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Rape and the (Animal) Other: Making Monsters in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

Along with postcolonial studies, ethnicity studies, and queer theory, feminist scholarship has noted that inquiries made within Western ontology have largely been made by white, (predominantly) heterosexual men, speaking from positions of privilege and/or power. As such, definitions of being have their roots in white, cis-male, heteronormative privilege, excluding anyone who does not fit these boundaries. Furthermore, Western history concerning being, since at least Plato, has insisted on splitting mind and body, favoring the mind as formative of subjective experience and denigrating the body as impure and unworthy of philosophical inquiry. As this article demonstrates, the mind/body binary is in fact symptomatic of the masculine ontological imperative to disown the body and its effects on being, which is particularly important regarding the performative effects of rape. However, the body has haunted ontological analyses, from somatic symptoms in psychoanalysis to the scandal of the speaking body in linguistics, and feminist scholarship has called for a revision of the body's ontological significance, which was first rejected by feminist writers for its essentialist connotations. The outright rejection of the body's role in being, however, is akin to rejecting a critical reading of half of any binary category, as it reifies the idea that binary constructs are opposites. In recent years, and mostly by way of feminist and queer theory, bodily practices have become an integral part of ontological inquiries, and this article emerges from theories pertaining to the body—the female body in particular. In its separation of mind and body, the canon has "lost" what it means to be a body, disparaged the body as inferior to the mind, and has made the body symbolic of a further denigrated femininity. Luce Irigaray, for example, points out that psychoanalytic discourse "gets rid" of the body by ascribing it to the feminine, suggesting that both the body and the feminine are things to be rid of (1985, 90).

This article intends to break away from this formation of the feminine, in part by building on the theories of poststructuralist feminist theorists Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti, especially on Butler's understanding of performative identity acts and Braidotti's revision of the Deleuzian concept of becoming. The conceptual schools of performativity and becoming both require an understanding of identity practice that is incumbent on the body.

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My investigation was born of a desire to link identity performativity to a theory of monstrosity, one that could explain how fictional qualities adhere to bodies, making identities recognizable by the outward signs and gestures monstrous bodies perform. These signs and gestures are often taken as marks of an "authentic" or "original" self, and as coming from an essential, internal core, but as Butler shows, these gestures actually constitute identity, concealing their genesis and presenting the body as the origin of these acts (1999, 33). Thus, acts that have come to be understood as originating from inside are instead mimetic of behavior that has been perceived as appropriate for certain bodies; these acts come from outside the body (enacted by other bodies) and find themselves reembodied and reenacted.

Butler's analysis of the sedimented acts that accumulate to form gender has brought the body back to scholarship concerning being by pointing out that the mundane daily gestures of the body are in fact what produce the "I." The implication of Butler's ontology is that one's identity is not a fixed category but a structure in flux; its negotiations between bodily performances are described as "strategies" for the "I's" survival in a binary world (1988, 522). It is for this reason that I employ Braidotti's theories, which conceptualize identity as a process of becoming rather than being. The shift from a static to an active term not only emphasizes the performative qualities of identity formation, in the sense that it is a constitutional "doing," but suggests fluidity and multiplicity in its creation. Moreover, "becoming" is a present participle, signifying a sustained process that comes to accrue substance as well as an opening for varied, multiplicitous, and even contradictory identity practices. As Butler points out, "gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (1999, 22): that it is not fully what it *is* implies the ambivalence at the heart of identity. It is through a conceptualization as multiplicitous, contradictory, ambivalent, and incongruous that some forms of being have been linked to theories of monstrosity. Certain feminist and queer theories, as well as postcolonial critiques, have noted the inclination of authorities to employ the language of monstrosity when writing or speaking about difference, by which I mean the othering that takes place in discourse, making the other an uncanny specter that haunts the "I" who speaks.[1] I understand "discourse" to mean precisely what Butler understands by the term in her Foucauldian reading of identity politics, which

[1] On feminist theories of the monstrous and the other, see Judith Halberstam's *Skin Shows* (1995). On queer theories of the same, see Partha Mitter's *Much Maligned Monsters* (1977), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985).

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is the combined signifying processes of cultural practices that, repeated over time, create what they signify. In other words, I understand "discourse" as being fundamentally performative.

As this article theorizes the making of monsters, it is useful to list the pertinent meanings of "monstrosity." The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the Latin *monstrum*, meaning "portent" or "prodigy," as the root of "monster," with the verb *monere* (to warn) as its base.[2] Chris Baldick adds another verb that makes up the base of *monstrum*, which is *monstrare*, "to reveal," hence the English "to demonstrate" (1987, 10). Monsters are thus a revelation, serving as a warning to others for transgressive behavior. The etymology of "monster" is important, as its category indicates a doing; the monster signifies not only a "to be" but a "to do" at its very root, making monsters necessarily performative. The definition of "monster" has also mutated and evolved to incorporate other meanings, and thus the signifier demonstrates a multiplicity of identities that are always already at its core. What this article proposes is the realization of a feminist ontology based on a positive understanding of monstrosity, where I read the end result of othering, the misrepresented body of the other, as a potential site for more positive, empowered identity performances. In other words, I interpret the monstrous "I" as a potentially positive model for identity practice. By demonstrating the ability of performative acts to affect bodies, while simultaneously analyzing the affectivity of monstrous figures, this article proposes a new theoretical category, which I have named the "monstrative"—a performative force that others the "I" through physical and discursive acts. If monsters exist as signs, then the monstrative is the performative force that makes the other into such a sign, into a monster. The monstrative is related both to the performative and to othering; while "performative" accounts for creation, it does not always create monsters, where monstrative acts do. Moreover, while othering explains the process by which the "I" is made other by exterior forces, it does not adequately account for the processes that make others other to themselves. I also do *not* consider monstrativity and becoming to be opposing forms—the monstrative is a process perpetrated against the (body of the) other, while becoming is a process that can only be initiated through mutual consent—but both are performative processes that result in monstrosity. The monstrative also underlines the significance of embodiment to identity formation through its affectivity, explaining how monsters are made, not biologically but socially and culturally. Moreover, although deconstruction stresses the gap that occurs between any signifier and its signified, "monster" is a signifier

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "monster."

