

Chapter 5

The Possibility of Secular Salvation in the Writings and Fiction of J.M. Coetzee: Sister Bridget's Challenge to Humanism

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

John Newton (1779)

The verses in the epigraph are from a Christian hymn written by the former captain of a slave ship involved in the Atlantic slave trade who eventually converted to Christianity and repented his role in the slave trade for the rest of his life. His hymn is based on a prayer by King David (1 Chronicles 17: 16-17) and expresses gratitude for moments of grace in which he was saved from sin. His work as a priest inspired William Wilberforce, whose efforts to abolish the slave trade in Britain eventually succeeded in 1823. Newton's story raises interesting questions about personal and general complicity in an evil institution such as slavery, considered normal at the

time, and whether there is the need for divine intervention, or moments of grace, to achieve salvation, questions at the heart of much of Coetzee's writing.

The question of (secular) salvation is one of the most difficult ones in Coetzee's writings. It is not clear why a secular writer like Coetzee should feel the need to use the biblical narrative of the fall, grace and redemption at all. However, he does use such religious terminology in secular contexts, and so this needs to be explored. It is fair to ask, then, what exactly his protagonists need to be saved from. Is it from their guilt at being (unwillingly) complicit in exploitative and brutal social, political and economic structures, such as colonialism, Nazism, apartheid and the industrialised farming of animals? Is it from being perpetrators or victims in these systems? Does salvation relate to suffering and death? Or is the disgrace being born into a world that is fallen and inherently imperfect, if not evil? Is Coetzee concerned with the salvation not only of his protagonists but also of the entire world they inhabit? It will be argued, in the following chapter, that the state of disgrace in *Disgrace* is realised at all levels, that the novel depicts an entire world in a fallen state requiring salvation, but without the possibility of divine intervention or grace. It is just such a fallen world that Elizabeth Costello tries to bring to her audience's attention in *The Lives of Animals*. This raises the further question whether the vision of the world in these two novels is inescapably pessimistic, whether there is any space for optimism.

In the interview preceding his essay, "Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky," in *Doubling the Point*, Coetzee distinguishes between religious and secular confessions (Coetzee, 1992, 251-52) and relates confession to a process of transgression, penance and absolution (251). He also distinguishes between confession, memoir and apology as separate autobiographical modes and acknowledges Montaigne in this context (252). Of course, the dialogue, or interview, preceding the essay is a form of confession for Coetzee himself. In the "Introduction" to *Doubling*, David Attwell offers grace as one way of achieving closure but acknowledges, with Coetzee, the difficulty of transferring religious terms to a non-religious context (11).

Coetzee concludes his essay thus: "True confession does not come from the sterile

monologue of the self or from the dialogue of the self with its own self-doubt, but . . . from faith and grace” (291). Attwell reiterates the need for grace in the interview that precedes the essay and the lack of a secular equivalent (247). Coetzee’s answer to this involves the body and the pain that it can feel:

Whatever else, the body is not ‘that which is not,’ and the proof that it *is* is the pain it feels. The body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt. (248)

He continues:

Not grace, then, but at least the body. Let me put it baldly: in South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. . . . [I]t is not that one *grants* the authority of the suffering body: the suffering body *takes* this authority: that is its power. To use other words: its power is undeniable. (248)

The latter extract is followed by the parenthetical words that provided the first epigraph to Chapter 1 and together they suggest that Coetzee is concerned with the problem of suffering at the deepest level, at the level at which the idea of suffering and its removal (hence salvation) are at the heart of Buddhist teachings and of Christian theodicies. His sentiments are echoed by the words of Isaac Bashevis Singer, a writer for whom Coetzee appears to have a close affinity even though he does not explicitly acknowledge him:

The same questions are bothering me today as they did fifty years ago. Why is one born? Why does one suffer? In my case, the suffering of animals also makes me very sad. I’m a vegetarian, you know. When I see how little attention people pay to animals, and how easily they make peace with man being allowed to do with animals whatever he wants because he keeps a knife or a gun, it gives me a feeling of misery and sometimes anger with the Almighty. I say “Do you need your glory to be connected with so much suffering of creatures without glory, just innocent creatures

who would like to pass a few years in peace?” I feel that animals are as bewildered as we are except that they have no words for it. I would say that all life is asking: “What am I doing here?” (*Newsweek* interview, 16 October 1978 after winning the Nobel Prize in literature) ¹

Coetzee emphasizes the importance of Dostoevsky in achieving closure to the apparent endlessness of confession:

Against the endlessness of skepticism Dostoevsky poses the closure not of confession but of absolution and therefore of the intervention of grace in the world. In that sense Dostoevsky is not a psychological novelist at all To the extent that I am taken as a political novelist, it may be because I take it as given that people must be treated as fully responsible beings: psychology is no excuse. Politics, in its wise stupidity, is at one with religion here: one man, one soul: no half-measures. What saves me from a merely stupid stupidity, I would hope, is a measure of charity, which is, I suppose, the way in which grace allegorizes itself in the world. (Coetzee, 1992, 249)

However, when Attwell asks Coetzee later in the interview whether the ending of *Age of Iron* can be interpreted allegorically as representing the intervention of grace and whether Elizabeth Curren can be seen to have achieved absolution, Coetzee is evasive about the possibility of grace:

As for your question about absolution for Elizabeth, the end of the novel seems to me more troubled (in the sense that the sea can be troubled) than you imply. But here I am stepping onto precarious ground, on precarious water; I had better stop. As for grace, no, regrettably no: I am not a Christian, or not yet. (250)

This leads to the question of how salvation is possible in a post-Christian world without recourse to the idea of God’s saving grace. It has been pointed out that

¹Since this quotation comes from the International Vegetarian Union website (IVU), no page reference can be provided.

Montaigne, an author important to Coetzee not merely on the issue of confession but also in attacking the presumption of humans (generally) and rationalist philosophers (specifically), as well—as we have seen—as being one of the few European men of letters to condemn cruelty to animals, argued that without God’s grace there can be no salvation (Montaigne, 1991, 499). Although he admired Socrates more than any other philosopher he could not accord him the saintly status that Erasmus did, and he felt that Socratic wisdom cannot lead to salvation, since Socrates was ignorant of the Truth of the Catholic Church (Montaigne, 1991, xvii). Nonetheless, as was argued in earlier chapters, the very unattainability of any ultimate “Truth,” means that the most trustworthy guide humans can have is a fallible figure such as Socrates who does not presume to possess the truth but rather tries to provoke others to seek the truth and to question their most deeply held assumptions and prejudices. It was argued that Elizabeth Costello performs just such a role in *The Lives of Animals*, except as a writer and poet rather than a philosopher. Thus Coetzee, like Isaac Bashevis Singer, has faith in art, or poetry, as a possible means of salvation, not in the sense of attaining bliss in the afterlife, but virtue, morality and justice in this life. In particular, the poet strives to instil compassion or empathy in his or her readers for the characters he or she creates through the sympathetic imagination. In terms of *Disgrace* this applies not only to Lurie and his opera but also to Coetzee’s novel and his readership.

In a series of penetrating Levinasian analyses of *Disgrace*, Mike Marais argues that art can facilitate “self-substituting responsibility,” where one overcomes domination of the other by sacrificing oneself for the other. However, he also points out that there is the danger that fiction can completely dominate the other by failing to respect the other’s alterity (Marais, June 2000). This is why Dostoevsky’s polyphony is so important to Coetzee, since it mitigates the author’s complete domination of his or her subject. Indeed, (the desire for) domination is perhaps one of the most significant sources of evil in the world and one of the central problems that Coetzee explores in his novels.

Typically, Coetzee problematizes the idea of salvation through art and the humanities throughout his work but most explicitly in “The Humanities in Africa,” which appears as Lesson 5 in *Elizabeth Costello*, where Elizabeth Costello’s sister, Blanche, now a Catholic nun known as Sister Bridget, is offered an honorary doctorate in the humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand in recognition of her work with HIV-infected children at the Hospital of the Blessed Mary on the Hill, in Marianhill, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. Her voice is a striking example of Coetzee’s use of polyphony since it is a very powerful indictment of the humanities in which Coetzee has invested his life’s work. Indeed, it can be seen as a piece of confession on his part. In her speech she notes how embattled humanity departments are in Africa and throughout the world (no doubt partly as a result of “the great rationalization” that Lurie mentions in *Disgrace*), but instead of offering any consolation she goes on to attack *litterae humaniores* or “humane studies” as irrelevant to life and as a false route to salvation, having departed, during the Renaissance, from their original aim of biblical textual scholarship, namely the correct interpretation, understanding and translation of the Word of God:

“The message I bring is that you lost your way long ago, perhaps as long as five centuries ago. The handful of men among whom the movement originated of whom you represent, I fear, the sad tail—those men were animated, at least at first, by the purpose of finding the True Word, by which they understood then, and I understand now, the redemptive word.

“That word cannot be found in the classics, whether you understand the classics to mean Homer and Sophocles or whether you understand them to mean Homer and Shakespeare and Dostoevsky. . . .

“... The *studia humanitatis* have taken a long time to die, but now, at the end of the second millennium of our era, they are truly on their deathbed. All the more bitter should be that death, I would say, since it has been brought about by the monster enthroned by those very studies as first and animating principle of the universe: the monster of reason,

mechanical reason. But that is another story for another day.” (Coetzee, 2003, 122-23)

In the dinner that follows the graduation ceremony, reminiscent of the dinner in *The Lives of Animals*, the professor seated next to Elizabeth Costello asserts, contra Sister Bridget, that the faculties of the humanities are relevant to a secular age and are the core of the modern university. Costello reflects to herself that “if she were asked to name the core of the university today, its core discipline, she would say it was money-making” (Coetzee, 2003, 125). This reflection of Costello’s, her sister’s comment on “the monster of reason, mechanical reason” (which resembles Costello’s own denouncing of reason in *The Lives of Animals*), and David Lurie’s scornful remarks on “the great rationalization” (Coetzee, 1999a, 3) and “emasculated institution of learning” (4) in *Disgrace* are part of Coetzee’s critique of the managerial approach to running universities and society, originating in Enlightenment rationalism, although in a reductive form of it, namely a narrow utilitarianism. It will be argued that this is a major part of the fallen nature of the globalized world that Coetzee criticizes in his later novels.

When Costello asks the professor to consider her sister’s interesting claim that there was “[s]omething wrong with placing hopes and expectations on the humanities that they could never fulfill” (Coetzee, 2003, 125), he replies, without really engaging with Blanche’s challenge—indeed misrepresenting her position as fatalism—and without acknowledging that the idea of a fallen human nature is an idea borrowed by the humanities from the Bible, and, in fact, relying on clichés and a reference to Alexander Pope’s “Essay on Man”:

“The proper study of mankind is man,’ says Professor Godwin. ‘And the nature of man is a fallen nature. Even your sister would agree with that. But that should not prevent us from trying—trying to improve. Your sister wants us to give up on man and go back to God. . . . She wants us to plunge back into the Christian fatalism of what I would call the Low Middle Ages.’” (125)

Costello then recounts her own youth when she and her fellow students would look to literature for salvation, even if some of the authors turned out to be false prophets like Lawrence and his “dark gods” (126-27):

“What I mean to say is that in our truest reading, as students, we searched the page for guidance, guidance in perplexity. We found it in Lawrence, or we found it in Eliot, the early Eliot: a different kind of guidance, perhaps, but guidance nevertheless in how to live our lives. . . .

“If the humanities want to survive, surely it is those energies and that craving for guidance that they must respond to: a craving that is, in the end, a quest for salvation.” (127)

Costello’s mentioning salvation in this secular context echoes her earlier comments in *The Lives of Animals* about the need for salvation and will hopefully help to illuminate the idea of salvation in *Disgrace*.

When the Dean, who overhears Costello, asks whether she thinks the future of the humanities is dark, she replies that “[f]or my one part, I would say that it is enough for books to teach us about ourselves” and immediately goes on to reflect that “[t]eaching us about ourselves: what else is that but *studium humanitatis*?” (128).

The Socratic overtones of Costello’s words are quite clear, reinforcing the insights of previous chapters that Costello is a Socratic figure, except in terms of poetry rather than philosophy, and in terms of Bakhtin’s polyphony, the latter exemplified in the dinner conversation just being described. Sister Bridget has a pointed reply:

“I do not need to consult novels,” says her sister, “to know what pettiness, what baseness, what cruelty human beings are capable of. That is where we start, all of us. We are fallen creatures. If the study of mankind amounts to no more than picturing to us our darker potential, I have better things to spend my time on. If on the other hand the study of mankind is to be a study in what reborn man can be, that is another story.” (128)

When a young man suggests that the humanities, as the technique of reading and interpretation, are best suited to helping people through this modern, multi-cultural age, Sister Bridget expresses her disapproval of the early humanist scholars who, while they were not crypto-atheists, were crypto-relativists in that, instead of respecting Christ's universality, they relativised him in his historical context (130). She also mentions those scholars who thought that:

“Greece provided a better civilizational ideal than Judaeo-Christianity. Or, for that matter, those who believed that mankind had lost its way and should go back to its primitive roots and make a fresh start. In other words, the anthropologists.” (130)

The Dean interrupts the conversation and it ends with Sister Bridget's intolerant views. Despite having the final say, her narrow fundamentalism leaves a bad taste in the mouths of her auditors, not least her sister. Elizabeth Costello finds equally disconcerting her private conversation with her sister immediately following the dinner and her visit, the next day, to the Marianhill Hospital, where she experiences first hand her sister's idea of salvation.

In their conversation after the dinner, Blanche points out what she sees as the failure of Hellenism, which, according to her, was “the one alternative to the Christian vision that humanism was able to offer” (131). Costello replies:

“But Hellenism was surely just a phase in the history of the humanities. Larger, more inclusive visions of what human life can be have emerged since then. The classless society, for instance. Or a world from which poverty, disease, illiteracy, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and the rest of the bad litany have been exorcised. I am not putting in a plea for either of these visions. I am just pointing out that people cannot live without hope, or perhaps without illusions. If you turned to any of those people we had lunch with and asked them, as humanists or at least as card-carrying practitioners of the humanities, to state the goal of all their efforts, surely they would reply that, however indirectly, they strive to

improve the lot of mankind.” (132)

Blanche replies:

“Yes. And therein they reveal themselves as true followers of their humanist forebears. Who offered a secular vision of salvation. Rebirth without the intervention of Christ. By the workings of man alone. Renaissance. . . . Well, it cannot be done.” (133)

When Costello suggests that Blanche sees damnation for all of those who seek salvation outside of the Catholic Church, her sister concludes:

“I said nothing of damnation. I am talking only about history, about the record of the humanist enterprise. It cannot be done. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salvatio.*” (133)

The divergence between Costello and her sister’s worldviews is especially evident in their different attitudes to art. Costello is appalled by the single-minded devotion of Joseph, the resident carver at Marianhill, to carving the same image of the crucified Christ his whole life until arthritis ends his craft: “What does it do to a person’s—if I dare to use the word—*soul* to spend his working life carving a man in agony over and over again?” (137). Blanche replies at length, concluding, “Which of us, I now ask, will Jesus be most gladdened to welcome into his kingdom: Joseph, with his wasted hands, or you, or me?” (138). In all of her conversations, Blanche shows no uncertainty as to the existence of God. Her fundamentalist certainty is in strong contrast to Costello’s Socratic fallibility and is all the more repellent for it. Against Blanche’s vision of art serving religion, Costello pits the Greek ideal of bodily youth and beauty:

“I am asking what you, you yourself, have against beauty. Why should people not be able to look at a work of art and think to themselves, *That is what we as a species are capable of being, that is what I am capable of being*, rather than looking at it and thinking to themselves, *My God, I*

am going to die, I am going to be eaten by worms?" [Coetzee's emphases]
(139)

Blanche argues that Greek ideals were not foreign to the Zulus, and that “when Europeans first came in contact with the Zulus, educated Europeans, men from England with public-school educations behind them, they thought they had rediscovered the Greeks” (140). Yet, according to Blanche, when the colonial administrators offered the Zulus a kind of secular salvation, the elimination of disease, poverty and decay through reason and the sciences, the Zulus chose Christ instead because they knew better, because “they [especially African women] suffer and he [Christ] suffers with them” (141). When Costello asks whether it is not because he promises them another, better life after death, Blanche replies, “No. To the people who come to Marianhill I promise nothing except that we will help them bear their cross” (141). This is a stark, unattractive vision of salvation, which has no place for Greek ideals of beauty or of the redemptive powers of art and appears to preclude the possibility of secular salvation. It also seems a bit naïve in failing to locate the source of African poverty and suffering in colonialism and Apartheid, apparently assuming that such suffering is inevitable. Despite Blanche’s powerful critique of humanism, this thesis will try to develop Coetzee’s case for secular salvation through art, making use not only of Christian ideas of salvation (translated in a secular context) but also those of Hellenism and of anthropology.

Blanche is relentless. Instead of trying to part with her sister amicably—most likely their last parting before they die—she takes the opportunity to have the last word, speaking on behalf of the Africans:

“... remember it is what they have made of him, they, the ordinary people. What they have made of him and what he has let them make of him. Out of love. ... Ordinary people do not want the Greeks. They do not want the realm of pure forms. They do not want marble statues. They want someone who suffers like them. Like them and for them.

...

“You backed a loser, my dear. If you had put your money on a different Greek you might still have stood a chance. Orpheus rather than Apollo. The ecstatic instead of the rational. Someone who changes form, changes colour, according to his surroundings. Someone who can die but then come back. A chameleon. A phoenix. Someone who appeals to women. Because it is women who live closest to the ground. Someone who moves among the people, whom they can touch—put their hand into the side of, feel the wound, smell the blood. But you didn’t, and you lost. You went for the wrong Greeks, Elizabeth.” (144-45)

There is a marked lack of humanity, even charity, in Blanche’s parting comments. In a sense, however, Costello has the last say, although in a letter that she never sends to Blanche, and a letter which she nonetheless censors, excluding the part where she describes how she tried to share her naked, erotic beauty with a man, a friend of her mother, on his deathbed in hospital. As in the rest of the stories relating to Costello, aging and death are ever-present realities in “The Humanities in Africa.” It is arguable that Costello shows greater compassion because of the very personal nature of her giving of herself to another individual, whereas Blanche is serving a higher cause than that of the suffering individual. She concludes her first letter with the conviction that:

“The humanities teach us humanity. After the centuries-long Christian night, the humanities give us back our beauty, our human beauty. That was what you forgot to say. That is what the Greeks teach us, Blanche, the right Greeks. Think about it.” (151)

Like “The Humanities in Africa,” *Disgrace* is set in post-apartheid South Africa. It is clear from the analysis of the former work that making a case for secular salvation in *Disgrace* will be very challenging. In fact, some critics, like Elizabeth Lowry in “Like a Dog,” have concluded that *Disgrace* is a completely pessimistic novel. She notes that:

Coetzee's fiction is in many ways informed by an old-fashioned liberal-humanist vision. The novels demonstrate clearly that absolute power over the other, power without pity, is always asserted at great cost. . . . The world being jettisoned is that of David Lurie and Mrs Curren, with its interest in Romantic poetry and the classics—a world whose humanist values have failed to resolve the conflict between coloniser and colonised. And yet these very values—a respect for the individual, sympathy, restraint—become the measure of what is missing, in human terms, in the revolution. (Lowry, 1999)²

In order to ascertain how Coetzee can realise the ideal of secular salvation in *Disgrace*, it will be necessary first to explore in more detail the nature of the fallen world in which the novel is set. It will be necessary to widen the scope of the concept of disgrace from a narrow application to David Lurie to a broader application to the very milieu and ethos he inhabits. It is a layered ethos that will require a sociological, historical, mythological and anthropological excavation, using the very tools of the humanities that Blanche dismisses. Indeed, the biblical narratives that form the basis of her faith will also be subject to such an analysis, which will use some of the insights that Elizabeth Costello and Coetzee offer in *The Lives of Animals* in order to attempt to ascertain the origins and meaning of humanity and its fallen nature. It will trace not just one but several moments in human history when humans have fallen into ever deeper disgrace. It will also seek in history, most notably in Hellenistic philosophy (despite Blanche), for an ethics of secular salvation, using these as a basis for Lucy Lurie's vision of the world and for bridging the divide between humans and animals that the Judaeo-Christian tradition has enforced.³ The thesis will then explore how Coetzee attempts to find salvation in animals.

It was when humankind's prehuman ancestors started eating meat that they obtained the protein necessary for the cerebral boost that eventually led to their dominance as a species. This is true even though humankind's prehuman ancestors most

²Since this extract is taken from a webpage, no page reference can be provided.

³Peter Singer subjects the biblical attitude of domination over animals and nature to a sustained critique in *Animal Liberation*.

probably did not kill their own prey but started off as scavengers. Nonetheless, in a sense the very foundations of humanity are based on violence. Paradoxically, that choice to start eating meat has given humans the power to choose to abstain from meat, which they do not need in order to survive or even, indeed, to thrive. It can be argued that humankind's fall from grace occurred not when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but rather when the pre-human ancestors started eating meat, thereby gaining the knowledge of good and evil. Nonetheless, even in the biblical myth the fall from grace of Adam and Eve was accompanied by the inclusion of meat in their previously vegetarian—indeed fruitarian—diet. Thus meat-eating is a concession to humankind's fallen and sinful nature. Peter Singer and Elizabeth Costello would argue that this myth is merely an excuse for eating meat, a biblically sanctified excuse for a brutal practice in order to ease the conscience of those participating in it. However, it could be argued that in order to live a less sinful, more perfect, virtuous and compassionate life, believers in the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition should abstain from meat in an attempt to recover the prelapsarian state of grace. This may help to cast light on Costello's vegetarianism: for her, meat-eating represents a fall into sin, and salvation consists, at least in part, in abstaining from eating meat. A quotation from Isaac Bashevis Singer helps to illuminate further Costello's comment on salvation being the motivation behind her vegetarianism:

The only justification for killing animals is the fact that man can keep a knife or an axe in his hands and is shrewd enough and selfish enough to do slaughter for what he thinks is his own good. The Old Testament has many passages where the passion for meat is considered to be evil. According to the Bible, it was only a compromise with so-called human nature that God had allowed people to eat meat. ...

...I personally am very pessimistic about the hope that humanity's disregard for animals will end soon. I'm sometimes afraid that we are approaching an epoch when the hunting of human beings may become

a sport. But it is good that there are some people who express a deep protest against the killing and torturing of the helpless, playing with their fear of death, enjoying their misery. Even if God or nature sides with the killers, the vegetarian is saying: I protest the ways of God and man. We may admire God's wisdom but we are not obliged to praise what seems to us His lack of mercy. It may be that somewhere the Almighty has an answer for what He is doing. It may be that one day we shall grasp His answer. But as long as we don't understand it, we shouldn't agree and we shouldn't flatter Him. (Giehl, 1979, Foreword)

Coetzee appears to share Isaac Bashevis Singer's highly principled attitude to vegetarianism as well as his pessimism that things will not change for the better soon. Besides helping to explain Costello's comments on her vegetarianism, it also may help to understand her "GOD-DOG" anagram in "At the Gate," showing how a change in our attitude towards animals along with our conception of God is absolutely necessary for our salvation. This will be explored further in the next chapter. Isaac Bashevis Singer expresses these ideas with great power, linking vegetarianism with justice, both human and divine:

When a human kills an animal for food, he is neglecting his own hunger for justice. Man prays for mercy, but is unwilling to extend it to others. Why should man then expect mercy from God? It's unfair to expect something that you are not willing to give. It is inconsistent.

I can never accept inconsistency or injustice. Even if it comes from God. If there would come a voice from God saying, "I'm against vegetarianism!" I would say, "Well, I am for it!" This is how strongly I feel in this regard. (Rosen, 1997, Preface)

It could also be argued, as it is in James Serpell's *In the Company of Animals*, one of the books used by Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, that the fall from grace, or a second fall, occurred when humankind was forced to make the shift from hunter-gathering to cultivation, which was accompanied by the domestication of animals.

The relatively care-free existence of the hunter and gatherer, whose needs were provided for directly by nature, was replaced by the difficult and labour-intensive existence of the cultivator, dependent on the vagaries of climate and weather and requiring careful planning and social organisation. Again there is a biblical parallel for this traumatic shift in human society in the story of Cain, the cultivator, and Abel, the hunter and, significantly, the one favoured by God. The murder of Abel by Cain marks this painful shift from hunting to cultivation, and is accompanied by Cain's fall into utter disgrace, indeed, a cursed state. With the agricultural revolution and the rise of civilization came new forms of violence: hierarchy,⁴ the division of labour, the domestication of animals, slavery, centralised government, taxes, empire and war.

