilet, it is as if the reader was locked as well. Consequently, the reader does not know what is happening outside, it means outside the lavatory, in the house or where Lucy is with the attackers. Trapped in his head, the reader does not get a full picture of the attack. What's more, the use of the present tense throughout the attack, for example "he tries to kick at the door" (D 94) or "His child is in the hands of strangers" (D 94) gives the reader no insight. He or she only gets what occurs right in the moment with David Lurie who is his "pair of glasses". So, the use of the present and the internal focalisation both shorten the depiction of the attack the reader could have had if the focaliser were someone other than David Lurie, maybe someone outside the story. In that case, the reader would have had an exhaustive, a complete picture of the story and he would have known what was happening to Lucy when David locked in another room. Locked in the lavatory,

David Lurie can only guess that something horrible may be happening to his daughter. As David is the focaliser, the reader perceives and feels his emotions. In the passage, there is confusion in his mind revealed through the word "unsure" (D 93). "Something is wrong" (D 93) but he is not sure about what it is. The reader can feel how he is trying to improve the situation by calling Lucy many times and Petrus "Lucy, come out here" (D 93), "Lucy" (repeated twice on page 93). He's trying harder and "shouts" (D 93), "louder" (D 93). However, there is a disadvantage being stuck in David's position: there are many blanks in the passage as David "blacks out" (D 94). Therefore he "hit[s] the floor" and appears in the lavatory all of a sudden; neither David nor the reader knows how this happened. This is the concept of ellipses.

On the contrary, it is possible to feel the ongoing and remarkable shift of power

taking place in this passage between black people represented by the three black men and white people interpreted by David Lurie and his daughter Lucy. This shift of power may also be happening in real life in South Africa, a newly post-Apartheid society. As a matter of fact, the usual balance of power of South Africa is shifting. From 1948 to 1991, the country had been under the regime of Apartheid, promoting racial segregation between Blacks and Whites. Therefore, a “White-on-Black exploitation” had been taking place. David was even accused by Farodia Rassool during the meeting earlier in the narrative of perpetuating this exploitation in a post-Apartheid South Africa when he had “undesired” (D 25) sexual intercourse with Melanie Isaacs, a coloured student:

Farodia Rassool intervenes:

“We are again going round in circles, Mr Chair. Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specificity, all of a sudden it is not abuse of a young woman he is confessing to, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part. That is why I say it is futile to go on debating with Professor Lurie. We must take his plea at face value and recommend accordingly” (D 53).

However, if he used to be the educated white professor symbolising the white supremacy, he is becoming in this passage the overpowered victim of three black men. It is also the case for his daughter who has never humiliated Black people. They both seem to pay for what their white ancestors did to the black South African people and could therefore be qualified as scapegoats. Many elements in the passage of the attack reveal how the balance of power is shifting. First of all, he is on the floor compared to the black boy who is standing, i.e., in a position of power. He is “on all fours” (D 93) and “creeps into the kitchen” (D 93). He is even “dragged” (D 93), we can guess, by the black boy who is standing and thus who is given more power. What is more, he is confused and cannot escape (“blocked” (D 94), “tries to recover” (D 94)) while the black men are free to do what they want to, in the house and with his daughter: “his child who is in the hands of strangers” (D 94). In addition to that, the lack of dialogue can be pointed out. Indeed, he is all alone and has nobody to help him whereas the three black men form a group. Indeed, even if the black boy is with him, there are two other men are with Lucy). David Lurie who usually expresses himself in very long, sophisticated sentences, can only speak to himself in this moment of helplessness during which he is completely on his own. The narrator uses

the free indirect discourse (in italics) to reveal what David is thinking: “*If I am still conscious then I am all right*” (D 93) or “*now*” (D 93). This stream of consciousness reveals the state of loneliness in which he must be. He does not have any human to talk to and the dogs are outside. On top of that, one can even say that David is becoming like an animal “on all fours” (D 93) whereas he used to think of Melanie as a rabbit being trapped by a fox. There is a reversal of power insofar as he is the white man who abused a coloured student and the reader has the impression that he is now reduced to an animal, which cannot do anything to escape. It is worth mentioning also that the only living being with him was the “bulldog” (D 93), which will shortly after be “controlled” by the black boy with a stick. In brief, all these elements put together, show us how David Lurie is becoming the victim of three empowered black men who are making him and even his respectful daughter suffer; they are reduced to a state of helplessness. As a white man, he used to be at the top of the pyramid during apartheid. On the contrary, in this situation, black people have taken the control over him, they are taking their revenge. Through this attack, one can feel black people’s hate for white people who oppressed them from 1948 to 1991. Indeed, even after the end of the regime, South Africa’s inhabitants took time to redefine the way they relate to other communities, as suggested by the novel. If we take a closer look at it, we can say that this attack will undoubtedly change David Lurie. It will make him a different man compared to the one he used to be. First of all, being the victim of black people is something unprecedented for him, a white professor at the University of Cape Town. His position as an animal and mainly as dog makes this situation for him all the more disgraceful as he used to be the one who leads, the one who is amongst “superior people”. Then, he finds an ally in the bulldog when he “lets of the bulldog’s leash” (D 93) whereas he had never been really close to animals when he used to work in the city. Finally, he realised how much his daughter needs him at this moment. During the passage of Lucy’s attack, he undergoes a moment of recognition, which he interprets as “the day of testing” (D 94).

To conclude, this passage depicting one specific moment of the attack clearly reveals the shift of power happening between David Lurie who used to be a University Professor and three Black men who have here taken the upper hand, controlling the situation. One can say that the shift of power is noticeable mainly because of David being compared to a dog in this passage. The usual frame of power

taking place during the apartheid regime is totally destroyed and David Lurie is being overpowered. As the story is narrated through David's point of view, the reader even gets a clearer image of the domination of the black men here on the protagonist. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the internal focalisation plays a major role in making the reader understand both the power shifting in South Africa after apartheid and the ongoing trauma David Lurie is going through because of the loss of his position as a white and educated man. The fact that David Lurie is becoming a victim is all the more obvious as we can feel his emotions, his state of mind through the choice of focalisation, excluding the black men's or Lucy's point of view. However, even after the attack, David Lurie will have difficulty in understanding and accepting that black people will from the end of apartheid onwards have more power. Indeed, it will be hard for him later in the novel to consider Petrus as the "co-proprietor" (D 62) of his daughter's farm and to think of Petrus as being in another position above the one of the "dog-man".

Through the passage of the attack during which David Lurie is helpless at the hands of the three black men, the reader is led to think that he is as ill-treated as Lucy's dogs are by the three men. It is true that he is not shot dead like the dog that died. However, he is dragged "on the floor", "on all fours", like an animal.

The image of the dog helps the reader understand that those three black men must feel some hate towards David Lurie and Lucy and more largely towards white people. On top of that, they killed the dogs, which symbolise security for white people. The reader can think that the rape has happened only because the three men managed to kill the dogs. David Lurie understands that the three men have done that, driven by hate towards white people. He knows that dogs were trained by the white community to scare black people:

Like shooting fish in a barrel, he thinks. Contemptible, yet exhilarating, probably, in a country where dogs are bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man. A satisfying afternoon's work, heady, like all revenge (D 110).

They must have taken pleasure in killing white people's tool of oppression, or symbol of power. Later in the novel, the reader can notice one more time that David Lurie understands that black people were oppressed by white people and by their tool(s) of oppression, one of which were dogs. Indeed, some weeks after the attack, David Lurie is imagining his daughter's terror, her fear:

Lucy was frightened, frightened near to death. Her voice choked, she could not breathe, her limbs went numb. *This is not happening*, she said to herself as the men forced her down; *it is just a dream, a nightmare*. While the men, for their part, drank up her fear, revelled in it, did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror. *Call your dogs!* They said to her. *Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs!* (D 160).

Dogs were the symbols of white people's power and therefore in this situation they are using the white community's oppression tool against themselves. From another point of view, by guessing what could have been his daughter's thoughts during this moment of horror, David understands what it is to be treated as an object. The reader is led to think that, as a man who has always been used to seeing women as his property, he is able to consider what Melanie must have felt when he had "undesired" (D 25) sexual intercourse with her. One can say that the rape of his daughter and his being humiliated like a dog makes him understand what Melanie, his former student, must have felt.

There are other elements emphasising the disgrace of David Lurie and these elements are in a way still related to dogs. In chapter eleven, before the attack during the walk with her daughter, David asks Lucy "Do you need a new dog-man?" (D 88). She then asks him if he "could live here, in this part of the world" (D 88). When proposing himself as the new "dog-man", it means that he would maybe not disagree with her if she asked him to do it. In any case, he makes it possible to put in relation this job related to dogs with him. Therefore, it looks as if the more he is getting away from the city, the closer he is to animals, and mostly dogs.

When he comes back to the farm a second time after having been to Cape Town and his house, which had been broken into, he gets back his job at the animal clinic which consists in handling the dogs which have been euthanized. Therefore, he comes in contact even more with dead animals. He drives the bodies to the incinerator and shows them respect, even if he was not used to doing that before. Indeed, he used to think that concerning animals, one must not "lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from the animals" (D 74). He does not believe in the shared life with animals his daughter promotes: "This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals" (D 74).

However, at the clinic, he builds a special relationship with one of the dogs, a "young male with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it" (D 215). This dog is "fascinated by the sound of the banjo" (D 215). David Lurie plays while writing his opera. Lurie is "sensible of a generous affection streaming out towards

him from the dog” (D 215). His growing compassion for dogs stands for a change in the character of David Lurie. The reader is led to think that not many people care about David anymore. Indeed, the people at the university, both the students and the professors have turned their backs on him. There is only the crippled dog that is one of the only ones to like him and to give him signs of “affection” (D 215) and yet it is a dog, not a human being.

At the end of the novel, David Lurie brings one more dog to Bev Shaw for her to euthanize. He brings the crippled dog and says “Yes, I am giving him up”, after Bev Shaw asks him if he does not want to “save him for another week” (D 220). After all the time he has spent with the crippled dog, the fact that he accepts to kill it raises some questions. It can be interpreted in different ways.

According to Tom Herron, the giving up of the dog has a deep meaning for the protagonist:

A systematic investigation of the role of dogs and animals more generally as narrative elements in Coetzee’s writing can lead us, in fact, to a different understanding of some of the deepest concerns that shape his art and, in turn to an explanation of David’s final act in *Disgrace* (Herron 587).

Herron does not give an explicit explanation about the reason why David gives up the dog at the end but he suggests that it symbolises a significant change for David and a big step in his way of thinking. Indeed, at the beginning, David Lurie used to think that animals do not have souls and then from the second part of the novel, he started to believe that they do have a soul as he thinks that one dog as “an intelligent look” (D 85) or that a dog could be put on stage “Would you dare to do that: bring a dog into the piece, allow it to loose its own lament to the heavens” (D 215). Herron adds that:

for a man so corroded with scepticism to consider so seriously the lives, deaths, and passage of the souls of fellow *Disgrace* d beings is, as Coetzee’s 1993 Nobel citation suggests, to “capture the divine spark” in humans and in other animals. The phrase well described a novel that manages to allow what Derrida calls the animal’s address to the human whilst at the same time extending to animals human kindness, sympathy, and, finally, love (Herron 489).

Animals can “address” human beings, and human beings can answer them and this helps to spread human “kindness, sympathy and finally, love” (Herron 489). One could say that Coetzee recommends a good relationship between animals and

human beings and a good treatment of animals. Herron does not give an answer about the reasons why David would give up the dog in the end.

Nevertheless, despite David's growing awareness about animals and the fact that they may have a soul, his giving up the three-legged dog can be interpreted by a loss of hope both in life and in writing his opera. This dog, who stayed next to him while writing his opera was his only "friend". By letting him go, it means that he resigns from life and accepts that he has lost everything. Once again, the dog illustrates the state of disgrace he is in.

Another critic, Louise Tremaine, sees the 'giving up' in *Disgrace* as a giving up of humanity. In her essay entitled "*The Embodies Soul: Animal Being in the Word of J. M. Coetzee*" she explains that the giving up the dog symbolises the giving up of the protagonist himself, of his last thoughts and beliefs and on the fact that he is different from animals:

Giving up, with the dog, the operatic artifice that has been his 'ludicrous defense' against shame and therefore, unwittingly, against any hope of 'being fully human,' David is ready at last to start at ground level (610).

Tremaine suggests that giving up the dog at the end seems to be a sort of sacrifice as he gives up what he has always believed to be the definition of a human being. Being at Lucy's farm, he has learned to live in another environment and this has made him change his point of view about the definition of a human being compared to an animal. Therefore, he can start from nothing and he does not think any longer that human beings are more important than animals.

Tremaine's quote suggests that human beings are descending or decreasing to be closer to humans or at the same level.

It is worth pointing that according to Tremaine, animals in *Disgrace* are necessary to understand the author's beliefs.

So far, the roles of dogs in South Africa and in the novel have been examined. The fact that dogs are often ill-treated as if they were less than living beings have also been noticed. The focus has only been on the protagonist David Lurie and how the use of dogs and the comparison with dogs can be humiliating and emphasize the state of disgrace he finds himself in. However, he is not the only character whose life can be compared to the life of a dog, i.e., humiliating and disgraceful as they are ill-

treated by humans. Indeed, throughout the narrative, one can say that every character is at some point compared to a dog.