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without a signified; it is what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen calls a "kind of third term" or a "third-term supplement" (1996, 6–7). "Monster" is thus a signifier whose signified is always already yet to come, emphasizing the becoming that repeatedly takes place within monstrosity.

Butler's understanding of performativity is that repeated "stylized acts" performed upon and by the body create gender, and that these acts, in turn, create the "I" (1999, 34). The discourse surrounding bodies, including the names we use to categorize them, constitutes them according to that diagnosis (Butler 1997). Thus, "monster" is the descriptive category that brings a figure into being *as* monster. That identity takes shape as a multiplicity and that this taking shape is a continuous project also echoes the multiple meanings of "monster" and the resistance of the monstrous body to take on signification as anything other than an open signifier. Thus, unrecognizable identity acts are conceived of only as something other, an unknown entity that resists the symbolic, remaining unnameable and unrepresentable. Using "becoming" to explain identity as the accretion of substance through performative acts always already implies something else yet to come, a project that is unceasing. Monstrosity is a powerfully generative paradigm against which to read the processes of becoming at play in human identity practice because its etymology indicates not only the multiplicity of meanings always already incorporated by the "I" but that these various meanings constitute the "to come" inherent in becoming and in all performative acts. Braidotti's reevaluation of Deleuzean becoming revises second-wave feminist theory by characterizing becoming as "becoming-minoritarian" (Braidotti 2002, 96), which I interpret as becoming-monster: this necessitates multiplicity in terms of identity structure (race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, religion, age, species), where "all becoming is becoming monster; even the desire to want to become is monstrous, because all becoming is about an ambiguity between, but never attaining either of, two points" (MacCormack 2004, 11).

Like the monstrative, becoming-monster is a process, but it is not its equivalent: where monstrativity constitutes the body as a sign of otherness, becoming-monster is an empathetic response to the other who has been classified as monstrous through monstrative acts. In other words, the monstrative results in a body being made sign, where becoming is to be necessarily between forms, to *escape* signification. Monstrative acts are thus done *to* the body of the other, where becoming is a process adopted *by* the "I." As I demonstrate shortly in my analysis of J. M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (2000), the monstrative produces a body of difference that the sovereign "I" characterizes as monstrous, by which I mean abhorrent, abject, filthy, feared, and excluded. Becoming, on the other hand, results in a monster, but this monster is a hybrid category. Many classical monsters are hybrids and are monstrous

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only because of their resistance to categorization. Women can be classed as this form of monster because of our ability to reproduce and thus become, in a fundamentally bodily sense, a hybridized form. Moreover, the monstrative is a violent and negative force, while becoming allows for a much more positive view of otherness. I use Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a case study of monstrative acts and becoming-monster, especially concerning the monstrativity of discursive acts in literary narrative and of violent bodily acts such as rape. The particular narrative form that Coetzee employs in *Disgrace* discursively shapes the identities represented according to a specific ideological view, which is that of David Lurie, the novel's protagonist. What becomes clear in the process of this analysis is that what is meant by "discourse" includes violent bodily acts, which come to supplement ideological imperatives and which violently (re)order bodies according to these ideologies. Thus, in the process of demonstrating the monstrativity of certain bodily acts, I also demonstrate that these acts supplement discourse.

I deal with two major theoretical concerns as they relate to the category of the monstrative: the constitutionality of rape and the process of becoming-animal. These themes both relate to identity formation, specifically regarding the production of an "I" always in relation (and often in opposition) to a "you"; this invariably produces an ethics concerning human relationships, as well as our relationships with other beings. Thus, ontological queries always already presuppose the "I's" responsibilities toward the other; as Butler writes, "I begin my story of myself only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (2005, 11). Accounting for oneself, in this frame, has the double meaning of self-constitution before the other and defending one's actions. *Disgrace* can certainly be understood as the attempt by its white, male protagonist to account for his actions, yet, as it is written in the third person and focalized through its protagonist, the narrative allows one a degree of distance from the accountability of first-person confessional narratives such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Instead, *Disgrace* posits a narrative where the constitutional effects of rape indirectly affect protagonist David Lurie (who is himself accountable for rape), which is played out by his becoming-animal as the novel progresses.

Disgrace is a novel written in two parts. The first section, to which the novel's title refers, deals with Professor Lurie's fall from grace after his student, Melanie Isaacs, makes a formal complaint regarding his misuse of her. Having embarked on a mission to seduce his student, Lurie (who, incidentally, realizes that his behavior is bad) is unable to make the connection between his misuse of her and the later event in which he and his daughter, Lucy, are attacked at her farm in Grahamstown. The second half of the novel focuses on the aftermath of this incident, which sees Lurie's eventual

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ability to atone for his violation of Melanie through a profound sense of empathy with the other, initiated by his becoming-animal. At the fore of Coetzee's philosophy in *Disgrace* is a deeply ethical concern for the individual's responsibilities toward the other, which in the novel takes the form of the animal—the silent, impenetrable, absolute other that has been subject to centuries of human violence and neglect. Thus, the ethical questions with which Coetzee is engaged emphasize moments of human silence and refusal that are juxtaposed against the absolute other's inability to communicate. The other's silence, whether a conscious choice or not, is also contrasted with the human propensity to use narrative as a form of justification, which highlights the constitutional effects of narrative and literary discourse. In *Disgrace*, the literary canon is very clearly demonstrated as monstrative, as well as being presented as a system of representation that can be and has been wielded by a self-serving androcentric authority.

