Framing and Visuality in Two Postcolonial Novels: J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *Reputations*

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Abstract

"Framing and Visuality in Two Postcolonial Novels: J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *Reputations*"

The aim of this study is to examine the concept and effect of framing in two postcolonial novels, *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee and *Reputations* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez. A frame can be defined as "[t]hat in which something, *esp*. a picture, pane of glass, etc., is set or let in, as in a border or case" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It thus encloses, limits but also structures a particular point of view or way of seeing. The thesis will examine such conceptions of framing as devices that serve to isolate and foreground particular moments or scenes within the larger narrative. Specific instances of framing will be analysed in the two chosen novels. *Disgrace* is set in post-Apartheid South Africa, against a backdrop of the political transition. The story grapples with a literature professor's challenges concerning his lack of insight and empathy, and at the centre is the question of gender-based violence. The analysis will focus on several moments of framing which allow insight into his limited point of view and his lack of empathetic engagement with others. Similarly, *Reputations* focuses on the life of an accomplished, middle-aged political cartoonist whose life comes to a standstill when past, private events intersect with his prosperous present in Bogotá, Colombia. As these are both novels from the Global South, there are various degrees of comparison; however, this thesis will focus on framing, and how this literary technique brings pivotal moments to the forefront.

Keywords

framing, visuality, parergon, compartmentalisation, point of view, J.M. Coetzee, Juan Gabriel Vásquez

Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that "Framing and Visuality in Two Postcolonial Novels: J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *Reputations*" is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed:  Date: November 2023

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Thinking about Frames

1. Chapter Overview

This thesis is concerned with reading two novels from the global south, focusing on questions of framing. J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1994) and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *Reputations* (2013), set in South Africa and Columbia respectively, will be analysed closely in terms of the different framing strategies they employ. At the outset, it is important to clarify what this thesis means by the concept of framing. The idea of framing, as used in this study, is a complex and understudied approach to literary fiction, and needs some explication. Frames and processes of framing will be understood as forms of visual enclosure and a staging of focused and often frozen scenes within the narration of the story. The idea of the frame, which has generated considerable discussion in art theory and philosophy, will be applied to the reading of literary texts, and, as I will elaborate in a following section, draws on the aesthetic theories of Immanuel Kant, Georg Simmel, and specifically Jacques Derrida's critique of the parergon. Additionally, the argument will also draw on Gotthold Lessing's well-known argument in *Laocoön* (1766) where he distinguishes between verbal art (poetry) and pictorial art (painting or sculpture), arguing that these two media use space and time in fundamentally different ways.

The way this thesis therefore thinks about framing is distinct from a narratological approach which distinguishes between frame and embedded narration. This idea of a framed narrative structure is a very familiar idea in literary studies, and a large number of fictions employ this device: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the well-known Arabian cycle of stories, *One Thousand and One Nights* (1775), and Emily Bronte's classic, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), are some of the many examples. Framed narration essentially involves stories told within another story, and can be defined when

> events are narrated by a character other than the primary narrator or when a character tells a tale that, although unrelated to the main story, contains a moral message for the listener in the text (Herman, Jahn & Ryan 278).

Though this thesis will use framing in a different sense, the idea of framed or embedded narration can also be compared with placing a frame around a picture -- a frame covers each "side" of the picture, much as framing a story covers both "sides" of the plot, the beginning and the ending. While framed narration is an important aspect in literary analysis, in this thesis I wish to consider the more literal use of frames, where moments within a narrative are visually enclosed, borders are signaled, and specific episodes are given a pictorial treatment. At the same time, such framed moments in the story also need to be read against that which remains outside the frame, in other words, consider aspects which stand outside these moments.

The argument of this thesis will take a cue from an Honours essay topic which J.M. Coetzee, in his role as literature professor at the University of Cape Town (UCT), set his students, directing them to pay attention to the role that windows play in Flaubert's novel: "Discuss the importance of windows in *Madame Bovary*" (Essay topic set by Prof. J.M. Coetzee in a graduate seminar, University of Cape Town (Amazwi, 2002.13.2.3.3)).[1]We do not know what Coetzee may have been specifically thinking about when setting this essay question, or what kind of analysis he would have expected his students to pursue. But the novel Coetzee was working on at the time was *Disgrace*, and as will be evident in my analysis in Chapter Two, framed moments, often involving windows, proliferate in the novel: Lurie's glimpse of Soraya through the shop window in St George's Mall; gazing out contemplatively through the rain-spattered window after his rape of Melanie; witnessing the execution of the dogs through the bathroom window; and Teresa's numerous appearances at her window, looking for her lost lover in the dark night.

This thesis will thus take a cue from Coetzee's question and look at moments in the narratives where particular scenes are enclosed and set apart, not just demarcated views through a window or a door frame (as Coetzee wanted his students to focus on), but also other forms of explicit or implicit enclosure, such as when a scene is described in terms that invoke a painting. As Derrida aptly points out in *Truth in Painting*, "[t]here is framing, but the frame does not exist" (Derrida 39). In addition to the "natural" or implied frames involving windows and doors or views through

[1] I am indebted to my supervisor for pointing me to this reference.

other apertures, framing is also of course important when photographs, paintings or other works of art are present in the story, and are the subject of ekphrastic description. W.J.T Mitchell, whose work on visuality has gained much attention (for example, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (1994)) describes ekphrasis in a later essay as follows:

> [It] is a verbal representation of visual representation—typically a poetic description of a work of visual art […] The crucial rule of ekphrasis, however, is that the ‘‘other’’ medium, the visual, graphic, or plastic object, is never made visible or tangible except by way of the medium of language. One might call ekphrasis a form of nesting without touching or suturing, a kind of action-at-distance between two rigorously separated sensory and semiotic tracks, one that requires completion in the mind of the reader (Mitchell 402).

Such moments always also involve a sense of frame, either explicitly or implicitly. Lurie's reference to a George Grosz painting in *Disgrace* and Mallarino's reference to the caricatures which he curates in *Reputations* are examples of several such moments which will be analysed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

This thesis suggests that such framed moments and "nested" images heighten,[2] sharpen and foreground pivotal themes in both novels, and I will argue that such explicitly framed scenes, for example the rape scene in *Disgrace*, or the moment Mallarino draws a thick black square to figuratively cage Cuéllar in *Reputations*, are not only always highly significant moments in the story, but also embody a heightened ethical significance. In the case of *Disgrace*, my analysis will show how Lurie reduces female characters to two-dimensional surfaces, and such pictorial moments stage his limited point of view that does not fully recognize the full personhood of the looked at subject in the scene. In the case of *Reputations*, Mallarino reduces characters to black-and-white caricatures irrespective of their gender. In other words, such framed moments in the novel make Mallarino's and Lurie's problematic compartmentalised view of the world literally visible.