### 1.3.2 - Petrus's Disgrace

Let us focus on the character of Petrus.

At first, when David Lurie arrived at the farm, Petrus was just the “dog-man” and the “gardener” (D 64) even if Lucy described him as her “new assistant. In fact, since March, [her] co-proprietor” (D 62). Later on, he will no longer be the dog man, as he says: “No more dogs. I am not any more the dog-man” (D 129). One can say that dogs reflect the status of Petrus. In other words, when he introduced himself as being the “dog-man”, it means that he has not climbed the social ladder yet, even if he is already Lucy’s “co-proprietor”. When he is described as being “not anymore the dog-man” (D 129), it means that he is not related to dogs anymore, his identity is not related to them anymore. At the same time, he has acquired more land in Lucy’s farm and then one can affirm that dogs reflect his situation, as being at the bottom or higher in the social ladder. Petrus must have lived during probably most of his life as a black man living in South Africa during the apartheid regime, which started in 1948 under the apartheid regime implemented by the National Party. During apartheid, all the racial groups were separated and Petrus was therefore at the very bottom of the pyramid, as being a black South African. He will have been discriminated against during apartheid. He must have felt disgraceful and inferior to white people. That is the reason why he is introduced to David and thus to the reader as the “dog-man” (D 64). It is as if his job was only consisting in taking care of dogs. His identification as Petrus is related to dogs. This must be a consequence of the apartheid regime during which black people had no choice but to remain in the same low position, they could not climb the rungs of the social ladder.

### 1.3.3 - Lucy's Disgrace

Similarly, at the end of the novel, the life of Lucy will be compared to the life of dogs. For an independent young lesbian woman, giving up the land and accepting to become Petrus's third wife is humiliating and equal to the life of a dog. Indeed, Petrus said to David that Lucy can become his wife so that she could be protected because "here [...] it is dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry" (D 202). There are several elements which are disgraceful and humiliating for Lucy and by extension for her father as well. Firstly, Petrus proposed that Lucy should marry the young boy who was present during the attack. Then, he says that he himself will marry Lucy because the boy is "too young to be marry" (D 202). He is "a child still" (D 202). That is the reason why Petrus thinks that he himself "will marry Lucy" (D 202). This is disgraceful for Lucy as David said to Petrus, "Lucy does not want to marry. Does not want to marry a man. It is not an option she will consider. [...] She wants to live her own life" (D 202). What is humiliating is that Lucy was not expecting to live a life like this, married to Petrus, and yet when David talks to her about it, she replies that David should go back to Petrus and say that she accepts "his protection" (D 204). She even says that "he can put out whatever story he likes about [their] relationship and [she] won't contradict him" (D 204). One can understand that she is ready to resign even if she has never imagined her life in such a way. What is all the more disgraceful for her is the fact that at the beginning Petrus proposes that she gets married to Pollux, one of the three attackers, if he was not "too young to be marry" (D 202). This situation is also disgraceful, for David as her father who affirms that it is "humiliating" (D 205). He had "such high hopes" for her daughter and he feels sorry to see her "end like this" (D 205). He had the intention of selling the house in Cape Town and he was "prepared to send [her] to Holland" (D 204). It is as if he failed as a father to protect his daughter, to make her live in good conditions. What is all the more humiliating and disgraceful is Lucy's acceptance of the situation, her resignation. She agrees with her father who finds the situation "humiliating" if she really gets to marry Petrus. But she says that:

perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity". Her father replied "Like a dog" and she says "Yes, like a dog" (205).

She accepts to start from scratch and to be deprived of all the elements which usually make a human being i.e., dignity, rights etc. On top of that, as a white woman, she seems to never have disrespected black people or been racist towards the other racial groups. She seems to be respectful and yet she is paying the price of the harsh treatment of black people, coloured and Asian people during the apartheid regime, inflicted by the white community and I believe that she can also, like her father, be qualified as a scapegoat. Indeed, as Stephen Watson points out, in an interview conducted in 1978 and transcript in a collection of literary criticism entitled *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee*, “J.M. Coetzee remarks that he was inclined “to see the South African situation [today] as only one manifestation of a wider historical situation to do with colonialism, late colonialism, neo-colonialism” (*Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee* 13). Dörte Griesse mentions the fact that David is “loaded with the sins of Apartheid” (Griesse 11) and that “Lurie’s status as scapegoat provides the starting point of the animal-focused narration” (Griesse 11).

According to Greta Olson, a Professor of English and American Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Giessen, in her article entitled “Like a Dog: Rituals of Animal Degradation in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Abu Ghraib Prison” when Lucy says “Yes like a dog” (D 205),

Lucy makes her status explicit when she answers her father’s comment about the degrading aspects of her situation [...] Post-rape, Lucy has none of these privileges and is relegated to the status of an animal (126).

In other words, at the end of the novel, by accepting to marry Petrus and giving him her land in order to be protected, Lucy accepts to be like an animal. She is aware of the fact that she needs a black man to be as safe as possible, which is not a value she used to have before the attack. She also accepts the fact that she does not have any rights anymore, any power or any weapons. This must be disgraceful for her to be in this state of acceptance and resignation insofar as it has never been part of the sort of life she has aspired to live. It is all the more disgraceful through this system of self-degradation (“Yes like a dog”) it seems that she feels safer when being deprived of power, as if the three black people would not want to hurt her if she is inferior than them. She said that she does not “want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us” (D 74) and yet she finally accepts to live a life “like a dog” (D 205). She chose safety at the cost of

dignity. One must not forget that she also chose to remain in South Africa after the attack, i.e., a country in which she is not safe, even if her father was hoping she would go to Holland:

“[...] Take a break for six months or a year, until things have improved in this country. Go overseas. Go to Holland. I’ll pay. When you come back you can take stock, make a fresh start.”

“If I leave now, David, I won’t come back. Thank you for the offer, but it won’t work [...]” (D 157).

Her acceptance of the situation is significant.

So far, the roles of dogs in South Africa, as well as some of their roles and meanings in the novel have been examined. One can say that J.M. Coetzee’s main aim in *Disgrace* was to show the situation in the country was in after apartheid i.e., the South Africa in 1997. David Lurie, his daughter and Petrus are in a state of disgrace at least at one time in the novel. Animals, and especially dogs, are used to illustrate it. Petrus, the former dog man who used to be treated as someone less than animals because of his being black, acquires another status, and he is not the dog-man anymore: “No more dogs. I am not any more the dog-man” (D 129). However, as Petrus was not present during Lucy’s attack, the reader is led to think that he might have something to do with this horrible deed. Following Lucy’s rape, he acquires more land and thus his new status as a land owner in a disgraceful manner. As far as David Lurie is concerned, he lost his job and will probably not be a professor anymore after one of his students, Melanie Isaacs, files a complaint for sexual harassment against him. He has no choice but to move to his daughter’s farm, far from the city, waiting for the scandal to blow over. He soon becomes the new “dog-man”, working at the animal clinic, euthanizing them. One could argue that the fact that David takes care of the dogs before their death and brings their corpses to the incinerator i.e., even after their death is symbolic. As dogs used to be a tool of oppression used for the white community against coloured and black people during apartheid, it could mean that David Lurie is the one who carries the white supremacy to an end. In other words, if one considers that David Lurie symbolises the white community of South Africa and that dogs symbolise its power, the fact that Lurie brings the dogs’ corpses to the incinerator stands for the end of the white supremacy in a post-apartheid society. It recalls the reversal of the societal pyramid, very present

in the novel.

Finally, Lucy, his daughter, is the victim of the three black men's and maybe Petrus's crime. Therefore, she has no choice but to get married to Petrus for protection and to live a life which David compares with the life of dogs. It is as if she knew that she would never be able to run the farm as she wishes in this country.

Now that the roles of dogs in highlighting the disgrace of the characters have been analysed, let us mention one element linked to the use of animals in the novel, which should not be forgotten. In *Disgrace*, the notions of animalization (or the fact that animal metaphors are used to describe human beings' behaviour) and violence are overlapping. Indeed, when human beings torture others, they are seen as individuals behaving like animals, like savage, fierce animals. That is the reason why Lucy describes her attackers as "dogs in a pack" (D 159), while they were committing their crime. The attack is described as canine and her attackers as dog-like. In addition to that, as a white man, David Lurie associates the black men with animals and uses the words "filthy swine" (D 206) or "jackal boy" (D 202), to describe Pollux, the youngest of the attackers. In other words, in the novel when human beings find that someone else is horrible, violent and that he can provoke a feeling of hate, they qualify him as individuals who are more ferocious, wilder than them, and who are, therefore, animal-like. Bad behaviour is categorized as animalistic, as a personality trait belonging to animals. As a result, in this novel, animals stand for distance but also for violence.

Moreover, one can talk about a demonisation of dogs. They can be described as evil in the novel to justify human beings' behaviours. Indeed, following Lucy's rape, when thinking about Lucy's pregnancy, David thinks:

What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like dog's urine? (D 199).

This metaphor demonises dogs, who are similar to those men, whereas one can feel Lucy and Bev Shaw's respect for dogs. Lurie even changes his mind on animals throughout the novel.

As a conclusion for this part, we shall say that Coetzee's interest for animal life can be noticed in a certain number of his books. Indeed, at several moments he seems to make use of them as metaphors, friends or companions for human beings

or protective device. In *The Lives of Animals* (1999), he even portrays the protagonist, Elizabeth Costello, as being a defender of the animal cause.

In *Disgrace*, the protagonist David Lurie makes the use of metaphors during his encounters with women, then sexual desire is associated with animality. The animal metaphors reveal the power relations between himself and his sexual partners. One can understand that he is used to being the one who leads, the predator, who chases his prey.

In the narrative, the use of dogs and dog-metaphors can also be noticed. However, it has another purpose. The process of reversal of the power pyramid after apartheid can be noticed in *Disgrace* and it is emphasized by the recourse to dog-metaphors. Indeed, Petrus, the once dog-man, owns a significant amount of land at the end of the novel. On the contrary, David Lurie, a former white University professor, finds himself in a state of *Disgrace* after his affair with his student Melanie Isaacs. He ends up taking care of dogs at the clinic and has as a friend a crippled dog that he gives up in the end.

The dog metaphor does constitute a structured metaphor throughout the novel as it helps reveal the changes the characters undergo. Animal metaphors used in the first part of the novel are revelatory of power relations. It also reveals David's thoughts as "his racism emerges in his persistent zoomorphism, in which animal characteristics are projected, mainly but not exclusively, onto black people" (Herron 488).

One can also say that animal metaphors used in the novel help depict the problematic relationships between the people who were once-colonised and the once-colonisers.

As far as the giving up of Driepoot, the crippled dog, at the end of the novel, the reader is led to think that the dog illustrates David's resignation from life, his resignation to having fallen from grace, both professionally and personally, and his loss of hope. One could also argue that he gives up Driepoot because he sees disgrace in living in such a way and therefore, he may think that it will free the dog from its misery.

Animal metaphors could have deepest meanings. According to Jan Kosecki in his PhD Thesis "Metaphors of the Body in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee":

“In what I initially called organic (corporeal) metaphors; Coetzee seems to present abstractions as embodied qualities of the human organism. Thus, the corporeal metaphor – by suggesting that land can be treated as a penetrable body, for example – invites the interpretation of the images in Coetzee's fictions as allegorical. The abstract, general notions of conquest, colonialism, war, or apartheid become conceptualised as concrete and individual instances: as sexual desire, impotence, cancer. Organic (corporeal) metaphor is thus the “embodiment” of abstract notions and the treatment of the body as if its significance and “meaning” were more than just literal and contingent.” (60-61)

Therefore, animal metaphors could embody larger themes like violence of apartheid or conquest.

As women are often compared to animals in the novel, it is clear that a parallel can be drawn between them. According to Don Randall in his article entitled “*The Community of Sentient Beings: J.M. Coetzee’s Ecology in Disgrace and Elizabeth Costello*”: “gender and animality are, in Coetzee’s new line of thought and imagination, linked to rather than distinct concerns” (213). He explains this idea by giving an example. When Bev Shaw, whom he described as being “the book’s most deeply committed animal lover” (215), asks David if he likes animals, he answers by saying that he likes animals because he eats them and therefore, he at least likes “some parts” of them (D 81). According to Randall “David’s attitude to women seems notably similar, as is evidenced by his occasional trivializing and unoriginal “animalization” of Soraya; and more particularly by his subsequent responses to Melanie. David fetishes Melanie’s body to a very notable degree, dwelling upon her girlishly slim hips, her perky breasts; one may say that he evidently likes her, or at least some parts of her” (215).

Our second part dealing with silence reveals another element, which is common to both women and animals.

## 2- SILENCE

The similarity between women and animals in *Disgrace* has been highlighted in the first part. This was mainly due to the animal metaphors used by the protagonist, which draw a comparison between animals and women.

I believe they can also be compared because they are both silenced throughout the narrative. Therefore, the second part of this study will be dealing with the theme of silence in *Disgrace*, which is, according to me, worthy of our attention and relevant to this dissertation's topic.

### 2.1 - DEHUMANISATION

Firstly, silence in the novel is linked to the concept of dehumanisation, as will be shown thanks to animals and women, who are both silenced in the novel.