The conceptual definition of "rape" is a crucial aspect of the novel, but it is also key to this article, as it exemplifies what is at stake in the use of monstrative language, demonstrating how those with the authority to wield language use it to corroborate their innocence, vilify the victims of sexual violence, and perpetuate their power and the cycle of oppression. In another article (Moffat 2013), I discuss the interrelation of the performativity of rape and the performativity of its definition: here, this serves as a point from which to discuss the monstrativity of (specifically) rape and (generally) violent bodily and speech acts. I then turn to a discussion of responsibility to the other as it figures in *Disgrace* and how it relates to violent acts that not only cause injury but constitute identities through the act of injury. I also demonstrate the critical importance of Lucy's sexuality to an emerging black masculine power in the new South Africa, where she is raped because of what her materially female (lesbian) body signifies. Monstrative acts are the process whereby bodies are made into signs, and rape is a monstrative force that feminizes its victim's body, simultaneously masculinizing the body/ies of the perpetrator/s. Silence plays a crucial role in the representation and justification of all violent acts, and it is often the reclamation of the victim's once-silenced narrative that is used to redefine these acts. Whether silencing has been enforced or is symptomatic of trauma, its existence is often taken as consent and used in part as justification for bodily violence. *Disgrace* goes so far as to use silence as a literary device, where Lucy's refusal to narrate her rape becomes one of the major ethical points in her father's redemption arc.

The choice Lucy makes in remaining silent, however limited that may be, is juxtaposed against the absolute narrative silence of the animals that populate the novel, where human silence constitutes a refusal to narrate, to rep-

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resent, or to claim witness to an event. While Lucy's rape is unrepresented by the novel, Melanie's is aestheticized and fetishized to the extent that it is (more often than not) misdefined by the novel's critics. We are furthermore not offered Melanie's perception of the events, as she is the object of Lurie's narrative focus. The performativity of narrative to shape the "truth" of events is indelibly tied to the manner in which rape is interpreted *as* rape, which, in turn, perpetuates the constitution of rape culture. Rape culture is narrowly defined as a cultural acceptance of rape but is also gradually coming to mean the acceptance of the ownership of women's bodies within public spaces, a narrative that is enacted through rape as well as other practices that perpetuate the (self-)regulation of women's bodies. The narratives of ownership and control, the total lack of female and animal voice, and focalization are implemented not only to critique misogynist practices but to demonstrate the interrelation between phallocentrism and androcentric, technocratic, planet-harming acts. Much of Coetzee's writing has been noted as focusing on the slippage between a European conceptualization of land ownership and the misuse of women's bodies, and *Disgrace* continues this slippage in the form of Lucy's rape and her ownership of her farm.[3] This is further disrupted by the misuse of animals' bodies in the novel, both physically and discursively.

As the novel's title suggests, its narrative concentrates on the protagonist's fall from grace into a state of abjection; he finds redemption only when he accepts the removal of his power, which is characterized as his becoming-animal. Tom Herron (2005) notes that Lurie literally becomes a "dog-man" (Coetzee 2000, 64) through a metamorphosis that is always already incomplete, where he does not become a dog but a hybrid version of himself and the dogs that come under his care in the second half of the novel. This becoming-animal finds an echo in classical antiquity, in which monsters often take the form of hybridized animals, including animal-human hybrids, which exist under the appellation "monster" because they do not obey the categories nature has ostensibly set out for them. In order to demonstrate this metamorphic process, I employ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, which they explain, "is to participate in a movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold . . . to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs" (2004, 96). Becoming, then, means existing outside the symbolic order; being dog-man means that Lurie's identity is not categorical as either/or but

[3] See Barnard (2003), Graham (2003), Segall (2005), and Lopez (2010).

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gives him the potential to escape the violence of signification, which in *Disgrace* is represented lexically, through the use of animal and sexual metaphors legitimized by the Western canon, and formally, through the representation of rape.

Lurie's becoming-animal occurs through his state of disgrace and the event in which he is attacked and Lucy raped; this leads to his eventual atonement—for his wrongdoings against Melanie but also in the sense of being at one with those who share his abjection. In *Disgrace*, these are the dogs that he and Bev Shaw euthanize because nobody else can or wants to care for them. His "at-one-ment" with these animals is what makes Lurie a monster, a dog-man, but this becoming-animal does not occur in one single event; instead, Lurie's becoming is a series of events that accrue to make him at one with the other he has up to this stage treated as secondary and inferior. It is through this becoming-animal that Coetzee invites us to meditate on our relationship with the other *as* other and to reflect on similar tropes regarding human (mal)treatment of animals, colonialism, and gendered arrangements and expectations. My focus here is on the ethics of performative acts, on our responsibilities to the other that we constitute and to the monsters that we create. The concept of becoming, particularly in its relation to the static philosophical and psychoanalytical notion of being, necessarily invokes an ethics because it is always already a matter of one's being affecting another's and vice versa. The ethical concerns of this analysis are not just to question what responsibilities we have to our (linguistic) creations but to interrogate the right to narrate in the first instance. If narrative creates symbolic meaning and the ordering of the world according to the narrator's tenets, what right does s/he have to wield the word, especially when its use can injure, traumatize, and constitute identity in a state of abjection? What right do we have to demand the other's story?