Besides the biblical parallels to what anthropology has learned about the history of humankind, there are similar precedents in the myth of ancient Greece, particularly in Hesiod, who traced the ages of man, from the Golden Age ruled by Kronos, to the Ages of Silver and Bronze ruled by Zeus and to the Age of Iron, each subsequent age representing a degeneration of the previous. The pessimism of these ancient myths contrasts starkly with the modern belief in progress through science. Significantly, Coetzee has named a novel *Age of Iron*, which is set in the dying days of apartheid, the ethos of which is certainly degenerate. In Hesiod's Golden Age, however, vegetarianism was part of the blessed way of life.

The next great revolution was the Industrial Revolution, which pessimists may see as the latest in the series of falls into sin that humanity has made. This revolution was accompanied by the revolution in science and by an acceleration in colonialism (apartheid being a late development of colonialism), culminating in the triumph of rationalism in the Enlightenment, a narrowly instrumentalist form of this being the origin of the managerialism touched on earlier in this chapter. This pessimistic view of these revolutions, of course, runs counter to the optimistic liberal belief in progress in science and civilization, and it is perhaps hypocritical of critics and scholars to enjoy

⁴According to the philosopher Steve Best, hierarchy rather than class, sex or race is the most basic reason underlying all forms of oppression in the world, both of humans and nonhumans. Indeed, he argued at the launch of Animal Rights Africa, at the Wits Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2008, that the slavery of humans was preceded by the domestication of animals, the two institutions sharing the language and techniques of violence and bondage.

the benefits of modern technology and civilization while criticising the science and rationalism behind them. Nonetheless, the Enlightenment belief in progress through science was powerfully brought into question by the ravages of colonialism, two world wars, the rise of totalitarianism, the invention of weapons of mass destruction and the Nazi genocide with its numerous imitators throughout the twentieth century. Coetzee makes it clear through the mouth of Costello in *The Lives of Animals* that science has been disgraced by its complicity in the animal exploitation industries, not only in testing on animals and vivisection but also in the technical “refinement” of animal factories. In this thesis, this pessimism will be characterised as Nietzschean and the optimism as Socratic, continuing the opposition of these two figures from Chapter 2. It should be remembered, too, that in Chapter 1, Alasdair MacIntyre was quoted as arguing that since the Kantian and utilitarian philosophies have failed to resolve basic ethical problems, the stark choice remains between a Nietzschean or an Aristotelian ethics.

As discussed in previous chapters, Costello repeatedly compares the factory farms and slaughter houses of modern agriculture to the death camps of the Holocaust in *The Lives of Animals*, thus damning the industrialised farming of animals in the strongest possible terms. As pointed out in Chapter 4, she says that the originators of this industry should be foremost among those seeking atonement (Coetzee, 1999b, 61). For Costello, in these farms, as in the Nazi death camps, we see human nature fallen to its lowest level, both in terms of the people who run and profit from these farms and the consumers who buy their products. Modern factory farms are “triumphs” of instrumentalist rationalism in terms of the supposed efficiency with which they are run. Indeed, the apparent efficiency of the Chicago slaughter houses, their disassembly lines, was apparently the inspiration behind Fordism, namely Henry Ford’s assembly line, which revolutionised industrial production in the twentieth century, and which was taken to even further “scientific” extremes in the form of Taylorism.⁵ Costello

⁵Scientific management (also called Taylorism or the Taylor system) is a theory of management that analyzes and synthesizes workflows, with the objective of improving labour productivity.

discusses the relatively more honorable but less efficient modes of hunting and bull-fighting as means of acquiring meat for human consumption, pointing out that “we are too many” (Coetzee, 1999b, 52). Interestingly, her words are echoed in *Disgrace* by those of Bev Shaw: “there are just too many of them” (85) and the narrator: “*because we are too menny*” (146), except here they are referring to dogs rather than humans. She then goes on to point out that:

“We need factories of death; we need factory animals. Chicago showed us the way; it was from the Chicago stockyards that the Nazis learned how to process bodies.” (Coetzee, 1999b, 53)

In fact, we do not need these factories of death because we do not need to eat meat in order to live healthily. Our decision to eat meat is not moral but aesthetic, in that we like the taste of flesh. In his speech in Sydney 2007, Coetzee himself points to the psychic cost of our complicity in the meat industry:

To any thinking person, it must be obvious there is something terribly wrong with relations between human beings and the animals they rely on for food. It must also be obvious that in the past 100 or 150 years, whatever is wrong has become wrong on a huge scale, as traditional animal husbandry has been turned into an industry using industrial methods of production.

There are many other ways in which our relationship with animals is wrong (to name two: the fur trade and experimentation on animals in laboratories), but the food industry, which turns living animals into what it euphemistically calls animal products and by-products, dwarfs all others in the number of individual animal lives it affects. (Coetzee, 2007b)⁶

Indeed, the sheer scale of the meat industry beggars the imagination since it is estimated that in 2008 over 50 billion animals were slaughtered for food. However, Frances Moore Lappé shows how the apparent efficiency of industrial farming is an

⁶Since this quotation is from a web page, no page references can be given.

illusion. It puts small farmers out of work, uses at least half of the world's grain and water supplies, pollutes the environment, including water, on a massive scale, and contributes towards, rather than solves, the problems of world hunger and impoverishment. She points out that farming animals, especially cattle, for meat is so inefficient that it is like "a protein factory in reverse" (Lappé, 1991, 67). Coetzee, however, does not mention the environmental costs and economic inefficiency of industrialised farming, since he is concerned mainly with the abuse and destruction of individual animal lives. His apparent rejection of ecology in *The Lives of Animals* may be, in part, because it also seems to fall into the managerial mode, aiming to replace the inefficiencies of industrial production with a more effective management of resources by means, for instance, of recycling and a less wasteful use of natural resources. Indeed, Costello speaks in *The Lives of Animals* of "the managers of ecology" (Coetzee, 1999b, 54), repeating the word "managers," when criticising ecological philosophies.

The relevance to *Disgrace* of this discussion of industrialised agriculture and its comparison with the Holocaust becomes clear when Lurie explicitly describes his and Bev's euthanasing of the dogs and his incineration of the dogs' corpses as *Lösung* (Coetzee, 1999a, 142), a word used by the Nazis to describe their policy of genocide against the Jews, the "final solution." Lurie's use of this word in this context is highly problematic, in much the same way that Costello's is in *The Lives of Animals*, although in both cases it is meant to show instrumentalist rationalism taken to its logical, brutal conclusion. It is surprising that Derek Attridge does not discuss the references to the Holocaust when he analyses the ethos of *Disgrace*, because he does bring to attention the many references in the novel to the "times" in which it is set; indeed, he goes so far as to entitle his chapter on the novel "Age of Bronze, State of Grace" and relates it to Coetzee's earlier novel, *Age of Iron* (Attridge, 2005, 162). He insists, however, that Coetzee's apparent pessimism in *Disgrace* is not directed towards the post-apartheid South African government, but towards the dominant ethos of the world, which the South African government is merely following. This

is the ethos of managerialism and globalisation, as previously discussed, which originates ultimately in a utilitarianism and instrumentalist application of rationalism of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, although it represents a particularly reductionistic version of it. It is clear that Coetzee perceives this bureaucratic managerialism as the latest in the series of falls from grace in human history and it shows how Lurie's personal disgrace is part of a broader picture, of an entire world fallen from grace, most clearly evident in the disgraceful treatment of the less powerful members of society, namely women, children, animals and the poor.

Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of managerialism, mentioned in Chapter 1, can clearly be applied to the moral vision in *Disgrace*. The managerial approach, a business mode of working, that MacIntyre relates to Weber's Protestant work ethic and personifies as the character of the "bureaucratic manager," has arguably infected every aspect of modern life from running schools, universities and hospitals to government and agriculture. It basically represents a capitalist business model triumphant after the collapse of communism (symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) and applied to all aspects of contemporary life. Indeed, it can be seen as a form of American or Anglo-Saxon economic and cultural imperialism, which places profits above people, animals and the environment, reducing them all to mere "resources." It is arguably deeply opposed to humanity and humanism, as well as to a true environmentalism, where nature is not seen merely as a means to human ends but as an end in itself.

Mike Marais, citing an article by Jane Taylor, provides a more philosophical view of this vision of a fallen world, linking the violence in South Africa to the European Enlightenment's legacy of the autonomy of the individual:

What is at issue here is the notion that society is made up of what Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz ... refers to as "monads", each one a living consciousness separated totally from every other consciousness. Taylor (1999:25) maintains that *Disgrace* examines the alienating consequences of this divorce of self from other: "We are required to consider when reading this novel, what are the implications for our social and subjective

identities, when we live, as we do, enclaved off from one another, defensive, having shut ourselves against sympathy, no longer ready to stop at the scene of an accident, for fear of our own safety.” The principal consequence of this failure of sympathetic identification with other beings is violence. In fact, the sealing off of imaginative identification is a “necessary precondition for us to engage in the long-term and sustained business of slaughter” (Taylor 1999:25). (Marais, June 2000)⁷

Using the philosophy of Levinas, Marais argues that “[w]hether ethics is construed in terms of compassion or, in Emmanuel Levinas’s terms, as a self-substituting responsibility for the other (1981), the South African society described in *Age of Iron* is distinguished by the absence of ethical action” and that “[i]n *Disgrace*, exactly this point is made about post-apartheid South Africa by the rape scenes” (Marais, June 2000). He goes on to argue that “ethical action, in this text’s conception, derives from the exposure of the monadic subject to an otherness on which it cannot foreclose” and concludes that “[a]n initial reading of *Disgrace* would seem to suggest that the character Lurie undergoes a similar development from monadic subjectivity to self-substituting responsibility in the course of this novel.” Marais goes on to develop his Levinasian analysis with increasing sophistication in subsequent articles, although he comes increasingly to view Lurie’s moral growth as problematic. He also argues that Coetzee shows in *The Master of Petersburg* that Levinas’s ideas can be applied to animals, in particular Dostoevsky’s response to the dog that howls in the night where he comes to the “realisation that he can only love his son, Pavel, by loving every sentient being” (8) and “[w]hile this encounter does not lead to Dostoevsky’s assumption of responsibility for the dog, it *does* suggest that non-human animals are able to place humans under obligation” (8-9).

In his review of two books by Attridge, Marais points out that while “Levinas’s absolute other is ‘God’ ” (Marais, 2005, 94), Blanchot revises Levinas’s ideas to suit a secular context:

[Blanchot’s] understanding of absolute alterity is certainly *not* grounded

⁷Since these quotations come from a webpage, no page references are available.

in notions of divinity. According to Blanchot, alterity is absolute because it is ultimately irreducible. (94)

Thus, it seems possible to argue a case for secular salvation in *Disgrace*, as Marais does, using Levinasian terms as developed by Blanchot.

Derek Attridge makes some important observations about the embeddedness of the word “grace” in the title of the novel and in numerous other instances: Lurie’s ex-wife mis-remembering Lucy’s lover’s name as “Grace,” a dog’s “period of grace” at the clinic, the “*coup de grâce*” that the intruder fails to deliver to the dog he wounds in its throat, Lurie’s considering that castration is not a “graceful solution” to the urgings of desire and the fact that “ageing is not a graceful business” (Attridge, 2005, 177-78). Attridge notes that among the many verbal doublets that Coetzee includes in his novel, “we don’t find disgrace/grace” even though it seems as if “the term is present in a ghostly way through much of the text” (178). He continues:

“Grace” is not, as it happens, the opposite of “disgrace.” The opposite of disgrace is something like “honor”; the *OED* definition of “disgrace” links it frequently with “dishonor.” Public shame, in other words, is contrasted with, and can only be canceled by, public esteem, disgrace is redeemed by honor. Lurie spurns the opportunity to escape disgrace by means of public confession, and he makes little attempt to regain a position of public honor after his shaming. (178)

Considering the bleakness and apparent pessimism of *Disgrace*, it may be difficult to imagine what kind of moral vision Coetzee can be offering to his readers, what kind of salvation. Nonetheless, perhaps a case can be made, not merely in terms of Lurie’s apparent reform but in terms of his daughter, Lucy’s, chosen life. It will be argued that in the figure of Lucy we see a reduced Socratic-Costello character and that as the Cynics stand to Socrates, so Lucy stands to Costello. In fact, a great variety of ethical systems, in various relations of conflict, complementarity and co-operation, can be identified in *Disgrace*, embodied not only in particular characters, who often hold apparently incompatible value systems within themselves, but embedded within

the very structure of the world they inhabit.

Some of the most important of these value systems are, on the one hand, Enlightenment utilitarianism and deontology explained earlier as well as Romanticism which reacted against them, and, on the other hand, various forms of virtue ethics, including Platonism, Aristotelianism, Cynicism, Christianity, an ethics of care, ecofeminism and African *ubuntu*. Peter Singer's connection to utilitarianism and Tom Regan's link to Kantianism should also be kept in mind. There are elements, too, of Hume and Nietzsche.

The ethics of justice, which is largely Kantian and can be described as masculine, and the ethics of care, which can be described as feminine and whose emphasis on care should not be confused with the "mercy that is to season justice" (Baier, 1992, 40) were briefly discussed in Chapter 1. Hume's emotivism has also been remarked on earlier, his assertion that reason should be a slave to the passions. In Hume's view, values and ends are linked to our desires which are non-rational, and reason merely becomes instrumental in determining the means to achieve our ends. This would appear to position Hume with instrumentalist rationalism. However, his idea that we should develop our sentiments towards humanity and compassion is very important too, and links him with Enlightenment sentimentalism, which developed as a corrective to its valorization of reason.

Then, there is also a more traditional tension between love and law, and between pagan *eros* and Christian *caritas*. These various forms of European ethics are modified by the African context and ethos of *Disgrace*, evident especially in the figure of Petrus, who combines traditional African values and practices like *ubuntu*, communalism, African Christianity and polygamy, with modern western ones like the Protestant work ethic (evident in his efficient use of a tractor to plough his fields) and individual self-advancement. Finally, there are the ethical practices of family, friendship and patriarchy at work at a very basic level in *Disgrace*. The philosophy of Cynicism, however, may require further explanation.

A similar sense of social dislocation to that evident in the postapartheid milieu of *Disgrace* was experienced at the break-up of the world of the Greek city-state and

its subsumption within the Hellenistic Empire. All societies undergoing fundamental change reveal a similar feeling of dislocation, one which is felt most keenly by those people who were in a privileged position in the previous order. Coetzee's apparent pessimism would seem to conflict with his apparent humanism and has been seen as damaging to the project of nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa. He has been labelled as a reactionary, wrongly so according to the consensus view in a special edition of a journal on *Disgrace* (Attridge, 2002) edited by Derek Attridge. As a white intellectual Coetzee may have occupied a privileged place in Apartheid South Africa, but as an English academic, he was not a member of the ruling group and so cannot be said to have held much political power.

Rosemary Jolly argues that both the ANC and David Lurie are mistaken to see Lucy's rape in racial terms and that the novel is not about racial violence but gender violence, which is a correlative to violence against nonhuman animals. She argues:

Disgrace examines the extent to which the related concepts of humanity and humanitarianism on the one hand and patriarchal culture on the other are essentially constitutive of one another. The novel interrogates what to be humane might mean without recourse to the species boundary between human and nonhuman animals, what acting as a humanitarian might mean without invoking public testimony and the law as watchdogs, and how our sense of ourselves as human is radically undermined by our addiction to a cult of the rational—what Coetzee's recent work identifies as an irrational fetishization of instrumentalization, a profoundly secular addiction to the god of efficiency. (Jolly, 2006, 150)

She goes on to argue that Coetzee is not simply concerned to bring others not previously considered persons (selves) into the sphere of the ethical community, but to interrogate the idea of the self as an ethical category, thus rejecting the liberal approach (145).

At times of change, the previously empowered or privileged classes often move from politics to ethics, from action to contemplation. Bertrand Russell describes

just such a process that occurred when power passed from the individual Greek city-states to the Macedonian Empire: “When political power passed into the hands of the Macedonians, Greek philosophers, as was natural, turned aside from politics and devoted themselves more to the problem of individual virtue or salvation” (Russell, 1945, 230). Besides this emphasis on individual virtue and salvation, what is specifically relevant to *Disgrace* is the philosophy of the Cynics. Russell writes about the Cynics, and Diogenes, in particular, who looked to Socrates as their model, both for his wealth of virtue and his material poverty:

He decided to live like a dog, and was therefore called a “cynic,” which mean “canine.” He rejected all conventions—whether of religion, of manners, of dress, of housing, of food, or of decency. [He lived in] a large pitcher, of the sort used in primitive times for burial. He lived, like an Indian fakir, by begging. He proclaimed his brotherhood, not only with the whole human race, but also with animals. (231)

This link of the Cynics to dogs may help to understand Coetzee’s idea of salvation as developed in *Disgrace* and elsewhere, not only in Lurie’s caring for the dogs in the animal shelter but also in his having to learn to free himself from his bondage to Eros, his belief in an ethic of self-gratification, which was the original cause of his fall into disgrace. Fascinatingly, in an interview with David Attwell on the essay on confession in *Doubling the Point*, but with reference to his writing as autobiography, Coetzee says that “[i]n the terms brought into prominence in the essay, the debate is between cynicism and grace. Cynicism: the denial of any ultimate basis for values. Grace: a condition in which the truth can be told clearly, without blindness” (Coetzee, 1992, 392). In a sense, these two terms get a radical reworking in *Disgrace*, neither being privileged, but both being transformed, grace into a secular form, and cynicism into something more positive as in the special sense explained below:

The teaching of Diogenes was by no means what we now call “cynical”—quite the contrary. He had an ardent passion for “virtue,” in comparison with which he held worldly goods of no account. He sought virtue and

moral freedom in liberation from desire: be indifferent to the goods that fortune has to bestow, and you will be emancipated from fear. (231)

It is clear that this philosophy has certain affinities with Buddhism and with Taoism. What is important for Coetzee is the link with salvation, a process not of embracing a (most probably illusory) promise of an afterlife or a spiritual reality, but of accepting the base materiality of existence, rejecting all conventions and illusions, and placing one's faith in earthly virtue, and not for any reward, either on earth or in heaven. A positive aspect of this form of ethics is the realisation of the kinship of all living creatures and the development of a mutual respect; hence it offers salvation from the prejudices of speciesism. Through vegetarianism it also offers salvation from complicity in an exploitative system where animals are used for food.

Interestingly, Cynics rejected the formal and theoretical reasoning of other philosophers, preferring instead “the *chreia* ...; the diatribe ...and Menippean Satire” (Borchert, 2006, 613). This reinforces the link between Costello and these philosophers, through Socrates, since she also shows a disrespect for the technical philosophical mode, preferring more emotive modes as the Cynics did—the rant being one of them, as discussed in earlier chapters. Furthermore, Bakhtin also singled out the Menippean Satire as one of the sources of the novel, in the tradition of the Socratic dialogue, to which genre, it was argued in earlier chapters, *The Lives of Animals* belongs.

The following description of Cynic philosophy also can be applied to a great extent to the figure of Elizabeth Costello:

Essentially individualistic and largely anti-social in advocating independence from any community, Cynicism was the most radical philosophy of spiritual security offered to fill the social and moral vacuum created in the fourth century BCE by the dissolution of the city-state political organism. ... The Cynic saw himself as ‘scout and herald of God,’ dedicating his own labors as a reconnaissance for others to follow; he was the ‘watchdog of mankind’ to bark at illusion, the ‘surgeon’ whose knife sliced

the cancer of cant from the minds of others. Cynics deliberately adopted shamelessly shocking extremes of speech and action to jolt the attention and illustrate their attack on convention. (Borchert, 2006, 616)

This description suits not only the figure of Costello, particularly in her repeated evocation of the Holocaust analogy, but also, in many respects, the biting satire of Jonathan Swift, particularly his outrageous piece, “A Modest Proposal,” which, as mentioned earlier, Costello discusses in *The Lives of Animals*, and his character, Gulliver, whose preference at the end of *Gulliver’s Travels* to commune with his horses rather than humans, is echoed by Costello in *The Lives of Animals*:

“You say that death does not matter to an animal because the animal does not understand death. I am reminded of one of the academic philosophers I read in preparing for yesterday’s lecture. It was a depressing experience. It awoke in me a quite Swiftian response. If this is the best that human philosophy can offer, I said to myself, I would rather go and live among horses.” (Coetzee, 1999b, 65)

The example of Swift also cautions against a complete rejection of the European Enlightenment for spawning utilitarianism and Kantianism, since it is just as important for its emphasis on sentiment, perhaps in reaction to what some may deem its excessive rationalism, which may have paved the way for the strong emphasis on passions of the Romantic movement. Besides, the two Enlightenment philosophies, forming part of liberalism, have been responsible for much good in the world: social reform, the ending of child labour and slavery, the extension of the franchise and the rule of law. Nonetheless, it could be argued that liberating ideas are often manipulated by the powerful to serve their own interests, that just as the aristocracy and monarchy used Christianity to justify their power during the Middle Ages, so have the ideals of liberalism, nationalism and democracy sometimes been manipulated to serve the interests of the wealthy and the powerful in the modern age, for instance, the ideologies of free market capitalism and of National Socialism. The ideology of managerialism, in particular, can be seen, in part, to be the latest technique to concentrate wealth in

the hands of a few. The philosophy of Cynicism, for all its apparent passivity, helps one achieve salvation from the corrupting influence of power and from complicity in exploitative systems of power.

Russell's criticisms of the apparent pessimism and political impotency of Cynicism may partly be based on his own historical situation, his optimism stemming from his being a part of the liberal, rationalist, utilitarian tradition (his god-father was the utilitarian John Stuart Mill) and a privileged (but not uncritical) beneficiary of the British Empire. Nonetheless, his criticism in his brilliantly polemical essay on the Romantic movement, that "Man is not a solitary animal, and so long as social life survives, self-realization cannot be the supreme principle of ethics" (Russell, 1945, 684), can validly be applied to David Lurie in *Disgrace*, particularly in his Romantic justification for taking advantage of his student, Melanie, namely that "I became a servant of Eros" (Coetzee, 1999a, 52) and that "I was enriched by the experience" (56).

As closely applicable as the Cynic ethic seems to *Disgrace*, one should be wary of imposing it uncritically on the novel. Indeed, aspects of it do not seem to fit with the ecofeminism that Lucy apparently embraces, since whereas ecofeminism, a form of the ethics of care, insists on the interdependence of all people and living systems, Cynicism is very much concerned with the independence of the virtuous soul, which resembles, perhaps only superficially though, the Kantian autonomous rational individual that ecofeminism rejects. Nonetheless, a closer look may reveal a more fundamental common ground between these two ethics, not least in their recognising a kinship with animals and a desire to live closer to nature. In any case, there is no reason why Coetzee's characters need embody single, unified and consistent ethical theories, since in real life people hold all kinds of conflicting beliefs and values with little regard for consistency (unless they are philosophers), and usually without even being fully conscious of them. There is no reason why Lucy should not embody inconsistent systems of ethics. Indeed, in a novel, characters are often portrayed in a process of change, and a tension between conflicting beliefs and values is often an essential driving force behind their development. If in *The Lives of Animals*,

characters can be said to embody clearly differentiated, monolithic positions (except Costello, as was shown in Chapter 1), in *Disgrace* the interplay between different values systems is far more complex and dynamic, evident in the profound ethical change that occurs in David Lurie and, to a lesser extent, Lucy.