The idea of "nesting" will be explored more carefully under the rubric of "intermediality", but can be defined as when "one medium appears inside another as its content" (Mitchell 401).

In the following sections of this introductory chapter, I will firstly look in more detail at theorisations of the frame in relation to painting and visual art, before thinking about the application of these ideas to a reading of literature. The chapter will close with a brief thesis overview.

2. Theorising the Frame in the Arts

The idea of the frame is an understudied and largely neglected area in literary studies. In the field of aesthetics, the content of the framed work is generally privileged and becomes the main focus of analysis, and the frame is largely rendered invisible. In his doctoral study of the history of frames in Western art, Caleb Bissinger draws attention to this literal marginality of the frame, which can be defined as:

> a boundary, a border, a margin; it is the picture's remarkable and inconspicuous terminus. A frame is also part of the architecture, a piece of furniture; it is an invitation and a testament to craft (Bissinger).

This conception of the frame as an interstitial or in-between object between art and non-art draws from a longer history in Western philosophy stretching back to Immanuel Kant's discussion of the parergon in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790). Frames, as Bissinger argues, do not only "protect the painting, fix it to the wall, and enrich its color" but are "also there to rivet the onlooker, merge fine art and architecture, signal ownership, and keep the real world at bay [17]" (Bissinger). Frames therefore pose questions about the relationship between the work of art and the world, and signal ideas as much as the content which they enclose.

In a seminal essay on the subject, "The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study" (1902) Georg Simmel, an influential German sociologist and philosopher, posed aesthetic and philosophical questions regarding frames. He attempted to define the function of frames as well as the manner in which they speak to the artwork itself:

> What the frame achieves for the work of art is to symbolize and strengthen this double function of its boundary. It excludes all that surrounds it, and thus the viewer as well, from the work of art, and thereby helps to place it at that distance from which alone it is aesthetically enjoyable (Simmel 155).

This shows that the frame isolates a body of work in order to establish the art work as a distinctive and set apart aesthetic object which the viewer can recognize as such. Without the frame the work might not be immediately recognizable as art, and would be in danger of blending into its environment. Simmel considers the frame as a "self-sufficient closure" (Simmel 156). Adding to this sense of isolating the work of art from its outside context, Simmel also focuses on the effect of frames in creating an inner coherence to the work itself:

> The qualities of the picture frame reveal themselves to be those of assisting and giving meaning to this inner unity of the picture (Simmel 156).

This implies that the frame assigns meaning to the art which it encloses even though it is not part of the artwork itself. Simmel further adds that the frame,

> through its configuration, must never offer a gap or a bridge through which, as it were, the world could get in or from which the picture could get out – as occurs for instance when content extends into the frame, a fortunately rare mistake, which completely negates the work of art's autonomous being and thereby the significance of the frame (Simmel 156).

From this, it can be said that the aim of the frame is to protect the autonomy of the artwork from the outside world, an intrusion or contamination which would otherwise destroy its aesthetic value. The key idea in Simmel's essay is the absolute compartmentalising or enclosing function of the frame which completely seals the work of art from the world. In Simmel's conception, frames may never leak: they may never "offer a gap or bridge through which, as it were, the world could get in or from which the picture could get out" (Simmel 157).

Lastly, Simmel states that "[l]ike furniture, the frame should possess no individuality but rather a style" (Simmel 157). Thus the emphasis for Simmel appears to be on the supportive qualities of the frame as opposed to having a distinctive aesthetic quality that might rival the work of art. Frames should have generic styles, such as gilding and ornamentation, but he also expresses a disdain for excessive ornamentation as it would disturb the painting by drawing the attention to its

boundary. The meaning of the work would be split between two entities and would thus not provide the viewer with the same amount of satisfaction as there would be no sense of hierarchy in an artistic sense.

Similarly to Simmel, the well-known French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu has also paid attention to framing, and its relationship to the work of art. In an early work, *Manet: A Symbolic Revolution* (1979), Bourdieu explored the idea of the Impressionist aesthetic revolution. On a basic level, Impressionist art can be defined as an aesthetic mode that sought to capture the fleeting moments in everyday scenes by emphasising natural light and ordinary subject matter. As summarised by Cartwright (2022):

> Impressionism was an art movement which began in Paris in the last quarter of the 19th century. The impressionists tried to capture the momentary effects of light on colours and forms, often painting outdoors. They frequently used bright colours with a thick application to capture landscapes and contemporary everyday life in cafés, the theatre, and the boulevards of Paris.

In *Manet: A Symbolic Revolution*, Bourdieu reflects on how Impressionism practised spontaneity, with canvases often painted in nature or out doors – whereas previously paintings had traditionally been carefully crafted in studios with posed human subjects or still life matter. Impressionist artists such as Manet took to the streets and painted anything that could be captured in urban life or in nature. This approach is also exemplified in other Impressionist works such as Monet's famous *Haystacks* series (1890-1891) and Van Gogh's *Wheat Field with Cypresses* (1889). The uniqueness of this artistic movement, argues Bourdieu, is attributed to the fact that the artists chose their own frames in selecting a "slice of reality", and in turn, this became represented on a rectangular canvas as a painting. This enabled the viewer to see the world as framed through the eyes of the artist. Bourdieu elaborates more on this idea in the following comment:

> it highlights the painter's power to take arbitrary decisions, to impose his own vision of the world [on the picture/viewers] instead of having to submit to a

> classical or canonical definition of what this worldview should be (Bourdieu 352).

Such subjective choices of scenery and subject matter are notable in Manet's work, for example, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) which captures a moment in the life of a tired-looking barmaid during a busy shift. Paintings such as this depart radically from the conventions of classical painting.

Bourdieu details how Impressionists challenged the status quo and the aesthetic ideals during this era, choosing their own idiosyncratic, often "low" subject matter and making art out of ordinary reality:

> The framing of the picture isolates it, thus separating it from the world and establishing it as a picture ('This is a picture', as Mallarmé might say): it institutes the representation of a slice of reality, of the order of reality. It achieves a sort of transition to a superior genre: it establishes the autonomy of the work – as well as of the artist, who has the final say on how reality is sliced and cut out in his work (Bourdieu 352-353).

In referring to the artwork as a "cut out" or "a slice of reality", Bourdieu essentially shows that Impressionist artists were in pursuit of finding unique and aesthetically pleasing moments to frame and capture with their paint brushes, moments they found in everyday scenes and views which could be transfigured as art. As Bourdieu put it, "[t]he frame … consecrates what it frames as worthy of being looked at" (Bourdieu 353). This statement further entrenches the above argument in the sense that everyday subject matter is made valuable and aesthetically significant when it is isolated from reality and enclosed by a frame. As opposed to the frame being a form of extraneous ornamentation, it becomes intrinsic to the meaning of the artwork.