Two performative acts take place when rape is committed: the rape itself, which creates and reifies gender binaries, simultaneously placing categories within a hierarchical structure, and the rhetoric that supports the act, either by claiming that it is not rape or through victim blaming, thereby creating and perpetuating rape culture (Moffat 2013, 101–2). Rape culture also does much more than just condone physical assault, and while it affects men adversely, and in varying ways, I will be focusing on its negative effects on women's lives. I am especially concerned with definitions of rape and their connection to the production of rape culture, particularly with regard to aestheticized narrative representations such as those we find in literary texts. I moreover use "narrative" rather than "discourse" to describe these representations, as "narrative" implies an element of storytelling, an artistic weaving of events, and a making of representation that "discourse" does not neces-

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sarily express. The definition of rape is contingent on storytelling, as Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver explain in *Rape and Representation*, stating that "who gets to tell the story and whose story counts as 'truth' determine the definition of what rape *is*" (1991, 1). As they point out, the person narrating is who gets to define retrospectively the act as rape or not, where "representations of rape after the event are almost always framed by a masculine perspective premised on men's fantasies about female sexuality and their fears of false accusation, as well as their codified access to and possession of women's bodies" (2).

The definition of rape is a major conceptual conundrum in *Disgrace*. Where Lucy's rape is rape in the classic sense—enforced and violent penetrative sex by three total strangers—it is not the only rape that occurs in the novel. Lurie's "affair" with his student, Melanie, is complicated by the imbalance of power between them, which is not just that of student-teacher but is based on race (Herron [2005, 477] notes the strong possibility that Melanie is mixed-race, while Lurie is definitely white), affluence, and especially gender. Furthermore, as the following scene demonstrates, this power-dynamic culminates in rape:

> "No, not now!" she says, struggling. "My cousin will be back!" But nothing will stop him. . . . She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. . . . 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. (Coetzee 2000, 24–25)

This is one of the most problematic moments in the novel, because of what it depicts, how it is depicted, and who narrates the moment. As Higgins and Silver write, in deciding if rape is rape, "who is speaking may be *all* that matters" (1991, 1). Although this is a third-person narrative, Lurie is its focalizer, meaning that the narrative goes some way to vindicate his actions. Focalization gives us insight into his motivations, but it also makes us aware of the ideology to which Lurie is heir, that is, a white European patriarchy. By writing in the third person, Coetzee is distanced from the narrative that would otherwise perhaps conflate him with his protagonist. Like Lurie, Coetzee is a privileged, educated, white South African man; thus, his treatment of such contentious subject matter, not only regarding race relations but as a male writer writing rape, has to be cautious. By focalizing this scene through Lurie, Coetzee represents rape from the point of view of a man who believes he is the "servant of Eros," whose "case

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rests on the rights of desire" no matter who is affected (Coetzee 2000, 89).[4] Moreover, Lurie cannot make the comparison between this scene and later, when his daughter is raped by three strangers. Both during and after this scene, however, he is characterized by an apparent lack of autonomy, overtaken instead by a desire planted in him by ancient (European) gods: "Strange love! Yet from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves, no doubt about that" (2000, 25). Lurie's lack of agency is complemented by Melanie's implied willingness to assist him: she "does not resist," she "helps him, raising her arms and then her hips" (2000, 25). As Higgins and Silver explain, substantiating a rape claim often means that victims have to prove their "innocence" by exhibiting resistance during the assault and demonstrating a chaste sex life (1991, 2). *Disgrace* obfuscates definition in its depiction of Melanie's compliance with Lurie's acts, but it does this because the historic definition of rape is not clear-cut. Women may submit to their rapists for any number of reasons, chief among them the fear of physical injury or death, but this does not mean that what they have suffered is not rape.

Narratives that employ victim blaming are precisely the kinds of representation that constitute rape culture. Victim blaming, moreover, is accompanied by the rapist's surrender of autonomy: Lurie is not accountable for his actions because he is a "servant of Eros," because the god "acted through" him (Coetzee 2000, 89), and he characterizes himself as a dog whose instinctual urges cannot be helped (89–90). The representation of rape as unavoidable not only constitutes rape culture, it disguises the fact that it *is* rape, even from those who rape. Lurie uses these excuses to convince himself that his liaison with Melanie is seduction, but, like all rape culture, it is an attempt to (re)claim a masculinity he feels is being denied him. His failed seduction of Melanie is a result of the emasculating effects of aging; he finds that as he ages, his allure dwindles and he must invent new ways to assure himself of his manliness because, up until now, his masculinity has been tied to his self-image as a seducer of women. When his powers of seduction fade with his looks, he "exist[s] in an anxious flurry of promiscuity" (2000, 7), and he finds himself in a position he regards as abject and sexually undesirable.

Lurie's emasculation hinges on the sexual conquest of women, so when he takes the new secretary of his department home for sex, he describes it as a "failure" because of her enjoyment in the act (2000, 9). Thus, his pursuit of Melanie is colored by his self-image as a conquistador rather than as an attentive lover, and women are regarded as objects to be won and then discarded. But the way his affair with Melanie is narrated only adds to his emasculation; although he "wins" her sexually a number of times, he is always left

[4] The original text is italicized to denote Lurie's thoughts.

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wanting more from her, as his seduction techniques, while resulting in sex, do not wholly captivate her. Lurie's description of his encounters with Melanie also demonstrate that his emasculation is indelibly tied to his strange new moribundity, where his seductive techniques fail due to the almost visible age gap between them. When he first invites her to his apartment, he shows her a film by Norman McLaren, probably the 1968 *Pas de Deux*, where his hope is that Melanie will feel as "captivated" by McLaren's dancers as he is: "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 wing beats. It is a film he first saw a quarter of a century ago but is still captivated by: the instant of the present and the past of that instant, evanescent, caught in the same space. He wills the girl to be captivated too. But he senses she is not" (Coetzee, 2000, 15).