Finally, it is necessary, in light of the supposed deep pessimism of *Disgrace*, to consider the philosophy of Schopenhauer. His pessimism, his emphasis on the superior power of will above reason (which he shares with Nietzsche and Freud), his focus on suffering and his concern for kindness to animals are all clearly relevant to *Disgrace*, as are his observations that egoism is the norm, that loving kindness (or compassion) is as rare as it is valuable and that malice is unique to humans. Almost unique in the pre-twentieth century western philosophical tradition, he advocated kindness to animals. Russell notes, somewhat pejoratively, that Schopenhauer's philosophy owes much to Buddhism and that it has a "certain temperamental affinity with that of the Hellenistic age; it is tired and valetudinarian, valuing peace more than victory, and quietism more than attempts at reform, which he regards as inevitably futile" (Russell, 1945, 753). Russell continues, pointing out that in Schopenhauer's philosophy:

There is no such thing as happiness, for an unfulfilled wish causes pain, and attainment brings only satiety. Instinct urges men to procreation, which brings into existence a new occasion for suffering and death; that is why shame is associated with the sexual act. (Russell, 1945, 756)

However, there is some form of salvation or, at least, escape:

To the good man, the veil of Maya (illusion) has become transparent; he sees that all things are one, and that the distinction between himself and another is only apparent. He reaches this insight by love, which is always sympathy, and has to do with the pain of others. When the veil of Maya is lifted, a man takes on the suffering of the whole world. In the good man, knowledge of the whole quiets all volition; his will turns away from life and denies his own nature. "There arises within him a horror of the nature of which his own phenomenal existence is an expression, the kernel and

inner nature of that world which is recognized as full of misery.” (Russell, 1945, 756)

There is a strong resonance between Schopenhauer’s emphasis on suffering and compassion and the actions of Lurie in Bev Shaw’s animal clinic, as will be discussed in the next chapter. What is important to note, however, is that the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche stands in strong contrast to the optimism of Socrates, who believed in the power of science and reason to improve the world. The work of Camille Paglia, who develops Schopenhauer’s insights in terms of Nietzsche’s distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian, will help to develop the idea of an erotic imagination, which will be opposed to Costello’s sympathetic imagination. It will be argued that the polyphony of *Disgrace* consists, at least in part, precisely in holding these two possibilities, the pessimistic and the optimistic, in a taut harmony without trying to achieve any final resolution.

Hopefully, this overview of the relevant philosophies and versions of ethics will help illuminate *Disgrace*, at least in terms of its ethical complexity. Most critics have analysed the novel mainly in terms of Levinasian and Christian ethics transferred to a secular context, opposing these to a modern form of utilitarianism. While this is obviously a very fruitful approach, it seems unnecessarily limited, and it faces serious problems, not least the question of how one can expect grace if one has rejected Christianity. In particular, no sustained attempt has been made to picture a positive moral vision in *Disgrace*, perhaps because of its apparently deeply pessimistic nature. Nonetheless, if Isaac Bashevis Singer’s words in the epigraph of the following chapter are to be taken seriously, such an attempt should be made.

If one can take Costello’s comments in “As a Woman Grows Older” (2004) as expressing Coetzee’s own thoughts on the matter, one must conclude that he is not too pleased with his novels being judged as being “bleak” and, presumably, pessimistic. Costello has been asked by her son, John, and her daughter, Helen, to meet them in Nice, France, where her daughter lives, and she correctly suspects that they want to offer to look after her when she becomes too old to look after herself. She is conversing with John as they walk along the Promenade des Anglais. When she mentions to

him that she has become trapped in a cliché, John asks her what she means, and she responds:

“I do not want to go into it, it is too depressing. The cliché of the stuck record, that has no meaning anymore because there are no gramophone needles or gramophones. The word that echoes back to me from all quarters is ‘bleak.’ Her message to the world is unremittingly bleak. What does it mean, bleak? A word that belongs to a winter landscape yet has somehow become attached to me. It is like a little mongrel that trails behind, yapping, and won’t be shaken off. I am dogged by it. It will follow me to the grave. It will stand at the lip of the grave, peering in and yapping *bleak, bleak, bleak!*” (Coetzee, 2004a, 11)

This story gives Coetzee an opportunity to express his feelings about the general critical perception of his work and an opportunity to reply to his critics, whom Costello humorously describes as yapping dogs. If she is a dogged writer, her critics, too, are dogged in characterising her as bleak.

Later she is driving with her daughter through the countryside, the beauty of which becomes the subject of their conversation. Characteristically, Costello expresses doubts about her lifelong pursuit of beauty:

“The question I find myself asking now is, What good has it done me, all this beauty? Is beauty not just another consumable, like wine? One drinks it in, one drinks it down, it gives one a brief, pleasing, heady feeling, but what does it leave behind? The residue of wine is, excuse the word, piss; what is the residue of beauty? What is the good of it? Does beauty make us better people?” (12)

Costello’s questioning of the link between beauty and ethics is particularly significant, suggesting that she, and presumably Coetzee, think writing should have a moral function beyond, or in addition to, the mere production of beautiful artifacts. This may provide a clue to Coetzee’s idea of salvation, which somehow involves art. Helen provides an answer to Costello’s questions:

“Before you tell me your answer to the question, Mother, shall I tell you mine? Because I think I know what you are going to say. You are going to say that beauty has done you no good that you can see, that one of these days you are going to find yourself at heaven’s gate with your hands empty and a big question mark over your head. . . .

“The answer you will not give—because it would be out of character for Elizabeth Costello—is that what you have produced as a writer not only has a beauty of its own—a limited beauty, granted, it is not poetry, but beauty nevertheless, shapeliness, clarity, economy—but has also changed the lives of others, made them better human beings, or slightly better human beings. It is not just I who say so. Other people say so too, strangers. To me, to my face. Not because what you write contains lessons but because it *is* a lesson.

“You teach people how to feel. By dint of grace. The grace of the pen as it follows the movements of thought.” (12)

The reference to grace in the context of writing rather than a religious one may help to explain Coetzee’s idea of secular salvation. Costello reflects to herself that Helen’s words sound rather old-fashioned and Aristotelian, and she replies:

“It is sweet of you to say so, Helen, sweet of you to reassure me. Not a life wasted after all. Of course I am not convinced. As you say, if I could be convinced I would not be myself. But that is no consolation. I am not in a happy mood, as you can see. In my present mood, the life I have followed looks misconceived from beginning to end, and not in a particularly interesting way either. If one truly wants to be a better person, it now seems to me, there must be less roundabout ways of getting there than by darkening thousands of pages with prose.” (12)

On the one hand, this can be seen as Coetzee expressing doubt in the ability of art in general and fiction in particular to make the world a better place, questioning the Nietzschean idea that only art can bring meaning to an otherwise meaningless



universe. On the other hand, however, it can be seen as gentle, ironic Socratic self-mockery that places our salvation, our potential for moral growth, precisely in the recognition of our finitude and uncertainty.

Chapter 6

Animals and Secular Salvation in *Disgrace*

The pessimism of the creative person is not decadence, but a mighty passion for the redemption of man. While the poet entertains he continues to search for eternal truths, for the essence of being. In his own fashion he tries to solve the riddle of our time and change, to find an answer to suffering, to reveal love in the very abyss of cruelty and injustice. Strange as these words may sound, I often play with the idea that when all the social theories collapse and wars and revolutions leave humanity in utter gloom, the poet—whom Plato banned from his Republic—may rise up to save us all. (Isaac Bashevis Singer, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1978)

Both *The Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace* were published in 1999 and both deal with human-animal relations, although in apparently very different ways. For all its emphasis on embodiedness, *The Lives of Animals* deals with animals in a very abstract way, that is, in the frame of a lecture, and one sympathetic critic, Barbara Smuts, whose essay is attached as one of the “Reflections” on *The Lives of Animals*, notes that “none of the characters ever mentions a personal encounter with an animal” (Coetzee, 1999b, 107). Smuts, a primatologist, goes on to narrate her extensive personal experiences with baboons in the wild and with her dog, confirming many of

Costello's insights about sympathetic imagination and the complexity of nonhuman animal experience. The critical consensus seems to be that this apparent shortfall in *The Lives of Animals* is more than made up for in *Disgrace* where the disgraced protagonist, David Lurie, ends up spending most of his time caring for the animals in an animal shelter, ironically performing the community service that he had initially refused to do when requested to do so by the disciplinary committee earlier in the novel as a public act of contrition. However, it will be more valuable to see *The Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace* in terms of complementing each other rather than in a relation of opposition. Thus, in this chapter, the insights and conceptual framework developed in previous chapters, which dealt with much of the fiction involving Elizabeth Costello, will be used to illuminate *Disgrace*, and the latter will help to cast light on the former, most notably in the difficult question of the role animals play in human (secular) salvation.

To continue the metaphor of illumination, the figure of Costello, an enlightened character (if only in the Socratic sense of a wise fool), will be contrasted with David Lurie, a type of Everyman figure, the figure of a fool who has to embark on a journey of self-discovery, from the darkness of ignorance to a state approaching enlightenment, or at least a degree of self-knowledge. Lurie has to achieve the state of enlightened self-questioning that characterises Costello; whereas she is at the forefront of developing a new ethics involving animals, he is saddled with anthropocentric and speciesist attitudes; indeed, he is trapped in the egoistic Romantic philosophy of self-realisation. In a way, Lurie resembles Costello's son, John, an intelligent but disconnected and relatively unenlightened intellect. In a similar way to which John Bernard stands in contrast to his mother, Elizabeth Costello, Lurie stands in contrast to his daughter, Lucy, whose vegetarian and ecofeminist worldview is hinted at in *Disgrace* and which Lurie barely begins to understand, but begins to move towards by the end of the novel. In both cases it is the female figure, whether mother or daughter, who has to enlighten the male, whether father or son, much like the figure of Sophy, or wisdom (like the figure of Philosophy in Boethius' *The Consolations of Philosophy*), was always personified as a woman. The comparatively enlightened worldview of Lucy is

evident in her name, which refers to illumination. It will be argued that Lurie's erotic imagination, which leads to his fall from grace, also provides, paradoxically, the basis for his partial rehabilitation in its transformation into a sympathetic imagination. The erotic versus the sympathetic imagination can perhaps tentatively be aligned with the Platonic and Socratic philosophies, a conjecture that will be tested against close critical analysis of *Disgrace*.

Throughout the novel we are aware of Lurie's failure to comprehend the alterity of his daughter, especially the decisions she makes about her body and property. While most critics have focused on Lucy's role as a victim of patriarchal and racist violence, in this chapter she will be presented as a more active figure with a positive voice and vision of her own. It will be necessary to liberate her voice from the uncomprehending and limiting perspective of her father, whose point of view necessarily dominates the third person intimate narrative, to a greater extent even than does John Bernard's in *The Lives of Animals*. This will help to reveal the polyphony of *Disgrace*. It will be argued that the dialogism in *Disgrace* is evident not so much in the juxtaposition of different characters' perspectives, as it is in *The Lives of Animals*, but a more subtle process involving the opposing voices within Lurie's consciousness, an opposition which enables a dialectical development from ignorance to (a degree of) enlightenment. Perhaps one can characterise the dialogism in *The Lives of Animals* as static and public and in *Disgrace* as dynamic and private.

Besides the relative degrees of enlightenment, Costello and Lurie display other important differences. Costello is a famous female author and feminist vegetarian who loves her cats, whereas Lurie is a sexually predatory, meat-eating, misogynistic male and obscure Romantic scholar, initially indifferent to animals but who comes to feel an attachment to the dogs in his care. Despite the differences between Costello and Lurie, there are equally significant similarities. Both are ageing academics—in 1999 she is 71 years old (born in 1928) and he is 52 (born in 1947)—in post-colonial societies and both have troubled relations with their children. Both are aware of the waning of desire (Eros) and of the approach of death. Both have to stand before a committee to give an account—or a confession—of their actions which both of them

resist. Finally, both appear to find or seek salvation in relation not to God but to animals.

It will be argued that at the beginning of the novel, David Lurie subscribes to a mixed set of values: a form of Romantic self-realisation, in particular the sexually predatory one of Lord Byron, a utilitarian approach to his sexual relations with the prostitute Soraya, and a minimal Kantian ethic of duty in relation to his work at the college at which he teaches. Implicitly he adheres to an ethics of justice, since within it his rights are protected by the rule of law, although he explicitly rejects it when he faces the university committee, justifying his violation of the rights of the student he has sexually taken advantage of, with reference to his Romanticism. Indeed, he strongly resembles Leibniz's monadic isolated ego. When his own daughter is raped, however, he is quick to resort to the language of an ethics of justice, failing to recognise that he was guilty of a similar violation of a female's rights. Furthermore, after the rape he is much concerned with the notions of "honour" and "dishonour," terms from virtue ethics. Underlying his ethical beliefs is a metaphysical, Judaeo-Christian belief in the human soul, or individual, as a special creation, separate from the rest of nature and a belief in the possibility of disembodied, immortal souls. Initially there is very little evidence of any Judaeo-Christian love or compassion in his make-up (Attridge suggests, on the basis of his surname, that he is Jewish), yet by the end of the novel we see him working towards an ethics of care (not specifically an ecofeminist one), although there is also a movement towards Cynicism, in the philosophical sense.

Like Paul Rayment in *Slow Man*, David Lurie is a divorced, unloved, loveless, lonely, ageing man, a disembodied intellect in the Kantian mode, a monadic individual, and, like him, has a strongly erotic imagination. Significantly, however, Lurie has a child, a grown up daughter, whereas Rayment is childless. Both these men need to transcend the limitations of their egoism and their eroticism, and develop a connectedness with others by means of charity or sympathetic imagination or, as Marais calls it, a self-substituting responsibility. This includes coming to terms with their own animal nature not only in the Eros they share with animals but also in their common mortality. Lurie has to realise that the ideas of an immortal soul and

an afterlife may be illusions, and that souls are necessarily embodied, that the idea of disembodied souls may well be incoherent. Thus Lurie's growing awareness of the individuality of animals will also be traced and related to his growing self-awareness.

At the beginning of *Disgrace* Lurie is shown to be almost completely self-centred and complacent, concerned exclusively with his own needs, as the opening lines reveal: "For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" (Coetzee, 1999a, 1). Concerning the prostitute Soraya, whom he visits once a week, he reflects that "he finds her entirely satisfactory" (1). His complacency is evident in his reflections on his happiness (a central concept both to ancient virtue ethics and modern utilitarianism):

He is in good health, his mind is clear. By profession he is, or has been, a scholar, and scholarship still engages, intermittently, the core of him. He lives within his income, within his temperament, within his emotional means. Is he happy? By most measurements, yes, he believes he is. However, he has not forgotten the last chorus of *Oedipus*: Call no man happy until he is dead. (2)

His erotic desires also seek to express themselves in the form of music, an opera on Byron: "What he wants to write is music; *Byron in Italy*, a meditation on love between the sexes in the form of a chamber opera" (4). His complacency is reinforced again later, when he reflects on his weekly visits to Soraya, a prostitute:

It surprises him that ninety minutes a week of a woman's company are enough to make him happy, who used to think he needed a wife, a home, a marriage. His needs turn out to be quite light, after all, light and fleeting, like those of a butterfly. No emotion, or none but the deepest, the most unguessed-at: a ground bass of contentedness, like the hum of traffic that lulls the city-dweller to sleep, or like the silence of the night to countryfolk. (5)

When he intrudes into her private life it poisons their relationship; her two children "become presences between them, playing quiet as shadows in a corner of the room

where their mother and the strange man couple” (6). This shift in perspective shows that Lurie has some kind of conscience as well as some sympathetic imagination, imagining how he must appear to her children: she is no longer merely a prostitute but a mother. Her individuation disturbs him. The reference to the children as if they were ghosts also echoes his thoughts about his declining attractiveness: “Glances that would once have responded to his slid over, past, through him. Overnight he became a ghost” (7). These references to ghostly presences show that Lurie believes in the possibility of disembodied spirits, which is linked to his belief that humans are superior to animals since they are not *merely* embodied. It also reveals a conflict within him between his academic abstractedness and an unconscious desire to be more fully grounded or connected with others, with individual, concrete existence.

Eventually Soraya refuses to see him any more. He returns to the “agency” to find a substitute, but he cannot find a satisfactory replacement; besides the generic name “Soraya” the commodification of sex is evident in the description that there are “lots of exotics to choose from—Malaysian, Thai, Chinese, you name it” (8). These generic terms deny the women their individuality and there may be the seeds of Lurie’s future moral growth in the fact that he values the individual qualities of his Soraya and wishes to know more about her as an individual. After a disastrous and short-lived affair with the new departmental secretary, he considers the possibility of castration (only hypothetically though) to solve the problem of his animal needs:

He ought to give up, retire from the game. At what age, he wonders, did Origen castrate himself? Not the most graceful of solutions, but then ageing is not a graceful business. A clearing of the decks, at least, so that one can turn one’s mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die.

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

His thoughts on animals are rather abstract, anthropomorphic and sentimental at

this stage: he projects onto the abstract category of “animals” his own anxieties and sadness about his waning opportunities for sex. Significantly, his thoughts on castration echo his thoughts on the “emasculated institution of learning” (4) at which he teaches. He does not consider the possibility of a virtuous abstention from sex, the exercise of self-discipline that the Cynics apparently practised, but, instead, a “technical” solution, typical of an instrumentalist, technocratic society. His failure to control his erotic impulse, his “animal” passion, which will lead him into disgrace, is foreshadowed by some striking animal imagery when he phones Soraya and she screams at him never to phone her again with a shrillness that appals him: “But then what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen’s nest, into the home of her cubs?” (10).

When he brings Melanie home he is fully aware of the enormity of the situation:

...the girl he has brought home is not just thirty years his junior: she is a student, his student, under his tutelage. No matter what passes between them now, they will have to meet again as teacher and pupil. Is he prepared for that? (12)

Lurie is clearly taking advantage of his student, using his academic authority and patriarchal status in pursuit of his passion, since he is no longer a youthful lover on equal terms with his beloved. The image of ghosts is repeated when Lurie shows Melanie the video of the dancers:

Two dancers on a bare stage move through their steps. Recorded by a stroboscopic camera their images, ghosts of their movements, fan out behind them like wingbeats. It is a film he saw a quarter of a century ago but is still captivated by it: the instant of the present and the past of that instant, caught in the same space. (14-15)

Lurie uses music, wine and conversation, full of erotic innuendos, to seduce Melanie, justifying his request to her to spend the night with him on the grounds that:

‘Because a woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it.’ (16)

This is specious reasoning merely serving his erotic impulses. However, he destroys the erotic atmosphere with his overly literary words:

‘From fairest creatures we desire increase,’ he says, ‘that thereby beauty’s rose might never die.’

Not a good move. Her smile loses its playful, mobile quality. The pentameter, whose cadence once served so well to oil the serpent’s words, now only estranges. (16)

There is the suggestion that his literary background has blinded him to the concrete realities of the situation: he justifies his dubious behaviour with idealistic and poetic sentiments. The reference to the serpents not only alludes to the temptation of Eve by Satan, but it also echoes Lurie’s earlier description of his sexual intercourse with Soraya as “rather like the copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest” (3). This connection between Lurie and Satan (and also, by implication, Byron) is ironically presented later when Lurie gives a class on Byron’s Lucifer while Melanie’s boyfriend sits in the lecture theatre.

His strong moral awareness that what he is doing is wrong is clear in the opening words of Chapter 3: “That is where he should end it. But he does not” (18). There is a powerful conflict between his conscience and his desire, and even though his desire wins, it does show that he has a conscience. He obtains her telephone number, thus breaching the confidentiality of student records. When he phones her, she answers “Hello”:

In the one word he hears all her uncertainty. Too young. She will not know how to deal with him; he ought to let her go. But he is in the grip of something. Beauty’s rose: the poem drives straight as an arrow. She does not own herself; perhaps he does not own himself either. (18)

The problematic morality of what he is doing is further complicated by descriptions of her child-like body and the extreme age difference between the two of them: “Her hips are as slim as a twelve-year-old’s” (19) and “*A child!* he thinks: *No more than*

a child! What am I doing? Yet his heart lurches with desire” (20). Still later: “He makes a bed for her in his daughter’s room” (26) and, much later, when she stays over at his house:

He sits down on the bed, draws her to him. In his arms she begins to sob miserably. Despite all, he feels a tingling of desire. ‘There, there,’ he whispers, trying to comfort her. ‘Tell me what is wrong.’ Almost he says, ‘Tell Daddy what is wrong.’ (26)

The reference to “Daddy” not only indicates the patriarchal power that Lurie has abused but also suggests an incestuous paedophilia, particularly since Melanie is in his daughter’s bed.

On the first occasion he has sex with Melanie, it is clear that she is an unwilling partner. When he takes her to lunch, “[a]t the restaurant she has no appetite, stares out glumly over the sea” (19). When they first have sex, the act is described purely from his perspective and according to his needs and desires: “though she is passive throughout, he finds the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into blank oblivion” (19). Her shame is evident in the way she averts her face when she leaves. He is completely indifferent to her feelings; she is merely the object of his desire.

Situational irony is evident in his discussion of the verb “usurp upon” (21) in his class about Wordsworth’s experience of the summit of Mont Blanc, since his definition of the verb perfectly sums up his relations with Melanie: “*usurp upon* means to intrude or encroach upon. *Usurp*, to take over entirely, is the perfective of *usurp upon*; usurping completes the act of usurping upon” (21), although the irony escapes Lurie. He is more aware, however, of the ironic relevance to his relationship with Melanie of his discussion of Romantic imagination, idealism and sense-experience, of the unfallen world of pure forms and the fallen world of sense experience, and of a need to wed the two, a process that he will undergo by the end of the novel: he will escape his lofty and abstract literary solipsism and get his hands dirtied dealing with the bodies of dogs. Also, his idealisation—or perhaps, rather, degradation—of

women merely as sexual objects, his narrow preoccupation with physical beauty, will also be grounded—and cured—by his affair with the unattractive Bev Shaw.

Lurie justifies his actions to himself while secretly watching Melanie practise for the play in the darkened auditorium:

An unseemly business, sitting in the dark spying on a girl (unbidden the word *letching* comes to him). Yet the old men whose company he seems to be on the point of joining, the tramps and drifters with their stained raincoats and cracked false teeth and hairy earholes—all of them were once upon a time children of God. Can they be blamed for clinging to the last to their place at the sweet banquet of the senses? (24)

His depiction of old men is extremely unflattering, even ludicrous, and he does not seem to consider the possibility of a dignified old age. It is a fallacious justification for his desires, and one too literary to be sincere. Melanie's performance does excite him, though, and the next day he appears at her flat without warning. Melanie's unwillingness to have sex on the second occasion is clear:

He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, her limbs crumple like a marionette's. Words heavy as clubs thud into the delicate whorl of her ear. 'No, not now!' she says, struggling. 'My cousin will be back!' (24-25)

And:

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

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, 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. (25)

The allusion to his lecture on Wordsworth is unmistakable in the word “intruder” and the other imagery is equally violent: “crumple,” “clubs,” “thud,” “die” and “jaws of the fox.” The reference to the marionette emphasizes Lurie’s dominance of Melanie.

However, there is a difference on the third occasion, when she stays over at his house:

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 young. One moment stands out in recollection, when she 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. Who knows, he thinks: there might, despite all, be a future. (29)

The notion of the moment that stands out in recollection appears to refer once again to Romanticism, to the power of the poetic imagination to recollect experience in all its intensity. Despite the morally objectionable actions of Lurie, there is a dark, ironic humour in his reflection, in the moment of climax, a moment when one’s rational capacities are at their weakest and one is least able to plan for the future, that he may have a future with her. Here she is depicted as a willing participant in the sexual act, although there is the suggestion that she has lost her innocence, that Lurie has corrupted her. The fact remains that he has taken advantage of her and abused his position of trust. It also appears that she is beginning to manipulate him, because the same afternoon, her boyfriend pays Lurie a menacing visit in his office. When she reappears in class her boyfriend accompanies her, and, intensely ironically, the theme of the lecture is the scandalous life of Byron: “Scandal: A pity that must be his theme, but he is in no state to improvise” (31). (Lucifer’s name shares the same root as Lucy’s.) Particularly ironic is his discussion of Byron’s depiction of Lucifer since the description fits him perfectly too. Also ironic is the fact that Melanie’s boyfriend, a stranger to the class, answers Lurie’s questions: “ ‘So what kind of creature is this

Lucifer?’ ” (33):

‘He does what he feels like. He doesn’t care if it’s good or bad. He just does it.’ (33)

It is obvious that the young man is speaking not just about Lucifer but Lurie. This is confirmed by Lurie’s reply:

‘Exactly. Good or bad, he just does it. He doesn’t act on principle but on impulse, and the source of his impulse is dark to him. Read a few lines further: “His madness was not of the head, but heart.” A mad heart. What is a mad heart?’ (33)

One gets the impression that Lurie’s reading in Romantic literature has confused rather than enlightened him, that it has led him astray, that the source of his impulse is dark to *him* and that *his* heart is mad. His lecture reads almost like a personal confession or apology:

‘Note that we are not asked to condemn this being with the mad heart, this being with whom there is something constitutionally wrong. On the contrary, we are invited to understand and sympathize. But there is a limit to sympathy. For though he lives among us, he is not one of us. He is exactly what he calls himself: a *thing*, that is a monster. Finally, Byron will suggest, it will not be possible to love him, not in the deeper, more human sense of the word. He will be condemned to solitude.’ (32-33)

This passage is also prophetic about the fate of Lurie: he will become outlawed for his disgraceful transgression and isolated from everyone. Coetzee makes the connections between fallen creatures explicit: “Byron, Lucifer, Cain, it is all the same to them” (34). Lurie could have added his own name to the list, which significantly includes Cain, who was mentioned in the previous chapter.