#### 2.1.1 - Animals and Silence

The animals in the novel are silent. It is due to the fact that by their essence, they do not share human beings' language and therefore they cannot communicate with them with words. Indeed, in her article entitled "Refusing to Speak: The Ethics of Animal Silence and Sacrifice in Coetzee and Derrida", Sundhya Walther states that Elizabeth Costello thinks that "animals are constitutively silent" (80).

As they are not human beings, one cannot say that being silent or silenced dehumanises them. Animals are used to create metaphors in the novel. Some animals in the novel, like Katy the bulldog or Driepoot, the three-legged dog, seem to be close to human beings and yet they will never be able to talk in human terms.

However, in parallel, animal silence helps highlight the dehumanisation of the women of the novel since they are being silenced throughout the narrative, like animals.

## 2.1.2 - Women and Silence

Indeed, “from the beginning of the novel, women are the silent figures [...]” (Walther 84). Firstly, during Soraya’s description by David Lurie, only the point of view of Lurie is depicted. Soraya never has a voice and it is exactly the same for the other women in the novel, except for Rosalind, Lurie’s ex-wife, who gets the chance to speak her mind. It can be argued that if she can talk, it is because she is not part of David Lurie’s life anymore. Farodia Rassool, a woman sitting at David’s trial, also dares to talk when faced with David Lurie. She does not hesitate to intervene: “You say you accept Ms Isaacs’s statement, Professor Lurie, but have you actually read it?” (D 49).

As one knows, *Disgrace* is a story of rape of a young woman by a middle-aged man. The reader is led to understand that sexual intercourse with David Lurie is unwanted. After being gang-raped by three men, Lucy chooses to remain silent and not to interrupt the pregnancy which results from the rape. As stated by Catherine Coquio in her article entitled « *Comme un chien* », the fact that Lucy:

Accepte l’enfant né du viol sans porter plainte revient à accepter les effets de la violence historique au cœur de ce pays, à s’y enraciner en renonçant à se faire justice, ou plutôt en se réclamant d’une justice étrangère aux tribunaux (89).

Her remaining silent means that she decides to close her eyes on the country’s history which may be the reason of her rape. On the contrary, she accepts her fate. Therefore, it is clear that, like animals, women do not pronounce themselves in the story. As a matter of fact, Lurie refers to animals to describe the women he meets as explained in the first part of this study. It is not just a metaphor. They are silenced like animals. At the end of the novel, Lucy even admits the fact that she has lost. She gives up everything she has done so far with the farm and her land “Tell him [Petrus] I give up the land. Tell him that he can have it, title deed and all. He will love that” (D 205). At this moment, Lucy gives everything she had to Petrus although Petrus can be linked to her three attackers. Indeed, it has not been proven that Petrus is innocent. In addition to that, he knew Pollux, one of the three black men. She agrees to let her aggressors win (“Is Lucy prepared to concede them [her aggressors] that victory?” (D 110)) and to “start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but, With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity” (D 205). Her

father insists on the fact that it results in being “Like a dog”. Her answer “Yes, like a dog” (D 205), clearly reveals her state of acceptance of the reality and self-degradation, as if nothing else could be done. The woman, who used to be independent, accepts her fate and even dehumanises herself by qualifying herself as an animal, at the same level than a dog.

As a matter of fact, as readers, we are led to think that in this novel, overpowered people cannot talk or express an opinion and this seems to apply exclusively to women.

In addition to that, one could talk about the commodification of women’s bodies, which is recurrent in the novel. One must not forget that the injustices of gender-based violence are not reduced to the physical abuses on women’s bodies only. The way women are depicted in the novel and the fact that they are silent, most of the time, reveals injustices towards women. According to Ruth Akinradewo in her article entitled “The Commodification of Women’s Bodies” “when we talk about the commodification of the bodies of women and girls, we are talking about the female being reduced to merely an object of trade” (web). I agree with this quote since in the novel, David Lurie thinks that 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” (D 16), like the sex workers he pays in the novel, at least three times. The concept of sharing can be compared to a sort of business, of royalties women owe to men and therefore one can talk about trade when considering Lurie’s viewpoint. Women’s silence and inactivity in the novel emphasizes the commodification of their bodies. For instance, when being at Lurie’s apartment, Melanie is said to “not resist” (D 25). Though she “averts her lips”, she “even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips” (D 25). As she does not talk and even “help[s]” David Lurie, her body is becoming a commodity for consumption by David Lurie.

One can also mention the fact that women’s bodies are made “the objects of scrutiny” (Kosecki 6). The reader can notice “the endowing of a mutilated body” (Kosecki 6). For instance, there is no explicit reason for Lucy’s acceptance of her fate but it will be possible to grasp the truth from her tortured body when she will be at an advanced stage of pregnancy or even more when her baby will be born, who is the symbol of also of her “mutilated body”, which has been touched by strangers. Even if Lucy is silent, her body will talk for her but the fact that she does not talk makes the comparison with an animal more striking. In that sense, silence in the

novel contributes to women's dehumanisation and, therefore, disgrace.

As remarked by Gillian Gane in her article entitled "Unspeakable Injuries in *Disgrace* and David's Story", silence in the novel can also be linked to the "failing of language" (Gane 102). As far as David Lurie is concerned, he struggles to have a real conversation with his daughter Lucy without her being against him. Indeed, it is important to notice once again that Lucy and her father have distinct personalities. David is compared to a "moral dinosaur" (D 89) and characterised as a white heterosexual while Lucy is a lesbian woman who does think that a woman can live on her own. These two opposite personalities bring about a failure of language between the two of them I believe that it can be linked with the notion of silence.

In addition, David Lurie is "more and more convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. [...] Like a dinosaur expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened" (D 117). Therefore, language seems to be an "inadequate tool" (Gane 102). While language seems to fail, texts "exercise an unexpected power" (Gane 102). In particular, the form filled out by Melanie against her professor for sexual harassment: "Two names on the page, his and hers, side by side. Two in a bed, lovers no longer but foes" (D 40). Even if these are words written on paper, and which are therefore silent, they lead to harsh consequences.

All in all, for all those reasons, silence is present at many places in the novel, and it has different meanings.

## 2.2 - SILENCE AND TRAUMA

As analysed previously, animals and women can be considered at the same level as they are both silent in the novel. They do not have a word and yet one could affirm that silence carries other meanings. Indeed, I agree with Sundhya Walther about the fact that "the ethic of the novel" finds itself "in the many significant silences, both human and animal, contained within the text". In other words, silence carries different meanings and can be revelatory of deeper and more important matter(s).

### 2.2.1 - Lucy's and Melanie's Cases

As far as Lucy is concerned, at the beginning of the novel, one could qualify her as being an independent and modern woman, who does not follow the rules, contrary to her father, the “moral dinosaur” (D 89). When she encounters the three black men, her life changes completely. She moved from her position as an independent woman, to the one of a defenceless woman who does not have the choice but to her former employee Petrus to find refuge and feel safe in South Africa. She is the victim of a rape and this changes the nature of her character.

In addition to that, the fact that she remains silent and does not talk about the rape can be interpreted in different ways. In her essay on “Rape and the Violence of Representation in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”, Carine M. Mardorissian makes an interesting remark:

Lucy accepts her fate as a symbol of the redistribution of power in postapartheid South Africa and sees her rapists as gathering apartheid debts. Her father—who was ironically a perpetrator in relation to the first sexual offense but a victim in the context of the second—now harbors a diametrically opposed view about the importance of legal and financial restitution as a response to his daughter’s rape. He wants her to seek retribution through the law. However, Lucy, who is pregnant as a result of the rape, accepts Petrus’s offer to marry her for her own safety in exchange for her land. This decision is all the more remarkable since the text intimates that there is a strong likelihood that Petrus, the black man with whom she previously shared the farm, may have known about the impending attacks (74).

The notion of the scapegoat is tackled one more time here, as if Lucy, but also David, were paying for their ancestors’ crimes. Mardorissian also makes reference to the disgrace of Lucy emphasized by the fact that she has to marry Petrus, who might have been a partner in crime for her rape. Finally, if she places David as a perpetrator at the beginning, the fact remains that he has now taken the place of the victim after her daughter’s rape. Thanks to this step, his character can reflect on his situation and about Melanie’s, which he has not done before.

The fact that Lucy remains silent places David as a victim who cannot escape from his situation as Lucy prevents him from talking about her and her situation. Lucy talks to him as if he were “a child or an old man” (D 104), as if he could not do anything about the situation. Indeed, when he asks her why she would not talk about the crime, she replies:

[...] You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. I will tell you, as long as you agree not to raise the subject again. The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone (D 112).

Lucy defines his position and it is to remain outside of her story, it is “private”. Her choice to remain silent has an impact on David Lurie according to Catherine Coquio. In her work entitled “Comme un chien”, she says the following:

Si celle-ci [la justice] n’est jamais traduite positivement, c’est par elle que Lucy impose silence à son père, et lui indique la voie de l’acquiescement – celle, pour lui, de la disgrâce et des chiens mourants. Le roman suit le cours de cet acquiescement en faisant parcourir au père le cycle d’une disgrâce (web).

Coquio defines Lucy’s choice to keep her rape secret as a political act. However, what is important in this quote is the concept of obligation. Because of her will to remain silent, Lucy keeps David from talking and therefore imposes her wish on him. His only solution is the “acquiescement” (Coquio), which replaces him in a dog’s position. According to Coquio, as from the rape and the obligation for David to remain silent, the protagonist will not have the chance to give his opinion anymore, he will lose his critical voice like an animal and this contributes to his disgrace, As David Lurie thinks, “Lucy’s secret; his disgrace” (D 109).

Lucy’s rape has changed many things for David, but for her as well. When analysing Lucy in particular, Jennifer Rickel notices in her article entitled “Speaking of Human Rights: Narrative Voice and the Paradox of the Unspeakable in J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* and *Disgrace*”, that she is one of the characters who is “being spoken” (Rickel 27). She chooses “not to speak within the normative discursive framework, and from a relatively privileged position each may challenge the politics of human rights that structure narrative voice” (Rickel 27). In other words, other people speak about her and tell her story as they wish but she herself decides to keep the truth for herself.

David Lurie thinks it is a shame that the attackers’ story is circulating rather than Lucy’s, and he worries, “Like a stain the story is spreading across the district. Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for” (D 115). David is angered that Lucy is “being spoken rather than speaking” (Rickel 171), because the rapists’ story must be

deformed.

The fact that Lucy does not talk can also be linked to her psychological state of mind. Silence can say or reveal many elements, even the psychological state of the characters. In Lucy's case, her remaining silent makes the atmosphere all the heavier, like the burden she has to carry, as if she was in a state of shock or trauma. I would suggest that silence can symbolise trauma in the novel. Indeed, if one considers silence as the absence of speech, the link between silence and trauma is clear. The trauma is such that the characters will not dare to talk about what happened to them. The characters' silence in the novel recalls the trauma and the suffering of the victims of the apartheid regime. It reveals that even white people, like Lucy, can be the victim of the regime. In his dissertation entitled "Ethics and Politics of Trauma in J. M. Coetzee's Post-Apartheid Fiction", Narayan Prasad Chudal points out that "Freud has divided traumatic neurosis into two symptoms-the positive symptoms which includes flashbacks and hallucinations and the negative symptoms which includes "numbing, amnesia, and avoidance of triggering stimuli" (Caruth 96)" (Chudal 32). He adds by considering that:

Caruth mentions that trauma theory often divides itself into two basic trends: the focus on trauma as the shattering of a previously whole self and the focus on the survival function of trauma as allowing one to get through an overwhelming experience by numbing oneself to it (Chudal 32).

In other words, when being in a state of trauma, one could either talk to express one's feelings, or choose to remain silent as if one was indifferent when being confronted to this traumatic event. I believe the second solution suits Lucy the most. She decides to make an ellipsis concerning what happened to her. Even during her attack, when David was locked into the lavatory, the atmosphere made it easy to understand that something horrible was happening ("Something is wrong. He knows at once." (D 93). Many elements were not clearly mentioned to the reader. As we know, it is due to the internal focalisation in the novel, which enables the reader to see the events only through Lurie's eyes. As he was locked in the lavatory, there were many ellipses.

As there are many elements which are unmentioned in the novel, one can notice a tension between "testimony and silence, truth-telling and secrecy, the private and the public" (Gane 103). Indeed, Lucy decided to stay silent concerning her rape but

her secret is revealed to us, even if it is not told explicitly (Gane 101). Similarly, David Lurie's affair with Melanie was not supposed to be revealed until a complaint was filed against him, which made him appear like a monster for everyone.

Catherine Coquio affirms that some events in the novel are untold and happening secretly:

De même qu'elle ne s'explique pas sur cette justice hors droit, elle ne raconte pas son viol, qui semble appartenir à cette justice extérieure au langage. Faut-il comprendre que le viol de la Blanche par le Noir est un « juste » retour des choses après la violence de l'apartheid ? C'est en tout cas ce que dit son choix de vie : celle d'une fille de colon violée par un Noir, et néanmoins épousée par un autre Noir, qui protégera aussi le violeur. On est exactement là dans le domaine de « l'entente », domaine théologique selon W Benjamin, qui y voyait l'équivalent humain de la violence divine, dégagée de la violence mythique du droit. Ce domaine est laissé à l'état d'implicite : nous n'assistons ni aux négociations, ni à l'accord conclu entre les parties. Par là aussi, beaucoup plus encore que par la caricature de procès universitaire, Coetzee répond quelque chose aux nouveaux juges de la *Commission Vérité et réconciliation* en Afrique du sud. Le projet de vie de Lucy et l'abandon de David à la mort animale se décident et se déroulent parallèlement, sans communiquer, comme le montrent les dialogues entre le père et la fille. La décision politique de Lucy reste étrangère à David (web).