This passage is crucial to understanding the existential crisis Lurie finds himself in, a crisis in which the "I" "cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of [its] gender" (Butler 1999, 13). Finding himself "losing" his masculinity through his waning seductive powers, Lurie loses his self-understanding as a man. Because he lives within a system of binaries, this can only mean that he is becoming-woman, a becoming that he will later try to actively perform. The significance of this passage is that first, the dancers are described in the same manner in which Lurie has only just described himself, where his declining magnetism has left him a "ghost" of his former self (2000, 7). Moreover, like the dancers in McLaren's film, he is a ghost because he exists simultaneously as his old self, the young seducer, as well as this new self that has lost his power to captivate. Like the dancers, the two Luries are "caught in the same space" of his desire, and the film serves to visualize this moment of becoming. Second, Melanie cannot be captivated by the scene of evanescence because she has not yet lived it; Lurie recounts that it was twenty-five years since he first saw the film, where Melanie can only be about twenty-one. Lurie's use of the verb "captivate" is also deliberate: its lexical relationship with the verb "capture" signals his actual motives for inviting Melanie into his house; instead, he finds himself captured both by his desire and by his aging body.

Moreover, there is a subtle indication in this passage toward the animal symbolism with which Lurie regards Melanie in subsequent chapters, where the "wingbeats" of the dancers' movements foreshadow his eventual portrayal of her as his "poor little bird" (2000, 32), and his "little dove" (34).[5] Imagining Melanie as a caged bird is not a far leap for the reader to make. Animal imagery is used consistently through the novel for a number of reasons, not

[5] Ibid.

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least of which is the language of seduction that Lurie borrows from his literary forebears. As an academic well-versed in English literature, Lurie adopts the language of the English poets as a means by which to seduce Melanie, inviting her to submit by saying that "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it" (2000, 16).[6] To ring this "truth" home, he quotes a line from a Shakespearean sonnet, but this only serves to further alienate her by reinforcing the divides between them. His role as Melanie's teacher is emphasized in this moment, which he thinks stresses their age gap, but what he does not realize is that he also reifies the strangeness of his master tongue, the English language with which his ancestors have subjugated much of the African continent. In *History of the Voice*, Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite writes of the unfamiliarity felt by children in the colonies learning English poetry in school, explaining that "what English has given us as a model for poetry . . . is the pentameter" (1984, 9), yet, to a child living in the Caribbean, this meter sounds odd and unnatural, for the "hurricane does not roar in pentameters" (10). The subject matter of English poetry is often a world away from the experiences of people in the (ex-)colonies, which is partly why Lurie's words serve only to alienate Melanie.

Lurie's mastery of the English tradition also performatively constitutes his masculinity, a masculinity specifically contingent on a European poetics of seduction that is made up of centuries' worth of wooing techniques and into which Coetzee weaves a complex layer of intertextual material. Lucy Valerie Graham explains that the Western tradition has had "a fraught relationship" with the representation of rape (2003, 439), where the poetics of seduction and aesthetic renditions of rape intersect in worrying ways. Higgins and Silver meanwhile assert that "the politics and aesthetics of rape are one" (1991, 1), and in *Disgrace* it would certainly seem that we are intended to make this connection. Pamela Cooper writes that "Lurie's sense of sexual right rests on his mastery of the symbolism of desire and otherness entrenched within the Anglo-European aesthetic tradition," where "in contemporary South Africa, the erotic conventions of Western art split off from their referents to drift among alien signifiers" (2005, 25). Like Brathwaite's contention that English poetic modes ultimately fail in a colonial setting, Lurie's speech act misfires; it does not convince Melanie to fall in love with him. However, like many unhappy performatives, Lurie's iteration of the Western aesthetic produces an unintentional performative act by replicating the conventions of rape culture, intonated through the old masters aesthetic. Thus, saying that "beauty does not own itself" (2000, 16), while

[6] Lurie is professor of communications, but his specialization is English Romantic poetry.

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lofty sounding, ultimately has the performative effect of absolving Lurie of the crime he later commits, permitting him to become the owner he thinks Melanie lacks.

Lurie's allusions to the English tradition, moreover, point to a far deeper, more insidious Western tradition of representing rape aesthetically. For example, Graham points out that the two women raped in *Disgrace* have names that echo literary forebears: Lucrece (Lucy) in Shakespeare and Philomela (Melanie) in Ovid (2003, 439). Coetzee's intersection of Western aesthetic traditions with the (post)colonial conflation of bodies and land also echoes Western poetic modes of seduction as well as the tradition of the English pastoral. Much postcolonial feminist theory (e.g., Stoler 1997) is concerned with the conceptual slippage between imperial expansion and the bodily violations of those being subjugated by its rule, in both imperialist rhetoric and in the acts carried out in its name, while Coetzee's writing often focuses on white South Africans' relationship with the land.[7] However, in *Disgrace*, Coetzee conflates notions of land ownership and boundaries with women's rights to bodily sovereignty, comparing the patriarchal modes of the white settlers clinging to their European heritage with those of the rising black power in the new South Africa. As Rita Barnard (2003) notes, novels such as *Disgrace* challenge the "South African Pastoral," a genre of white (often Afrikaans) writing that praises the beauty of the land and the simplicity of pastoral life while omitting the violence that colonialism ensured. Graham further explains that the South African pastoral "presents a vision of the 'husband-farmer' as custodian of the feminine earth, [which] has been discursively implicated in the colonial appropriation of territory" (2003, 438) and whose "dream topography [is] the family farm, ruled by the patriarch and inscribed (albeit by the invisible labor of black hands) as a legacy for his sons, theirs to inherit and bequeath in perpetuity" (Barnard 2003, 204). The South African farm has become a symbol of colonial oppression and thus a contested space for patriarchal control, as have women's bodies. The correlation between the rhetoric of colonial land-grabbing and that of seduction in the European aesthetic tradition is made precisely because imperialism is patriarchal, and its literature of seduction quite often belies the misogynist and imperialist ideals of its writers, who monstratively make metaphorical connections between the conquering of women's bodies and the conquering of land.