Simmel and Bourdieu discuss the idea of the frame in relation to works of visual art, and both their conceptions owe a debt to Immanuel Kant's ideas about aesthetics. A key idea of Kant, as expressed in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), is the need to distinguish between true art and ornamentation, and this distinction shapes his comments on the parergon, and also finds expression in his more well-known

discussion of the difference between the sublime and the beautiful. Kant's discussion of the parergon would be extensively critiqued by Derrida in *The Truth in Painting*, specifically one chapter in the book which is entitled "Parergon". What is meant by the idea of the parergon, and why is this a significant concept for both Kant and Derrida? In order to understand this concept, it is first important to look in some detail at Kant's thinking.

On a very basic level, the parergon is a supplement to the ergon, or the actual work of art. The parergon, is adjacent to the ergon, but not the true artwork itself. The word parergon can be simply explained in terms of its two parts - para being "beside", and ergon being "work" (Duro 23). Kant discusses the parergon as follows:

> Even what we call *ornaments* (*parerga*), i.e., what does not belong to the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent, but [is] only an extrinsic addition, does indeed increase our taste's liking, and yet it too does so only by its form. As in the case of picture frames, or drapery on statues. or colonnades around magnificent buildings (Kant 226).

The parergon can thus be understood as being "by the work" and a "by-work". Kant took care to distinguish the ergon (or the work of art) from parerga, which should only play a supplementary supportive function, and "increase our taste's liking".

Kant gives two examples of parerga, both of which are "adjunct" to the proper work of art, and yet in close proximity. The first example Kant cites is "drapery" in classical architecture and sculpture, where sculptures require a structure to balance on in order to avoid breakage. Thus, the parergon is not only decorative but it also serves a structural, literally supportive purpose as well. The second example of parerga are the "frames of pictures". Kant is very clear that picture frames should not be seen as part of the work of art proper: a fancy gold frame should not "win approval for the picture", but the picture in itself should stand on its own merits. Kant therefore warns against too elaborate and ornamented frames ("finery") which detract from the "genuine beauty" of the painting. For Kant then, parerga are a way of distinguishing between true or genuine art on the one hand, and decorative ornamentation or structural support on the other.

Before looking more closely at the way in which Derrida takes up Kant's concept of the parergon and deconstructs it, it may be worthwhile to look at Kant's larger argument about aesthetics, which hinges on a fundamental distinction between the concept of the sublime, and ideas of beauty. For the purposes of our discussion beauty can be associated with a pretty frame, whereas the grander idea of the sublime is only properly found in the true art object itself. Immanuel Kant is well-renowned for his trilogy consisting of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Critique of Judgment* (1790). For the sake of this thesis, I will focus primarily on *Critique of Judgment*, particularly the "Analytic of the Sublime" in which Kant discusses aesthetic questions, namely how we respond to beauty, art, and overwhelming experiences. Kant's observations are structured by what he sees as a fundamental opposition between the beautiful and the sublime. He defines the beautiful as a category of aesthetic objects which is generally pleasing and acceptable, whereas the sublime is that which is thought-provoking:

> The finer feeling that we will now consider is preeminently of two kinds: the feeling of the **sublime** and of the **beautiful**. Being touched by either is agreeable, but in very different ways (Kant 14).

Both the beautiful and the sublime can elicit feelings of pleasure; however, the difference lies in the intensity of the sublime as opposed to the surface-level nature of the beautiful. The examples of the sublime which Kant lists are included to develop this contrast, such as the "sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peaks arise above the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or the depiction of the kingdom of hell by Milton arouses satisfaction, but with dread". Beauty, on the other hand, is evoked by "the prospect of meadows strewn with flowers, of valleys with winding brooks, covered with grazing herds, the description of Elysium, or Homer's depiction of the girdle of Venus" (Kant 14-15).

The above examples show the boundlessness and the sense of terror ("dread") evoked by the sublime and its manifestations in nature, and by contrast, the harmless pleasantness of scenery that is merely beautiful. Kant elaborates on this distinction

with a further set of examples that illustrate the grand scale and boundlessness of the sublime:

> The sublime must always be large, the beautiful can also be small. The sublime must be simple, the beautiful can be decorated and ornamented […] The sight of an Egyptian pyramid is far more moving, as Hasselquist reports, than one can imagine from any description, but its construction is simple and noble. St. Peter's in Rome is magnificent. Since on its frame, which is grand and simple, beauty, e.g., gold, mosaics, etc., are spread in such a way that it is still the sentiment of the sublime which has the most effect, the object is called magnificent (Kant 17).

Kant thus argues that the sublime cannot be contained or properly framed as it exceeds all comprehension, and may even be threatening in nature. It can be likened to natural disasters such as hurricanes or volcanoes, or powerful forces of nature such as waterfalls or the boundlessness of the cosmos. These are natural phenomena which have no discernible limits and thus challenge our capacity to comprehend their immensity. In contrast to the grand, overwhelming nature of the sublime, beauty is something that is confined and superficial. More simply, it can be identified as that which is minute, delicate and decorative; moreover, it does not require much thought to understand it. With these ideas in mind, we can therefore conclude that for Kant, true sublime objects and experiences in nature resist framing and enclosure; and, similarly, truly sublime works of art should also not be enclosed by frames that detract from and disturb the sublime aesthetic object.

Kant's aesthetic theories have had a major influence on Western philosophy, and also underpin Derrida's *The Truth in Painting* (1975). Of particular interest is Derrida's critique of Kant's ideas of the parergon. In the chapter entitled "Parergon" he deconstructs Kant's rigid conception of the binary opposition between ergon (art) and parerga (ornamentation), and suggests that there is no clear dichotomy between the frame and that which is framed.

Derrida initially presents and summarises Kant's conception of the parergon before deconstructing it. For Kant, as Derrida recounts, the parergon

> is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of an object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so solely by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames [Einfassungen] of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces (Derrida 18).

Derrida points out that for Kant parerga are of lesser importance than the art form itself, as they simply "[augment] the delight of taste". Derrida further explains that for Kant,

> "the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of a beautiful form - if it is introduced [*simplement appliqué*] like a gold frame [*goldene Rahmen*] merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm -it is then called *finery* [*parure; Schmuck*] and takes away from the genuine beauty" (Derrida 18).