Coetzee describes twice how Lurie’s heart goes out to Melanie, describing her as a “poor little bird” (32) and “*my little dove*” (34). There is, once again, a strong irony when Lurie reprimands Melanie for missing a test, “Melanie, I have responsibilities”

(35) but she gets up defiantly and leaves: “Responsibilities: she does not dignify the word with a reply” (35). Like Lucifer, Lurie has put impulse above principle, erotic love above the rule of law, but hypocritically resorts to the language of justice to try to avoid getting into trouble himself.

His fall into personal disgrace deepens, as does the dark irony, when he fails to tell the truth to Melanie’s father on the telephone, after Mr Isaacs asks him to find out what is wrong with his daughter, and he thinks to himself: “*I am the worm in the apple*, I should have said” (37). The disgrace becomes public when Isaacs confronts him openly:

‘We put our children in the hands of you people because we think we can trust you. If we can’t trust the university, who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers.’ (38)

Lurie is unable to respond and reflects instead: “A viper: how can he deny it?” (38). This may be a reference once again to Satan, this time in the garden of Eden. In fact, he had initially met Melanie in the “old college gardens” (11) and “[w]hen he made the first move, in the college gardens, he had thought of it as a quick little affair—quickly in, quickly out” (27). However, the metaphor of the viper, or snake, also betrays a speciesist mentality shared by Isaacs and Lurie. For Lurie, animals are merely abstractions and allegorical, an attitude that will be challenged by his work in the animal shelter.

Soon he receives from the Vice-Rector’s office notification of a complaint against him by a student under the charge of harassment. Accompanying the notification are legal documents representing the beginnings of legal proceedings against him. His Romantic ethic of Eros has led to a stark clash with an ethics of justice, and he struggles to concentrate when reading the copies of the code and constitution. Instead, he imagines how Melanie, her father and her cousin went and laid charges against him, flattering himself that Melanie did so reluctantly. He operates much more comfortably in an imaginative mode.

It is clear that the procedures are fair to both victim and perpetrator, yet Lurie

makes no attempt to assert his rights within this ethics of justice. He makes no attempt to defend himself or have a lawyer represent him in the initial meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and later when he faces the committee. This seems quite foolish on his part, perhaps suggesting a disrespect for the rule of law and ethics of justice, or even a devilish pride and intransigence, but can also be seen as a consistent adherence to his romantic ethic of passion. It is clear that certain female colleagues would like to go further in punishing him than the law permits:

Elaine Winter takes her cue. She has never liked him; she regards him as a hangover from the past, the sooner cleared away, the better. (40)

Later, during the actual hearing, Dr Farodia Rassool says: “If he is simply going through the motions, I urge that we impose the severest penalty” (51), even though the hearing has no power to punish or pass sentence. Their dislike, no doubt, also stems from the nature of his offence; there is a sense of female solidarity, especially evident in the “Rape Awareness Week” (43) organized by the students on campus. On the other hand, his male colleagues try to protect him as much as the law permits and to advise him how to act in his own interests, as they perceive it, even suggesting that he hires a female lawyer to represent him, advice which he ignores. There seems, disturbingly, to be some male solidarity, fraternity set against sorority, although Lurie rejects Hakim’s moral support: “He has known Hakim for years, they used to play tennis together in his tennis-playing days, but he is in no mood now for male chumminess” (42). Perhaps Coetzee is suggesting that an ethics of justice inevitably leads to scenarios of conflicting rights, although the idea of the battle of the sexes is as old as literature.

Some critics have interpreted the committee of enquiry allegorically, seeing a similarity in David Lurie’s refusal to show contrition to the refusal of white South Africans to refuse to show contrition for their complicity in apartheid. Indeed, his stubbornness before the committee resembles the refusal of many white South Africans to accept the very terms of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, Boehmer makes a strong case for an alternative reading:

[I]n *Disgrace* ...secular atonement is proposed as an alternative to the public and Christianized ritual of redemption through confession, of reconciliation through a possibly self-serving catharsis, or ‘real actions,’ which the TRC, for example, has offered. (Boehmer, 2006, 137)

Lurie is appalled when his lawyer suggests he consider “sensitivity training. Community service. Counselling” (43) and dismisses it arrogantly and contemptuously. Yet by the end of the novel he is doing voluntary community service by working in the dog shelter, except by then it is a sincere and meaningful private act whereas if he had agreed to it earlier it would have been merely an insincere public display. Perhaps it is the apparent hypocrisy, the lip service to political correctness, that prompts him to dig in his heels. His response, “To fix me? To cure me? To cure me of inappropriate desires?” (43), is an allusion to the castration of animals, but “inappropriate desires” is also a phrase that will recur throughout *Slow Man*.

He has lunch with his ex-wife Rosalind and when he mentions the possibility of spending the holiday with Lucy, his daughter from his first marriage, she raises the topic of the trouble he is in:

‘Don’t expect sympathy from me, David, and don’t expect sympathy from anyone else either. No sympathy, no mercy, not in this day and age. Everyone’s hand will be against you, and why not? Really, how *could you?*’ (44)

Lurie has to admit to himself that she may be right, even though he does not like her tone of “passionate recrimination” (44), which shows some capacity for self-criticism within him. Despite the references to the times in which they are living (which Attridge has remarked upon), a time of bureaucratic managerialism and an impersonal, puritanical ethics of justice, Lurie still insists on his Romantic ethic of passionate love, almost petulantly: “You haven’t asked whether I love her. Aren’t you supposed to ask that as well?” (45). He defends Melanie against Rosalind’s comment that she is dragging his name through the mud, to which Rosalind responds:

‘Don’t blame her! Whose side are you on? Of course I blame her! I

blame you and I blame her. The whole thing is disgraceful from beginning to end. Disgraceful and vulgar too. And I'm not sorry for saying so.' (45)

Rosalind uses the word, "disgraceful," and is the first character to use a form of the title word of the novel, a word that Lurie will apply to himself, thereby branding himself with something like the mark of Cain, a fallen state that he will come to accept as permanent, as Boehmer argues. Rosalind appears to have embraced the sexual Puritanism behind bureaucratic managerialism. She has, however, functioned something like a conscience to Lurie, and he has been forced to perceive the situation differently. What he suppresses, however, is the fact that Melanie was not an equal party in this disgrace, but that he had taken advantage of her. He is still blinded by his literary Romantic ideals and by the Byronic assumption of male entitlement. The language of disgrace is echoed by Lurie himself when he imaginatively adds to the newspaper report that Rosalind brings to his attention the next day:

David Lurie (1945-?), commentator upon, and disgraced disciple of, William Wordsworth. (46)

The hearing is headed by Manas Mathabane, Professor of Religious Studies, apparently an allusion to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, which was also headed by a black man and a religious figure, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It also introduces the idea of a religious, specifically Christian, process of confession and contrition, as examined by Boehmer above. The language of Lurie's reflections is moralistic, that of a Christian virtue ethics, and yet there is no note of contrition or remorse:

He does not feel nervous. On the contrary, he feels quite sure of himself. His heart beats evenly, he has slept well. Vanity, he thinks, the dangerous vanity of the gambler; vanity and self-righteousness. He is going into this in the wrong spirit. But he does not care. (47)

One could also add "pride," the sin that caused Lucifer's downfall. Lurie arrogantly answers Rassool's question whether it is prudent of him to accept Melanie's charge

without reading it: “No. There are more important things in life than being prudent” (49). His pride and arrogance prevent him from accepting counselling and advice, as does his belief that he has done nothing wrong (54): “Frankly, what you want from me is not a response but a confession” (51) and:

‘Then what do you want me to do? Remove what Dr Rassool calls the subtle mockery from my tone? Shed tears of contrition? What will be enough to save me?’ (51-52)

The male members of the committee express their desire to help him and Lurie responds: “In this chorus of goodwill . . . I hear no female voice” (52), once again foregrounding the battle of the sexes. However, he does go on to confess, but in an unrepentant, even defiant, spirit: “I became a servant of Eros” (52). Rassool objects: “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 long history of exploitation of which this is part” (53). Lurie reflects on the word “abuse,” noting the tone of righteousness with which it is spoken, but in the end he cannot deny that he was in a position of power over Melanie. There seems to be polyphony at work here in the juxtaposition of the different ethical discourses. The hearing appears to involve a complication between the language of rights (the ethic of justice) and the language of virtue ethics, both that of pagan, or Romantic, eros and of Christian contrition. When Swarts intervenes, Lurie responds: “You mean, will I humble myself and ask for clemency?” (54). When Lurie admits guilt but not that he was wrong, Rassool says, “The statement should come from him, in his own words. Then we can see if it comes from his heart” (54), echoing Costello’s appeal to her audience to open their hearts in *Lives*. Lurie responds sceptically: “And you trust yourself to divine that, from the words I use—to divine whether it comes from my heart?” (54). Thus, the hearing ends on an unsatisfactory note with Lurie admitting to guilt but not specifying what he did wrong.

His response to the student reporters following the hearing, who ask him “Are you sorry?” and “Do you regret what you did?” (56), is quite unrepentant: “No,

...I was enriched by the experience” (56). He has not begun to enter into Melanie’s experience of the affair. The animal and hunting imagery that follows suggests that not just Lurie but also the reporters are predatory:

Confessions, apologies: why this thirst for abasement? A hush falls. They circle around him like hunters who have cornered a strange beast and do not know how to finish it off. (56)

The statement drawn up by the committee reads:

‘I acknowledge without reservation serious abuses of the human rights of the complainant, as well as abuse of the authority delegated to me by the university. I sincerely apologize to both parties and accept whatever appropriate penalty may be imposed.’ (57)

However, the Rector is only prepared to accept it if Lurie makes a statement expressing a spirit of repentance. Lurie stubbornly sticks to his position, rejecting the religious discourse of repentance:

‘I appeared before an officially constituted tribunal, before a branch of the law. Before that secular tribunal I pleaded guilty, a secular plea. That plea should suffice. Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, another universe of discourse.’ (58)

The discourse of an ethics of justice has the final word, although Lurie rejects it in his heart. He also rejects a Christian ethics of confession, adhering to his Romantic ethics of self-realisation, which shares something with the Socratic injunction “Know thyself,” although Socrates would not have approved of the Romantic emphasis on emotion. In a sense Lurie can be understood not simply as stubborn but also as principled in refusing to make an insincere confession of repentance. As Boehmer argues, he will go on to pursue a secular penance later in his work at the animal shelter in a permanent state of disgrace without the chance of absolution. To use the terms taken from “Before the Gate,” Lurie will choose DOG rather than GOD as his path to salvation, living, like Cain, in an perpetual state of sin; as will be

argued later, dogs function as scapegoats in the novel, the bearers of human sin. This would fit Coetzee's discussion of the inescapably endless nature of confession without the possibility of the intervention of grace, except, possibly, through suffering and charity. The concept of "charity," in the sense of selfless or altruistic love, seems to refer once again to Christian ethics, but perhaps a case for a secular kind of charity can be made. This very stubbornness and intransigence of Lurie, resembling that of Lucifer, would make his moral development all the more remarkable, even though he does not come close to Costello's level of enlightenment. He is like an Everyman, very reluctant to change his ways, very complacent in his ignorance—Socrates mocks the complacency of ignorant people in Plato's *Symposium*—and yet makes the first steps towards moral growth, showing how even the most hardened adult, proud in his intellect, can change fundamentally, even late in life.

Lurie's movement from Cape Town to the tiny town of Salem in the Eastern Cape can be seen as a type of ironic pastoral, a movement from the corrupting influences of city life to the supposed purity of country life, the beginning of his "Cynical" transformation to a more virtuous, basic, doglike existence. As an ironic pastoral it resembles *In the Heart of the Country* both in terms of portraying a difficult father-daughter relationship and a moment of climactic violence, the rape of a white woman by a black man. It also recalls *Waiting for the Barbarians* as an example of frontier literature in its being set in the Eastern Cape. However, while these genres of the pastoral and frontier literature are treated ironically by Coetzee, Lurie, who uses the language of these genres, does not do so with any profound irony. His Romantic, erotic imagination seems to be especially out of place in interpreting the conditions of Lucy's chosen way of life in terms he can understand. During the course of his stay there, however, his erotic imagination will be gradually transformed into a more sympathetic imagination, his egoism into altruism. The transformation is only partial but it is remarkable that it can happen at all considering the intransigence of his character and attests to the power of Lurie's imagination. He does not have the benefit of

a Costello-like guiding figure to show him the way to a more enlightened state but has to start his transformation from within, which is possible mainly because of the polyphony of voices within his own consciousness, as is evident in the way he keeps modifying his proposed opera in response to the different voices within him. He does, however, have the example of Lucy and Bev Shaw even though he never fully comprehends their set of values towards which he is initially highly dismissive.

While Lurie idealizes the apparent purity and simplicity of Lucy's way of life, through the retrospective lenses of the pastoral genre and early colonialism, for her, it will be argued, her chosen lifestyle is actually a forward-looking movement towards ecology, as well as an attempt to recreate Eden on Earth, not through sentimental imaginings, but through hard, peasant toil and through an ethical way of life including vegetarianism. On her piece of land Lucy practices autarky (a concept important to the Cynics) and vegetarianism, and cares for animals. Her ideals of non-violence, economic independence and respect for life are embedded in her land. Were she to give up her land and relocate to the Netherlands after her rape, as her father later suggests, she would have given up her dream to create a better world and capitulated to violence. Her stubborn, Cynical refusal to budge and her persistence despite personal violation make her the real hero of the novel. However, the fact that she could not buy the land on her own but that her father "helped her buy her it" (60) already hints at the social framework of patriarchal power in South African society that makes her rape possible—patriarchy translated into male entitlement—and shows that she can only realise her dreams of female independence after some awful compromises.

As her name suggests, Lucy has a far more enlightened complex of beliefs and values than her father, a system of ethics that he cannot fathom, although it is a position towards which David starts moving at the end of the novel despite himself and despite not fully comprehending it. Her position is never, however, fully articulated but is embedded in the place she lives and works and embodied in her actions and words. Her value system is rooted in the African soil, not detached, literary and European like her father's. Ecofeminism's emphasis on the interdependence of

people and its rejection of Kantian autonomy and individualism resemble the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, which states that a person is a person because of other persons. Her lesbian form of feminism tends towards independence from men, a sort of female Cynicism, but not from people—her plot of land can be seen as a kind of Island of Lesbos, which is forcefully colonised by men, in much the way Costello suggests the land of the Houyhnhnms in Swift’s story could reasonably be imagined to be forcefully subdued by men (*The Lives of Animals*, 57). After her rape the Cynical strand becomes more dominant even though she appears to give up some of her independence to the patriarch, Petrus. Although she appears to submit to male domination, she nonetheless takes responsibility for the child and in this sense she owns the future, since the child will imbibe her values. Unlike the women at the Technical University of Cape Town, Lucy does not insist on her rights, but rather acts according to an ethics of care, something Lurie fails to understand. Lucy may have been violated but she has not been destroyed and through her child her values will live on. She will maintain a degree of independence and her place on the land. It may be little, but it is enough, and it may be the beginnings of a gradual movement towards a more enlightened society.

Lurie’s literary, Eurocentric preconceptions prevent him from respecting the alterity of his daughter’s home and her way of life. Despite his idealising her lifestyle, he is concerned about her safety in such an isolated place, and expresses approval of her guard dogs and the rifle she has recently bought—Coetzee also takes the opportunity to take a humorous swipe at philosophy, touching on the battle between philosophy and poetry that is so central to *The Lives of Animals*, when Lucy points out that it will not help much during a burglary if two people rather than one are staying in the house and Lurie replies:

‘That’s very philosophical.’

‘Yes. When all else fails, philosophize.’

‘But you have a weapon.’

‘I have a rifle. I’ll show you. I bought it from a neighbour. I haven’t

ever used it, but I have it.’

‘Good. An armed philosopher. I approve.’

Dogs and a gun; bread in the oven and a crop in the earth. Curious that he and her mother, cityfolk, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share. (60-61)

Lucy is clearly reluctant to be compelled to own a gun, it being part of a male culture of violence and colonialism, so clearly expressed by Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusklands*, and the irony is that it will be used against her to kill the very dogs that are supposed to protect her. The reference to history is one of many references to the times in which Lurie lives, as Attridge has noted, but what is significant here is that Lucy seems to be moving against the times, her organic farming standing in opposition to the hegemony of industrialised farming, her mainly subsistence farming, in opposition to market-oriented cash-crop production, her local production, to international production. Indeed, her farming need not be seen as retrogressive, but as part of an organic revolution in agriculture. After she has shown him the kennels, he thinks:

This is how she makes a living: from the kennels, and from selling flowers and garden produce. Nothing could be more simple. (61)

After being shown the vegetable gardens, Lurie imagines Lucy to be a frontier farmer:

She talks easily about these matters. A frontier farmer of the new breed. In the old days, cattle and maize. Today, dogs and daffodils. The more things change the more they remain the same. History repeating itself, though in a more modest vein. Perhaps history has learned a lesson.

They walk back along an irrigation furrow. Lucy’s bare toes grip the red earth, leaving clear prints. A solid woman, embedded in a new life. Good! If this is to be what he leaves behind—this daughter, this woman—then he does not have to be ashamed. (62)

Lurie seems unable to understand his daughter except in such stereotypical and historical terms as “*boervrou*,” “settler,” and “frontier farmer,” thereby failing to recognise her individuality and otherness. Lucy’s solidity and embeddedness stand in strong contrast to the disconnected and abstract life of a city-dweller, particularly an intellectual like Lurie. It is precisely this lack of connection of urban dwellers to the source of their food, their ignorance of how food is produced in post-industrial societies, that makes the cruelties of the industrial farming of animals possible. However, Lurie’s imagination does at least empower him to see in terms of striking visual images the contrast between his urban lifestyle and his daughter’s rural one, and this imagination will help him to begin transcending his own limitations, although it will require the violent and traumatic event of his daughter’s violation to force him to begin making this transformation. His mentioning that he need not be ashamed to leave such a daughter behind is not a reference to his personal disgrace, but rather to the idea in Plato’s *Symposium* that the eros inherent in all living creatures is based on the desire to possess immortality, which manifests itself in the desire to procreate offspring, whether these are biological children, artworks, scientific discoveries, or enduring legislation. This is the self-conscious motive behind his desire to create an opera on Byron, as he tells Lucy:

‘One wants to leave something behind. Or at least a man wants to leave something behind. It’s easier for a woman.’

‘Why is it easier for a woman?’

‘Easier, I mean, to produce something with a life of its own.’ (63)

The irony here is that he is proud of his “creation,” Lucy, despite merely being her father and even though he does not really comprehend her. These Platonic ideas are echoed in “What Is Realism?” as discussed in Chapter 2, when John dreams of the birth of a novel in relation to his mother, Elizabeth Costello. The Platonism is further reinforced here when Lurie admits that work on his opera has not progressed very far since “it’s all in the realm of ideas as yet” (63), the “realm of ideas” being a very Platonic phrase. Thus Lurie’s imagination and love at this stage can still be

characterised as Platonic and erotic, the desire to possess beauty and goodness for oneself, rather than Socratic or altruistic, namely the desire to assist others. This possessive, erotic imagination has been related by Camille Paglia to what she calls the aggressive Western eye, a gaze that separates the subject from a world of others reduced to objects, which is evident in the way Lurie ruthlessly looks at the bodies of women and judges them according to how far they realise a physical ideal of beauty. In contrast to vulgar ideas of “Platonic Love,” the physical, sexual attractiveness—not just the spiritual qualities—of an individual *is* important according to Plato, since it is the starting point in an ascent to ever higher and more abstract ideals of beauty, culminating in the vision of the Form of the Good, or Absolute Beauty. The power of Lurie’s erotic imagination is such that it overwhelms him at certain moments and blinds him to the individuality of women, as it did when he made love to Melanie, and does again when he walks on his own from the farm to the main road:

Without warning a memory of the girl comes back: of her neat little breasts with their upstanding nipples, of her smooth flat belly. A ripple of desire passes through him. Evidently whatever it was is not over yet. (65)

He judges his own daughter whom he hasn’t seen for a year:

For a moment he does not recognise her. A year has passed and she has put on weight. Her hips and breasts are now (he searches for the best word) ample. (59)

Later, after the memory of Melanie overwhelms him, he thinks:

Ample is a kind word for Lucy. Soon she will be positively heavy. Letting herself go, as happens when one withdraws from the field of love. (65)

Later, on his first Saturday afternoon, he joins her in her room and reflects that she is “[a] woman in the flower of her years, attractive despite her heaviness, despite the unflattering clothes” (76) and “[a]ttractive . . . yet lost to men” (65). Of course, he is only considering erotic, sexual love here, perhaps a heterosexual version of the

homoerotic love discussed in Plato's *Symposium*, not the vulgarised idea of idealised, "Platonic" love but the fully erotic one of the dialogue. However, he is capable of a more parental love, although this is also ultimately Platonic in that it concerns the extension of one's own existence through one's offspring:

From the day his daughter was born he has felt for her nothing but the most spontaneous, most unstinting love. (76)

His reflections pass through a series of questions concerning her sexuality which he considers but decides against asking her, showing a limit to his willingness to comprehend her or intrude upon her thoughts. When Lurie meets Bev Shaw earlier that Saturday morning he judges her very harshly:

He has not taken to Bev Shaw, a dumpy, bustling little woman with black freckles, close-cropped, wiry hair, and no neck. He does not like women who make no effort to be attractive. It is a resistance he has had to Lucy's friends before. Nothing to be proud of: a prejudice that has settled in his mind, settled down. His mind has become a refuge for old thoughts, idle, indigent, with nowhere else to go. He ought to chase them out, sweep the premises clean. But he does not care to do so, or does not care enough. (72)

The Platonic love based on attractiveness and the more Christian one of care are both evident in this passage, and it is clear that at this stage Lurie strongly associates with the erotic. Yet he has the insight to recognise that his lack of care is a character fault; it can be called a Socratic insight in recognising one's own limitations, as opposed to Platonic perfectionism. Indeed, this recognition is the germ of his growing toward an ethics of care later in the novel. His dislike of women who make no attempt to look attractive is particularly disturbing, since it assumes that women should present themselves as objects of male desire. When love does transform Lurie's soul it is not by means of Platonic love that transcends the physical love of the beauty manifested in individual bodies, moving ever upwards to a vision of the Idea of Absolute Beauty itself, but rather an altruistic love, charity, that recognises the value of the embodied

existence of individual beings, and not only the embodied souls of human beings. It is a movement not toward abstractness but toward concreteness. The metaphysical counterpart to Lurie's Platonic eroticism is a belief in the possibility of disembodied and immortal souls, a belief he expresses on several occasions, contrasting it with animal bodies which for him lack souls.

His aggressive, objectifying gaze is even more evident when he goes to help Bev in the clinic for the first time, his imagination alive with unflattering images:

Her hair is a mass of little curls. Does she make the curls herself, with tongs? Unlikely: it would take hours every day. They must grow that way. He has never seen such *tessitura* from close by. The veins on her ears are visible as a filigree of red and purple. The veins of her nose too. And then a chin that comes straight out of her chest, like a pouter pigeon's. As an ensemble, remarkably unattractive. (81-2)

If Lurie tends to value women according to their degree of attractiveness, thus not respecting their individuality, he barely notices animals as individual beings at all, referring to the dogs in their kennel by the generic term, although he does notice how one of them, a bulldog bitch, seems bored. It is Lucy who individualises, perhaps even humanises, the dog:

'Katy? She's abandoned. The owners have done a bunk. Account unpaid for months. I don't know what I'm going to do about her. Try to find her a home, I suppose. She's sulking, but otherwise she's all right. She gets taken out every day for exercise. By me or Petrus. It's part of the package. (62)

There seems no suggestion that Lucy is considering having Katy "put down;" indeed, she later suggests she will adopt her. Katy is later humanised again when they take her on a walk the next day and she struggles to defecate: "The bitch continues to strain, hanging her tongue out, glancing around shiftily as if ashamed to be watched" (68). Wendy Woodward, in a book about the portrayal of animal subjectivity in South African literature, points out that, with the exception of Katy and the lame

dog, Driepoot, the animals in *Disgrace* are not individuated. Furthermore, Katy and Driepoot, despite being individuated, are not portrayed as agents, namely initiators of actions or autonomous subjects, nor does Coetzee attempt to enter into their subjective experience (Woodward, 2008, 128-29). Thus, while *Disgrace* goes further than *The Lives of Animals* in describing actual experiences with animals, it still does so from a human perspective.