Lurie is not a conquistador of space, but he is a conqueror of women: Coetzee instead makes the connection between the patriarchal control of

[7] See Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Life and Times of Michael K.* (1983).

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women's bodies and colonization through Lucy's rape, which takes a very different form from Melanie's. Significantly, in the context of the novel, Lucy, who is white, is raped by three black men, a detail for which Coetzee received a lot of criticism following the publication of *Disgrace*, where politicians, academics, and journalists all weighed in with their displeasure at what was deemed a racist attack on postapartheid racial integration (Moffett 2006, 135). Graham, for example, quotes Jeff Radebe, minister for public enterprises at the time: "In this novel J. M. Coetzee represents as brutally as he can the white people's perception of the post-apartheid black man" (2003, 435). What is made quite clear here is that only Lucy's ordeal has been regarded as rape, whereas Melanie's has not. Many of the novel's critics do not even view Melanie's ordeal as rape: both Herron (2005, 477) and Maria Lopez (2010, 924) refer to Melanie's rape as "abuse," while Cooper names it only "effectively a rape" (2005, 25). Sue Kossew, meanwhile, perplexingly contends that Lurie's behavior is "more morally complex than rape, than pedophilia" (2003, 159). The point is that rape and pedophilia (which I will unfortunately not have space to give proper consideration here) are not clear-cut events but are subject to a great deal of what Higgins and Silver call "undecidability" between postincident narratives (1991, 2–3), due in part to the prevalence of cultural modes that dictate the definition of incidents according to patriarchal modes. In *Disgrace*, neither incident is narrated by the victim but is instead framed by the protagonist who is in one case the perpetrator and in the other a failed defender: we never hear Melanie's version of events, and, because Lucy adamantly refuses to give her account, neither do we get a clear picture of her rape. Higgins and Silver explain that in narrative representations of rape the actual event is often absent from the telling, where it instead "exists as an absence or gap that is both product and source of textual anxiety, contradiction or censorship" (1991, 3). What Coetzee thus achieves by omitting Lucy's narrative is a fetishization of the kind of rape that Melanie is subjected to, to the point that its very definition as rape is obscured, which is surely why most of the novel's critics only vilify Lucy's rape and not Melanie's.

Part of the reason for this is the long history of deflecting rape through representation, "where it has been turned into a metaphor or a symbol or represented rhetorically as titillation, persuasion, ravishment, seduction, or desire (poetic, narrative, courtly, military)" (Higgins and Silver 1991, 4). The definition of rape is obscured because it also has everything to do with having the authority to rape. Higgins and Silver maintain that "rape and rapability are central to the very construction of gender identity" (1991, 3), which means that whether or not the body of the victim is female, the act of rape monstratively constitutes that body as feminine, simultaneously (re)producing

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the masculinity of the person who rapes. With the move from apartheid to the "new" South Africa, what has clearly been demonstrated by the bewildering number of reported rapes is that this move has precipitated the rise of a black patriarchy establishing its masculine authority through rape. This is especially the case with instances of rape that are coupled with further violence, as with Lucy's case in *Disgrace*. The controversy associated with Lucy's rape was partly fueled by the sensationalism surrounding many of these cases, especially as many of them were perpetrated by black men against white women. However, these cases hardly give an accurate representation of the realities of rape for most women in South Africa because these are sensationalized crimes and not the (no less horrific) everyday incidents of partner rape or coercion.

The upshot of regarding rape as a seduction, popularized in English literature through metaphors of colonial expansion, hunting, and other masculine pursuits, is the extreme dichotomization of masculine and feminine sexuality, where being male has become synonymous with being a rapist inasmuch as being female has become synonymous with being a disenfranchised and passive victim.[8] Furthermore, Lucy's rape is quite clearly an exercise of masculine authority used as punishment for claiming a masculinity of her own, which is manifested in two ways: first, as a lesbian, she performs a masculine sexuality through her "ownership" of women and second, by owning land, Lucy claims an authority denied her by her material body. Lucy's rape signifies what both Graham and Cooper refer to as a move from one patriarchal group to another, where Lucy's sexuality and status as landowner mean that she performs a masculinity that is forbidden her corporeality by the emerging power. This power is symbolized both positively, through the financial success of Petrus, Lucy's neighbor and one-time employee, and negatively, through Lucy's rape, where "the assault signifies, on a broad symbolic level, the black phallus replacing the defunct white one as the features of patriarchal authority are reconfigured in South Africa" (Cooper 2005, 29). As Graham contends, there is more than a suggestion that Lucy's lesbianism is partly what provoked her rape (2003, 439), where, as a lesbian, Lucy performs a masculinity that her black neighbors regard as inappropriate. To illustrate this more fully, it is crucial to note that rape rates continue to rise in South Africa, and, among these rapes, a large portion are committed with the intent to (re)feminize an unapproved lesbian population. Like the sensationalized rapes committed against white women that make the news, the rapes of South Africa's lesbians are often coupled with

[8] Many love poems from the English tradition use hunting as a symbol of the poet's desire for sexual union.

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extreme violence and in some cases murder. In an article covering the "corrective" rapes of lesbians in South Africa, Pumza Fihlani notes that many of these rapes are committed against "butch" lesbians considered to be "stealing" women from men. Interviewing men on the streets of Johannesburg for their opinions on the topic, this BBC reporter found that what many said corroborated the performative effects of rape, with one saying, "when someone is a lesbian, it's like saying to us men that we are not good enough" (in Fihlani 2011). The pervading logic here is that women are property to be used by men as they see fit.