Finery here can be likened to a golden and/or gilded frame which might rival the artwork and detract from it, as opposed to supporting and augmenting the artwork itself which is presented on the canvas. Derrida's key interest is the question of the border which is the supposedly rigid demarcation between art and frame. For Derrida, puzzling questions emerge when one asks where the work of art ends, and to what extent the parergon or frame is part of the painting, or part of the non-art context:

> The incomprehensibility of the border, at the border, appears not only at the inner limit, between the frame and the painting, the drapery and the body, the column and the building, but also at its outer limit (Derrida 24).

In saying this, Derrida demonstrates that the frame (and ornamentation in general) are not exclusively exterior elements, but cannot be separated from the artwork itself, nor from the contextual space:

> [T]his frame is problematic. I do not know what is essential and what is secondary to a work. […] [F]or example, the frame. What is the place of the frame. Does it have a place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its inner limit. Outer. And the surface between the two limits (Derrida 26).

In posing such simple but foundational questions about the boundary between art and non-art, Derrida suggests that the ornamentation and the artwork cannot be neatly separated and need to be thought of together. The parergon, he argues:

> [is] neither work (ergon) nor outside the work [hors d'oeuvre], neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it gives rise to the work (Derrida 9).

Derrida thus suggests that the binary opposition or neat separation between artwork and frame cannot be sustained, and is itself a limiting discourse. Kant's conception of the parergon "presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and the outside of the art object" (Derrida 12) and even imposes a "violence of framing" that "confines the theory of aesthetics within a theory of the beautiful, the theory of the beautiful within a theory of taste, and the theory of taste within a theory of judgment." (Derrida 30).

Thus, from the above discussion, one can see that Derrida is interested in the paradox of the Kantian parergon which is "neither part of it nor absolutely extrinsic to" the work of art (20). Parerga, such as the frame, "are neither internal nor external, [they] effectively frame the work, but also square it" (Derrida 20). Derrida is thus concerned with the ambiguous nature of frames which constitute the work and make it recognisable, but which occupy an indeterminate space which mediates inside and outside. Such a Derridean conception of framing can be a productive lens for literary analysis.

3. Lessing's *Laöcoon*: Art and Literature

How could one then apply these ideas about framing, which Simmel, Bourdieu and Derrida discuss in relationship to visual art, to a reading of literature? In this section, I will be thinking about the application of theories of framing to literature. How can we use these ideas to read and analyse fiction? How can ideas of the frame, enclosing a painting, be applied to narration in a novel? The frame, as described by Simmel and Bourdieu, can be understood as marking the boundary of the work, which creates the art object and isolates it, a distinction which, as we have seen, Derrida critiques.

One way of thinking about frames in relationship to literature is to consider one of the first Western works of literary analysis, namely the critical essay written by Gotthold Lessing. Lessing's influential eighteenth-century essay, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766/2013), draws a fundamental distinction between two forms of art, namely visual and verbal, which he differentiates as follows:

> I reason thus: if it is true that painting and poetry, in their imitations, make use of entirely different media of expression, or signs—the first, namely, of form and colour in space, the second of articulated sounds in time;—if these signs indisputably require a suitable relation to the thing betokened, then it is clear, that signs arranged near to one another, can only express objects, of which the wholes or parts exist near one another; while consecutive signs can only express objects, of which the wholes or parts are themselves consecutive (Lessing 101).

Lessing here argues that visual art occupies space as it isolates and fixes a specific moment that has occurred in time, and is comprehensible to the viewer in one, single instant. Literature on the other hand, a sequence of "consecutive signs", requires time to read and comprehend. Literature makes use of narrative progression which generates momentum in the plot, whereas in "its coexisting compositions, painting can only make use of a single instant of an action, and must therefore choose the one, which is most pregnant, and from which what has already taken place, and what is about to follow, can be most easily gathered (Lessing 102).

In essence, Lessing argues that visual art (be it painting or sculpture) depicts a singular moment in time and is thus static as the emphasis is on the space it occupies. However, literature considers objects and characters as they develop and change over a period of time. Lessing thus views literature as a superior art form for its ability to capture movement and change.

(Image 1: *Laocoön and His Sons*)

Lessing's essay's title is drawn from a classical marble sculpture which was discovered in 1506 and can now be found displayed in the Vatican. It shows three figures: one large figure in the foreground (Laocoön), and two smaller figures in the background (Laocoön's sons), who are surrounded by snakes. The sculpture group is made of marble and their muscles appear outstretched and contorted. Laocoön and the figure to the right of him can be seen looking upwards as if they are reaching for something in the distance. However, the figure to the left can be seen cowering. The discomfort and pain which the sculpture group invokes is further entrenched by the facial expressions on its figures. The figures are positioned against a marble block

which can be seen as the functional parergon in this context. In addition to this, a cloth is draped over the block which can be seen as decorative parerga.

Lessing's essay was deemed controversial during its time of publication; however, it remains an influential work due to the strict division between visual art / space and literature / time. In Lessing's conception, visual art and literature were fundamentally distinct and could not mix in any way. Lessing demonstrates his commitment to this absolute separation by giving a hypothetical example of the Laocoön statue becoming animated, or infused with time:

> For only imagine the mouth of Laocoön to be forced open, and then judge! Let him shriek, and look at him! It was a form which inspired compassion;, for it displayed beauty and pain at once. It has grown into an ugly and horrible shape from which we gladly avert our eyes; for the sight of pain excites annoyance, unless the beauty of the suffering object change that annoyance into the sweet feeling of compassion (Lessing 14).

For Lessing, a statue or painting must always remain a frozen, still object, and a scenario where it begins to morph and change would be so "ugly and horrible" that "we gladly avert our eyes". Here Lessing shows that when the division between space and time collapses, the static sculpture becomes animated and lifelike in a way that should only be achieved through literature. The notion of space is thus disturbed by the introduction of time as art objects are meant to remain static in space. The example provided by Lessing further entrenches his argument that visual and verbal art cannot be interwoven, and neither can the modalities of space and time. Visual art works must remain uncontaminated by time.