I believe his “état d'implicite” that Coquio is referring to or in English the “implicit state” is obviously an extended ellipsis in the novel, which is linked to silence, which is linked to trauma experienced by the characters in the novel and mainly Lucy.

It is worth recalling that maybe Lucy did not report her rape because she understood that the three black men did this horrible deed because of the society and how it shaped them. Carine M. Mardorossian points out in her work entitled “*Rape and the Violence of Representation in J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace*” that:

In such a context, a white woman's decision to report sexual aggression by black men is to say the least a fraught decision. In fact, even nonsexualized crimes conjure up a host of challenges for victims of crimes sensitive to the ways in which claims of white victimization in South Africa fuel the fires of racism in a country used to criminalizing the black population. In 2006, the eighty-two-year-old Nadine Gordimer was attacked in her Johannesburg home by four young black men but resisted relating the incident in terms of her own trauma. Instead, she focused on her attackers' social status, describing them as “products of a society grappling with the legacy of South Africa's past” and as “young people in poverty without opportunities.” The author of the article further referred to the Nobel Laureate as “overcome by sympathy” and “sorrow” for her aggressors, implicitly revealing how any individualized attention to the trauma experienced by the victim would serve as fodder for generalizing racist assumptions (75).

Nadine Gordimer gives an explanation for attack by the fact that South African society made black people like that, as “products of society” and that may be what Lucy thought. It recalls what has been said before about the scapegoat.

Like Lucy, Melanie Isaacs is silenced after her rape. If one considers that silence is the absence of speech and that the absence of speech is linked to a state of shock and trauma, then it is clear that Melanie is traumatised by her rapist. At David's apartment, she does not dare to show who she really is and what she really wants. On the contrary, "she does not resist" (D 25).

Even if Melanie does not feel well and has "little shivers of cold run[ning] through her" (D 25), she does not do anything to make David understand it, although it can be argued that "a man of his age" (D 1) should be aware of Melanie's feelings at this moment. As Benita Parry states in *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee* (1995), a collection of literary criticism: "Shared by Coetzee's protagonists of silence is an absence or economy of speech which is, in all cases, associated with sexual passivity or impotence [...] (43). In that case, Melanie is one of Coetzee's "protagonist of silence" and she does not talk while she is being sexually abused. The image suggested during her rape is that of a dead body, a corpse in the bed.

Benita Parry adds "Paola Splendore reads Michael K, the Barbarian Girl and Friday as "characters who cannot speak or who refuse to speak the language of the foe, but whose silence shouts as if they were a thousand people screaming together (44). I believe this quote can be used to explain Melanie's silence but also Lucy's. Given the two situations, one can guess that behind their being silent, there are many important elements that would need to be revealed. However, silence is prevailing and "shouts". It echoes with the paradoxical situation as horrible deeds happened both to Lucy and Melanie and yet many ellipses are present, leading to silence.

Even if some people can argue that Melanie did not remain silent as she files a complaint against David Lurie, I suggest that she rather has no voice. Indeed, when Lurie learns about the complaint, there is no mention of Melanie's name:

Next morning, with surprising dispatch, a memorandum arrives from the office of the Vice-Rector (Student Affairs) notifying him that a complaint has been lodged against him under article 3.1 of the university's Code of Conduct (D 38).

The use of the passive voice instead of the use of Melanie's name at this moment can be interpreted as an absence of implication from Melanie in the action of filing the complaint against her professor. When thinking about who could have lodged the complaint, David Lurie thinks that:

Melanie would not have taken such a step by herself, he is convinced. She is too innocent for that, too ignorant of her power. He, the little man in the ill-fitting suit, must be behind it, he and cousin Pauline, the plain one, the duenna. They must have talked her into it, worn her down, then in the end marched her to the administration offices (D 39).

By thinking that it is impossible that Melanie has taken that decision by herself, David Lurie positions her as a silent character, who does not have a word to say. Instead, he thinks of all the persons who could have done it and through his very judgmental thinking, he concludes that if Melanie has done it, it is probably because some people have coaxed her into doing it. When depicting the scene in his head, he imagines Melanie's cousin talking for her of Mr Isaacs while Melanie would "stood by abashed" (D 39). It is only towards the end of the novel that Melanie's name is mentioned:

"After Melanie lodged her complaint", he says, "the university held an official inquiry. As a result, I resigned my post. That is the history; you must be aware of it." (D 165).

As a matter of fact, Melanie's silence can be justified by different elements. Firstly, David Lurie's patriarchal way of seeing the world makes Melanie appear like a poor little girl who "is too innocent [...], too ignorant of her power" (D 39). As previously mentioned, one can argue that Melanie's silence is justified by the traumatic experience she is undergoing because of David Lurie.

Through Lucy's and Melanie's cases, silence appears to be caused by traumatic events. As Beerendra Pandey argues in her chapter in the book "Pedagogy of Indian Partition Literature in the Light of Trauma Theory":

In examining the so-called belated register of a traumatic event in collective memory, we should not dismiss the utility of psychoanalysis and psychology outright in favor of sociology, for denial, repression, and silence on the part of the individual survivors in the aftermath of a traumatic event could delay their actions to present their traumatic experiences in public arenas (126).

Indeed, silence can precede the truth. It is the case for Melanie. She was silent when being with David Lurie, while a complaint filed against him revealed to the world what has happened. However, it can be argued that Melanie did not actually have her word to say in the process.

So far, the fact that silence can be caused by trauma has been dealt with. Silence can also have a link with the concept of victimhood.

### 2.2.2 - Victimhood

According to Elizabeth Wilkinson in her work entitled “Gertrude Bonnin’s Rhetorical Strategies of Silence”, “[w]hen one powerful group or individual silences another less powerful group or individual, silence can be viewed as a marker of victimhood” (Wilkinson, 33). In the novel, there are some overpowered people who are being silenced by some other more powerful people. For instance, Melanie stands for weakness, David Lurie’s “little dove” (D 34), who has fallen into a beast’s clutches represented by the University professor. As he is white and a man, there is no doubt that he has more power than Melanie has, as a coloured young woman. In addition to that, the story is set in the post-apartheid period in South Africa. From 1948 to the end of the apartheid regime, people had been used to living following a specific scheme defined by the regime in power. Therefore, while David Lurie was classified at the very top of the social ladder, people like Melanie were categorized at its bottom. They were overpowered by the white minority in power. As a matter of fact, the National Party was silencing the oppressed population thanks to the implementation of specific laws, promoting segregation towards the black, coloured or Asian communities. Even if the novel is set after this period, the apartheid scheme is still present in the novel and mainly through the relation between David and Melanie but also Soraya. As they are black women, they are not able to move out from their positions as they are “ignorant of [their] power” (D 39). These female characters in the novel are victims of the former system but also of Lurie. They are therefore silenced and think what they have to do is to comply.

Similarly, during the attack at the farm, Lucy and her father are the victims of the three black men and all they can do is wait until it is done. Lucy, a white woman, is raped by the three black men and therefore she has no choice but to accept her fate as if she had to pay for the sins perpetrated by her ancestors. She is the victim of the system. Once again, silence is the result of victimhood.

This process of being silenced does not happen to women only. Indeed, in chapter 11, during which David is being locked in the lavatory while Lucy is with the men shows how a man can be silenced as well. He is actually “being dragged across the kitchen floor” (D 93), like an animal or an object. When he talks, it does not seem to have an effect at all: “Lucy he shouts, Lucy! speak to me!” (D 94) Even when he can talk, it is not taken into consideration. David speaks and makes noises,

but does not communicate. It is worth mentioning that the absence of dialogue here is linked to the state of disgrace Lucy and her father find themselves in. Indeed, the absence of dialogue results in silence, which leads here to helplessness and loss of power, and therefore to the similarity with animals for both of the characters victims of the attack.

The house is silent as well “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!” (D 94) This quote suggests that David does not hear anything coming out from the house. It can be noted here that the house’s silence is significant as the protagonist understands that his daughter is in danger.

During the attack, Lucy and David are deprived of language. Even if David Lurie says some words, it is useless and it does not change the situation. However, speaking is what makes people understand each other and yet at this point, the characters are deprived of this faculty, like animals who are voiceless. However, language is what makes us humans. Indeed, “language, reason and morality have been raised as distinctions for our human nature” (web) according to Jens Rinnelt in his article entitled “What makes us human?” published in 2018. In addition to that, Noam Chomsky argues that humans, contrary to animals, are all born with an innate understanding of the way language works. In an interview for the New Scientist, he assumes that:

It’s perfectly obvious that there is some genetic factor that distinguishes humans from other animals and that is language-specific. The theory of that genetic component, whatever it turns out to be, is what is called the universal grammar (web).

In addition to that, in *Language and Mind*, he asserts that “Human language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world” (59).

It means that being deprived of language is degrading for David Lurie and his daughter, as deprivation of language makes them similar to animals. It marks their regression from the human to the animal state. They are deprived of the only characteristic that makes them human and are therefore linked to animals which only have ways of communicating with signals which may be “may be a sound, colour pattern, posture, movement, electric discharge, touch, release of an odorant, or some combination of these mediums.” according to the definition of Britannica.com.

The concept of voicelessness in Coetzee's works is tackled in Carrol Clarkson's book entitled *J.M. Coetzee: Countervoices* in which she analyses some of Coetzee's novels. She deals with the treatment of animals, linked to the process of being silenced or reduced to silence. She raises questions about voicelessness within an ethical context of human relations to animals: "on what basis can one relate to animals other than human, when they are voiceless in human terms?" (*J.M. Coetzee: Countervoices* 106). This question can be linked to the women in the novel or even David during the moment of the attack in chapter 11. I suggest a reformulation which is: "On what basis can one relate to women and overpowered people, when they are voiceless in human terms." I directed the question towards women and overpowered people in the novel who are thus compared to animals. In other words, it sounds difficult to even address people who do not have a word to say, as language is what gives us our human nature. If one cannot address them in human terms, it means that the comparison with animals is particularly pertinent. Actually, Melanie, Lucy and also David during the moment of the attack, do not have the choice but to remain silent. It is true that David shouts but it remains useless. They are in a state of helplessness and can thus be compared to animals, who are "voiceless in human terms" as well. One can say that silence is linked to passivity and passivity can be linked to being "animalised", or at least dehumanized.

Whether the characters are man or women, they can be the victims of some more powerful people than them and this leads to the process of being silenced. As a result, they lose their right to choose as human beings. That is the reason why being silenced can be the result of victimhood.

One could also refer to Petrus, the black man who helps Lucy at the farm. He was a victim of the system at the beginning of the novel. All he could do was "look after the dogs and in the garden" (D 64). Stuck in his position as the "dog-man" (D 64), he finally gets the opportunity to climb the social ladder thanks to Lucy. However, before his success, his being at the bottom of the hierarchy prevented him from talking and have a voice.

Silence is therefore undoubtedly linked to trauma. Indeed, through Lucy's and Melanie's cases, it has been shown that the absence of speech or reaction was due to the traumatic events they went through. In addition, the fact is that overpowered people are the victims of more powerful individuals or groups than them.

While it is admitted that Lucy's and Melanie's silences are due to external motives, it can also be argued that it is the result of a choice.

### 2.3 - SILENCE AS A CHOICE

Another reading would be to argue that it is Lucy's choice to remain silent about what happened to her. Immediately after the attack, she takes the decision not to talk about her rape and does not want her father to talk about it either. Indeed, she asks David "would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you?" "You tell what happened to you," she goes on, "I tell what happened to me" (D 99). Lucy's story is personal. Later, she adds by stating that her story is not the property of the public:

"As far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone. "This place being what"? "This place being South Africa" (D 112).

This reveals at the same time that she is well aware of the situation of South Africa and that she seems to be resigned to deal with it. She has not occupied a privileged place like her father, who seems to be unaware of the reality of South Africa. This quote reveals the strategy behind Lucy's silence. I believe that if Lucy chooses to remain silent, it is purely because she is well aware of the historical contingencies of the situation in the country. In another context, the truth could have been revealed but in South Africa, she prefers to stay silent for political reasons. She knows that the attack was impersonal, i.e., political, and her response to it cannot be public. Pressing charges would lead to a national story on black-on-white violence. She chooses to accept the situation to avoid political problems and the public exposure that would accompany it. She has no other choice but to consider her attack as being private. Therefore, she does her best to remain outside of the public sphere. It is her choice to remain silent and it can be seen as a strategy.

The fact that she perceives her attack as being very personal is also important: "It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them (D 156).