As a woman, Lucy is regarded under the new patriarchal order as property, meaning that she has no right to property ownership herself, whether of land, such as her farm, or of "goods," which she claims by taking other women into her bed. Graham writes that "as a lesbian, Lucy would be regarded as 'unowned' and therefore 'huntable'" (2003, 439), as little more than an animal, which is specifically the connection Coetzee wishes us to make. By owning land, Lucy confounds the private and the public spheres: because she is a woman, she can neither be the Afrikaner "husband-farmer" nor a postapartheid custodian of the land such as Petrus. For flouting this "rule," Lucy is raped, which, as Cooper writes, is an act that performatively puts her "in *her* place," that is, "the conventional place of wife and mother—albeit in a reshaped system" (2005, 31; emphasis added). What is more, with the rape taking place within the domestic sphere, the idea is driven home most literally (Cooper 2005, 31). When she eventually accepts Petrus's offer of marriage, Lucy's feminization within the new patriarchal order is complete, which, she points out, hinges on his ownership not only of her but of her land: "Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game" (Coetzee 2000, 203).

That Graham relates Lucy's lesbianism to being "unowned" and "huntable" under the new patriarchy also links to Coetzee's treatment of animals in the novel. Animals, particularly in their use as symbols or metaphors, have a long history in the Western aesthetic tradition, one that is both reiterated and deconstructed in *Disgrace*. Throughout human history, animals have been subject to and subjected by discursive and bodily subjugation, without possible recourse, as the animal's gaze, unlike ours, is not paired with discursive parameters that constitute what it sees. "It is no accident," writes David Wood, "that . . . categorical distinctions are actually wielded by only one of each pair [of binary opposites]" (2004, 133). When Butler writes that the injurious address "may also produce an unexpected and enabling response"

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by "inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call" (1997, 2), the only other who cannot "counter" this call is the animal. Silence is the point in *Disgrace* where the animal and the human converge, where silence has everything to do with abjection and bodily trauma, and speech and the command to account for oneself are likened to violent physical penetration. Wood points out that "what is true of naming . . . is equally true of silence (and speaking out). Silence can preserve possibilities that articulation would prematurely close off, but, in many political contexts, silence is construed with consent, and can be fatal" (2004, 135). Lurie cannot understand Lucy's choice to remain on the farm postrape because he views her silence on the matter as consent to her violation. This view, however, is problematic when one considers the silence of animals and other others who cannot speak. Animals have very little chance of denying the "violence and genocide" (Wood 2004, 129) we continue to put them through, which take the forms of both bodily trauma and linguistic categorization, subjecting animals to a master/slave dialectic that, being speechless, they cannot answer for. Linguistic categorization has also lent itself to symbolic associations between animals and human traits, so that animals have come to represent certain human behavior, becoming metonymic supplements for our virtues and vices. Thus, dogs have come to be associated with loyalty and foxes with cunning, even if animal behavior bears nothing in common with what it represents. Our propensity to view animals symbolically has also often led to their destruction, such as in the case of foxes, whose presumed "cunning" is part of the rhetoric used in their culling.

Lurie's mastery of the Western aesthetic tradition means that animal metaphors have made their way into his vocabulary, especially when speaking of women, which often corresponds with the aesthetic of the hunt, a poetic device and common canonical feature used to suggest seduction. Every woman Lurie encounters in the text is compared to an animal or to animals, especially where sexuality is concerned. For instance, he quickly loses interest in the new secretary in his department after becoming disgusted by her sexual enjoyment, which is illustrated using animalistic imagery: "bucking and clawing, she works herself into a froth of excitement that in the end only repels him" (2000, 9). Her sexual mannerisms are comparable to two animals, one that traditionally alludes to masculine sexuality, the horse, and the other to aberrant female sexuality, a predatory animal with claws, probably feline. What is more, the horse imagery conveyed by the secretary's "bucking" and her "froth of excitement" also alludes to an unchecked, bestial sexuality that is symbolized by the horse/human hybrid, the centaur, which represents a monstrously bestial and rapacious form of male sexuality. That the secretary's mannerisms allude to a typically masculine sexuality is no

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mistake: because she is not timid about her sexual enjoyment, Lurie finds her repulsive. Moreover, pairing this symbolism with feline imagery also suggests her masculinity, as predation alludes to hunt imagery, which has traditionally cast men in the role of predator or hunter and women as prey. Lurie certainly deems himself hunter, describing himself at various stages as a "fox" (2000, 25), a "worm" (37), a "viper" (38), and a "shark among the helpless little fishies" (53). That he is able to do so is through his monstrative constitution of women as animals, usually of the "helpless" variety, enabling Lurie to consider himself a hunter or predator, because he views the world according to a binary logic in which he is a "fox" only because Melanie is a "rabbit" (25). Lurie casts Melanie as prey not only for the purpose of reifying his masculinity but to vindicate his misuse of her. While his mastery of the Western tradition normalizes this rhetoric, Lurie also reiterates the human propensity to regard animals as objects. Thus, by likening Melanie to an animal, he unconsciously recreates her objectification.

Coetzee makes a lexical connection between Melanie's objectification and the objectification of animals through the use of repetition. When he first "invites" Melanie to embark on an affair with him, Lurie reasons that "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it," thinking to himself, "she does not own herself. Beauty does not own itself" (2000, 16). Lurie later uses the same rationale to console himself over the impending slaughter of Petrus's two sheep, thinking, "sheep do not own themselves, do not own their lives" (2000, 123). The purpose of this repetition is not only to demonstrate the Western patriarchal objectification of women through their similarity to animals but to emphasize the implicit human approval of livestock slaughter. Coetzee *wants* us to compare these animals to Melanie, as a symbol of *human* kind: if Melanie "does not own" herself, Lurie later considers, "perhaps he does not own himself either" (2000, 18).