The converse argument also applies to literature. What happens in a literary text when narrative progression becomes static, for example when the forward momentum of time in the story gives way to "nested", pictorial moments, or ekphrasis? The counter example is when literature, which should portray an unfolding in time, freezes. This is what Lessing identifies as the problem of ekphrasis. For Lessing, ekphrasis in literature is a fundamental problem that disrupts his neat, binary conception of it. It is therefore not surprising that he attempts to explain Homer's

most well-known ekphrastic moment, namely the description of Achilles's shield, as an example of a "vivid picture of an action". Lessing identifies the use of ekphrasis as problematic here as it is a moment in literature which is contaminated by space. The famous passage in Homer is, for Lessing, less a verbal description of a static, finished work of art, but dwells on the process of its creation, namely the labours of Hephaestos, the blacksmith:

> And the famous crippled Smith forged a meadow deep in a shaded glen for shimmering flocks to graze, with shepherds' steadings, well-roofed huts and sheepfolds. And the crippled Smith brought all his art to bear on a dancing circle, broad as the circle Daedalus once laid out on Cnossos' spacious fields for Ariadne the girl with lustrous hair. Here young boys and girls, beauties courted with costly gifts of oxen, danced and danced, linking their arms, gripping each other's wrists. And the girls wore robes of linen light and flowing, the boys wore fine-spun tunics rubbed with a gloss of oil, the girls were crowned with a bloom of fresh garlands, the boys swung golden daggers hung on silver belts. And now they would run in rings on their skilled feet, nimbly, quick as a crouching potter spins his wheel, palming it smoothly, giving it practice twirls to see it run, and now they would run in rows, in rows crisscrossing rows — rapturous dancing (Homer et al).

As opposed to viewing art and literature as enmeshed, Lessing regards the insertion of a visual medium as the beginning of a new narrative. Here the pictorial content of Achilles' shield becomes a scene of action, and Lessing draws attention to Homer's craft where the work of art becomes animated:

> Thus, he here also makes use of that knack of art, which I have already commended; by which he changes that, which, in his subject, is co-existent, into what is consecutive;, and thereby converts a tedious painting of a body into a vivid picture of an action. We see not the shield itself, but the divine craftsman who executes it (Lessing 126).

Lessing thus implies that Homer does not actually make use of ekphrastic description. and re-reads the ekphrastic moment not as a still picture, but as a narrative which is

marked by time. Instead of interrupting the story of Achilles, the ekphrastic moment becomes a story in itself.

Although Lessing's essay is rigid in its binary approach, and can be likened to Kant's ideals on artistic beauty and what the human mind processes as sublime, it is nevertheless useful as a way to think about embedded pictorial elements in a literary text, and how this affects time and space. As we have seen, Lessing argues that narrative occupies time, whereas art occupies space. While Lessing has considered the two as polar opposites, visual art and literature cannot be neatly separated and it is precisely their entanglement that is interesting in the novels which I have selected for this thesis. Since literature is sequential as it works in terms of narrative progression of time, I am interested in what happens when an artwork (or rather an ekphrastic reference to an artwork) is nested within the text, and the natural progression of time is halted. This tension between the two media is complex and produces effects that require more careful analysis, as will be seen in the next chapter where I discuss several examples, such as the encounter between Lurie and Soraya on St George's Street at Captain Dorego's Fish Inn, where such a framed moment interrupts linear progression, and effectively changes the direction of the narrative, even causing the plot to lose momentum and morph into another alternative and unexpected story.

A question central to this thesis is what happens when nested or framed pictorial moments are inserted into a narrative and freeze time. In analysing such visual frames and scenes of enclosures in both texts, the gap can be explored between the visual which is explicit, and the literary images which are implicit. Lessing's opposition between space/visual art and time/literature, or rather a deconstruction of this binary opposition, will thus underpin my analysis of framed moments in the novels, and allow a reading of their disruptive effects on time, My analysis of such pictorial moments in *Disgrace* and *Reputations*, will show how framing freezes narrative progression – and how in such reflective moments other forms of thinking and action become possible for the protagonist.

A key idea in this thesis is thus the concept of ekphrasis. Murray Krieger is an art history and literature scholar whose work on ekphrasis has garnered much attention and success. In his writing, he tends to focus on the relationship between

literature and art, arguing that ekphrasis is a useful tool for identifying how art and literature can intersect in collaborative ways. In a book entitled *Ekphrasis, the Illusion of the Natural Sign* (1992), Krieger discusses ekphrasis as it is exemplified in John Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" and Homer's "The Shield of Achilles", both of which Krieger comments on in his book:

> What these poetic descriptions, Homer's and Keats's, shared was a word-ridden and time-ridden attempt not only to portray visual representations but to create verbal "pictures" whose complexity utterly resists their being translated into visual form (Krieger XIV).

Krieger argues that in examples such as the shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* or Keats's Grecian urn, the object does not exist in actuality. Rather, the idea of such objects is solely made possible through the use of language:

> Frequently, as we find in obvious examples of ekphrasis such as the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* […] or-to invoke the most familiar, even if belated, example - Keats's Grecian urn, the object of the ekphrasis does not exist except as it is invented in its verbal description, subject to the special character that only its verbal form can exploit (Krieger 17).

This quote suggests that ekphrastic moments are less representational but fictive. As they are verbal descriptions, the author and the reader are able to "make free with it". There are a number of explicit ekphrastic moments in *Disgrace* and *Reputations*, such as: the photograph of Soraya in the catalogue for Discreet Escorts; Lurie's photograph in the college newspaper following the scandal with Melanie Isaacs (which provides a sense of validity); the photograph of Lurie's mother which Melanie questions him on; the painting which Lurie fixates on in an art book in the library; Mallarino's caricatures (more significantly, *The Disfigured Face* and *Congressman Adolfo Cuéllar – Suffer the little girls to come unto me*); and Mallarino's oil painting of his wife, Magdalena, holding his daughter, Beatriz, in her arms.

What is significant with regards to invoking photographic moments in fiction, or moments captured in a mirror-like surface, is that they appear to represent a

moment of truth or revelation. A particularly poignant example of ekphrasis is the painting which Lurie views and analyses as a child in great detail called *The Rape of the Sabine Women*. The description of the artwork is painted in vivid detail which alludes to the heart of the novel - Lurie's complicated relationship with women and sex. It provides some insight to the reader on more sensitive themes such as power relations, abuse, and gender. Such complex themes are made visible through the reference to a work of visual art and Lurie's poetic description of it. While a more detailed description of this moment will follow in chapter two, it is worth considering how ekphrasis is able to highlight the larger scope of political and social turbulence in South Africa.

4. Framing, Intermediality and Fiction

Lessing's conception of a fundamental separation of art and literature provides a useful lens, but is self-evidently not a model that applies to contemporary culture where visual and textual media are increasingly mixed. W.J.T Mitchell makes the claim that "[all] media are, from the standpoint of sensory modality, 'mixed media'" (Mitchell 395). This idea refutes Lessing's claim that art and literature are separate entities and thus cannot be interconnected. This idea which Mitchell touches on can be referred to as "intermediality" where there is an interconnectedness between various forms of media. One particular form of intermediality, referred to several times earlier, is the idea of nesting.