As an answer, Lurie states that “it was history speaking through them... it may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t” (D 156). It is necessary to make the distinction between personal and historical motives because it has impact on Lucy and on the fact that she will remain silent and not press charges against her attackers. Actually, the personal and the public aspects of the attack are inseparable. By saying that the three men were pushed by impersonal and external forces, David is right. However, the fact remains that Lucy was the principal target. As a result, the attack is both personal and impersonal. Indeed, those men will remain a threat for Lucy but it is also impersonal as there will still be a general threat for Lucy because they might have been influenced by history, which cannot be changed. One can argue that as Lucy sees her attack as a personal hatred towards her, she chooses to remain silent to avoid more problems, hence her choice to remain out of the public sphere.

As a result, Lucy’s apparent passivity might be a strategy because “even from a position of less power, individuals can use silence not as victim-based reaction to but as a central strategy of *action for*” (Wilkinson 33). Even though Lucy is the victim who has no power in this context, she takes the decision to impose silence on her father and this is an action which has a purpose. By doing so, she avoids political entanglements.

She also chooses to accept the situation as she had to cope with it. Gillian Gane argues in her work entitled *Unspeakable Injuries in Disgrace and David's Story* “as a tax she must pay; [...] she accept[s] violation and suffering and commit[s] [herself] to enduring it in silence” (Gane 104). In Lucy Graham’s work entitled “Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”, one learns that media reported “high levels of sexual violence in South Africa increased noticeably in the national press during the late 1990s” (Graham 434).

Silence can be linked to power as well. As mentioned by Catherine Coquio, Lucy’s choice to remain silent can be seen as a sort of power that she imposes on her father.

It recalls what has been said earlier about the political motives behind Lucy’s silence. It also makes reference to David’s position now that Lucy has obliged him to remain silent. As Coquio suggests, it is linked to animal metaphors in the novel. Indeed, this obligation to remain silent removes David’s right to speak as a human being.

So far, we have dealt with Lucy’s case only. While it has been noted earlier that Melanie did not have a voice in the process of filling the complaint, some people,

like Gillian Gane, argue that in *Disgrace*, there is “one woman who speaks out”, that is to say Melanie and one who “remain[s] silent”: Lucy. The woman who speaks is coloured. Melanie’s complaint and David’s trial are “symptomatic of the new era” (Gane 101). Indeed, as Melanie is coloured, it would have been impossible for her to denounce David during the apartheid years as coloured people were part of the oppressed people alongside with black and Asian people. This trial is a reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission “set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid.”

Actually, the TRC constitutes the antithesis of the act of remaining silent. Formerly oppressed people could talk and be heard and this can be compared to Melanie’s case in the novel, if one considers that she speaks. The fact remains that David was not charged with rape but only with sexual harassment.

All in all, silence can be the result of a specific strategy as Benita Parry states in *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*:

Such readings have come from Coetzee’s most attentive critics, amongst some of whom there has been a tendency to construe the fictions as calculated transcriptions of the author’s known critical stances on the instability of language and the unreliability of narration. The consequence is that paradox and impasse, gaps and silences are accounted for, not as textually generated through the interplay of the referential and the rhetorical, or by the interruptions of incommensurable discourses, but as the planned strategy of a highly self-conscious practice which displays the material and techniques of its own process of production. More specifically, it has been suggested that by deliberately inscribing ambiguity, indeterminacy and absence, Coetzee’s fiction registers the author’s understanding of his own ‘positional historicity’, thus effecting a formal and aesthetic encoding or fictionalising of Jameson’s premise on the political unconscious, and thereby pre-empting any effort by critics to theorise the elisions and ideological complicities inaugurated by the texts’ spoken and unspoken cultural affiliations (43).

She adds that:

Within the discussion of colonial and postcolonial discourse, silence has been read as a many-accented signifier of disempowerment and resistance, of the denial of subject position and its appropriation. Emphasising the ambiguity of silence, Christopher Miller has written that because “the voice remains our central metaphor for political agency and power... silence is the most powerful metaphor for exclusion from the literary modes of production”, adding that while some insist on its oppressivity, others “find in silence itself a different kind of word to be listened to, perhaps a strategy of resistance” (Miller 248) (43).

In a context of post-apartheid South Africa, Lucy’s and Melanie’s silence can be said to be a way of resistance. Therefore, silence can reveal hidden elements.

Another paradoxical point in the novel makes silence become a vehicle for

discourse. Indeed, Lucy's "very silence becomes a source of discourse" (Gane 102). As a matter of fact, it is as if silence, or the act of revealing no element and staying discrete, was exactly what enables the reader to understand that horrible deeds have happened to both Melanie and Lucy. Indeed, as Gillian Gane articulates it in her own way, "inaccessibility of truth and the inadequacy of the language available to them [appears] as a means of articulating the truth" (Gane 102). For example, concerning Lucy's pregnancy, the attackers will be compared to animals, which marked Lucy with "dog's urine" (D 205) and yet, the fact that she has been raped will not be stated explicitly.

To conclude, silence in *Disgrace* is revelatory of different elements. Firstly, it is worth recalling that animals and women are silenced in the same way in the novel. Therefore, I believe the notion of silence falls into the theme of animal metaphors.

Silence can reveal somebody's trauma, as a result of a shocking event. It can also be the marker of victimhood. For instance, David Lurie can be said to be one of the victims in Lucy's rape as she prevents him from talking and then imposes silence on him.

On the contrary, one can argue that silence is a strategy put in place by the women in the novel, and especially Lucy, for political reasons. As a consequence, it is the result of a choice, as David Lurie states, "the freedom to remain silent" (D 188).

It can also be a vehicle for discourse. The fact that many elements are hidden can suggest that many unspoken deeds have taken place.

### 3- VIOLENCE

The theme of violence is recurrent in the novel. In a post-apartheid context, tensions arise in South Africa, where the former group races have difficulty getting along in this new society. What is at stake is that the former way of living under apartheid still has impact on the society at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the country. In addition, violence is emphasized by the specific way of thinking and values of the characters.

#### 3.1 - INTERSECTIONALITY

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee depicts several characters from different social categories and thus gives us an overview of the social and political environment of South Africa after the end of apartheid. The violence portrayed is often intersectional. The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw “to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics “intersect” with one another and overlap” (web) as stated by Jane Coaston in her article entitled “The Intersectionality Wars”.

For instance, in her work “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, Crenshaw qualifies black women as being the victims of intersectionality: “Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (Crenshaw, 1244).

In her work entitled “Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful”, Kathy Davis gives a summary of what intersectionality is and a commentary on Crenshaw’s definition of the term:

Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. Originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality was intended to address the fact that the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse. Crenshaw argued that theorists need to take both gender and race on board and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences

(Davis 68).

Indeed, from the point of view of feminist literary critics, the female characters in the novel *Disgrace* are the victims of intersectional violence. Indeed, according to Peter Barry in “*Feminist Criticism: Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*”, those critics “examine power relations which obtain in texts and in life, with a view to breaking them down, seeing reading as a political act and showing the extent of patriarchy” (134).

### 3.1.1 - Melanie’s and Soraya’s Cases

When considering Crenshaw’s and Davis’s quotes and Coaston’s definition, one can affirm that Melanie Isaacs is at the centre of the concept of intersectionality. Soraya can also be seen as a victim of intersectional violence. They are both in a position of less power than David Lurie because of their respective positions of sex worker and student. Indeed, being a woman and in addition to that, a woman of colour, they have two characteristics which will undoubtedly be harmful for them, all the more in the context of post-apartheid, during which people in South Africa have to get used to the shifting structures of power. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Soraya finally has some power over David as she refuses to see him at the end.

Farodia Rassool, one of the people sitting at the hearing committee, makes reference to the specific hierarchy in South Africa as concerned to Melanie’s case:

“We are again going round in circles, Mr Chair. Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specificity, all of a sudden it is not abuse of a young woman he is confessing to, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part” (D 53).

She highlights the importance of this event at this specific time of South Africa history. Following the end of the apartheid regime, David Lurie has abused a young woman who is from the formerly oppressed group labelled “coloured” during apartheid, meaning that the story goes on. This has not been the first time a white man abuses a coloured or black woman. Indeed, in the long history of colonisation, during slavery for instance, white men were used to abuse black woman for their own pleasure.

In contrast with her status, on a societal level, David Lurie is the most privileged character in the whole novel. As a white heterosexual man and Professor, in a patriarchal society, David gets advice from people around him during the moment of the trial like Aram Hakim who tells him “Speaking personally, David, I want to tell you you have all my sympathy. Really. These things can be hell” (D 42), while David acknowledges himself that “[he] was having an affair with the girl” (D 42). His privileged position as a professor (“But as teachers we occupy positions of power” (D 52)) allows him to get advice from his lawyer, who tells him what to do in order get Melanie’s family to give up:

“Well, my advice would be, as a matter of strategy, get a woman to represent you.” He mentions two names. “Aim for a private settlement. You give certain undertakings, perhaps take the spell of leave, in return for which the university persuades the girl, or her family, to drop the charges. Your best hope. Take a yellow card. Minimize the damage, wait from the scandal to blow over.” (D 42).

It is clear that, given his job at the university, he has some power that the family does not have and I believe this has to do with intersectional violence or I would say “intersectional discrimination”. Because of his privileged position, David Lurie will have difficulty coping with the societal changes, starting with his difficulty to understand Soraya’s wish to stop seeing him. His egocentrism made him believe that she was another woman with him, maybe the real Soraya: “No doubt with other men she becomes another woman: le donna è mobile. Yet at the level of temperament her affinity with him can surely not be feigned” (D 3). Later on, he struggles to understand that he is not the one who leads in Lucy’s life:

“David, I can’t run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not anymore. You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character. I am a minor who doesn’t make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life, I am the one who makes the decisions’ (D 198).

There is only Rosalind, David’s ex-wife, who dares to tell him the truth, without taking into account his position: “Everyone’s hand will be against you, and why not? Really, how *could* you?” (D 44), before she comments the situation: “The whole thing is disgraceful from beginning to end. Disgraceful and vulgar too. And I’m not sorry for saying so” (D 45).

Soraya is also victim of intersectional violence. Even if she decided to be a sex worker, she is the victim of the society. As a woman formerly labelled “coloured”, she has no choice but to do this job in order to provide for her family. In addition to that, her clients are likely to be part of the “white” community, like David Lurie. The apartheid scheme is visible here. Due to her former hierarchical position as a “coloured” woman, Soraya has to please white men. Indeed, even after apartheid, some vestiges remain and she has to do this job in order to provide for her family.

According to Gillian Gane in “*Unspeakable injuries in Disgrace and David’s story*”, one can infer that David Lurie is “evidently attracted by woman of colour, [...] he enjoys the power that accrues to him through the convergence of disparities in gender and race” (Gane 103). In addition to that, “he is old enough to be [Soraya’s] father” (D 9); but also, Melanie’s. As David is older than Melanie, he has more power on her. While she is a young girl still doing her studies, David is fifty-two years old, which means that he has more experience than her in many fields.

He may be “sexually aroused by the stage performance in which Melanie assumes an accent that is “glaringly Kaaps” (Gane 24). Similarly, he describes Soraya’s body as being “honey-brown” (D1), meaning that she would have been classified “coloured” during apartheid.

Considering that David Lurie is attracted by women of colour, it looks as if he likes the domination he has over them, as a white heterosexual man.

It is obvious that the combination of two aspects which look like “weaknesses” leads to tension. According to Gillian Gane,

the intersection of race and gender is of course always fraught with tension, yet gender seems to carry a disproportionately heavy burden in these novels. In *Disgrace*, in particular, one must suspect that gender is at least to some extent displacing another identity category that cannot easily be named. When I found myself mistyping the title of the novel as Disrace, what was missing suddenly became clear: the novel is dis-raced—it is uncomfortable with naming racial categories or discussing racial issues (Gane 101)

Indeed, it is true that the characters’ racial identities are not mentioned explicitly but rather implicitly. For instance, when David describes Melanie, he does not mention her skin colour: “She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large, dark eyes” (D 11). The reader guesses Soraya’s and Melanie’s identities through some words or group of words such as: “honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun” (D 1), which David uses to describe

Soraya, or “Melàni: the dark one” (D 18). Actually, sometimes, even if there is no clear mention of gender as being a motive of discrimination, it is clear that being a woman in the novel is not an advantage. I believe that gender alongside with the theme of race are at the basis of the tensions. These two themes are related to the theme of animal metaphors. Indeed, the women in the novel are described by David Lurie in animal terms and for Melanie and Soraya, it is emphasized by the fact that they are both women of colour.

As pointed out by Gane, gender is at the centre of the novel. She remarks that Lurie is losing the power and privilege he is used to having as a white man, but “instead of pointing to the new racial order he fixates on questions of gender and sexuality.” (Gane 101). For instance, he refers to the Cape Technical University where he teaches “to his mind, emasculated institution of learning” (D 4).

### 3.1.2 - Lucy's Case

Women of colour are not the only ones to be the victim of intersectional violence in the novel. Of course, David's daughter Lucy is at the centre of this theme as well. Lucy is white lesbian woman. As a white woman, she is at a higher social level than Melanie and Soraya, even in the post-apartheid period, still anchored in the former social hierarchy. Nevertheless, she can be discriminated against for three main reasons: her skin colour (recalling the white supremacy), her sex, and her sexual orientation.