Lurie also pays no attention when Lucy first mentions her “help” (60) and only asks about him when she mentions his name (62). She mentions that he is her “new assistant. In fact, since March co-proprietor. Quite a fellow” (62). Lurie soon has an opportunity to talk to Petrus who tells him:

‘I look after the dogs and I work in the garden. Yes.’ Petrus gives a broad smile. ‘I am the gardener and the dog-man.’ He reflects for a moment. ‘The dog-man,’ he repeats, savouring the phrase. (64)

The word “gardener” reminds one of the protagonist in *Life & Times of Michael K*. However, Petrus is no mere worker and he grows in stature as the novel progresses, but not always in a positive light, and always as the uncontested patriarch. Lucy mentions that he has another wife and family in Adelaide, establishing Petrus as a polygamist and a man of some substance in African terms. His role as “dog-man” will, significantly, be taken over by Lurie.

Lucy invites Lurie to stay on her farm as long as he likes. When he says he would not like to outstay his welcome as a visitor, she suggests they call it “refuge” (65) to which he replies: “You mean asylum? It’s not as bad as that, Lucy. I’m not a fugitive” (66) and tells her how he refused the administration’s compromise offer of taking counselling, pronouncing melodramatically (as he admits to himself) that he would rather be shot, but stopping short of suggesting that they would like to have him castrated. Lucy finds this extreme and he explains that:

‘These are puritanical times. Private life is public business. Prurience is respectable, prurience and sentiment. They wanted a spectacle: breast-beating, remorse, tears if possible. A TV show, in fact. I wouldn’t oblige.’

(66)

Once again there is a reference to the times in which they live, but its being specified as “puritanical times” clearly links it with the Weberian, Protestant work ethic critiqued by MacIntyre in *After Virtue* and by Coetzee in his most recent novels. Earlier in *Disgrace* it was criticised for its role in the “great rationalisation” and for its valorization of work. Here Lurie expresses his disgust toward the ethic’s denigration of sex, or sensuality. Lucy responds to her father’s stubbornness, saying “[y]ou shouldn’t be so unbending, David. It isn’t heroic to be unbending” (66) but invites him to stay on the farm for as long as he likes on whatever terms he chooses. She is remarkably unjudgmental about his affair with Melanie, apparently viewing her as an equal participant, which distances her from the women at the university who were quick to condemn Lurie. This is clear again in their conversation when they walk the dogs the next day, when she asks him “Why did she denounce you?” (69). When she asks whether he has thought of getting married again (to someone of his age), he justifies himself:

‘Do you remember Blake?’ he says. ‘Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires’?

‘Why do you quote that to me?’

‘Unacted desires can turn as ugly in the old as in the young.’

‘Therefore?’

‘Every woman I have been close to has taught me something about myself. To that extent they have made me a better person.’

‘I hope you are not claiming the reverse as well. That knowing you has turned your women into better people.’

He looks at her sharply. She smiles. ‘Just joking,’ she says. (69-70)

Despite the “joke,” Lucy is making an important point, hinting at the selfishness of Lurie’s maxim, belying his claim that erotic love has improved his character (which is one of the aims of Platonic love). Lurie uses Blake rather opportunistically to

justify the pursuit of his own sexual gratification, which would not be problematic in itself, so long as his relationships were reciprocal—which was not the case with Melanie—but there is no evidence to suggest that his affairs have ennobled him. His idea of love is completely self-regarding at this stage, which makes his turn towards other-regarding love later in the novel so much more striking.

After selling their produce at the Saturday market, Lucy and her father drop by at Bev and Bill Shaw's house (the Shaws' surname may allude to the vegetarianism and social activism of George Bernard Shaw). Lurie does not look forward to the visit and it is clear that the limits of his sympathetic imagination have already been reached; indeed, that he has preconceived opinions about the Shaws:

The Animal Welfare League, once an active charity in Grahamstown, has had to close down its operation. However, a handful of volunteers led by Bev Shaw still runs a clinic from the old premises.

He has nothing against the animal lovers with whom Lucy has been mixed up as long as he can remember. The world would no doubt be a worse place without them. So when Bev Shaw opens her front door he puts on a good face, though in fact he is repelled by the odours of cat urine and dog mangle and Jeyes Fluid that greet them.

The house is just as he had imagined it would be: rubbishy furniture, a clutter of ornaments There is not only Bev Shaw, there is Bill Shaw too

It has been a long morning, he is tired, the last thing he wants to do is trade small talk with these people. (72-3)

Lurie's observations are particularly uncharitable and his attitude toward them patronising. His gaze is hyper-critical, sharpened by moral, or aesthetic, distaste, and it appears as though he believes he can learn nothing of value from them. Starting as he does from an egoistic, Romantic ethic of self-realisation, he cannot comprehend a life of service to others, especially not to nonhuman others. After the visit Lucy discusses Bev with Lurie who notes that her work must be a losing battle. Lucy agrees:

‘Yes, it is. There is no funding any longer. On the list of the nation’s priorities, animals come nowhere.’

‘She must get despondent. You too.’

‘Yes. No. Does it matter? The animals she helps aren’t despondent. They are greatly relieved.’

‘That’s wonderful, then. I’m sorry, my child, I just find it hard to whip up an interest in the subject. It’s admirable, what you do, what she does, but to me animal-welfare people are a bit like Christians of a certain kind. Everyone is so cheerful and well-intentioned that after a while you itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging. Or to kick a cat.’ (73)

He is surprised at his outburst, which is callous to the point of being offensive, especially in light of his virtual rape of Melanie and the rape of his own daughter to come, and in its expression of casual violence towards animals, let alone its dismissiveness toward those who do difficult and soul-destroying work in (under-funded) animal clinics. This lack of concern with animals is thus linked to a lack of concern with people, specifically women, and is related not only to individuals like Lurie but to the ethos of South Africa and the priorities of its government. Rosemary Jolly makes the point that in the traditions of Western representations, and others, “that which is female, coporeal, black, and/or otherwise antirational (and therefore antimale) is allied with that which is animal” (Jolly, 2006, 150) and that “[t]he war on women in South Africa occupies the same discursive space as the war on animals in Elizabeth Costello’s discourse” (166). The words of Mahatma Ghandi come to mind, that one can measure the moral progress of a nation according to how it treats its animals (quoted in the epigraph to Chapter 7). Lurie’s reference to Lucy as “my child” in this context also seems patronising and his praise of animal-welfare people seems insincere. It is not clear that he is aware of the difference between animal welfare, which accepts the use of animals for human ends as long as it is done kindly, and animal rights, which rejects the idea that animals should be seen merely as means to human ends. Lucy notes that her father thinks she should be doing something better with her life, that

he does not approve of her friends because they will not lead her to a “higher life” (74). When he denies this, she asserts:

‘But it is true. They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is, there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals. That’s the example that people like Bev try to set. That’s the example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. I don’t want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us.’ (74)

There are echoes both of *The Lives of Animals* and of “The Humanities in Africa” in Lucy’s words, especially in her hint about the suffering that humans inflict on animals. Bev Shaw resembles Sister Bridget, except without the religious fundamentalism. Both devote their lives to relieving suffering amongst the powerless and marginalised without expectation of recognition or profit, although it is unlikely that Sister Bridget would consider the suffering of animals to be of much moral significance, since her Catholicism denies the possibility that they can possess immortal souls. On the other hand, Bev is unlikely to believe in an afterlife. However, if Sister Bridget believes she serves a higher cause in the form of God, Bev and Lucy believe in no such higher cause. The ultimate object of their cause is not transcendent but descendent, not an abstract and disembodied immortal, perfect, supreme Being, but concrete and embodied mortal, imperfect, suffering beings. For them the capacity for suffering of the individual animal, a capacity they share with humans, is sufficient cause, and the fact of suffering is their ultimate authority. It is worth quoting Coetzee again in this respect:

[I]n South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. . . . [I]t is not that one *grants* the authority of the suffering body: the suffering body *takes* this authority: that is its power. To use other words: its power is undeniable. (Coetzee, 1992, 248)

This cuts against not only a religion like Christianity but also against a Platonic notion of a “higher life,” the exemplum of the Hellenism that Sister Bridget criticises

in “The Humanities in Africa,” where one’s erotic desire prompts one to ascend through ever higher objects of beauty, culminating in a vision of the Form of the Good. Lucy’s seems to be an extreme position, like the Cynicism of Diogenes, since it apparently questions the value of the highest products of civilisation: art, science and philosophy. It also thereby questions the value of Lurie’s own artistic project, his opera on Byron, an evaluation that appears to be confirmed by the decreasing ambition of his project as the novel progresses. This is not to say that the opera is unimportant but only that its significance changes in emphasis, mainly from an assertion of Byron’s (and therefore of Lurie’s) sexual prowess to the suffering, many years later, of the Contessa who was one of his conquests. In the end, Lucy is asserting the importance of a moral rather than an aesthetic life, the sharing of the suffering of others rather than the indulging of one’s own desires. It does thus closely resemble Buddhism, and Lucy’s mentioning the possibility of coming back as a dog or pig seems to reinforce such an interpretation, although it could be argued that she mentions this merely as a “thought experiment.” Lurie responds:

‘Lucy, my dearest, don’t be cross. Yes, I agree, this is the only life there is. As for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different. So if we are going to be kind, let it be out of simple generosity, not because we feel guilty or fear retribution.’ (74)

Lurie’s response is described as a “homily” and can perhaps be dismissed as sanctimonious, complacent and insincere, especially his prescription that we should be kind to animals. He has not begun seriously to question his speciesism, his belief in human supremacy. His language is not that of animal rights but a human-centred virtue ethics, as evident in his use of the words “kindness” and “generosity.” It is significant that Lucy “seems about to respond to his homily, but then does not” and that “[they] arrive at the house in silence” (74). The silence indicates that the limits of sympathy and discussion have been reached. Lurie, complacent in his prejudices,

is not prepared seriously to consider his daughter's perspective, a situation similar to that faced by Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, except this time the readers perceive it from the perspective of an unsympathetic Everyman figure, whose own views on animals most likely coincide with those of the majority of them. Thus the readers are asked to identify with the protagonist of the novel, at least in terms of his views on animals, an unsettling identification that may force them to reflect on their own attitudes toward animals. The silence suggests that Lucy and Lurie are speaking from within incommensurable paradigms: Lurie is limited by the presuppositions (including that of speciesism) of his anthropocentric paradigm, unable as yet to make a shift toward a biocentric one. This also suggests the limits of rationality, an important theme in *The Lives of Animals*. As the events later in the novel will attest, the beginning of the shift from one paradigm to another will not be a result of reasoned, abstract discussion, but of lived, embodied experience, particularly of suffering and the attendant emotions.

The masculinist (to use a term coined by Costello in *The Lives of Animals*) ethos of South African society is emphasized by the televised broadcast of the soccer match that clearly bores Lurie: "Saturday afternoon in South Africa: a time consecrated to men and their pleasures" (75) and, when the match is over and Petrus changes the channel: "Boxing: two tiny men, so tiny that they barely come up to the referee's chest, circle, leap in, belabour each other" (75). This celebration of male physicality contributes to the framework of patriarchy and male entitlement that forms the background ethos of the novel and that makes Lucy's rape possible. The aloof and mocking attitude toward these televised displays of machismo is associated with Lurie's perspective by means of the third person intimate narrator. Lurie no doubt dismisses these sport broadcasts as examples of popular and "low" culture, and yet he cannot see the link between them and his own attitude of male entitlement, evident in his attitude toward women and in his interest in the "high" culture of his Byronic opera, Byron not only being famous as a Romantic poet but also infamous for his female "conquests."

Bored with the televised sport, Lurie joins his daughter in her bedroom and they

discuss how he can spend his time. He agrees to help with the dogs, particularly with the dog meat with which Lucy admits to having difficulty (suggesting she is vegetarian), to help Petrus establish his lands, for which he can be expected to be paid since Petrus has recently received a land grant, and to help Bev at the clinic, even though he feels they will not “hit it off” (76-77). Petrus’s increasing wealth and power in relation to Lucy are emphasized when she says that “I’m not sure I can afford him any more” (77), indicating his growing patriarchal stature. Concerning working at the clinic, Lucy points out that it will not be necessary for her father to hit it off with Bev, that he should not expect to be paid and that he “will have to do it out of the goodness of [his] heart” (77). Lurie’s reply is pointedly ironic:

‘I’m dubious, Lucy. It sounds suspiciously like community service. It sounds like someone trying to make reparation for past misdeeds.’

‘As to our motives, David, I can assure you, the animals at the clinic won’t query them. They won’t ask and they won’t care.’

‘All right, I’ll do it. But only as long as I don’t have to become a better person. I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself. I’ll do it on that basis.’ His hand still rests on her foot; now he grips her ankle tight. ‘Understood?’

She gives him what he can only call a sweet smile. ‘So you are determined to go on being bad. Mad, bad, and dangerous to know. I promise, no one will ask you to change.’ (77)

Thus Lurie’s intransigence is emphasized and his association with Byron’s Lucifer is reinforced; Lucy’s use of the words “bad” and “mad” echoes his lecture on Byron’s Satan, an “erring spirit” (32) with a “mad heart” (33). However, he does agree to help with the work in the clinic and it will eventually cause a profound change in his heart, reforming him despite himself, and serving, too, as the community service that he has resisted so fiercely.

Lucy later finds him fast asleep in Katy’s cage. When he says that she is difficult to befriend, Lucy replies:

‘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.’

Lucy insists on humanising the dogs, using the pronouns “she” and “who” rather than “it” and “that” as well as the term “mourning” (“pining” would be the traditional term). Philosophers like Leahy would dismiss this as anthropomorphism and Lurie, who shares their anthropocentric world view, insists on a distinction between immortal human souls and mortal animal souls:

‘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.’

Lucy shrugs. ‘I’m not sure that I have a soul. I wouldn’t know a soul if I saw one.’

‘That’s not true. You are a soul. We are all souls. We are souls before we are born.’

She regards him oddly. (78-9)

However, he can provide no other justification for his views on souls than the (patriarchal) authority of the Church Fathers, who did not have the benefit of Darwin’s theory of evolution, which shows the continuity between animals and humans and denies the dogma of humankind as a special creation. Indeed, Lurie’s idea that we are souls before we are born is decidedly Platonic or Neoplatonic in contrast to the official Aristotelianism of the Catholic Church. Lurie’s views are surprisingly outdated yet he does not attempt to interrogate Lucy on her views but rather dismisses them with his reference to the Church Fathers. Thus Lucy remains an unknown to Lurie, beyond his epistemological horizons, and her world of knowledge and experience is

largely closed to Lurie on account of his preconceptions. Lucy's ideas seem more in tune with science, modernity and Darwinism, although Buddhism also denies the existence of an immortal, or enduring, soul. One can extend Rosemary Jolly's analysis (discussed above) in noting that the Platonic binary of soul/body and the Aristotelian of form/matter may well have originated in the heaven/earth binary of ancient Greek myth, and that in each of the binary pairs, the left-hand term, associated with the rational and active masculine principle, is privileged above the right-hand one, associated with the irrational and passive feminine principle. Thus Lurie's belief in disembodied souls and his belief that animals' souls are tied to their bodies are ultimately patriarchal ideas since they assert the superiority of soul over body, and hence masculine over feminine.

Lucy links dogs and gods in a sentence—"They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things"—which relates to the theme of achieving salvation through animals, although here the instrumentalisation of animals is emphasized. This may be a reference to the distinction made by Kant, as discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to Midgley, between persons and things, persons having moral status, and animals, being classified as non-persons, having none, being treated instead as possessions and property. However, Lurie is not yet ready to consider showing respect for animal subjectivity.

When Lurie asks Lucy whether she ever puts animals down, she replies that Bev has taken this task upon her because no one else will do it, even though "[i]t cuts her up terribly" (79) and suggests that Bev is a more interesting person even in his own terms than Lurie gives her credit for. A "shadow of grief" then falls over Lurie and he apologises to Lucy for having failed to be a better guide in her life. He does, however, agree to help, although not with the best feelings. Nonetheless, it is his work at the clinic that initiates the transformation of his character even though he starts there merely as a result of a need to relieve his boredom and even though he finds Bev physically repulsive. He even finds her ideas ridiculous. When they have to restrain a dog, Bev says, "Think comforting thoughts, think strong thoughts. They can smell what you are thinking" (81). He thinks to himself, "They can smell what

you are thinking: what nonsense” (81) and when she thanks him, saying “You have a good presence. I sense that you like animals” (81), he replies extremely callously: “Do I like animals? I eat them, so I suppose I must like them, some parts of them” (81). These are the words of someone who has not begun to take the interests of animals seriously, to consider the implications of their being subjects in their own right, and who is openly malicious towards someone who truly does care. While she ponders his words he objectifies her with an unsympathetic gaze, noting her physical unattractiveness in detail, and is surprised that she answers his sarcastic comment:

‘Yes, we eat up a lot of animals in this country,’ she says. ‘It doesn’t seem to do us much good. I’m not sure how we will justify it to them.’
(82)

Lurie is almost bemused by her answer and thinks to himself:

Justify it? When? At the Great Reckoning? He would be curious to hear more, but this is not the time. (82)

Later, after she disagrees with his attempted consolation in suggesting that the goat they are unable to treat is born prepared for its death and says, “ ‘I’m not sure. I don’t think we are ready to die, any of us, not without being escorted’ ” (84), he thinks:

Things are beginning to fall into place. He has a first inkling of the task this ugly little woman has set herself. This bleak building is a place not of healing—her doctoring is too amateurish for that—but of last resort. . . . Bev Shaw, not a veterinarian but a priestess, full of New Age mumbo jumbo, trying, absurdly, to lighten the load of Africa’s suffering beasts. Lucy thought he would find her interesting. But Lucy is wrong. Interesting is not the word. (84)

Once again the limits of Lurie’s sympathetic imagination are clear. He subjects not just Bev’s name and looks to scorn and ridicule but also her words, without trying

to interpret them sympathetically. The irony is that he will become the very “dog-psychoomp” (146) the idea of which he ridicules now. All Bev actually seems to be saying is that the animals should be treated with especial kindness while they are being put down. Likewise, he finds the wrong emphasis in her words on the numbers of animals eaten in the country. Bev’s point is that this excessive meat-eating is symptomatic of the culture of violence in the country; like Costello, she is pointing out the psychic cost to people of their mistreatment and abuse of animals; her point is mainly a moral one. However, Lurie insists on giving it a metaphysical gloss, “seeing the world through metaphysical glasses” as Jolly calls it (Jolly, 2006, 164), and thus can treat it with ridicule. While Jolly is right to blame Lurie’s metaphysical preconceptions, his literary imagination is just as culpable in doing violence to otherness. Nonetheless, the fact that he engages her in conversation, especially when he helps with feeding the dogs after Bev has finished in the clinic, and the fact that she says things that he finds difficult to accommodate, show that he has the potential to begin the process of transcending the limits of his sympathetic imagination, that he has started to recognise her otherness, if not to understand it. Later on he even adopts her expression about dogs being able to smell one’s thoughts (142, 156, 193).

This glimmering of sympathy is also evident in his perceptions of the goat, another animal that is more fully individualised in *Disgrace* than the generic “dogs”:

The goat, a fullgrown buck, can barely walk. One half of his scrotum, yellow and purple, is swollen like a balloon; the other half is a mass of caked blood and dirt. He has been savaged by dogs, the old woman says.

But he seems bright enough, cheery, combative. (82)

Besides being individualised, the goat is also a symbol of fertility, even of male sexual prowess, and it is significant that, because he cannot be healed without being rendered sterile, his owner decides against treatment and takes him home to be slaughtered. The goat, like the lame dog Lurie later befriends, also symbolises the threat of social castration for his “inappropriate desires” that Lurie so strongly resists, but which began with the loss of his good looks and will be completed later when his face is

burned. Bev has a moment of sympathetic communication with the goat through touch, a moment of communication that transcends the species barrier and which Lurie does not ridicule:

She kneels down again beside the goat, nuzzles his throat, stroking the throat upward with her own hair. The goat trembles but is still. She motions to the woman to let go of the horns. The woman obeys. The goat does not stir.

She is whispering. ‘What do you say, my friend?’ he hears her say. ‘What do you say? Is it enough?’

The goat stands stock still as if hypnotised. Bev Shaw continues to stroke him with her head. She seems to have lapsed into a trance of her own. (83)

Indeed, much later, after Lucy’s rape, Lurie remembers this incident with respect: “He remembers Bev Shaw nuzzling the old billy-goat with the ravaged testicles, stroking him, comforting him, entering into his life. How does she get it right, this communion with animals?” (126). Bev is clearly upset about the fate of the goat and also individualises, even humanises, him: “ ‘Such a good old fellow, so brave and straight and confident!’ ” (83). Lurie reflects on the name “lethal” given to the euthanasing drug that is used for bad cases, relating it to “the waters of Lethe” (83) and, to his surprise, tries to comfort her, thus indicating the beginnings of his transcending the limits of his sympathy. The idea of the sacrificial goat will also reappear in “At the Gate” in *Elizabeth Costello*, where Costello specifically points, when asked to justify her life of writing fiction, to the individuality of the ram that Ulysses slaughters in order to allow him to visit Hades, an event that seems to be prefigured here when the ram is mentioned in connection with Lethe. The description of the blowfly grubs writhing in the ram’s damaged scrotum in Bev’s clinic appears to be an allusion to the wound, discussed in Chapter 2, of the young man in Kafka’s “A Country Doctor”: “Worms, the length and thickness of my little finger, roseate and also coated with blood, are writhing against the inside of the wound, with little white heads, and

many, many little legs. Poor boy, it's not going to be possible to help you" (Kafka, 2007, 189). There is also the figure of the scapegoat, which will be discussed below. Nonetheless, despite his multiple symbolic significance in *Disgrace*, the goat remains solidly individuated.

The stirrings of Lurie's sympathetic imagination are clear when he returns home and retires early but cannot sleep and instead tries to imagine the life, particularly the sex life (although here it is more the erotic than sympathetic imagination at work), of his daughter and of the burden he, as her father, must be on her, seeing her as "his second salvation, the bride of his youth reborn" (86). His sleeplessness may be an indication of how deeply he has been moved by his experiences that day and he sits up late, unable to be inspired when reading Byron's letters on his affair with Teresa: "In adultery, all the tedium of marriage rediscovered" (87). In a sense it is an answer to Lucy's question whether he is considering marrying again, and it reveals a degree of misogyny in his character. It is clear that he cannot see that the pursuit of Eros can offer no salvation since it is posited on the possession of the good for oneself, and on the possession of personal immortality (even though these can, for Plato, only be obtained through the exercise of virtue). For Plato, the possession of immortality, namely the salvation of the soul from its mortal body, involves a movement from imperfect, impermanent physical bodies toward disembodied, perfect, eternal abstractions. Salvation through animals is the very opposite of Platonic salvation and also differs from Christian salvation as it involves the recognition that there are no immortal souls but, instead, that souls are embodied and mortal like all other animals. This means that the value of lives resides in their individuality, mortality and embodiedness rather than in the supposed possession of an immortal soul and in the existence of an afterlife; that is, their value lies precisely in their limited existence, their animality, in their actual dog-like, rather than their imagined god-like, nature.