Mitchell's point about the entangled relations between different media underpin a growing area of interdisciplinary interest in the humanities, namely the idea of intermediality. The topic of intermediality has generated considerable discussion over recent years. In general terms, intermediality can be understood as:

> the relationships between media and is hence used to describe a huge range of cultural phenomena which involve more than one medium. One of the reasons why it is impossible to develop *one* definition of intermediality is that it has become a central theoretical concept in many disciplines such as literary, cultural and theater studies as well as art history, musicology, philosophy, sociology, film, media and comics studies – and these disciplines all deal with

> different intermedial constellations which ask for specific approaches and definitions (Rippl 1).

A possible reason for this growing interest could be in relation to how diverse media practices have since become. While Lessing originally suggested that visual art and literature cannot mingle, current creative media practices increasingly embrace and enmesh visual, textual, sonic or performative modes. Similarly, Ágnes Pethő explores the prefix "inter" in intermediality and considers the relationship it has with media in her book *Cinema and Intermediality* (2020). An intermedial approach implies a

> kind of theorizing …focused on relationships, rather than structures, on something that "happens" in-between media rather than simply exists within a given signification has proved to be the key element of the term (Pethő XII).

This approach demonstrates how varying forms of media can be borrowed by the other, as opposed to co-existing. The interconnectedness between these medial elements forms a tapestry of understanding for its viewers. Hermann Wittenberg, furthermore has suggested that there are three interrelated dimensions which can be understood as follows:

> firstly, how intermedial moments make us aware of our physical embodiment and activate an attentiveness to the play of our senses; secondly, how they often invoke a strongly affective and emotive response; and thirdly, they are ethical events that foreground the necessity to recognize and respond to others as human beings (1).

In my thesis I wish to take a cue from a broader understanding of intermediality, as well as Wittenberg's comments on the embodied, affective and ethical dimensions of pictorial moments in literary texts to explore Coetzee's and Vásquez's novels with regards to framing and how this theoretical lens can help to gain insight into the subjectivity of its male protagonists, and conversely how such framing strategies serve to objectify and flatten female characters. Wittenberg and several other scholars (such as Amir discussed more extensively below) have given attention to the significance of photographs in Coetzee's writing, where the framed nature of "nested"

photographs in the fictions are often emphasised and also brought into question. My own approach draws from this interest in the complex nature of literary photographs and their borders, but extends the idea of framing beyond photographs to other conspicuously framed scenes where windows, mirrors, doors, key holes and other apertures act as "natural" frames to contain and enclose particular moments in the narrative.

In literary criticism, this particular use of framing, as used in this thesis, is comparatively rare, and therefore the work of Ayala Amir is particularly useful and important, even more so because her analysis focuses on the fiction of J.M. Coetzee, though not specifically on *Disgrace*. Her article titled "'What Used to Lie Outside the Frame': Boundaries of Photography, Subjectivity and Fiction in Three Novels by J.M. Coetzee" examines *Dusklands* (1974), *Age of Iron* (1990), and *Slow Man* (2005), by employing the idea of the frame. Unlike my own approach, Amir's analysis uses the idea of the frame in a more limited or focused way, as relating directly to "nested" photographs, but her discussion provides useful pointers for my own analysis. Amir's article focuses on the cinematic and photographic framing as staged by Coetzee throughout the aforementioned novels, and this is a useful lens for the analysis which I wish to pursue.

Amir is specifically interested in Coetzee's literary photographs as these are not just illustrative, but are, as she argues, "arenas for ethical and political concerns that haunt Coetzee throughout his writing" (60). These ideas are foregrounded, Amir suggests, by the "issue of frame or boundaries":

> I would like to suggest that the unique qualities of photography […] make photography a site for the exploration of subjectivity, its boundaries and the possibility of intersubjectivity (Amir 60).

Amir therefore focuses on one particular aspect of the photographs that feature in Coetzee's novels, namely their framed nature, posing questions as to what is included and excluded in their rectangular space. Amir also argues that an attention to photographic framing can reveal intimate truths:

> In my reading of Coetzee, I wish to keep tracing the connection between subjectivity-intersubjectivity and photography through the relationship (both analogical and concrete) between the photograph's unique frame and the boundaries of the self […] expand and contract when confronting the other (Amir 60).

Framing effects are thus not confined to inert photographic objects in the text, but are connected to subjectivity (the self) and encounters with others. Through the problematisation of framing, she argues, Coetzee's fictions show how the outside world merges with the more intimate, inside world, and how such framed moments stage encounters between self and other.

Amir's analysis of *Age of Iron* is particularly useful as *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* both unfold as South African tragedies that centre on two white individuals who appear rather complacent in their lives, living estranged from their immediate relatives as they appear unable to empathize with others, while also living in a turbulent political landscape (the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid era respectively). Amir analyses a particular moment in the novel when Mrs. Curren considers a photograph from her childhood, wondering who was excluded from the family portrait:

> Who clipped the hollyhocks? Who laid the melon seeds in their warm, moist bed? Was it my grandfather who got up at four in the icy morning to open the sluice and lead water into the garden? If not he, then whose was the garden rightfully? Who are the ghosts and who the presences? Who, outside the picture, leaning on their rakes, leaning on their spades, waiting to get back to work, lean also against the edge of the rectangle, bend it, bursting it in?
>
> Dies irae, dies illa when the absent shall be present and the present absent. No longer does the picture show who were in the garden frame that day, but who were not there (Coetzee 110-1).

The photographic moment explicitly problematises framing: the full truth is not captured by what is visible within the pictorial frame, but the photograph nevertheless allows us to "to see what used to lie outside the frame, occulted" (quoted by Amir 65).

The viewer or reader is thus forced to consider the countless, nameless workers and servants in white South African households who are absent yet demand recognition, leaning "against the edge of the rectangle, bending it, bursting it in" (Coetzee 111, quoted by Amir 65). In doing so, a number of ethical issues are raised such as the relationship between the self (the main characters) and others (the nameless workers who are said to be responsible for the upkeep of the garden). This also raises the question of ownership - while *Age of Iron* is set in a particularly turbulent time politically speaking, when class and racial divides were clearly demarcated, the nameless workers contribution to the upkeep of the pictured family's property suggests the property is equally theirs. These questions lead the reader, as well as the main character, to ask why these employees were not placed within the frame, but rather excluded from it. In addition to this, the mention of the photograph reveals the boundlessness of time, which can also be identified in both of my chosen novels, and suggests that there is a delicate tension, or rather a "blurred line", between linguistic and natural signs. Coetzee's use of framing, as an unstable border between the visible and the invisible, is apparent in all his fictions, and will be a focus in my discussion of *Disgrace*.