Even if it is not mentioned explicitly, one can understand that David finds her sexual orientation problematic even if he accepts it: “Attractive, he is thinking, yet lost to men” (D 76). Later on, when considering Lucy's and her ex-partner's Helen relation, he believes they are “sisters more than lovers” (D 86). He also “wonders how it is for Lucy with her lovers, how it is for her lovers with her” (D 76). I believe this thought recalls some heterosexuals' discriminatory thoughts about who is the man in a lesbian or in a gay couple. Lucy's sexual orientation is significant as it makes the damage of the rape even more difficult to bear, even though a rape remains awful. The fact of raping a lesbian is called “corrective rape”, which is a term coined in South Africa after “well-known cases of corrective rapes of lesbians like Eudy Simelane and Zoliswa Nkonyana became public” (definition.net). Corrective rape is defined on the website [yourdictionary.com](http://yourdictionary.com) by:

The act of raping a lesbian woman in an attempt to turn her heterosexual". Definition.net defines this term as being "a hate crime in which a person is raped because of their perceived sexual or gender orientation. The common consequence of the rape, as seen by the perpetrator, is to "correct" their orientation, to turn them heterosexual, or to make them "act" more in conformity with gender stereotypes (web).

Nevertheless, if one considers that Lucy's rape was planned by Petrus in order to take over her land, the hypothesis of the "corrective rape" cannot be confirmed.

Because of her identity which makes her the victim of intersectional violence, she ends up having no other solution than marrying Petrus, as she explains to her father:

No. Wait. Before you get on your high horse with Petrus, take a moment to consider my situation objectively. Objectively I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here [threatening period in South Africa]. To whom can I turn for protection, for patronage? To Ettinger? It is just a matter of time before Ettinger is found with a bullet in his back. Practically speaking, there is only Petrus left. Petrus may not be a big man but he is big enough for someone small like me. And at least I know Petrus. I have no illusions about him. I know what I would be letting myself in for" (D 204).

By saying that she is smaller than Petrus, she reinforces the reversal of power which has taken place. Before the rape, she was an independent woman whereas now she has to ask her former employee for protection.

As said earlier, Lucy sees her fate as a tax she must pay: "They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying?" (D 158). As Gillian Gane remarks, "if someone must take on the sins of white South Africa, why should it be Lucy?" (Gane 105). Indeed, Lucy is innocent. She seems to have never done something wrong towards the other communities and yet she ends up being the victim of black people's hatred for the white community.

### 3.1.3 - The Notion of “Agency”

I believe the notion of “agency” is related to intersectional violence. This term of agency falls into the field of gender research. It was coined by Judith Butler, an American university professor and philosopher. She explains this term in her work entitled “*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*”:

Merleau-Ponty maintains not only that the body is an historical idea but a set of possibilities to be continually realized. In claiming that the body is an historical idea, Merleau-Ponty means that it gains its meaning through a concrete and historically mediated expression in the world. That the body is a set of possibilities signifies (a) that its appearance in the world, for perception, is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence, and (b) that its concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities. Hence, there is an agency which is understood as the process of rendering such possibilities determinate. These possibilities are necessarily constrained by available historical conventions [...] (Butler 521).

In other words, someone’s agency describes his or her empowerment and capacity to act beyond the determinisms, outside of himself or herself. It describes someone’s capacity to conform, but also to resist. An article published in 2019 on the website “The Indian Express” talks about “How climate change is reducing women’s agency in Asian, African settings”. Climate change has led to “erratic weather behaviour and altered the nature of soil and water” (web). As men migrate in search of better work, women earn less money than they used to. As a result, women have less control on their life, and on their children’s lives. This example is indeed far from our topic but I believe it can help explaining the notion of agency or the decreasing of women’s agency in the novel. In *Disgrace*, because of the intersectional violence towards women, Soraya, Melanie and Lucy are restrained in their power to act, and this is due to external factors, like the climate change for Asian women farmers. For the women in the novel, the external factors are mostly other people’s viewpoints, discriminations and violence. These behaviours are mostly all shaped by society. As a result, Soraya does not have the choice but to remain a sex worker to survive. It is true that Melanie has lodged a complaint towards David Lurie, but during their encounters, she was faced to a white professor and therefore it was decreasing her agency, her capacity to act. Finally, because of her rape, motivated by different elements, Lucy finds herself in danger, with no capacity to bounce back, in

“this place being South Africa” (D 112).

### 3.1.4 - Petrus's Case

Even if Petrus finally manages to own land, it has not always been the case. Under the apartheid regime, he was at the bottom of the power pyramid. As a black man, he was stuck in his position and had very little agency. However, the violence towards Petrus cannot be described as “intersectional” as even if he is a man, his skin colour is what makes him disrespected during apartheid and even after, hence his appellation as “the dog-man” (D 72). Because of his being black, Petrus's agency is reduced and this is due to the classification under apartheid.

As the activist and psychology professor Kevin Nadal points out in his book entitled “*That's so Gay! Microaggressions and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community*” that:

[...] aggressions towards people with a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality can be “subtle, unconscious, and unintentional discrimination that is experienced by people of color; women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people; religious minorities; people with disabilities; and people of other marginalized groups” (Nadal 5).

As a consequence, Soraya, Melanie, Lucy and Petrus are the victims of aggressions in the novel, which are sometimes unconscious such as comments on their characteristics or physical like the rape for Lucy and Melanie, the lack of respect for their bodies.

### 3.2 - RAPE

Sexuality and gender form an important part of this novel and it has been perfectly summarized by Miloslawa Stepien in his work entitled “‘Truth’ and ‘Reconciliation’ as Sites of Conflict over Meaning”:

It seems that one of the most important subjects touched upon in the novel is sexuality, in its different varieties: those of older and younger men, rapists and men who impose themselves on women in some way dependent on them or else manipulate them into having sex; and also blurred images of the sexuality of women, those sharing their bodies in return for money or favours, willingly and unwillingly, those raped or violated (Stepien 203).

Before starting with Melanie’s rape, let us not forget the fact that the reader perceives the whole novel through David Lurie’s eyes. As a result, Melanie’s feelings and perception concerning her relationship with David remains unknown for the reader, who only gets to see their encounters from a heterosexual and fifty-two years old man.

From the opening line of the novel, the reader understands that sex is a predominant thought for the protagonist. It can be inferred that it will play an important role in the novel.

Even if the notion of sexuality is recurrent in the novel, the notion of rape is not clearly mentioned in *Disgrace*, but rather implied. Even if Lucy talks about rape “I think they do rape” (D 158), her father does not refer to rape explicitly. Indeed, from David’s point of view, his relation with Melanie is “not rape, not quite that” (D 25).

In addition to that, at the farm, when thinking about his daughter’s relationship with Helen, he comes up with the thought that:

Perhaps she [Lucy] simply prefers female company. Or perhaps that is all that lesbians are; women who have no need of men. No wonder they are so vehement against rape, she and Helen. Rape, god of chaos and mixture, violator of seclusions. Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow (D 105).

I believe this quotation suggests a banalisation of rape. As a man, he cannot really know what is worse between being raped as a lesbian or as a virgin. In addition, being raped remains inhumane in any case.

To understand the complex concern of rape in the novel, it is important to pay

attention to what comment David makes about Melanie, and highlight the fact that Melanie's voice and point of view are ignored and recreated from David's point of view.

Firstly, Melanie's and David's only connection is that she is his student. Ananya Bose pointed out in her article entitled "Analyzing Gender Roles in J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace*", that "his opinion about women here is noteworthy: "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 prodigal of beauty, of beauties" (D 11-12). Being attracted to his students is normal for him. When they are at his apartment, he is completely aware of the fact that she is his student: "No matter what passes between them now, they will have to meet again as teacher and pupil. Is he prepared for that?" (D12). The word "pupil" emphasizes the fact that Melanie is just a child compared to David.

David justifies his being attracted to Melanie and women in general: "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" (D 16). Therefore, it appears to be the women's fault if men are looking at them. The first time David and Melanie have sexual intercourse, the act is related from his point of view: "he makes love to her" (D 19). It is a subjective interpretation of his own act.

The fact remains that Melanie is inactive during the sexual act:

On the living-room floor, to the sound of rain pattering against the windows; he makes love to her. Her body is clear, simple, in its way perfect; though she is passive throughout, he finds the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into oblivion (D 19)

As remarked by Ananya Bose in her thesis, "this explains how he loses himself in his desire, in spite of his knowledge of her age and her uncertainty; David Lurie, here, comes across as a true misogynist" (Bose 68). Even if according to David he "made love to" Melanie, the fact that she was absent the next day at the university is significant. It recalls what has been said earlier in the second part, concerning silence linked to violence.

According to Sanne Kalkman in her thesis entitled "An Intersectional Feminist Analysis of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", the second encounter is significant as her "verbal and non-verbal resistance make it clear that she is not consenting to sex" (Kalkman 26). Melanie insists that she does not want to have intercourse with

him “No, not now” (D 25) when he surprises her at her flat, “thrusts himself upon her, usurps her” (Bose 68). The fact that she urges him to leave immediately after they have had intercourse (“Pauline will be back any minute” she says when it is over. “Please. You must go” (D 25)). Even if the reader never gets Melanie’s concretely explained point of view, her reactions are indicative of her state of mind.

Their next encounter is more ambiguous. She comes herself to David’s flat and:

He makes love to her one more time, on the bed in his daughter’s room. It is good, as good as the first time; he is beginning to learn the way her body moves. She is quick, and greedy for experience. If he does not sense in her a fully sexual appetite, that is only because she is still young (D 29).

One should pay close attention to the perspective here. If David thinks Melanie is “greedy for experience”, it is surely not the case. This assessment comes from David’s mind, who is looking for ways to convince himself that Melanie is invested in the act as he is and that is what she wants. The fact that they are in Lucy’s bed can be used to draw a parallel between Lucy and Melanie and their sexual experiences.

Melanie “hooks a leg behind his buttocks to draw him in closer: as the tendon of her inner thigh tightens against him, he feels a surge of joy and desire” (D 29). David’s description confuses the reader. It implies that the act was approved, even wanted (“to draw him in closer” (D 29)) by Melanie and that it was therefore not rape. Again, the fact that the act is described *only* from David’s subjective and limited point of view must be underlined.

The point of view of feminist literary critics is pertinent. Kalkman argues that “it would not be unreasonable to imagine that she might be afraid of possible academic consequences, were she to reject his advances” (Kalkman 14). What is more, at the trial, David admits that he has failed as he became a “servant of Eros” (D 52). As a result, it is clear that he is the one who started and imposed his will onto Melanie.

All in all, even if it is not mentioned clearly from the focaliser’s point of view, he does make some remarks which reveals his awareness that the intercourse he imposes on Melanie is unwanted by her.

As mentioned in the first part of this dissertation, the focaliser tends to make

reference to animals, especially when he is around women. It goes without saying that the notion of rape is linked to the notion of animality. As a result, during his sexual intercourses with Melanie, the animal imagery reveals his limited, unreliable understanding or acknowledgments of his own acts (cf. sub part 1.2). In addition to that, later in the novel, when he goes to see Mr Isaacs, he thinks about his first night with Melanie and this proves that the act was premeditated:

He remembers Melanie, on the first evening of their closer acquaintance, sitting beside him on the sofa drinking the coffee with the shot-glass of whisky in it that was intended to – the word comes up reluctantly – *lubricate* her. Her trim little body; her sexy cloths; her eyes gleaming with excitement. Stepping out in the forest where the wild wolf prowls (D 168).

Lurie imagines Melanie as being as excited as he is himself. In fact, when he says “her eyes are gleaming with excitement”, the reader understands that his eyes are “gleaming with excitement”. The quotation above also reveals David Lurie’s predatory instinct through the animal metaphor involving the image of the wolf, looking for a prey in the forest. Like the wolf, David Lurie is prowling around Melanie, his prey.

The use of a specific vocabulary of conquest and pursuit means that David’s aim is only to give himself some pleasure, without taking care about his “little dove” ‘s (D 34) feelings:

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... She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes... she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him” (D 25).

David Lurie thinks Melanie “does not resist”, and yet the fact that he compares her to a “mole burrowing” is paradoxical. This is a really significant passage, that reveals both characters’ viewpoints. While the professor is in quest own his own pleasure, like a fierce beast, the student is afraid, at the mercy of her attacker. She has no choice but to wait until the act of “killing” (D 158) is done.

David Lurie never mentions the word “rape”. However, he is aware that she has decided to “go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck” (D 25). The use of this powerful animal metaphor can be noted here as a symbol of David Lurie’s egocentrism, selfishness and predatory character. He also believes that Melanie will have to clean herself after

what has happened: “At the moment, he has no doubt, she, Melanie, is trying to cleanse herself of it, of him. He sees her running a bath, stepping into the water, eyes close like a sleepwalker’s (D 25). If he considers that she has been stained because of what he did to her, it is surely because he understands at some level that he has raped her. It can also be noted that Melanie has not been to class during some days before that happened and this reveals the traumatic aspect of the deed for her.

Lucy’s point of view concerning heterosexual relationships suggests the animality present during the sexual act: “When it comes to men and 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?” (D 158). The notion of entrapment reminds of the description of sexual intercourse when David compares Melanie to a rabbit, trapped by a fox.