Indeed, the idea of violence may be inherent in the notion of eros (as Camille Paglia asserts (Paglia, 1990, 18)), in the sense that it involves the possession of good things for oneself, and hence fails to acknowledge the other, although Plato does

try to transcend the limitations of the egoism inherent in eros by arguing that the ultimate goal of desire is the Good. This possibly inherent moral flaw in the notion of eros is powerfully and ironically dramatised in Chapter 11, when Lucy is raped soon after Lurie talks about the “rights of desire” (89), which links his violation of Melanie with the three intruders’ violation of Lucy. Paglia makes the interesting points that the idea of eros applies specifically to men, and that eros is necessarily linked with possession and aggression. This is borne out by studies of animal behaviour, especially the behaviour of male mammals who spend much of their time marking their territory which they are prepared to defend with force in order to protect their females and offspring, in order to perpetuate the survival of their genetic material. Indeed, much later Lucy suggests about her rapists that “I think I am in their territory. They have marked me. They will come back for me” (158). Thus the events later in the chapter cast a very dark shadow over the words Lurie uses to justify his affair with Melanie and he tells her: “My case rests on the rights of desire On the god who makes even the small birds quiver” (89). However, he keeps the following thoughts to himself:

I was a servant of Eros: that is what he wants to say, but does he have the effrontery? It was a god who acted through me. What vanity! Yet not a lie, not entirely. In the whole wretched business there was something generous that was doing its best to flower. If only he had known the time would be so short! (89)

Instead, he tells Lucy the story of a dog that was beaten whenever he became excited by bitches on heat, until he had been conditioned to deny his own nature. When Lucy asks him whether the moral of the story is that “males should be allowed to follow their instincts unchecked” (90), a question that echoes the judgement of the committee (“ungovernable impulse” (52)), he denies this but has no other plausible explanation. In fact, he concedes another possibility, “[t]hat desire is a burden we could well do without, ” to which Lucy responds that “that is a view I incline towards myself” (90), reinforcing her link with the philosophy of the Cynics. She then compares her father

to a scapegoat: "...you are safely expelled. Your colleagues can breathe easy again, while the scapegoat wanders in the wilderness" (90-91). Her application of this image to her father seems mistaken, since he is clearly bearing his personal sins, not the sins of the community. However, earlier, in response to Lurie's suggestion that he would rather be shot than make a public confession, she says:

'Shot? For having an affair with a student? A bit extreme, don't you think, David? It must go on all the time. It certainly went on when I was a student. If they prosecuted every case the profession would be decimated.' (66)

This suggests that Lurie can be seen as a scapegoat, at least in Lucy's terms. Her father does, however, dispute her terms:

'I don't think scapegoating is the best description,' he says cautiously. 'Scapegoating worked in practice while it still had religious power behind it. You loaded the sins of the city on to the goat's back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to read the ritual, including the gods. Then the gods died, and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help. Real actions were demanded instead of symbolism. The censor was born, in the Roman sense. Watchfulness became the watchword: the watchfulness of all over all. Purgation was replaced by the purge.'

He is getting carried away; he is lecturing. 'Anyway,' he concludes, 'having said farewell to the city, what do I find myself doing in the wilderness? Doctoring dogs. Playing right-hand man to a woman who specializes in sterilization and euthanasia.' (91)

Boehmer quotes and discusses these words on scapegoating, arguing that "Lurie's statement is crucial as it pulls together a number of the chief questions posed in the novel. How do we achieve moral cleansing in both an individual and a collective capacity in a secular age? What are the modern methods of purging?" (Boehmer,

2006, 133-37). She goes on to suggest that these modern methods are merely theatrical and contends that the answers to these questions provided by the novel seem to her, “symbolically at least, to be fairly traditional” (137), namely in relation to women and dogs, whose bodies are forced to bear the sins of the community. This relates particularly to Lucy, who is raped despite her innocence; the sins of the forefathers (and not just her own father) are visited on her.

Chris Danta provides an affirmative answer to the question whether Lurie can be considered a scapegoat, starting with the idea of Kafka as a writer and scapegoat who writes from the suffering and mortal animal’s perspective:

Whether by dint of an unfortunate translation by Tindale, the word *scapegoat* nonetheless attests in the most economical fashion possible to the embeddedness of the animal within the story of human identity. Insofar as the scapegoat injects animality into the drama of human salvation, it might be considered the narrative animal par excellence. Given that the sins of the community are also the stories of the community, the scapegoat’s sacrificial journey into the wilderness may be viewed as opening up a figurative space between the human and the animal, the very irreducibility of which allows for narrative itself to unfold. The sins (or the stories) of the community enter into the body of the scapegoat so as to become finite and pass away; the scapegoat thereby identifies the suffering body of the sacrificial animal as the starting point or condition of possibility for a story. (Danta, 2007, 722-23)

He concludes his essay:

The scapegoat, I have been arguing, is above all else a sign of unredeemed finitude; each becoming-animal of the human is also a becoming-sacrificial-animal and, as such, a becoming-corpse. (735)

In euthanasing—sacrificing—the dogs, in particular the individuated Driepoot who is described being carried in Lurie’s arms like a sacrificial lamb, Lurie is coming to

terms with his own mortality. Thus the term “scapegoat” can be applied to Lurie as much as Lucy.

The conversation between Lurie and Lucy ends when they meet three men on the path, men whom Lucy does not recognise, and a threatening atmosphere is created. The men pass on, but when Lurie and Lucy return home, the men are waiting for them, taunting the dogs in the cages. Lucy puts the dobermans into the cage, a move that Lurie thinks is brave but not necessarily wise. The men force their way into the house on the pretext of needing to make a phone call and lock themselves inside with Lucy. From now the narrative is confined to Lurie’s limited perspective, he himself being confined to a toilet when he tries to force his way into the house and they knock him unconscious. When he comes to, he is tortured by the thought of what the men may be doing to Lucy. His helplessness is emphasized by the vivid thoughts and images produced by his strong imagination. He can see, however, when he stands on the toilet seat, one of the men casually, not angrily but calculatedly, shooting the dogs in the cages, not bothering to finish off one who is wounded in the throat. The violence perpetrated on Lucy is also perpetrated, in different ways, on Lurie and the dogs. The violence perpetrated on Lurie seems particularly pointless—he is set alight—and it seems to be an act of cold malice. An overpowering sense of the injustice of the violence is created despite—or even because of—Coetzee’s lucid and factual, cool and detached style. There is a complete failure of the men to identify imaginatively with the suffering of their victims, a complete failure to respect the value of individual subjectivity and rights, both human and canine. In fact, it may be more accurate to characterise their acts as calculated malice, behaviour, according to Schopenhauer, of which only humans are capable.

Lurie tries to justify what has happened, to come to terms with their personal violation by trying, paradoxically, to depersonalise it:

A risk to own anything; a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold

on to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings pity and terror are irrelevant. That is how one must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. Cars, shoes; women too. There must be some niche in the system for women and what happens to them. (98)

What is important, too, is that Lurie is excluded from what Lucy experiences. Perhaps this exclusion is Coetzee's way of suggesting that male writers cannot do justice to certain female experiences, indeed, should not attempt to enter into such experiences out of respect for women. In fact, from the moment of her rape, Lucy becomes a closed book to both her biological father, Lurie, and her authorial father, Coetzee. When Lurie tries to embrace Lucy on two occasions immediately after her rape, she wriggles loose initially and later "she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing" (99). Her first words are directed to the dogs in the dog-pens: "My darlings, my darlings!" (97), words which are echoed by him: "My dearest child!" (97) and "My dearest, my dearest" (98). Her concern for the dogs in her care is striking considering she has just been raped. Her refusal to accept the embrace of her father may be an aversion to physical contact with men.

When Lucy does eventually speak to her father it is to ask him to tell only his story to the police:

'You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me,' she repeats.

'You're making a mistake,' he says in a voice that is fast descending to a croak.

'No I'm not,' she says. (99)

Lucy walks to her neighbour, Ettinger, for help to take her to the police and Lurie to the hospital. Ettinger represents a stock figure of Eastern Cape literature, a tough old farmer of German origin with a decidedly colonialist, or apartheid, mindset. Patting his Beretta in its holster at his hip, he tells Lurie that: "The best is, you save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, not any more, you can

be sure” (100). His idea of salvation is decidedly lacking in imagination, and echoes the rugged individualism both of the Wild West and of the Eastern Cape frontier farmer, armed with gun and, no doubt, Bible. It is a bleak picture of armed siege by “the natives,” not really a vision of salvation at all. Privately Lurie doubts that a gun would have saved them; more likely it would have left them dead. Ettinger’s picture of life in South Africa has evidently been rejected by Lucy in her lifestyle; she certainly does not perceive herself as a frontier farmer or *boervrou* as Lurie sees her; indeed, her lesbianism precludes the possibility of being a farmer’s wife. Later, however, Lurie reconsiders, resorting to the security clichés of contemporary South Africa, both suburban and rural:

They ought to install bars, security gates, a perimeter fence, as Ettinger has done. They ought to turn the farmhouse into a fortress. Lucy ought to buy a pistol and a two-way radio, and take shooting lessons. But will she ever consent? She is here because she loves the land and the old, *ländliche* way of life. If that way of life is doomed, what is left for her to love? (113)

To fortify her plot of land would be to capitulate to the imperatives of the security industry and to embrace the mentality of the besieged, to perpetuate the “vast circulatory system,” as Lurie puts it, the stakes becoming ever higher, the security industry itself being a symptom of the industrialization that Lucy’s ecological way of life rejects. The fact that Ettinger’s wife is dead and his children have returned to Germany suggests that Ettinger’s way of life has no future, literally and figuratively. Later, reflecting on Petrus’s possible plans to buy up the land of his neighbours, Lurie thinks to himself: “...Ettinger will die one of these days, and the Ettinger son has fled” (117). Still later, Lucy says, “It is just a matter of time before Ettinger is found with a bullet in his back” (204).

Indeed, Ettinger’s way of life is premised on a similar moral atomism to Lurie’s, the idea of the autonomous rational individual who must look after himself, who is

independent rather than inter-dependent. As if in contradiction to Lurie's individualism, Lucy appears the stronger person after the rape and twice has to speak to her father "as if to a child—a child or an old man" (104). Lurie is profoundly moved when Bill Shaw comes to fetch him from the hospital and asks him without irony: "What else are friends for? You would have done the same" (102). He reflects deeply on the Old English roots of the word "friend" and realizes the importance of inclusive friendship and interdependence, ideas excluded from his Romantic philosophy of self-realisation. He and Lucy stay that night at the Shaws and at midnight he has a vision of Lucy appealing to him to save her, a vision so vivid that he disturbs the others and insists on seeing Lucy, who dismisses his "dream" and sends him back to bed. Nonetheless, his metaphysical belief in the possibility of disembodied spirits has him reflect that: "Is it possible that Lucy's soul did indeed leave her body and come to him? May people who do not believe in souls yet have them, and may their souls lead an independent life?" (104). It is clear that he is suffering from trauma, since his thoughts are almost incoherent, motivated, no doubt, by his feeling that he has failed in his fatherly duty to protect his daughter, which explains why he then goes and sits beside Lucy's bed for the rest of the night.

The next morning he reflects on his daughter's lesbianism:

Not for the first time, he wonders whether women would not be happier living in communities of women, accepting visits from men only when they choose. Perhaps he is wrong to think of Lucy as a homosexual. Perhaps she simply prefers female company. Or perhaps that is all that lesbians are: women who have no need of men. (104)

It seems as though his sympathetic imagination is straining seriously to understand his daughter, even when she is more closed to him than ever before. However, he fails to understand her when he tries to press her to know whether she has taken contraceptive medication, since she flares up in anger, most likely at his proprietary attitude towards her. She is also irritated by his suggestion that they cannot return to the farm and continue with their lives "[b]ecause it's not a good idea. It's not safe"

(105):

‘It was never safe, and it’s not an idea, good or bad. I’m not going back for the sake of an idea. I’m just going back.’

Sitting up in her borrowed nightdress, she confronts him, neck stiff, eyes glittering. Not her father’s little girl, not any longer. (105)

Lucy’s concreteness stands in strong contrast to her father’s tendency to think in literary terms and metaphysical abstractions. She is as rooted and embodied as her father is abstracted and detached. Lurie’s vivid imagination is evident in the way he broods on his own suffering, yet he is unable to extend this faculty to enter into Lucy’s experience, let alone Melanie’s. What he describes himself as experiencing could well have been applied to both of these women, except multiplied many times over:

He has a sense that, inside him, a vital organ has been bruised, abused—perhaps even his heart. For the first time he has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future. Slumped on a plastic chair amid the stench of chicken feathers and rotting apples, he feels his interest in the world draining from him drop by drop. (107)

He is in a state of despair, a word he uses himself (108). The word “despair” presupposes a Christian virtue ethics, since it is the opposite of hope, one of the three theological virtues. Despair is a failure not only of hope, but also of faith and love, and, as a loss of faith in God, is traditionally considered a deadly sin. However, Lurie uses the word in a secular context, which implies a loss of faith in humanity, a loss of hope for the future of humanity, and a closing off of love of one’s fellow human beings. His slumped posture reminds one of Melanie’s arms hanging loosely when he had his way with her. The decayed and rotting garden, like his own burned body, however, functions not only as an objective correlative of his despair, but also as a symbol of the corrupted garden of Eden, of fallen human nature. Reflecting that he will have

to manage the farm until Lucy has recovered sufficiently, he thinks: “Lucy’s future, his future, the future of the land as a whole—it is a matter of indifference, he wants to say; let it all go to the dogs, I do not care” (107). There is no irony in his use of the expression about the dogs, and it will be echoed later by Lucy’s determination to live “like a dog” (205).

His metaphysical abstractions are also evident in his intensified thinking about ghosts: “In a while the organism will repair itself, and I, the ghost within it, will be my old self again. But the truth, he knows, is otherwise. His pleasure in living has been snuffed out” (107). The juxtaposition of the modern biological term, “organism,” with the incommensurable, pre-modern spiritualist term, “ghost,” is a striking example of his inability to comprehend a modern, biocentric worldview that has no need for notions such as the “soul,” the “ghost in the machine.” Later he thinks: “If the ghosts of Lucy’s violators still hover in her bedroom, then surely they ought to be chased out, not allowed to take it over as their sanctum” (111). Later still when trying to engage Petrus in a discussion about the rape, Lurie says: “I find it hard to believe they [the rapists] arrived out of nowhere, and did what they did, and disappeared afterwards like ghosts” (118). Lurie offers his bedroom to Lucy and moves into hers, since she will not stay in her bedroom, nor the back room with the freezer in which the frozen meat for the massacred dogs is kept. Lurie seems to assume that she will not stay in the back room because it will remind her of the slaughtered dogs but does not make a connection between the violence done to him and Lucy and the violence done to the animals who end up as dog meat. Again we see the limits of his sympathetic imagination, despite the fact that he struggles to cook unfamiliar dishes for Lucy “because she refuses to touch meat” (121): just as she was never comfortable with owning a firearm, so she was never comfortable with preparing the meat for the dogs. Her vegetarianism has, if anything, been reinforced by the rape, as she feels she can no longer stay in the room close to the freezer in which the meat for the dogs is kept: thus a link between male violence and meat-eating is made. While Lurie is concerned with ghosts, disembodied spirits, Lucy is concerned about the embodied existence of animals.

More significant is the way Lucy refuses to mention the rape to the police when they come to investigate the house and take her statement, even though it is clear that they are aware of it:

They are of her generation, but edgy of her nevertheless, as if she were a creature polluted and her pollution could leap across to them, soil them. (108)

And:

In Lucy's bedroom the double bed is stripped bare. *The scene of the crime*, he thinks to himself; and, as if reading the thought, the policemen avert their eyes, pass on. (109)

The attitude of the police, their willed ignorance, seems to make them, as representatives of the police, complicit, to a degree, in the violence done to women in South Africa, as represented by Lucy. It is similar to the willed ignorance that Costello mentions in relation to the systematic and large-scale violence done to animals on a daily basis that otherwise decent people prefer to ignore. However, Lucy's silence on the rape also seems to make her complicit in this "war on women," as Jolly puts it, which is what Lurie struggles to understand. He says to her: "I am sure you have your reasons, but in a wider context are you sure this is the best course?" (110). He reflects bitterly on how the three men will react when they follow how their attack is being presented in the media:

It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. *Too ashamed*, they will say to each other, *too ashamed to tell*, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit. Is Lucy prepared to concede them that victory? (110)

Lurie conceives of the rape in terms of macho bravado—"chuckling luxuriously," "exploit," "victory"—terms which Lucy would reject, showing once again his inability to understand the rape from her perspective. He tries to speak to Lucy about this:

As gently as he can, he offers his question again. ‘Lucy, my dearest, why don’t you want to tell? 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 an innocent party.’ (111)

In fact, despite Lurie’s words, the entire community perceives Lucy as being in a state of disgrace. Later, when she asks her father and Petrus to go to the market in her place, Lurie thinks he knows the reason:

She does not reply. She would rather hide her face, and he knows why. Because of the disgrace. Because of the shame. That is what their visitors have achieved; that is what they have done to this confident, modern young woman. 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. (115)

Critics have commented on the symmetry between Lurie’s violation of Melanie and the men’s violation of his own daughter. The connection is reinforced by the fact that Lurie chooses to occupy the room in which she was raped (111, 199) and that the third time he makes love to Melanie it is “on the bed in his daughter’s room” (29). In contrast, there is the asymmetry of their respective states of disgrace: he is the guilty perpetrator, she an innocent victim. While his state of disgrace is perfectly justified, it is an indictment on the community to consider Lucy to be disgraced, since the disgrace belongs to her attackers.

Despite this asymmetry, both of them insist on keeping their thoughts on their disgrace private, a fact that Lurie, ironically, fails to understand in Lucy’s case. She explains to him why she will not mention the rape as long as he does not raise the question 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” (112). Lurie persists, however, using a series of metaphors and biblical allusions in an attempt to get her to change her mind, suggesting she is hoping that if she accepts

her violation meekly this will ward off future attacks. She rejects his imagery and talk of vengeance, but he still persists, asking, “Then help me. Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present?” (112), raising the idea of Lucy as a scapegoat for white guilt incurred by apartheid, although he does not call it this. Once again, her response indicates the divide between the way they perceive the world: “No. You keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. Until you make an effort to see that, I can’t help you” (112).

Later, when one of the assailants, the boy, turns up at Petrus’s party Lurie cannot understand why Lucy does not phone the police as he insists she does. He asserts: “You want to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way to do it” (133). Lucy, in turn, insists on her privacy:

‘Don’t shout at me, David. This is my life. I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to be put on trial like this, not to have to justify myself—not to you, not to anyone else. (133)

The concept of “privacy” is crucial here. For Lurie, privacy may mean the right to keep his thoughts to himself (to his ghostly self), but for Lucy the word refers to the integrity of her body and the right to choose what happens to her body. Apparently Lucy has had an abortion before as she tells her father, much later, after his visit to Cape Town, breaking the news that she is pregnant: “But I am not having an abortion. That is something I am not prepared to go through with again” (198). Taken aback by the news both of her pregnancy and her previous abortion, he asks her why she has chosen to keep the child: “Why? I am a woman, David. Do you think I hate children? Should I choose against the child because of who its father is?” (198). It appears that she chooses to keep the child because of her commitment to the singularity of embodied life.

Once again, however, Lurie’s literary imagination prevents him from understanding Lucy’s point of view. He remembers Lucy’s claim that the three men are not

robbers but rapists—“they *do* rape” (158):

Well, Lucy was wrong. They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself. And now, lo and behold, *the child!* Already he is calling it *the child* when it is no more than a worm in his daughter’s womb. 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 a dog’s urine? (199)

The idea of male mammals marking their territory has already been discussed above. These lines also echo Lurie’s thoughts in response to Ryan’s provocative words to him, “Stay with your own kind” (194), after he has returned to Cape Town and tries to watch Melanie’s performance in the play at the Dock Theatre, which was not long before used as cold storage for the carcasses of pigs and cattle:

Your own kind: who is the boy to tell him who his kind are? What does he know of the force that drives the utmost strangers into each other’s arms, making them kin, kind, beyond all prudence? *Omnis gens quaecumque se in se perfecere vult*. The seed of generation, driven to perfect itself, driving deep into the woman’s body, driving to bring the future into being. Drive, driven. (194)

These lines clearly link Lurie’s taking advantage of Melanie with the men’s rape of Lucy, and though the thoughts are Lurie’s the irony apparently escapes him. What really bothers him is that this is how his line, his *name*, is going to end: it offends his Platonic notion of leaving something behind that will endure beyond his death:

A father without the sense to have a son: is this how it is all going to end, is this how his line is going to run out, like water dribbling into the earth? (199)

Even in this Platonism there seems to be an instrumentalist rationalism, one’s offspring serving merely as a means to one’s own ends, namely as a means to one’s

personal immortality, rather than as being valuable in themselves. However, by the end he has accepted his mortality, when he sees his daughter working like a peasant in the field:

So: once she was only a little tadpole in her mother's body, and now here she is, solid in her existence, more solid than he has ever been. With luck she will last a long time, long beyond him. When he is dead she will, with luck, still be here doing her ordinary tasks among the flowerbeds. And from within her will have issued another existence, that with luck will be just as solid, just as long-lasting. So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten. (217)

Lurie thinks his sex with Melanie was unlike the rapists' violation of Lucy since he was driven by love and they by hatred. He fails to see the essential similarity between his and their actions, though, in both cases the men were treating the women merely as means to their ends, failing to respect them as subjects in their own right. At no stage did he consider using a condom to protect Melanie, yet he is very concerned that Lucy may fall pregnant and contract a venereal disease or HIV/Aids. Yet he deceives himself that his use of Melanie was in service of Eros, of some higher force and for his ennoblement. In a sense the men's burning of Lurie can be seen as appropriate, linking his possession of Melanie with theirs of Lucy, his burn-marks becoming physical signs of his own disgrace, the mark of Cain, so to say.

Jolly discusses how Costello critiques the way Sultan in *The Lives of Animals* is both treated instrumentally, as the subject of an experiment, and forced to view the world in instrumental terms, to solve problems in an instrumental way, namely as a means to gratify his desires (Jolly, 2006, 158-9). She goes on to show how a similar critique of instrumentalization is applied to women in *Disgrace*. She shows how Lurie can overlook the reality of Melanie's unwilling body and, therefore, of the rape of her body by forming an image or metaphysical notion of her in his mind during the act (160). She points out how Lucy refuses to reconceive her rape in metaphysical terms.

Much later, when reflecting on her ordeal, what strikes Lucy most is the degree of hatred the men showed towards her even though they knew nothing about her as an individual:

‘It was so personal,’ she says. ‘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.’

Lurie attempts to console her:

‘It was history speaking through them,’ he offers at last. ‘A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors.’ (156)

Jolly argues:

Yet Lurie has only inklings of his complicity in a sexual economy that preys on women. He views the rape purely as a consequence of racial difference, while Lucy sees it as an attempt to subjugate her as a woman living alone, easy prey for men who may seek to exact from her ‘a price’ for her aping of a man’s independence. (Jolly, 2006, 164)

Jolly relates this “war on women in South Africa” (166) to Costello’s perceptions that a whole society is blind to massive daily atrocities on nonhuman animals partly as a result of “economies of instrumentalism” (167).

These “economies of instrumentalism” are implicit in the term “tax collectors” that Lucy uses when her father tries to dissuade her from staying “[b]ecause that would be an invitation to them to return”:

She broods a long while before she answers. ‘But isn’t there another way of looking at it, David? What if ... what if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors.

Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves.’ (158)

Durrant points out the limitations of Lurie’s sympathetic imagination in that he can imagine himself into the being of one of his daughter’s rapists, but not into the being of his daughter as the victim of rape (Durrant, 2006, 119-120). As Durrant notes, this, paradoxically, is not the failure of the sympathetic imagination but its (albeit modest) success, since it involves the recognition of its own limitations and is therefore perhaps a small step toward enlightenment. Even though Mike Marais would presumably agree with Durrant’s interpretation, he problematizes Lurie’s “development” even further, highlighting the apparent discrepancy between two passages which seem both to assert and deny Lurie’s ability to enter into Lucy’s experience of the rape (Marais, 2006, 77). In the first Lurie seems to succeed in this task:

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 a dream, a nightmare*. (160)

However the second passage which occurs soon after the first suggests that Lurie is not able to enter into Lucy’s experience:

You don’t understand, you weren’t there, says Bev. Well, she is mistaken. Lucy’s intuition is right after all: he does understand; he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself. The question is, does he have it in him to be the woman? (160)

In fact, it is precisely a discrepancy like this that has led Marais to challenge the standard interpretation of *Disgrace*, that Lurie’s progress from egoism to altruism, from self-regarding love, to other-regarding love, or self-substituting responsibility through self-sacrifice, is more or less straightforward. Instead, he argues that “*Disgrace* undermines, even as it installs, the possibility of this development and thereby questions the ability of the imagination to achieve what it is supposed to achieve” (Marais,

2006, 76). Perhaps a better solution to the apparent discrepancy is to recognise that while Lurie is able to imagine Lucy's experience, he is not able to identify with her position of being a victim of rape, but rather more honestly and darkly admits that he identifies with the rapists; that if he were presented with the choice between being an innocent victim of rape or a criminal perpetrator of rape, he would choose the latter.