As Amir puts it, framed moments in the narrative, such as photographs, point to "an unresolved encounter between people, which the photograph does not seal, but rather allows it to be present as an open event that summons others to participate in" (Amir 67). Coetzee's photographs thus, as Amir argues, stage a problematization of the frame which has important ethical consequences. This thesis will draw from Amir's analysis, but will not confine its discussion to literary photographs, but rather look at frames more broadly in narratives. An attentiveness to framing, not just photographs but other enclosed visual scenes, may help us to see the connections between the outside world and the more intimate, inside world.

5. Thesis Overview

This chapter has covered the theoretical ground for my thinking on framing which I will apply in my reading of the two selected novels. With reference to the above-mentioned, the following chapters will examine the concept and effect of framing in selected scenes from *Disgrace* and *Reputations*. The use of the framing in my analysis will explore how frames can limit the characters', as well as the reader's perspective,

but it will also serve as a useful tool in terms of structuring the reader's point of view. By using framing as a narrative device, particularly significant moments in the novels will be foregrounded against the larger narrative and these, furthermore, also illustrate how time becomes static within said frames. In terms of architectural frames, Derrida and Simmel's perspectives will be particularly helpful here, while Lessing's perspective will demonstrate how art and literature intersect around a problematization of time.

As *Disgrace* and *Reputations* are both set in the Global South, there are various commonalities between the two. While both novels contain relatively political themes; *Disgrace* set in post-Apartheid South Africa, and *Reputations* set in a politically turbulent era in terms of far-right politicians and censorship, this study will take more of a gendered approach in terms of its analysis. The gendered approach will tackle how the main characters seem to be imbued with a lack of empathy and insight with regards to issues concerning gender-based violence owing to the manner in which they objectify those around them. In objectifying the characters around them, particularly the female characters, the characters demonstrate how they compartmentalise their personal and public lives. This idea is made literally visible through the architectural and natural frames employed throughout. By compartmentalising their lives, they avoid forming any emotional ties with the women in their lives, and in Mallarino's case, people in general, and are thus able to succesfully conjure up flattened images of those around them, as opposed to seeing them as actual living beings with emotions and subjectivity. Both Lurie's position as a lecturer and white male living in South Africa, and Mallarino's position as a critically acclaimed political cartoonist imbue them with a sense of power and narcissism which fuels their objectification of others and prevents them from seeing things from a different perspective. Therefore, the following chapters will show how using framing as way of seeing can offer some form of insight into the ethical constraints of morally flawed characters who compartmentalise their lives.

Chapter Two

Boundaries: Pictorial Moments and their Ethical Implications in *Disgrace*

1. Chapter Overview

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) is one of the most significant, contentious and most widely commented on novels of South Africa's post-Apartheid transition. The novel is set amid a politically turbulent post-Apartheid landscape and concerns the life of David Lurie; a white, middle-aged lecturer in Cape Town teaching English literature. During his tenure at the university, Lurie engages in sexual affairs; however, his most notable affair is with one of his students, Melanie Isaacs. Once this affair escapes the frame of Lurie's private life and is made public to the university, Lurie is dismissed from the institution and goes to stay with his daughter, Lucy, in the Eastern Cape in a bid to avoid public humiliation. Although Lucy is lesbian, she falls pregnant as a result of a burglary and gang rape which occurs on the farm. This incident has lasting effects on Lurie's relationship with her and Lurie's perception of reality. The idea that Lucy is raped by three black men raises contentious questions about the "black peril narrative" which Lucy Graham explores in her paper entitled "Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*". Lurie's powerlessness in the face of his daughter's trauma; however, needs to be read in relationship to the powerlessness he inflicts upon female characters in the novel. On a personal level, the rape places Lurie in a position where he is forced to confront the political and social changes South Africa undergoes during the post-Apartheid era. In a bid to come to terms with his new reality, Lurie volunteers at a local animal shelter with Lucy's friend, Bev Shaw, where he euthanises dogs who are unable to find homes due to overcrowding in the shelter.

Most critics have focused their reading of the novel on themes of power, race, and gender. The argument I wish to pursue in this chapter is focused on an analysis of the story's main character, David Lurie, and his problematic relationship to others, particularly to women. An attentiveness to framing, visible in scenes in which architectural elements feature strongly (for example, windows, mirrors, or door frames) or where other physical forms of framing are implicit or are registered in the

prose as external and visible (such as the references to paintings or photographs), can also allow us to see the contours of Lurie's inner self. In other words, the chapter seeks to develop an analysis of such framed moments in the narrative as suggesting insights into Lurie's point of view and the way he looks at the world and at others. In looking at the novel through this particular lens, Lurie's re-examination of his own masculinity will be examined, as it relates to the story's female characters, from Soraya to Bev Shaw. It is worth noting at the outset that said female characters are described in two-dimensional form, illustrating Lurie's objectification of women. This two-dimensional perspective is made visible through the limited perspective offered by the frame. This chapter will use the ideas of framing, as discussed in the previous chapter, to cast a fresh light on the novel's key concerns.

2. Literature Review

Disgrace was first published just over two decades ago, and it has attracted a large volume of literary criticism, particularly focusing on its portrayal of race and politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Andrew 1999; Attwell 1993; Barnard 2003; McDonald 2009; and Stratton 2002, among others). *Disgrace* can be considered one of the most commented on South African novels. While this chapter cannot do justice to the volume and range of critical reception, I wish to focus on a few key voices that will intersect with my argument. For the scope of this study I wish to focus on a more gendered approach encapsulated by the notion of architectural framing which will be further entrenched by the work of scholars mentioned in the introductory chapter. In addition to this, I will also be drawing on the insights of scholars such as Attridge (2000), Bailey (1999), Boehmer (2002), Coleman (2009), Graham (2003) and Wright (2006).

In a well-known study called "Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", Lucy Graham examines how the novel can be seen as a subversion of the 'black peril' narrative, and rather a more focused discussion on the topic of gender and gender-based violence in South Africa. With reference to the title, the paper addresses the voicelessness of the female characters subjected to sexual violence in the novel: both Melanie Isaacs by David Lurie, and Lurie's daughter Lucy by the armed robbers at their Eastern Cape residence. It is evident that the victims of

said sexual violence are not given a voice in the novel which is further entrenched by Lurie's metaphor of the blanket:

> 'It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket' (Coetzee 110 quoted in Graham 433).

Graham notes that this quote denotes how "the experience of the violated body is absent, hidden from the reader" (Graham 433). Similarly, she references the scene where Lurie visits Melanie at her flat when her cousin is not home and continues to sexually violate her despite her verbal and non-verbal cues to stop. Lurie defines the moment as: '[n]ot rape, not quite that' (Coetzee 25 quoted in Graham 433). While it is evident that the victims of sexual violence are not given a voice in the novel, Graham also evidentiate that Lurie is the one who infers the idea of rape, which may also indicate that events which occurred in the novel may have been fictions which he conjured up to suit his desired reality. She entrenches this idea by quoting Lucy's words when pressured by her father, Lurie - "'You don't know what happened'" (Coetzee 134, cited in Graham 433). While the manner in which Lucy averts the subject and makes this statement could imply that the event never occurred, it could also suggest Lucy's awareness of her father's myopic viewpoint and sense of entitlement. With reference to the latter, it may imply that Lucy is attempting to claim back her bodily autonomy and speak "the unspeakable", something which Lurie is not particularly familiar with.