I believe that Lucy’s rape is more unambiguously presented in the novel than Melanie’s. Indeed, when David is locked in the lavatory during the attack, David and therefore the reader, understand that “something is wrong” (D 93). The damage that follows for Lucy is revelatory of the rape. She became pregnant and decides to keep the baby, to carry her rapists’ descendant. Her being lesbian emphasizes the damages it caused her. David thinks about the impact it must have on his daughter:

Lucy was frightened, frightened near to death. Her voice choked, she could not breathe, her limbs went numb. This is *not happening*, she said to herself as the men forced her down; *it is just a dream, a nightmare*. While the men, for their part, drank up her hear, revelled in it, did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror. *Call your dogs!* They said to her. *Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs!* (D 160).

This description by David clearly suggests that the rape was done in hatred towards white people. It was motivated by a desire for revenge, a desire to hurt. The fact that the men mentioned the dogs means that they are thrilled that this white woman cannot to anything at the moment, even calling her dogs, symbols of the white community’s need for protection. The description of Lucy’s feelings at that moment is also significant.

Following her rape, she will accept to live “like a dog” (D 205). Indeed, after she has announced to David that she will be marrying Petrus, they have a conversation:

“No, I’m not leaving. Go to Petrus and tell him what I have said. Tell him I give up the

land. Tell him that he can have it, title deed and all. He will love that.”

There is a pause between them.

“How humiliating,” he says finally. “Such high hopes, and to end like this.”

“Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but, With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.”

“Like a dog.”

“Yes, like a dog” (D 205).

She will have to forget about her values as an independent woman and, refuse to report the rape and accept to marry Petrus, the one who may be at the origin of her rape. It reveals the traumatic event that she has gone through. It is actually “against her character” (Bose 69), to become “a dead person” (D 161). This alienation suggests women’s inferiority in the novel.

Gertrude B. Makhaya in her online article entitled “*The Trouble with JM Coetzee*”, points out that the extract above:

was cited in a ruling party submission to the Human Rights Commission on Racism in the Media as an example of racist depictions of democratic South Africa as a place where black people are out to humiliate white people. It is not clear whether the intention was to label Coetzee himself as a racist (web).

Rape is an abuse of power. It can be noted that there are two types of abuse of power in the novel concerning women’s rape. Firstly, by their position as men, male characters catch women, who do not have the choice but to submit. Secondly, if one considers it possible that Petrus may have organised the rape in order to become landowner, this can be described as another type of abuse of power related to rape. Indeed, this premeditated act is an abuse of power as it aimed at making Lucy weak after the rape. It is not only a physical abuse of power, but rather a moral abuse of power.

David Lurie cannot understand his daughter’s feelings as he is a man and she believes every man is the same. It can be argued that Lucy says that her father cannot understand her situation as he has himself raped a young girl.

He starts making speculations and believes Lucy does not want to report the rape because she is ashamed: “It was a crime. There is no shame in being the object of a crime. You did not choose to be the object. You are the innocent party” (D 111). It is only after he has experienced what it is like to be the father of a raped girl that David goes to see Melanie’s father. Narayan Prasad Chudal remarks that “He [David Lurie] begins to confess his crime at the end of the novel, which he has never done before. He realises how Mr Isaacs, Melanie’s father, might be suffering from the sexual harassment of his daughter by him. Therefore, he visits Melanie’s house to beg forgiveness and to apologize to her father” (12). However, another reading would be to argue that:

The fact that Lucy is raped so violently makes it even easier for Lurie to not consider what he did to Melanie’s rape. He contemplates that some of “the legions of countesses and kitchen maids Byron pushed himself into there were no doubt those who called it rape” (D 160), insinuating that they had not really been raped because “none surely had cause to fear that the session would end with her throat being slit” (D 160). Although he does not mention Melanie here explicitly, this echoes his idea that what he did to her was not rape in the “real” sense of the word (Kalkman 23).

Indeed, “the moment Lucy and Lurie are attacked, but specifically the fact that Lucy is raped, is a pivotal incident in the novel” (Kalkman 21). Lurie begins to change. Therefore, rape can be described as the “plot device” (Kalkman 22) in *Disgrace*.

As he has been changed by Lucy’s rape, it can be argued that if the attack had not taken place, he would not have gone to Isaacs’s house to apologize. Indeed, in the first part of the novel, when Lurie was asked by a student if he regrets his action or not, he replied that he “was enriched by the experience” (D 56).

In addition to that, even if he apologised, “I am sorry for what I took your daughter through. You have a wonderful family. I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs Isaacs. I ask for your pardon” (D 171), Mr Isaacs seems to be doubtful about the truthfulness of Lurie’s assumptions:

“So”, says Isaacs, at last you have apologized. I wondered when it was coming” [...] You are sorry. You lacked the lyrical, you say. If you had had the lyrical, we would not be where we are today. But I say to myself, we are all sorry when we are found out. Then we are very sorry. The question is not, are we sorry? The question is, what lesson have we learned? The question is, what are we going to do now that we are sorry” (D 172).

Like Gertrude B. Makhaya in her online article, one could argue that

following Lucy's rape:

One of the myths that sustained apartheid turns out to be "true" after all – once the "savages" are in power, chaos reigns, and under the cover of lawlessness they exact revenge, stealing white property and raping white women. That is how crime is understood by some people in the new South Africa (web)

She gives one possible interpretation of Lucy's rape by white readers. Then, she makes a hypothesis about Coetzee's aim when writing *Disgrace*:

Is Coetzee fuelling that sentiment and purposefully soiling the image of black-led South Africa through his portrayal of an alienated white male and his "bleeding heart" daughter, who tries against all odds to live under the changed circumstances (or at least her interpretation of the changed circumstances)? Or is he arguing, benignly, that political change cannot eliminate the misery of all, as some reviewers of the book believe? (web)

It is possible to say that Coetzee depicts a coloured girl's rape and then a white woman's rape in order to represent South Africa's political system in 1997, that is to say, a democracy and therefore a so-called equality between the former racial groups.

### 3.3 - THE MALE GAZE

David Lurie is middle-aged, aging male, "a moral dinosaur" (D 89) as pointed out by his daughter. He is therefore a man unwilling to change, stuck into his old way of seeing the world.

Narayan Prasad Chudal qualifies David as a "lady killer" (159). Indeed:

If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life. [...] If he wanted a woman, he had to learn to pursue her; often, in one way or another, to buy her. He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores (D 7).

David Lurie thinks women are prey to be pursued, caught and devoured. Actually, what is at stake in the novel is that it is focalised through David's eyes. As

a result, the reader is forced to adopt a heterosexual male vision.

The novel is centrally “about [...] the violation of women” (Gane 101). As said earlier, women are silenced throughout the narrative like animals. This is linked to the notion of “the male gaze”. As explained by Janice Loreck, in her online article entitled “*Explainer: what does the “male gaze” mean, and what about a female gaze?*”:

The “male gaze” invokes the sexual politics of the gaze and suggests a sexualised way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. In the male gaze, woman is visually positioned as an “object” of heterosexual male desire. Her feelings, thoughts and her own sexual drives are less important than her being “framed” by male desire (web).

In other words, the male gaze is the act of depicting women as sexual objects for heterosexual viewers’ pleasure. The concept originally comes from film studies. Indeed, as a key idea of feminist film theory. The concept of the male gaze was introduced by scholar and filmmaker Laura Mulvey in her essay, “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*,” (1975). The concept is pertinent to the analysis of literature. This is the case in *Disgrace*. Indeed, the internal focalisation used in the whole novel forces us to see elements like David Lurie, a white heterosexual man, sees them. According to him, women have the duty to fulfil men’s desires. That is the reason why he justifies his actions by using the example of the dog who would get attracted to the female dog each time he sees her (D 90). Therefore, women’s role is only to please men’s eyes and desires. That is the reason why, in *Disgrace*, we clearly get the picture of women who do speak about the abuse they are victims of.

If in cinema, the male gaze can be noticed easily, like for instance a zoom being made on a woman’s body, it seems to be subtler in literature. The metaphors implying animals reveals the male gaze Lurie has on women (and the reader is forced to have this gaze as well). For instance, when he compares his relations with Soraya to the copulation of snakes, the image which is suggested is sexual:

Intercourse between Soraya and himself must be, he imagines, rather like the copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest” (D 3).

His perception of Soraya suggests that women must be available for men, and act in order to please men.

From the very beginning of the novel, one can feel the male gaze perpetrated by

David Lurie onto women:

Soraya emerges from the bathroom, drops her robe, slides into bed beside him. “Have you missed me?” she asks. “I miss you all the time” he replies. He strokes her honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun; he stretches her out, kisses her breasts; they make love (D 9).

At this moment when Soraya goes out from the bathroom, “drop[ping] her robe” it is as if a camera, which is in reality David Lurie’s eyes, was filming her along with the male character. As a result, the reader is invited, or rather obliged, to adopt a male position, here David’s position. According to Anneke Smelik from Radboud University Nijmegen in her article entitled “Gaze”, the male gaze is constructed in order to “enhance the visual pleasure” (Smelik 1) of the spectator. The reader can feel that David Lurie is following her walking towards him. Soraya is objectified as a sexual object and this is at the core of the male gaze concept.

Similarly, later in the narrative, the reader can feel and even share, as suggested by the concept of the male gaze, Lurie’s masculine gaze on Melanie. Is it clearly implied that David Lurie has “an eye” on her, maybe an insisting eye “Does she know he has an eye on her? Probably. Women are sensitive to it, to the weight of the desiring gaze (D 12). The use of the free indirect discourse enables the reader to understand that according to Lurie, looking at women as objects is something normal, as their role was to be looked at. Anneke Smelik explains that “the male gaze works in cinema as a form of voyeurism objectifying the womans’s body and turning it into a passive spectacle; in Mulvey’s famous words, into “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Smelik 1). Similarly, David Lurie thinks that women are made to be looked at.

In his book entitled *Ways of Seeing*, published in 1972, art critic John Berger explains that “Men act and women appear. Men look at women [...]” (*Ways of Seeing* 47). In other words, men are the ones who make actions and have responsibilities whereas women are passive. They are present as part of the furniture. The rest of Berger’s quote is interesting as he suggests that women have taken the habit of being looked at:

[...] Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (*Ways of Seeing* 47).

It depicts the male insisting gaze as something acceptable, as if women were used to feeling it. The male gaze not only objectifies women's body and identity for men. Women themselves objectify their own self-image. They have no choice but to become commodities for men but also in their own eyes. The fact that a woman becomes only "a sight", this can easily be demonstrated in *Disgrace*. One more example would be the description Lurie makes "A woman with chunky legs and no-nonsense business suit passes by and enters the apartment block" (D 33). This is what David Lurie sees. In a movie, this scene would have been showing in detail and with insistence the woman's legs by making close ups onto the woman's legs brought into focus. The male gaze in literature suggests the same thoughts as in movies.

There are other moments where the male gaze is present. When David Lurie goes to Melanie's parents' house, he feels attracted to Desiree, Melanie's younger sister, whom he finds beautiful. "Melanie the firstborn, the dark one, then Desiree, the desired one" (D 164). Here, the two sisters are being objectified. They are not seen by David Lurie as two young women but rather like two elements, one dark, one desired. His description of Desiree reveals the male gaze he has on young girl:

Desiree the beauty enters with the bottle and a corkscrew. [...] The hair that had screened her face is tossed back. She meets his gaze, still embarrassed, but stronger now that she is under her father's wing (D.168-169).

It is as if the reader could follow David's eyes on Desiree and since he has a "predatory" gaze, a male gaze into her direction, the reader is forced to see the moment like David, that is to say like a patriarchal and heterosexual man.

David's insisting gaze can be compared to the concept of the "eye rape" or "le viol par le regard" in French, which I believe to be a sort of sexual violence. It is a nonphysical rape, happening when someone's gaze, usually a man's gaze, is too insisting and harm someone's integrity, usually a woman's integrity. In the year 2019, in Geneva, during a march for women's rights, a cohort of teenage girls started chanting a slogan "Don't look at us!" It is undoubtedly linked to the notion of the male gaze, which is, according to Faustine Kopiejwski in her article entitled "*Eye rape: qu'est-ce que le concept de viol par le regard*", "par essence celui d'un prédateur – un regard qui vous déshabille. Certaines femmes l'assimilent à une forme insupportable de domination" (web). Given this definition, David Lurie's gaze on women can be defined as "eye rape". For instance, Desiree is an innocent young girl

and yet she is being looked at with desire by an older man.

Society, through literature, cinema, painting, and other forms of visual art, forces us to adopt a heterosexual man's vision, to see things from men's perspective. This fact can be noticed during Melanie's rape as well. "She opens the door wearing a crumpled T-shirt, cycling shorts, slippers in the shape of comic-book gophers which he finds silly, tasteless." (D.24). At this moment, as David lays eyes on Melanie, the reader is forced to see her image through David's eyes and thus share his vision of her. It is necessary to recall that the reader never has access to the way Melanie sees David.

In addition to that, during Melanie's rape, David is clearly portrayed as a predator. His description of Melanie during their first encounter is significant as it reveals of David Lurie's way of seeing the world:

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 (D 25).

David's opinion that it was "not rape, not quite that" (D 25), reveals his perception of what he does to her. However, the comparison between Melanie and a dying rabbit suggests that she was absent during the sexual act imposed on her. This description comforts heterosexual men as it shows a man's predatory "ability" perpetrated on a woman.