A further failure of Lurie's imagination which should be discussed is his imaginative projection into Lucy's future, a vividly imagined but impoverished vision, which he contrasts with Petrus's efficiency in managing his new farm but which the reader should not take at face value:

Against this new Petrus what chance does Lucy stand? ... If she had any sense she would quit: approach the Land Bank, work out a deal, consign the farm to Petrus, return to civilization. She could branch out into cats. She could even go back to what she and her friends did in their hippie days: ethnic weaving, ethnic pot-decoration, ethnic basket-weaving; selling beads to tourists.

Defeated. It is not hard to imagine Lucy in ten years' time: a heavy woman with lines of sadness on her face, wearing clothes long out of fashion, talking to her pets, eating alone. Not much of a life. But better than passing her days in fear of the next attack, when the dogs will not be enough to protect her and no one will answer the telephone. (151-52)

It seems fair to say that Lurie underestimates and misunderstands his daughter, paternalistically trying to impose his view of things onto her; indeed, his conversations with her can be considered monologic from his side. In fact, Lucy tells him so herself and keeps certain information to herself, such as her plan to keep the baby, because she believes her father will not understand. Indeed, their communication can be considered incommensurable, in that they have completely different terms of reference, so that it is no surprise that their verbal dialogue breaks down and they are forced to communicate through letters. Lurie initiates this correspondence after their return

home from the false call about his car, pleading to Lucy to change her mind about staying on the farm:

‘Dearest Lucy, With all the love in the world, I must say the following. You are on the brink of a dangerous error. You wish to humble yourself before history. But the road you are following is the wrong one. It will strip you of all honour; you will not be able to live with yourself. I plead with you, listen to me.

‘Your father.’ (160)

Lucy’s response is very instructive:

‘Dear David, You have not been listening to me. I am not the person you know. I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life. All I know is that I cannot go away.

‘You do not see this, and I do not know what more I can do to make you see. . . .

‘Yes, the road I am on may be the wrong one. But if I leave the farm now I will leave defeated, and will taste that defeat for the rest of my life.

‘I cannot be your child for ever. You cannot be a father for ever. I know you mean well, but you are not the guide I need, not at this time.

‘Yours, Lucy.’ (161)

Whereas Lurie imagines a defeated future for his daughter, she refuses to capitulate to his vision of the future, asserting her independence from him as her father and from men generally.

The instrumentalization of women and animals, as Jolly calls it, and the indifference to the suffering of the individual are not limited to Lurie and the rapists; they are part of the Weberian ethos of the novel. Its pervasiveness in South Africa is evident in Petrus’s return as patriarch, and the passing of power from Lucy to Petrus, from a white South African woman to an African man. His growth in stature is traced

from his starting out as Lucy's "dog-man" and living in a barn on her farm, to his acquisition of half of her land, to his relinquishing his position as "dog-man" (129), to Lurie asking him to consider being Lucy's "farm-manager" (152-53), to the erection of his own house which "must cast a long shadow" (197), to Lucy's willingness to hand over her title deeds to him, as her dowry, and become his third wife (204-05). It should be noted, however, that in African marriages the wife does not provide a dowry; rather, the husband must pay *lobola*, or a "bride price," to the family of his wife-to-be in compensation for the labour the family will lose when the daughter leaves the household and in recognition of future labour in the form of children that the wife will bring to her new family. However, since Lucy is lesbian, she cannot be expected to have further children and so her paying a dowry can perhaps be justified in this way. His adoption of a Protestant work ethic is evident when Lucy calls Petrus a "penny-pincher. In the old days it would have been an ox" (124) (when he slaughters two sheep for his party) and when Lurie notes the efficient way in which he ploughs his fields:

All very swift and business-like; all very unlike Africa. In olden days, that is to say ten years ago, it would have taken him days with a hand-plough and oxen. (151)

His indifference to the suffering both of Lucy and of the sheep that he has bought for slaughter is indexical of how women and animals are treated instrumentally in South Africa: he says to Lurie that "you are all right now" (114) but Lurie waits in vain for him to ask "*And how is Lucy?*" (115). Instead Petrus asks whether Lucy is going to the market the next day, pointing out, insensitively, that "she will lose her stall if she does not go" (115). Lurie has ambivalent feelings toward Petrus, liking his solid, peasant nature (as his imagination colours it) yet suspecting that Petrus knows more about the rape than he lets on, speculating that he may even have employed the rapists in a bid to take over Lucy's land: "Petrus has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place" (118). Lurie becomes silently enraged when Petrus refuses to acknowledge that what was done to Lucy was a "*violation*" and an

“*outrage*” (119).

That a new relationship is at hand is evident at the party which Petrus throws to celebrate the transfer of land to his ownership. He says to Lucy when she and Lurie arrive at the party “No more dogs. I am not any more the dog-man” (129) and after his wife opens their gift, he says “Lucy is our benefactor” (129) a word which must have been used with some irony and which Lurie finds distasteful. Petrus’s proprietary and slightly contemptuous attitude towards women is revealed when he says of his pregnant wife’s baby-to-be that “[w]e hope he will be a boy” (130). When Lurie asks what Petrus has against girls, he says:

‘We are praying for a boy . . . Always it is best if the first one is a boy. Then he can show his sisters—show them how to behave. Yes.’ He pauses. ‘A girl is very expensive.’ He rubs thumb and forefinger together. ‘Always money, money, money.’ (130)

He seems to assume that women and girls must always be dependent on men for money, and seems to resent the fact that they should be compensated for the work they do in the household. However, he makes an exception of Lucy, although her female independence must be an affront to his world view:

‘No, a boy is better. Except your daughter. Your daughter is different. Your daughter is as good as a boy. Almost!’ He laughs at his sally. ‘Hey, Lucy!’ (130)

Lucy is embarrassed and moves off to dance. The conversation, which Petrus dominates monologically, shows that he is deeply patriarchal and misogynistic, thoroughly part of the “economies of instrumentalism” in relation to women.

These same values are demonstrated in the way he treats the sheep he has bought, since he is prepared to tie them to a post for three days in the sun without water or grazing. Initially annoyed by the constant bleating of the suffering sheep, Lurie eventually forms a bond with them, becoming concerned about the callousness with which Petrus treats them, although Lucy points out his own hypocrisy in preferring

not to meet the animals that will be slaughtered on his behalf. Lurie moves them to where they can drink and graze. He reflects:

The sheep spend the rest of the day near the dam where he has tethered them. The next morning they are back on the barren patch beside the stable.

Presumably they have until Saturday morning, two days. It seems a miserable way to spend the last two days of one's life. Country ways—that is what Lucy calls this kind of thing. He has other words: indifference, hardheartedness. (125)

This hardheartedness is linked with the “economies of instrumentalism,” and the hardheartedness toward animals of country dwellers is no more to blame for the suffering of animals than the indifference of city dwellers to the source of their food. Indeed, the rural folk are less hypocritical than the urbanites. A little later he thinks to himself:

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. (126)

He ponders Bev's ability to commune with animals and wonders how she manages it:

The sun beats down on his face in all its springtime radiance. Do I have to change, he thinks? Do I have to become like Bev Shaw? (126)

For the first time he is considering changing his character. He even considers not going to the party in order not to have to eat the bodies of the two sheep, a notion to which Lucy responds by saying that “Petrus and his guests are certainly not going to give up their mutton chops out of deference to you and your sensibilities” (127), echoing Norma's criticism of Costello's “sensibilities” in *The Lives of Animals*. What

seems to be bothering Lurie is that these sheep are not abstractions but embodied, sentient, singular beings. On the day of the party when he can smell the sheep being cooked he wonders whether he should mourn for them but “[l]ooking into his heart, he can find only a vague sadness” (127), a phrase echoing Costello in *The Lives of Animals* when she asks her audience to open their hearts and listen to what their hearts say (Coetzee, 1999b, 37). Finally, when, at the party, he is served the mutton chops on a plate, he thinks to himself: “I am going to eat this . . . I am going to eat it and ask forgiveness afterwards” (131). Just as he thinks this Lucy is at his side asking to leave because she has seen one of her assailants. This juxtapositioning once again links the violence done to Lucy, and therefore women generally, with the violence done to animals, and Petrus’s protection of the boy—whom Lurie persists in describing in animal terms like “running-dog” (131), “jackal boy” (202), “swine” (207) and “jackal” (208, 217)—implies an implicit tolerance of violence to women. Along with the event of Lucy’s rape, this event is a turning point for Lurie in terms of his sensitivity toward others. It is not, however, a perfect transition and he still has lapses. For instance, when he sees Melanie’s sister he feels surges of desire and when he catches Pollux peeping at Lucy he assaults him.

Lurie’s change is evident in his new attitude to animals, his new attitude to Bev, with whom he has an affair despite his earlier physical revulsion, and the shift in perspective in his Byronic opera from Byron to Teresa, from the sexually predatory male (who dies) to the mourning female. His opera becomes increasingly down-scaled, until he eventually admits that it is going nowhere. However, it does not matter any more. He no longer has the overwhelming erotic need to leave something behind, to endure beyond death. Thus Lurie manages to shift perspective, a shift from the erotic to the sympathetic imagination, from self to other, male to female. It is a shift from eros to a secular caritas which prepares him for his self-abasement before Melanie’s sister, Desiree, and her mother, even though he still feels a twinge of eros when he sees Desiree. His pride, selfishness and intransigence have all been put to one side. He has changed despite himself, despite his initial refusal to change, and he is doing far more community service and in far better a spirit at the dog shelter than

he would have done had he accepted the conditions of the university committee. He has changed profoundly and deeply, although these are only the initial steps towards enlightenment.

When Lurie goes to see Mr Isaacs at the school at which he is headmaster, he has no clear idea of why he is going there except “to say what is on my heart” (165), which turns out to be a confession, or perhaps an apology, for his treatment of Melanie. His first attempt is far too literary to be sincere and seems to be yet another justification of his Romantic ethic of service to Eros: “She struck a fire in me” (166). He elaborates:

‘A fire: what is remarkable about that? If a fire goes out, you strike a match and start another one. That is how I used to think. Yet in the olden days people worshipped fire. They thought twice before letting a flame die, a flame-god. It was that kind of flame your daughter kindled in me. Not hot enough to burn me up, but real: real fire.’

Burned—burnt—burnt up.(166)

This confession could hardly be expected to please the father of the girl with whom he has had an affair, and Mr Isaacs begins to ask him what he thinks he is doing and notes “how are the mighty fallen” (167), but nonetheless asks him to “[b]reak bread with us” (167). Lurie is ironically unaware of the association of his fiery passion for Melanie and his own burning by his assailants, but he acknowledges to himself the validity of the comment that he is fallen, which is a reference to the theme of the fall from grace. Isaacs’s offering to break bread with Lurie is a generous, Christian gesture, and contrasts with the refusals to break bread in *Lives*.

When Lurie arrives at their house with a bottle of wine in hand, he notices that the Isaacs’ household (like Petrus’s farm) is frugally run, according to the Weberian Protestant work ethic:

They are teetotal, clearly. He should have thought of that. A tight little petit-bourgeois household, frugal, prudent. The car washed, the lawn mowed, savings in the bank. (168)

Lurie awkwardly joins them in saying grace, his awkwardness suggesting once more his lack of religion. After dinner, when Desiree and her mother leave the table, Lurie eventually apologizes to Isaacs for what he put his daughter through:

‘One more word, then I am finished. It could have turned out differently, I believe, between the two of us, despite our ages. But there was something I failed to supply, something’—he hunts for the word—‘lyrical. I lack the lyrical. I manage love too well. Even when I burn I don’t sing, if you understand me. For which I am sorry. 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.’

Wonderful is not right. Better would be *exemplary*. (171)

Isaacs is glad that he has apologized but is not yet satisfied and asks Lurie what God would want from him. Lurie’s reply establishes the basis of a secular salvation, which was discussed earlier in this chapter both in terms of Coetzee’s notion of the endlessness of confession and Boehmer’s application of the idea to *Disgrace* in relation to the TRC (with the implication that white South Africans, who benefited from Apartheid, must live in a continual state of disgrace):

‘As for God, I am not a believer, so I will have to translate what you call God and God’s wishes into my own terms. In my own terms, I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter. I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not a punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day, trying to accept disgrace as my state of being. Is it enough for God, do you think, that I live in disgrace without term?’ (172)

Isaacs says that Lurie would have to ask God and suggests that it was God’s doing that Lurie decided, on a whim, as he was passing through George, to visit the Isaacs family. Lurie denies this and decides he dislikes Isaacs when he suggests it is easy

to ask him, Melanie's soft-hearted father, for forgiveness. Lurie then goes into the bedroom in which Desiree and her mother are "doing something with a skein of wool" (173) and "[w]ith careful ceremony he gets to his knees and touches his forehead to the floor" (173). There is almost something classical about this act of abasement and in the reference to wool (the three Fates, Penelope's tapestry) and it marks Lurie's acknowledgement of the wrongness of his treatment of women as means to his ends, although he still has a twinge of desire when he looks into Desiree's eye. However, this apology is all the more meaningful for going against his nature, his Romantic philosophy of service to Eros; in fact, it can be seen as a repudiation of that philosophy.

His apology also shows how there can be no hope of religious salvation from sin, no hope of transcendence, but that secular salvation involves living with one's sin, and constantly trying to better oneself through service to others. In effect, Lurie has rejected the illusion of salvation through God, or the god Eros, and embraced his mortal, imperfect nature in choosing to live like a dog, which is reflected in his self-abasement before Mrs Isaacs and Desiree. His apology and its acceptance by the Isaacs family are further notes of optimism in the novel.

Lurie's modifications to his opera indicate his change in heart, the expansion of his sympathetic imagination, and reflect his changing situation. They also show his openness to the polyphony of voices within him, including that of Teresa, and he becomes, in a sense, her amanuensis. Clearly he had initially identified with Byron, who, as mentioned earlier, was infamous for his sexual exploits. His initial idea was to have Byron and Teresa living together in her husband's home, she still young and beautiful, he with a waning desire for her. However, "Byron, in the new version, is long dead; Teresa's sole remaining claim to immortality, and the solace of her lonely nights, is the chestful of letters and memorabilia she keeps under her bed, what she calls her *reliqui*, which her grand-nieces are meant to open after her death and peruse with awe" (181). He describes her as "a dumpy little widow" and "[w]ith her heavy bust, her stocky trunk, her abbreviated legs, she looks more like a peasant, a *contadina* than an aristocrat" (181). Lurie asks himself "Is this the heroine he has been seeking

all the time? Will an older Teresa engage his heart as his heart is now?” (181) because she has lost her youthful beauty and tellingly resembles Bev, with whom Lurie has recently had an affair. Indeed, it echoes an earlier incident when Lucy finds him asleep in the cage with Katy and says to him that Bev is a more interesting person than he thinks even in his own terms, prompting him to think about what his terms are: “That dumpy little women with ugly voices deserve to be ignored?” (79). He ponders:

Can he find it in his heart to love this plain, ordinary woman? Can he love her enough to write a music for her? If he cannot, what is left for him? (182)

In fact, he does come to love this image of an older, plainer Teresa, so much so, that when he eventually realises that the opera is going nowhere, he feels genuine sympathy for her:

Poor Teresa? Poor aching girl! He has brought her back from the grave, promised her another life, and now he is failing her. He hopes she will find it in her heart to forgive him. (214)

This echoes his hope that the dogs that he left behind him in the shelter will be able to forgive him for abandoning their bodies to a dishonourable treatment at the incinerator. The end of the opera may seem a failure in one sense, but in another, it does not matter. It shows that he has overcome his Platonic and erotic striving for immortality, whether in his acts of artistic creation or his sexual desires. He has overcome the same desire that has fed into his instrumentalist attitude to his relationships with women, especially the one with Melanie that led to his disgrace. The dead Byron figure represents the death of his predatory sexuality, of his erotic imagination, and his adoption of Teresa’s point of view represents the extension of his sympathetic imagination, his ability to perceive things from a woman’s perspective, a perspective that has up until then been closed to him. No doubt Lucy’s rape was the turning point in this shift of perspective and made it possible, opening him up to polyphony, to alternative voices within him. Earlier in the novel his erotic

imagination clearly overpowered his sympathetic imagination, although his twinges of conscience have been noted earlier in the chapter. Here the roles have been reversed. While his erotic imagination is not yet quite extinguished—witness his surges of desire towards Desiree—it has been subordinated to his sympathetic imagination. In his conversations with others, Lurie has tended to engage in monologue (much like Petrus) and Lucy herself tells him he has not been listening to her, yet he has the potential for dialogue as is witnessed by the voices within him when he comes to shifting perspective in his opera, when he opens himself up to alternative voices. Indeed, the voice of Byron’s daughter, Allegra, comes unbidden, the “inconvenience” (186) of which is an indictment of Byron’s irresponsible way of life.

Lurie had initially thought that he would be positioned between Teresa’s passion and Byron’s desire for oblivion, “but he was wrong. It is not the erotic that is calling to him after all, nor the elegaic, but the comic” (184). This represents his relinquishing the erotic but may also introduce a note of optimism. Through his opera he also articulates the fact that the poets led him astray: “*Out of the poets I learned to love*, chants Byron in his cracked monotone, nine syllables on C natural; but life, I found (descending chromatically to F), is another story” (185), admitting that his literary imagination has deceived him. It is also a repudiation of the Platonic belief in the possibility of the soul’s possession of immortality, an acceptance of his own mortality, and thus his kinship with dogs, rather than with gods, or God. Indeed, despite his erotic desire for immortality—he uses the word often, especially in connection with Teresa and his opera (181, 185, 209, 214)—he realizes that “[n]othing has to last forever” (211), an insight typical of both Buddhism and Cynicism. When he assaults Pollux, he relapses into his erotic or passionate mode (since aggression is closely related to eros), and he notes that while “Lucy may be able to bend to the tempest; he cannot, not with honour” (209), a term from virtue ethics taking precedence over the rule of law. However, the female figure of Teresa provides him with guidance:

That is why he must listen to Teresa. Teresa may be the last one left who can save him. Teresa is past honour. She pushes her breasts to the sun; she plays the banjo in front of the servants and does not care if they

smirk. She has immortal longings, and sings her longings. She will not be dead. (209)

What he has to learn from Teresa, and from his own daughter, is how to live without honour—or, at least, to be able to imagine living without honour—like a dog, and how to respect the other. Marais argues that just as Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg* learns that he cannot love Pavel without loving all sentient creatures, including the dog that howls during the night, so must Lurie realise that he cannot love Lucy without loving her rapists, Pollux and Petrus, even as he is beginning to love the dogs with which he works (Marais, 2001, 12). Platonic love is an exclusive or aristocratic love of the abstract Beauty that all beautiful things (bodies, artworks, laws, knowledge) share in common; Christian, or Socratic, love is an inclusive or egalitarian love of all concrete, individual embodied souls, irrespective of their participation in Beauty. Of course, there is the danger that this universal love, like “the love of humanity,” in its very generality becomes abstract and vacuous.

It should be noted, too, that, according to philosophers like Kant, Singer and Regan, love, care and compassion are character traits and not ethical categories, traits that they collapse into the cruelty/kindness discourse of animal welfare, that one should treat others properly not because of our possession of a quality like kindness or compassion, but because we are morally obliged to do so. On the other hand, this emphasis on terms such as love, kindness and compassion can be seen as a recognition of the importance of a virtue ethics of care, where such positive sentiments are encouraged to grow, as opposed to a Kantian ethics of justice, which merely insists on a minimal rule of law. Indeed, it is difficult to see how such virtues can flourish in the Weberian, instrumentalist ethos which forms the background to the novel. However, this makes Lurie’s moral development, in these terms, all the more remarkable, and provides some hope for the future, despite some critics seeing the novel as “a deeply pessimistic book” (Lowry, 1999).

Another problem is that Attridge and Marais emphasize the fact that the change from self-regarding to other-regarding is not something that a person has control over; it just happens to one, and can perhaps be called an act of grace (Marais, 2001, 10,

11)(Attridge, 2005, 182). Philosophers of ethics would not find this satisfactory, since to them an act is only moral if it involves a deliberate, rational choice. However, one could perhaps argue that Lurie has chosen to place himself in a situation—helping Bev in the clinic, for instance—that allows him to develop ethically despite himself. Nonetheless, it seems to render moral agency arbitrary and inexplicable.

All the same, the opera represents another important turning point in Lurie’s moral development. His changed attitude is evident when he returns to the farm after having been expelled for assaulting Pollux. By the end of the novel he has relinquished his paternal, proprietary attitude toward Lucy and comes to respect her independence and decisions, one of the positive, if mutedly so, moments in the novel, although it seems to follow an epiphany:

The wind drops. There is a moment of utter stillness which he would wish prolonged for ever: the gentle sun, the stillness of mid-afternoon, bees busy in a field of flowers; and at the centre of the picture a young woman, *das ewig Weibliche*, lightly pregnant, in a straw sunhat. A scene ready-made for a Sargent or a Bonnard. City boys like him; but even city boys can recognize beauty when they see it, can have their breath taken away. (218)

The references to artists and beauty here may be a subtle suggestion that salvation can be obtained through art. Lucy asks him to tea: “She makes the offer as if he were a visitor. Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start” (218). As Sue Kossew points out:

It is only when he acknowledges his “visitorship” rather than his rights of fatherhood and ownership that he feels like he has made a “new footing, a new start” (218). It is Lucy’s acknowledgement, too, of her having to share the land, to make compromises, that enables her to make tentative steps towards overcoming her disgrace and finding a way to live in a future South Africa that does not entail just guilt and punishment. (Kossew, 2003, 161)

Kossew's insights can be developed further, namely that *Disgrace* is not only about the moral growth of Lurie and Lucy but also about life, fertility, birth and children and the relation of these to literature. Furthermore, Jolly's insight that the novel presents the abuse of women and animals as correlative can also be extended to include the abuse of children. Marais' insight that Lurie's Lucy bears some relation to Wordsworth's Lucy prompts the question of why Lurie, a devotee of Wordsworth, would name his daughter after a girl who died a child. It is evident, too, that Lucy has fashioned her life very differently from the way her father has his, possibly even in opposition to his:

As a child Lucy had been quiet and self-effacing, observing him but never, as far as he knew, judging him. Now, in her middle twenties, she has begun to separate. The dogs, the gardening, the astrology books, the asexual clothes: in each he recognizes a statement of independence, considered, purposeful. The turn away from men too. Making her own life. Good! He approves! (88-9)

Even though he appears to approve of her independence, there is a hint of paternalism in his thoughts, and Lucy's rape puts his approval to a severe test, which he fails, since he repeatedly and monologically tries to dissuade her from staying on the farm (103, 155, 157, 158, 160, 204); indeed, once he even asks Petrus whether he is prepared to manage Lucy's farm while she is away, even though he has not obtained her consent to do so (152-53). Lurie finds Lucy's newly found independence surprising because she was always a quiet child. However, there are constant suggestions, even by Lurie, that he has not been a good father and guide for his daughter. Finally, when he professes surprise at the name of the boy, Pollux, Lucy bursts out:

'P-O-L-L-U-X. And David, can we have some relief from that terrible irony of yours?'

'I don't know what you mean.'

'Of course you do. For years you used it against me when I was a child, to mortify me. You can't have forgotten.' (200)

The irony used by Lurie against Lucy can be considered a mild form of child abuse: Lucy certainly suggests as much.¹ Lurie's affair with Melanie also borders on child abuse. As was noted in the analysis earlier in this chapter, on several occasions Lurie describes Melanie as a child, emphasizing the narrowness of her hips. Also, his reactions to Melanie's even younger sister, Desiree (reminiscent of Nabokov's *Lolita*), are very disconcerting, suggesting paedophilia. Disturbingly, Lurie's ex-wife, Rosalind, describes Melanie as just his type, referring to her "cunning little weasel body" (189). Furthermore, Lurie's assault of Pollux can also be considered child abuse. Lucy calls him a "disturbed child" (208) as opposed to Lurie's abusive epithets of "jackal" and "Deficient. Mentally deficient" (208). Lucy has already admitted that Pollux was not one of her rapists and that he was with her two assailants only to learn. This suggests that he is not a man yet, that he is still a boy, despite his evident malevolence. Lurie fails to consider that a child is usually completely shaped by the society or community in which he or she is born and thus cannot be held completely responsible for his or her actions. It is all too easy for a parent or adult to impose his or her will on a child. Significantly, it is Lurie's assault of Pollux that causes Lucy to kick her father out of her house, allowing him back later only as a visitor. Equally significant are the terms on which he is expelled, since they present Lurie as being sacrificed so that Lucy can attain some peace:

‘I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace.’