Lurie's rumination on his lack of self-ownership is also an attempt at self-justification, where, as Kossew argues, confession both enacts vindication (2003, 158) and performs the act of atonement (156). As its title suggests, the novel is about being in a state of disgrace for which the protagonist must atone, which takes place through what Kossew describes as "attending to the everyday, to the respective needs of an unborn child [Lucy's] and desperate dogs" (2003, 161). While this is perhaps the method by which Lurie finds atonement, his amends only properly take place when he finds himself in a state of becoming-animal. If the first section of the novel demonstrates Lurie's fall from grace, the second finds him learning how to welcome the absolute other through his atonement (at-one-ment) with the animals in his care. In the novel's first section, Coetzee uses Lurie as a focalizer in order

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to demonstrate how the protagonist distances himself intellectually both from his own base desires and the acts of those he feels are beneath him, thereby monstratively making parts of himself and others into signs of abject otherness. The very act of metaphoric association is monstrative because it relates humans to animals according to a human viewpoint. Thus, Lurie regards his aging self as a cockroach (Coetzee 2000, 8) because "cockroach" is a signifier for something abject, revolting, and other, something to be shuddered at.

Furthermore, while there are common associations between animal metaphors and their meaning, these are only common insofar as their ancestry, which is to say that we only regard cockroaches as abject and filthy because our regard is iterable: our use of animal metaphor hinges on a performative history of associating animals with human vice and virtue. This is partly because of the existence of medieval bestiaries, which documented animals (real and fantastical) according to real or perceived behavior, for which the animal became metonymic of similar behavior in humans. This is in part why we still make metaphorical connections between human characteristics and animals, even if these metaphors have been scientifically disproven, such as the notion of being as blind as a bat. What is more, animal metaphors became so culturally ingrained in the West that they ceased to be metaphors and became fact, a practice that has had an interesting effect (to say the least) on psychoanalytic discourses. Braidotti explains that in psychoanalysis, "each animal signifies a repressed or disavowed aspect of the patient's remembered experience, now festering silently into pathology," where animals are "metonymic displacements of unprocessed traumas" (2002, 140). However, she also demonstrates that these representations are based on the psychoanalyst's understanding of what each animal represents, which in turn hinges on centuries of repeated metaphorical association.

It is precisely such a reliance on metaphorical meaning that Lurie uses to other Melanie. Yet after his fall from grace, Lurie is offered salvation through his becoming-animal, which differs from finding metaphorical likenesses between humans and other animals (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 87). Lurie does not become the dog-man by imitating the dogs in his care but rather by being affected by their lot, by suffering with them: "The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets. One Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's *kombi*, he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. He does not understand what is happening to him" (Coetzee 2000, 142–43). Lurie "does not understand what is happening to him" because he is not in the habit of sympathizing with others and therefore does not recognize the emotion or its effects. And, because it is not characteristic of Lurie to sym-

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pathize with others, when he tries to reflect on Lucy's rape, he finds himself unable to embody her position: "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). That he can "become" the men who rape his daughter is easy for Lurie, not least because he is a rapist himself (even if he does not know this), but when he tries to embody Lucy, he can only question his ability to do so. Lurie's work in the clinic inaugurates his journey to redemption because being at one with the dogs allows him to eventually be at one with women as well: empathizing with the dogs marks this beginning, because empathy is an acknowledgment of the other's subjectivity.

Thus can Lurie begin to write his opera, because he begins to see women as something more than objects, as beings with desires of their own, just as he was able to commiserate with the dogs' suffering because he has lived their disgrace. He finds the opera almost writing itself, because he can now embody a woman who had been badly used by a man and on whose longing and agency the opera will be centered. Finally understanding the complexity of the other's being enables Lurie to review the monstrativity of signification that his mastery of the Western aesthetic had both excused and perpetuated. It is only through really sympathizing with the other, by literally becoming-other, that Lurie is able to receive redemption for his acts. Moreover, this sympathy can only be elicited by a love for the absolute other, "the deeper, more human sense" (Coetzee 2000, 34) of love that he insists Byron's Lucifer could not be given, the love that he finds at the root of the English word for "friend," "*freond*, from *freon*, to love" (102). Redemption happens because Lurie realizes he must love the absolute other as family, even if that other is responsible for his and his daughter's maltreatment. When Lucy explains on Lurie's second visit that the "boy" who took part in her rape, Pollux, is back living with Petrus, she clarifies his position by saying, "Pollux turns out to be a brother of Petrus's wife's. Whether that means a real brother I don't know. But Petrus has obligations toward him, family obligations" (200), the very same obligations he will have toward Lucy if she concedes to marry him.

What Petrus puts into practice by protecting the boy is a model of responsibility based not on family ties but on a philosophical at-one-ness of humanity. In certain Southern African traditions, this philosophy is known as *ubuntu*, an "anti-Cartesian notion that [states] 'I am because you are'" (Wilkinson 2003, 356), or as Desmond Tutu has put it, "[*Ubuntu*] embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is a person through another per-

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son, that my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable in yours. *When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself.* The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging" (Tutu 1999, 22; emphasis added). However, inasmuch as the *ubuntu* model may open the door to a possible utopia, Coetzee's novel demonstrates that accepting the other as brother is more easily said than done. *Ubuntu* philosophy explicitly states that it is a human bond that has a bearing on being and does not demonstrate any fellow feeling for the other beings with whom we share this earth. Given the manner in which women have been systematically likened to animals, not just aesthetically but through practices that regard women as usable and ownable, it is no wonder that the political change in South Africa has resulted only in the exchange of one patriarchy for another. *Ubuntu* is nevertheless a good place to start, because it operates by understanding oneself as a part of the other, of all others, and the other as part of oneself. While ambivalence endures, both at the close of Coetzee's novel and regarding our responsibility toward our discursive creations, the arrival of the monstrous other is inevitable and the question remains: will we persecute it, or will we welcome it as (always already) a part of our monstrous selves?

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