There are other expressions, linked to the lexical field of an attack, which makes David and Melanie look all the more like the predator and his prey. For example, "He has given her no warning[...]" (D 24), "She is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her (D 24), "But nothing will stop him" (D.25), "She does not resist." (D.25). I believe these expressions are part of the male gaze David has on Melanie.

The fear felt by Melanie, bearing in mind that someone could arrive anytime, makes the scene look all the more threatening. "No, not now!" she says, struggling. "My cousin will be back!" "Pauline will be back any minute" she says when it is over, "Please. You must go." (D.25). As explained earlier, this depiction is possible only thanks to the internal focalisation, one more time, which enables the reader to have David Lurie's point of view.

Therefore, his portrayal as being a predator is linked to the concept of the male gaze as it is linked to internal focalisation.

In his work entitled “The male gaze is more relevant, and more dangerous, than ever”, Kelly Olivier remarks that Laura Mulvey follows Freud in identifying “activity with masculinity and passivity with femininity” (Olivier 1). In *Disgrace*, Melanie is passive while David is active, chasing her. Her father is active also, looking to protect her, so is her boyfriend.

It makes her look as a passive prey. As a matter of fact, passivity is linked to silence. Silence is thus linked to the concept of the male gaze.

In her work entitled “The Politics of Rape: Traces of Radical Feminism in *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee”, Lianne Barnard argues that “the plot (especially the way rape as a theme is explored in many different variations and narrative situations) makes it possible to read the novel as a feminist critique of male desire, power, and willful self-ignorance” (19). Indeed, the way encounters with women are related by David Lurie, depicts a very heterosexual vision of women and it goes against the principle of respecting women.

Gillian Gane quotes Mary Eagleton who notices in her work “*Ethical reading: The Problem of Alice Walker*” that the novel “places the feminist reader in a difficult ethical position”. Indeed, while she is frustrated by Lucy’s silence, and while she shares David Lurie’s concern about his daughter, David Lurie remains a character “with whom [she has] very little sympathy” (Eagleton 196).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the omnipresence of animals and animal imagery throughout the novel reveals the importance of animals in Coetzee's works. *Disgrace* remains a very controversial novel. Opinions differ on this novel and critical works are still being published about it.

Coetzee is an admired but also criticised writer, partly for his analogies between animal suffering and suffering in the concentration camps in *The Lives of Animals*. In *Disgrace*, drawing comparison between his characters in distress and animals is a way to portray animal suffering. It is in his highly disturbed state of mind, face to the incapability to act and protect his daughter who accepts her rape as an act of retribution, that David Lurie becomes aware of the fate of the animals around him for the first time. This is one more disgrace for him. Lurie will now serve the dead dogs to honour them, to save the honour of the corpses and to show them some kind of love. The death of all these innocent dogs, and especially the joyful three-legged dog, makes the reader feel the atrocity of animal suffering and the fact that David takes care of them, in a kind of messianic way, is a significant turning point for him. Then, the dead dogs appear to be saviours for David Lurie's shame. By giving up the dog at the end, he also gives up his previous social position. Therefore, his fall from grace stands for the equality in South Africa which is slowly taking place.

Animal metaphors help to highlight the characters' disgrace. Actually, *Disgrace* is the ideal word for the title because disgrace touches every character of the novel in some way. It can be through the ways they have affected others and also through the ways that others have affected them. For instance, David Lurie's behaviour towards Melanie is disgraceful for both of the characters. David Lurie is depicted like a man completely lacking respect and this is disgraceful for him. When being seduced and then raped by her professor, Melanie is in a state of disgrace. In addition to that, David Lurie keeps comparing her to animals. Similarly, David, his daughter Lucy, who will give life as a result of rape, and Petrus, will be compared to animals, which reveals the state of disgrace they find themselves in. At the end, the characters come back from their disgrace as different persons. Lurie is experiencing changes at the farm; Lucy has resigned to start from scratch. Petrus is now a landowner. There is no mention of Melanie's life after the rape, but when David goes as far as spying on her when he returns to Cape Town, the reader learns that she has

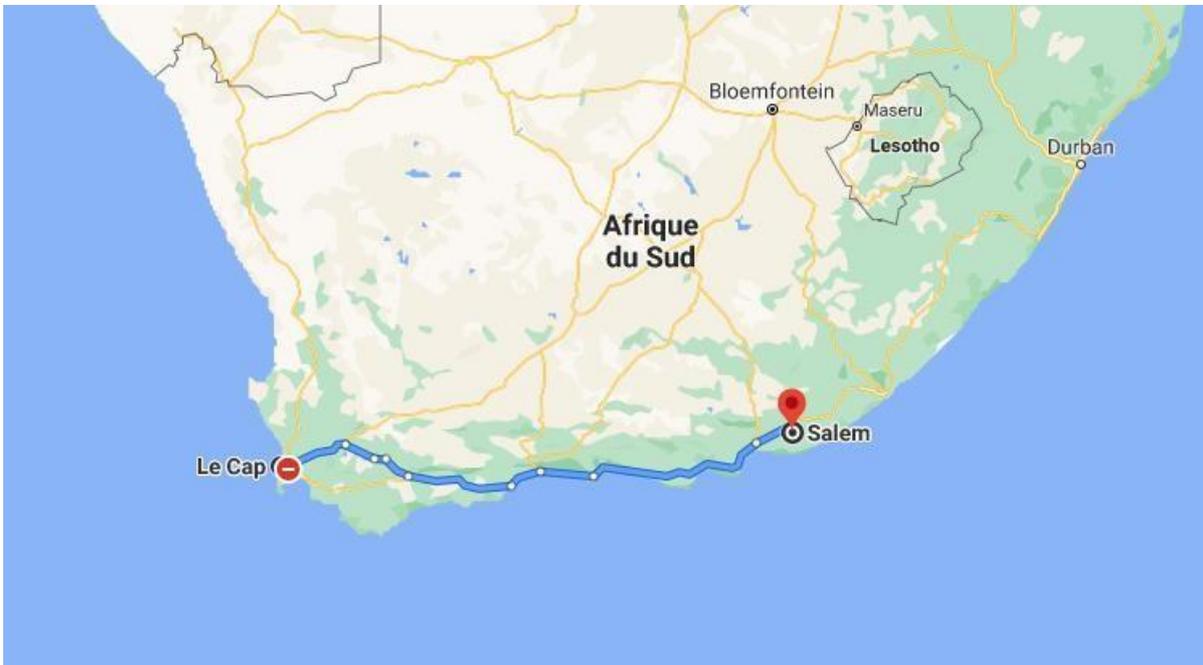
been back to the university, still performing plays.

Let us not forget the fact that the use of animal imagery also sheds light on important topics, and sometimes untold events, like Lucy's and Melanie's rapes. To summarise, one can say that animal imagery is linked to disgrace, which is itself linked to silence. Silence is linked to violence as it is caused by violence, which is represented through intersectional discrimination and acts of moral and or physical abuse. Silence is also linked to the male gaze, which imposes an insisting inappropriate gaze on women, who are condemned to silence.

Ever since the Booker prize winning South African novel was published in 1999, it has been a matter that is fraught with controversy. Indeed, while some people condemned this novel as being a racist text, implying some elements showing that one "race" is or could be superior to another one or other "races", others have appreciated the author's depiction of a gloomy and comfortless picture of the post-apartheid South Africa.

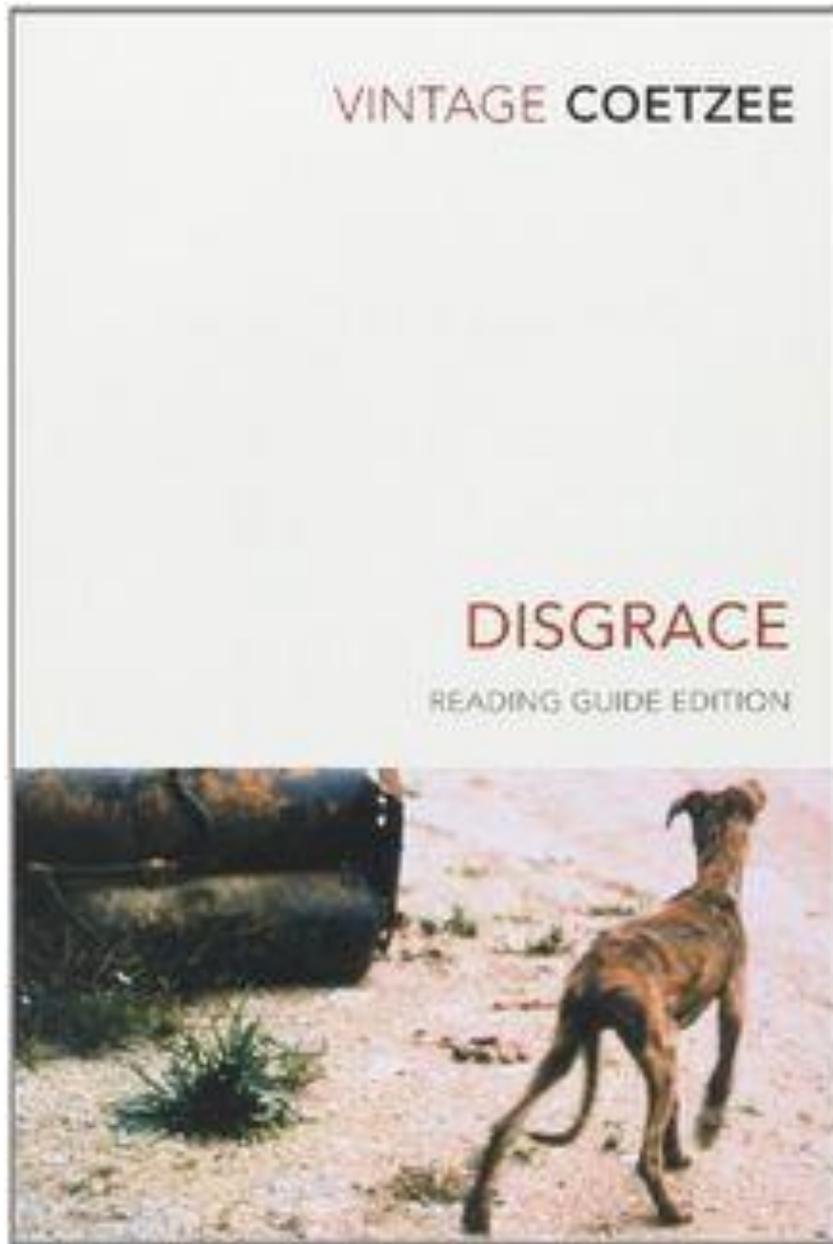
The Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes South Africa after the end of apartheid as being a Rainbow Nation, or a multicultural country where all people from different origins live in harmony. When reading *Disgrace*, the reader is led to think that J.M. Coetzee's novel does not strive for the achievement of a possible Rainbow Nation at all. On the contrary, it depicts a gloomy vision of South Africa after the end of apartheid, in which people, who were once part of the different racial groups, have very conflictual relationships. The former oppressed people seem to hate white people, who used to be at the top of the social ladder, and at the origin of all the injustices inflicted on black and coloured people. In *Disgrace* this hatred results in crime. However, Lucy's baby can be considered as a "rainbow baby", as being the mixed-raced child of a white woman and one of her black attackers.

## ANNEXE(S)

Annexe 1:

Salem is a little settler village 20 km south of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, 878 km from Cape Town.

Annexe 2:



Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace* (1999), Vintage Edition, London, Penguin Books, 2010.  
(Cover page).

Annexe 3:

During apartheid, dogs were used as means of protection. They were the symbols of the “white” supremacy.

Source: Picture found on Pinterest; link: <https://pin.it/3VrUNLD>

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## ABSTRACT/RÉSUMÉ

To understand J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, it is necessary to explain and explore the ways in which the author uses animal metaphors and animal imagery in *Disgrace* as a lens to highlight important yet untold topics.

This dissertation's aim is to shed light on the denunciations the author formulates through the use of literary devices using animals.

Parts of the novel that are difficult to read and understand are tackled. For instance, the silence that follows the specific act of violence that is rape, is analysed. The role of the male gaze and the concept of intersectionality are also examined.

In parallel to human suffering, this study makes the reader grow aware of the suffering of animals as it is expressed in *Disgrace*.

Keywords: South Africa; Post-Apartheid; Metaphors; Animals; Silence; Intersectionality; Violence; Rape

Pour comprendre le roman de J.M. Coetzee intitulé *Disgrace*, il est nécessaire d'analyser et d'expliquer les manières dont l'auteur utilise les métaphores et les images liées aux animaux comme un prisme pour mettre l'accent sur des sujets importants mais qui ne sont pas révélés explicitement dans le roman.

L'objectif de ce mémoire est de mettre en lumière les dénonciations faites par l'auteur, par le biais de procédés littéraires utilisant des animaux.

Les parties du roman qui sont difficiles à comprendre sont abordées, comme par exemple le silence qui résulte d'une violence spécifique, le viol. Le rôle du regard masculin et le concept d'intersectionnalité sont également examinés.

Parallèlement à la souffrance humaine, cette étude sensibilise le lecteur à la souffrance animale telle qu'elle est exprimée dans *Disgrace*.

Mots-clés : Afrique du Sud ; Post-Apartheid ; Métaphores ; Animaux ; Silence ; Intersectionnalité ; Violence ; Viol