‘And am I part of what you are prepared to sacrifice?’

She shrugs. ‘I didn’t say it, you said it.’

‘Then I’ll pack my bags.’ (208)

Thus, Lurie has to relinquish his paternalism and develop a respect not just for women but for children too, and not just his own daughter. While he failed to respect her otherness as a child and fails to respect Pollux's otherness, he does try to respect

¹Franz Kafka makes a similar accusation in "Letter to His Father," claiming his father Hermann used irony to intimidate his children (Karl, 1991, 609).

her independence once she grows up, this being a further modest note of optimism in the novel. Thus *Disgrace* should be seen as much an indictment of the abuse of children as it is of the abuse of women and animals; in fact, it presents a critique of all disempowered or marginalised members of society.

Perhaps that is why Lucy decides to keep the child, not out of a mere respect for life, but for the care of one of the most powerless members of society, the unborn child. Her favouring of the child's right to life above her right to privacy reinforces her privileging an ethics of care above an ethics of justice, a choice perhaps caused by the abortion she has had as referred to earlier. It is significant that she has kept this news from her father and when he asks why she has done so she says:

‘...David, I can't run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not any more. You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. ...I am not a 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.’ (198)

Lucy is prepared to respect the alterity of the child inside her even though it was conceived in rape, something which Lurie struggles to understand. Furthermore, she has re-shaped something good from evil, transformed a child conceived in violence and hatred into a symbol of hope and renewal for the future. The child will root Lucy more firmly in South African soil and strengthen her bond with Petrus's family, a bond which will provide her child with a birthright to the land. Thus Lucy's pregnancy, in the bigger picture, especially in how she chooses to deal with it, can also be seen as a muted note of optimism.

In the same way that he has to learn respect for biological children, Lurie has to learn respect for his brainchild, the opera, *Byron in Italy*, which initially seems to be a mere projection of his own sexuality, completely divorced from the southern African context. He has to learn to listen to the voices of his creatures, to respect their alterity, without dominating them as the Author or authority. In Bakhtinian

terms, he must avoid a monologue, dictating to his creatures, but establish a dialogue with them, which he does eventually achieve, as has already been explored. The same applies to Coetzee, as discussed in previous chapters, namely his commitment to dialogism in order to avoid dominating his text; like Coetzee and Costello, Lurie must become a secretary to the invisible, an amanuensis to his creatures. This he must do by relinquishing his Platonism, where the artwork, like biological children, is merely the means to furthering the immortality of the parents, whether creator or parent, implying an instrumentalist attitude to one's children. Lurie does relinquish this attitude toward both his biological daughter and his brainchild, the opera. He relinquishes his position of power and establishes a relation of equality, recognising the alterity of his daughter and his artwork. His new openness is evident not only in the shift of protagonist from Byron to Teresa, but also in his shift from imitating European music and using a piano to using a township banjo which Teresa ends up playing. He relinquishes his Platonism for Socratism, monologue for dialogue, for not only did Socrates portray himself as a midwife (rather than originator or creator) of ideas, and thus a humble assistant in their birth rather than their proud father, but his metaphor gives precedence to his own mother, who, as has been mentioned earlier, was also a midwife, thus acknowledging the importance of women, both in procreation and delivery of children.

Finally, *Disgrace* portrays not only Lurie's relinquishment of his rights as a father over Lucy, but also suggests the relinquishment of the paternalism of white liberal South African men over black South Africans. This is thematized in the novel in the word "boy" in relation not to Pollux but to adults. After Lucy's rape, Ettinger says he will send a "boy" to fix her kombi and Lurie notes that "[i]n the past he has seen Lucy fly into a rage at the use of the word *boy*. Now she does not react" (109). Again, when Lurie is helping Petrus to dig holes for pipes, he asks him whether he will build his house himself. Petrus replies that housebuilding requires skills and that "[f]or digging you just have to be a boy" (152). Lurie reflects:

Petrus speaks the word with real amusement. Once he was a boy [as an adult under apartheid], now he is no longer. Now he can play at being

one, as Marie Antoinette could play at being a milkmaid. (152)

Lurie is aware of the “historical piquancy” (77) of this shift of power when Lucy suggests he asks to work for Petrus for pay and when he assists Petrus with work on the farm in the role of the unskilled helper, a *handlanger* (136).

Thus *Disgrace* is optimistic in showing the end of the paternalism of colonialism in relation not only to Africans, but also to women, children, animals and artworks. This is symbolized by Lurie’s moral change. However, this optimism is not unqualified, for in place of Lurie’s paternalism, we see the continuation of patriarchy in the form of Petrus, whose name, in alluding to the first Pope, Peter, suggests that people like him will be the rock on which the new South Africa will be built. However, while it suggests that the battle against the injustice and inequality of racism has shown some success the same is not true for the battles against sexism, homophobia, classism, speciesism and ageism. However, Lurie’s transformation gives some modest hope for a more general transformation.

When Lurie speaks to Petrus the day after the party he begins to develop a disliking for his “dominating personality” (137), ironically unaware that the term can be applied to him too, especially in his relentless, monologic efforts to persuade Lucy to leave the farm, despite her clear intention to stay. The mantle of patriarchal privilege has shifted from Lurie to Petrus, which is indexical of the power shift in South Africa from white male to black male, patriarchy remaining in place. He does, however, have a valid point, in that Lucy’s assailants should be brought to justice. Nonetheless, there does seem to be some inconsistency, of which he seems unaware, because he is now asserting the rule of law, whereas previously, when justifying his use of Melanie, he had asserted the “rights of desire.” Petrus insists that the boy is not a thief, refusing to acknowledge Lucy’s rape, and concludes “He is too young, you cannot put him in jail” (138). Much later, after Lurie returns from Cape Town on suspecting something is not right, only to discover that Lucy is pregnant, he again confronts Petrus who finally admits that the boy, Pollux, is a relative, noting: “You come to look after your child. I also look after my child” (201). Despite the false symmetry that Petrus paints—Lucy is a victim while Pollux is a perpetrator, Lucy is

literally Lurie's child while Pollux is only figuratively the child of Petrus—his words point to a more basic level of ethics than the Western rule of law and justice, the ethics of family (for want of a better term). It is a valid point because it shows how Lurie's supposed abstract desire for justice may be no more than a desire to protect his own child, or worse, a desire for revenge on her attackers. Indeed, Petrus's recourse to family ethics, a particularly African polygamistic concept, in particular his offer to marry Lucy and thus provide her with his protection, promises closure to the whole affair, and can even be seen as a generous offer.

Lurie, however, sees the offer as opportunistic blackmail, since it will involve Lucy's handing over her title deeds to Petrus. Lucy accepts the offer on the condition that the house remains hers—that no one may enter it without her permission, not even Petrus—and that she can keep the kennels. Thus she relinquishes her right to the land, but not her right to stay on it, and her child will also become Petrus's responsibility. Lurie offers one last time to send her to Holland, an offer she rejects once again, displaying a stubbornness that she shares with her father. He finally accepts her wishes, saying how humiliating it is: "Such high hopes, and to end like this" (204). Lucy has the final word:

'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.' (205)

Critics like Elizabeth Lowry have seen this as a very pessimistic passage. However, it could be interpreted more positively. After all, it seems to be a speciesist prejudice that a dog's life is necessarily inferior to a human's, although Peter Singer sees more value in the life of a healthy human than that of a healthy dog (Singer, 1999, 90). As Durrant writes: "According to Lucy, reconciliation, or at least co-habitation, in postapartheid South Africa is dependent on the relinquishing of privilege, on learning

to live ‘like a dog’ (*Disgrace*, 205)” (Durrant, 2006, 127). Although he does not use the terms, Durrant makes many Socratic and Cynical insights in his essay, in which he compares *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, *The Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace*, relating ethics to ignorance (and fallibility). In particular he argues for the limits of the sympathetic imagination, as opposed to Costello’s claim that there are no limits to it, paradoxically claiming, however, that the very recognition of these limits forces one to recognise the alterity of the other (similar to what Marais argues). These insights can be extended further if one accepts the argument in Chapter Two that Costello is a Socratic figure and, by extension, that Lucy is, in a sense, her disciple, just as the Cynics, most famously Diogenes, were disciples of Socrates.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Volume 2 has a useful discussion of the Cynics, “the dog philosophers”: “The Cynics believed that happiness was to be found in ‘virtuous action,’ which was the practical expression of self-realization (*arete* and ‘know thyself’)” (Borchert, 2006, 616). It notes that Cynics were opposed to the conventions and artificialities of ordinary, ‘normal’ life. Cynicism was concerned with individual suffering: “Freedom was secured by ‘following nature’ by means of self-discipline, the end of which was self-sufficiency (*autarkia*); since man was vulnerable and perverted through his emotions and desires, happiness could be guaranteed only by the understanding and strength of mind to want nothing, lack nothing” and “hence, the most characteristic feature of Cynicism was an asceticism that sought to reduce physical wants to a minimum, as in the case of the animals after which Cynics were named, and to achieve spiritual independence like gods” (616). Thus, according to the Cynics, one can only become like gods by living like dogs.

It is interesting that Costello, in “At the Gate,” when accused of being cynical in her attitude to writing, says:

‘About myself, yes, I may well be cynical, in a technical sense. I cannot afford to take myself too seriously, or my motives. But as regards other people, as regards humankind or humanity, no, I do not believe I am cynical at all.’ (Coetzee, 2003, 201)

Referring to herself as cynical may be a reference to her “doggedness” (that her son, John, notes in “What Is Realism?”) or fidelity (as was argued in Chapter 3) as a writer, or it could be an allusion to the Cynics in a “technical sense.” Lucy tries to achieve a Cynical autonomy in her chosen way of life in the autarky she practises on her farm, an ecofeminist autonomy that includes independence from men. Like most ideals, however, it is not perfectly attainable, and she is forced to make some difficult compromises to keep her ideal alive, but it can be argued that she succeeds. The Platonic idealism of her lesbian Republic must settle for a Socratic, or Cynical, imperfectionism. In fact, she becomes even more Cynical in relinquishing her land (but not her house—even Diogenes had some form of shelter), making her less tied to material possessions and closer to nature, and thus freer to exercise virtue. The Cynical overtones should be noted in her words when she answers Lurie after he asks her whether she has begun to love her child:

‘Love will grow—one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too.’

A good person. Not a bad resolution to make, in dark times. (216)

Her reduced, but not abject, state is one that she shares with the characters of several of Coetzee’s novels: Michael K, the Magistrate, Elizabeth Curren and, not least, her father Lurie, who is also reduced to the state of a dog and dog-man by the end of the novel. His conversion to Cynicism is accompanied by the relinquishing of his philosophy of devotion to Eros. In each case, Coetzee suggests that one can only come to know oneself, to grow ethically, if one is able or willing to be reduced to the state of a dog, or to imagine oneself in such a reduced state. One can only find the god within oneself by relinquishing all irrelevancies and exposing oneself, through suffering, to the bedrock of being. One can only discover one’s humanity by temporarily losing it, by occupying a position of powerlessness or sharing the suffering of others.

Of course, the dogs are not presented in purely positive terms in *Disgrace* and Coetzee refuses to idealise them. Lucy’s dogs are all watch dogs—“working dogs”

(61)—whose job is to protect property, which firmly places them in the “economies of instrumentalism,” which is opposed to Cynical autarky. The old ram’s injury was a result of an attack by a pack of dogs; his owner tells Bev that “[e]very night the dogs come” (82). Also, Lucy describes her own rapists as dogs, in trying to understand why they raped her with such hatred:

‘They spur each other on. That’s probably why they do it together.
Like dogs in a pack.’ (159)

Furthermore, Lucy’s rape is described in Lurie’s imagination as an attack by dogs:

... the men, for their part, drank up her terror, 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!* (160)

Finally, Katy attacks Pollux. In these cases the dogs represent male aggression. Thus dogs represent both the godlike and beastlike sides of human nature, particularly masculine nature. Coetzee is thus under no illusions about a dog’s life and nature. Of course, the dogs should not simply be seen as representing aspects of human nature, and it is in respecting their singularity that Lurie achieves his salvation.

Lurie’s shift in sensibility is especially clear in his work with the dogs, who, like women, are victims of an instrumentalist ethos: they are discarded when no longer useful and handed to Bev for *Lösung* (142, 218). This term, which refers to the Nazi’s “Final Solution” of genocide for the Jews, is highly problematic, and echoes its controversial use by Costello in *The Lives of Animals*. It is controversially linked with euthanasia, since many, if not most, of the dogs handed to Bev are not maimed or unhealthy. The fact is that they suffer “most of all from their own fertility. There are simply too many of them” (142). Lurie reflects on his chosen task of incinerating the corpses of the dogs:

The dogs are brought to the clinic because they are unwanted: *because we are too menny*. That is where he enters their lives. He may not be their

saviour, the one for whom they are not too many, but he is prepared to take care of them once they are unable, utterly unable, to take care of themselves, once even Bev Shaw has washed her hands of them. A dog-man, Petrus once called himself. Well, now he has become a dog-man; a dog under-taker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan*². (146)

The fact that even Bev washes her hands of the dogs, alludes to Pontius Pilate's washing his hands of their guilt for condemning Jesus, and thus links the dogs, with Jesus, to the idea of the scapegoat. The Jews were similarly scapegoated in Europe, and not only during the Nazi period: Costello points out that Kafka's scapegoating was a *Vorgefühl* of what was to come (Coetzee, 1999b, 26). Once again Isaac Bashevis Singer's words help to elucidate this metaphor of genocide, that "[i]n relation to [animals], all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka." The suggestion is that a world in which animals are brought into being only to be killed and slaughtered on a massive scale is a fallen world, a world in disgrace, a world in which few people are untouched by the sin of instrumentalizing other sentient beings. If Lurie is moved by his work at the clinic but unmoved by the animals he eats, it is because he is personally acquainted with the animals he helps to dispose of; he recognizes their subjectivity, and he finds that instead of becoming insensitized to the killing, "[t]he more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets" (142). He is not prepared to leave the bodies on the dump for the incinerator crew to dispose of: "[h]e is not prepared to inflict such dishonour upon them" (144), nor is he prepared to let the crew break the limbs of the dogs with their spades before feeding them into the incinerator. He reflects:

Why has he taken on this job? To lighten the burden on Bev Shaw? For that it would be enough to drop off the bags at the dump and drive away. For the sake of the dogs? But the dogs are dead; and what do dogs know about honour and dishonour anyway?

²Gandhi, to whom Costello refers in *The Lives of Animals* in relation to vegetarianism, Kafka and fasting, tried to raise the status of the untouchables in India, giving them the name *harijan*, which means "children of God," and publishing a weekly paper called *Harijan*.

For himself, then. For his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing. (145-46)

Attridge, in an attempt to identify whether Lurie does achieve a state of grace in the novel, as opposed to redemption from dishonour, goes on to argue that:

Grace is by definition something given, not something earned, in the way that Lurie has earned this moment of optimism in his relationship with his daughter. Grace is a blessing you do not deserve, and though you may seek for grace, it comes, if it comes at all, unsought. (180)

He concludes that Lurie does achieve something like a state of grace by the end of the novel in his work with the dogs, in his realisation of the value of the singularity of individual lives, and in the respect he shows for the bodies of the euthanased dogs despite the apparent worthlessness of his efforts. He argues that Lurie's concern with incinerating the corpses of the dogs "is not a practical commitment to improving the world, but a profound need to preserve the ethical integrity of the self" (187) and compares this with Costello's vegetarianism coming from a desire to save her soul. Finally, Attridge points out that "[i]t's precisely the notion of *cost*, the measurement of profit and loss, that Coetzee questions in *Disgrace* and that literature puts to the test" (191). Grace, in not being something earned, cuts against the Weberian, instrumentalist vision of society, a world that can be said to have fallen into a state of disgrace.

However, this interpretation of the ending of *Disgrace*, in which Lurie can be said to have achieved a degree of salvation, is complicated by comparisons of "sacrificing" the dogs with the mass killing of Jews in the Holocaust. Few of the critics referred to in this thesis discuss the Holocaust analogy in relation to *Disgrace*; if they do so, it is almost exclusively in relation to *Lives*. Even in a collection of critical essays like *J.M. Coetzee and the Role of the Public Intellectual* (Poyner, 2006), only one critic, Michael Bell, discusses the Holocaust analogy in relation to *Disgrace*, and then only in the concluding page of his article in which he expresses his distaste for the word

“Holocaust” and claims that he also finds that “the conclusion of *Disgrace* has the force of a sudden kick in the stomach”:

Lurie’s final remark about the dog (“I am giving him up”) resists, as far as I can see, analytic articulation (*Disgrace*, 220). Obliquely invoking the Shoah, it speaks from the abyss of the self, combining both betrayal and abnegation within a transcendent, but not religious, implication of sacrifice. He does not know whether he is acting selfishly or generously at the level of motivation, but he is willing to do the right thing; the desire being focused precisely by the objective triviality of the occasion. Costello has something similar in mind when she speaks not of moral conviction but of saving her soul (*Lives*, 43). (Bell, 2006, 188)

It seems significant that it is Lurie, himself most probably Jewish, who compares the euthanasia of the dogs to the mass murder of Jews. Presumably Bell means the killing of the dogs is trivial only relative to the killing of the Jews, but Coetzee would not have evoked the analogy lightly, would not have dared making it, if he considered the euthanasing of the dogs to be trivial in itself. Bell’s observations about Costello’s use of the Holocaust analogy can equally be applied to *Disgrace*:

By allowing Costello to use the Shoah to express her anguish about animals, Coetzee is using the animal theme to illuminate not just the psychology of the Shoah, or apartheid, but of the historical judgments made about them. How many of those who sincerely subscribe to the antiracist culture of the late twentieth century would have done so at the beginning of it? How many are exercising independent moral responsibility and how many are animated, like the earlier perpetrators, by the mass emotions of their own day? (Bell, 2006, 186)

Thus, Coetzee uses the analogy, as did Isaac Bashevis Singer most famously before him, to challenge his readers to question their own norms and prejudices, not only in relation to race, class, sex and age, but also to species, to consider the psychic cost

to themselves of their complicity in the exploitation of animals, as well as the animal suffering that their complicity necessitates.

In an essay in which he brilliantly parodies both Kafka's "Report to an Academy" and Coetzee's use of it in *The Lives of Animals*, Gareth Cornwell adopts the perspective of a dog (who resembles not just Red Peter but also the canine narrator of "Investigations of a Dog" (Kafka, 1973)) who expresses his or her dissatisfaction with Lurie's assistance in the killing of the dogs being described as an act of self-sacrifice and of "love" (Coetzee, 1999a, 219), and of the general critical acceptance of these terms:

Love? Who in their right mind murders out of love? This, in a nutshell, is the curse of your human language—the way in which it enables you to delude yourselves into believing that something is so merely because you say it is so. Is it otiose to point out that what makes it possible for Lurie and Bev Shaw to believe that they are acting out of love is the unexamined assumption that they have absolute, ethically-sactioned authority over the animals in their charge—an authority that allows even for large-scale murder? (Cornwell, 2008, 135)

Concerning the closing lines of the novel, in which Lurie carries the individualised dog, Driepoot, in his arms like a sacrificial lamb to be euthanased, telling Bev that "Yes, I am giving him up" (220), Cornwell's canine speaker says:

It is apparently orthodox to read this scene as marking another step in David Lurie's ethical education, a further stage in the process of self-renunciation on which he has embarked: he is giving up the dog to death *not because he wants to but in order to spare the animal further suffering*. In other words, Lurie's is an act of benevolent self-sacrifice.

I hope I have already said enough to indicate the level of self-delusion that such a reading entails. . . .

I must reiterate my suspicion that, if nobody else does, at least Coetzee sees this. And in my dog's-eye view, this complicates and darkens

the central thematic motif of ethical awakening while simultaneously compounding the disgrace in which the human world of the book is seemingly irredemiably sunk. (Cornwell, 2008, 136)

Driepoot can perhaps more precisely be described as a sacrificial scapegoat, since, though innocent himself, he bears the sins of humankind; indeed his very own killing is one of the sins that he is forced to bear. However, Lurie's "euthanasing" of "Driepoot" can, ambivalently, also be interpreted both in utilitarian terms of being "cruel to be kind" and in terms of an ethics of care. Cornwell is right to suggest that it is not just Lurie but the entire world he inhabits that is sunk into a state of disgrace. However, perhaps it is premature to call the world irredeemable. The world depicted in *Disgrace* is, indeed, in a state of disgrace for treating others, and not just human others, as expendable, merely as means to ends, but while the mass of humanity turns a blind eye to the injustices exercised daily on millions of animals, there are those, like Bev Shaw and Lurie, who face the truth and in showing kindness to the animals discarded by other people, at great personal psychic cost and for no personal gain, open themselves to the possibility of grace and achieve some degree of redemption for themselves, and thus perhaps even for the world. After all, if someone as intransigent as Lurie, who was linked with Lucifer at the beginning of the novel, can make the first steps toward ethical transformation, evident in the awakening of his sympathetic imagination in relation to the two Persian sheep and the dogs in the clinic, in his learning to respect the alterity and independence of his biological daughter and the brainchild of his opera, in his renunciation of his devotion to Eros, in his acceptance of the ending of white privilege, in eventually apologising wholeheartedly to Melanie's family, in accepting his permanent state of disgrace and in resisting instrumentalist rationalism (however modestly), then there is perhaps a glimmer of hope.

Boehmer argues that in Lurie's actions towards the dogs, "[h]e achieves, in Elizabeth Costello's terms, an unconscious redemption from evil: his self becomes a site on which pity is staged" (Boehmer, 2006, 141). She concludes, "[i]n short, *Disgrace* along with Coetzee's published essays since 1999, proposes animals as the essential

third term in the reconciliation of human self and human other, where reconciliation equates with the embodying of an elastic and generous kindness” (141). This modest form of salvation is realised in *Disgrace* in various ways, emblematised in the GOD-DOG anagram (and palindrome). It consists in the recognition of our kinship with animals, our common finitude and shared capacity for suffering and joy. It also requires that we question our deepest prejudices—not just racism, sexism, homophobia, classism and ageism, but, deepest of all, speciesism—and our most cherished beliefs, most notably the beliefs in an immortal soul and in God. For in recognising our kinship with dogs rather than gods, we recognise our mortal, imperfect nature and thereby discover the true value of finite existence and the need for kindness and compassion.

While Lurie has not reached Elizabeth Costello’s level of moral progress, he has started taking the first steps in that direction, which includes admitting that he has made mistakes, analogous to the Socratic wisdom of recognising one’s ignorance. His movement, no matter how faltering and tentative, was traced from an inclination of Platonic perfectionism to that of Socratic fallibility, from abstract idealism to concrete embodiedness, from an erotic to a sympathetic imagination, from egoism to altruism, from monadic atomism to self-substituting responsibility, from Romantic self-realisation to Cynical self-realisation. This can be seen both in his development toward and Lucy’s consolidation of an ethics of care and Cynicism, in the historical sense. This movement, which involves the recognition of the other, can also be traced, in Bakhtinian terms, from the monologic to the dialogic. Indeed, it is art, music (the opera) in Lurie’s case, and writing in Coetzee’s case, that permits the moment of grace that can lead to salvation, a moment in which one recognises the mortality one shares with animals. Indeed, this may shed some light on the epigraph of the previous chapter, the extract from the hymn “Amazing Grace,” where the moment of grace is bound up with music: “how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

In *Disgrace*, the movement from monologic to dialogic is not only embodied in Lurie’s personal development, but in Coetzee’s treatment of his material, in his combining all these antithetical and conflicting forces within the greater polyphony of his



novel. In such a novel deep pessimism can co-exist with modest optimism without any final resolution. It seems clear, then, that this novel exemplifies the words of Isaac Bashevis Singer in the epigraph of this chapter, namely that “[t]he pessimism of the creative person is not decadence, but a mighty passion for the redemption of man. . . . In his own fashion he tries to solve the riddle of our time and change, to find an answer to suffering, to reveal love in the very abyss of cruelty and injustice. . . . [W]hen all the social theories collapse and wars and revolutions leave humanity in utter gloom, the poet . . . may rise up to save us all.”