Graham argues that the reader is tasked with "'listening not only to who speaks and in what circumstances, but who does not speak and why'" (Higgins & Silver cited in Graham 434). In addition to this, it is also worth considering that Lucy is given much more dialogue in the novel than Melanie, which may also imply that Lurie not only discriminates against women, but also people of colour. He is aware that the trauma Lucy faced was horrific and it makes him feel somewhat powerless as he is trapped in the bathroom as the event unfolds, yet he does not view Melanie by the same token, even after having met her father. The

> elision of the scene of violence in texts about rape both emphasises the violence and suggests the possibility of making it visible (Graham 434).

Graham indicates that the "elision" of sexual violence within the novel may further add to the extremity of these events and subconsciously makes the events "visible" for the reader (Graham 434).

Furthermore, Graham suggests that while Lurie is capable of developing a sense of self-awareness and empathy to an extent, he lacks reciprocity for women's feelings. It is this feeling of vulnerability and female sensibility that he cannot fully contain or inhabit. This is made apparent by the manner in which he attempts to compartmentalise his life and contain female characters through framed perspectives. Further, Graham adds:

> In this imaginary 'reading', the elided scene of violence is represented, but Lurie's question suggests that ethical responsiveness depends on experiencing the narrative differently - not from the viewpoint of perpetrator or voyeur, but from the position of weakness and suffering. Since the stories of Melanie and Lucy are elided in *Disgrace*, the responsibility for such an imagining is left with the reader (Graham 444).

This highlights that such an understanding can only come from a "position of weakness and suffering" as opposed to being the perpetrator or a bystander. As Melanie and Lucy's accounts of their respective traumas are not in the novel, Graham suggests that only the reader can attempt to empathise with the victims and assume responsibility in the ways Lurie cannot. This reading is useful for the scope of my thesis as it demonstrates how ethical boundaries can easily be dissolved in societies where power imbalances are prevalent, particularly between men and women. I will apply this notion in my analysis through the use of architectural frames and painterly moments.

Similarly, Boehmer examines the idea of accountability and forgiveness in her article entitled "Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender Implications in *Disgrace*". This reading is particularly useful in shaping not only my gendered approach to framing and close analysis of *Disgrace*, but also in regard to fleshing out Lurie's character and considering whether or not he is capable of redemption.

Boehmer attributes Lurie's lack of empathy to his privileged position as a white male professor in a country notorious for racial oppression. She argues that Lurie's objectification of women of colour is evident in the indirect comparisons between Melanie and his daughter, in which Melanie is referred to as "the dark one" and his daughter is often associated with light:

> These silent parallels align Lurie's self-styled seduction of the student Melanie Isaacs in the first half of the novel with the gang rape of his daughter by three black men in the second. In both halves of the narrative, therefore, a highly conventional patriarchal and colonial prerogative of possession over the silent 'body of the woman' is exercised (Boehmer 344).

However, Lurie draws a connection between the two women by associating them with death after they have both been sexually victimised:

> Melanie, 'the dark one' (p. 18), becomes passive as a dead person as he, the intruder, thrusts himself upon her (pp. 24–5); Lucy, the figure of light, calls herself a dead person after the rape (Boehmer 344).

Boehmer suggests that the patriarchal society which is omnipresent on a global level leads Lurie to objectify women, particularly those who he pursues sexual relationships with or views through a sexualised lens.

In a bid to atone for his wrongdoings, Lurie becomes the "dog-man", euthanising the dogs who are ill, old or undesired at Bev Shaw's animal shelter. While Boehmer questions whether this is form of atonement is adequate in the greater scheme of things, she also suggests that Lurie himself compares himself to a dog. This is not only evident in the bond he shares with Drie-Poot towards the end of the novel, but in his understanding of Lucy's childhood dog, too:

> The closer animal analogy therefore is with the retriever dog that Lurie remembers from Lucy's childhood, a dog which, plagued with desire, '[began] to hate its own nature' (Boehmer 347).

In this sense, Lurie indirectly compares his desire for women with the primal urges of a presumably unneutered animal, which suggests he may be vindicating himself of his wrongdoings. Lurie's limited point of view of women, sex and people of colour in a newly transitioned political system presents itself as a moral dilemma in which Lucy becomes collateral:

> She physically, if not verbally, accepts a burden of accountability for the wrongs of the past. While rejecting the abstraction of words like atonement, she lives with what has happened to her by doggedly carrying on (Boehmer 349).

Lucy's silence raises questions for the reader concerning whether her voice was not only stifled by her attackers, but her father as well, and if her suffering and silence serves as a "ground on which a new society is brought into being" (Boehmer 349). Boehmer concludes that Lucy becomes an unwilling participant in Lurie's ethical dilemmas. She also clarifies that although Lurie is not able to empathise with others; he is capable of sympathising with others on his own terms:

> For Lurie […] sympathy involves a limited yet still willing identification with another's suffering. Lurie, in this sense, remains a subject, even if a self-substituting one; Lucy's self-substitution involves becoming reconciled to the position of conventional object (Boehmer 349).

This level of objectification is what I aim to evidentiate in my analysis of architectural and natural frames in the novel and how such frames flatten the women in Lurie's life owing to his compartmentalised perspective.

What seems to be at the crux of Coetzee's novels is the quest for a empathy; however, it is unclear whether Lurie is able to develop a sense of empathy in *Disgrace*, despite the glimmers of an ethical stance that are made present in particular instances (such as when he seeks forgiveness from Mr. Isaacs and his family, when he considers the impact of the rape on his daughter Lucy, and when he tends to the dogs at Bev Shaw's animal shelter). While it is also not clear whether he is genuine in his quest

for atonement, he seems to reach a state of grace towards the end of the novel, thus ameliorating his overall sense of "disgrace", as signaled by the novel's title.

Lurie's quest for empathy, in terms of his attempts to be more empathetic to others, is meticulously examined by Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn in "Reading Coetzee Expectantly: From Magda to Lucy" (2019). With regards to "The Founding Myths of South Africa", Ghosh-Schellhorn states that "it is entirely [Lucy's] own decision to continue to live on a farm she had first known as a communard before buying it with some help from her father" (208). However, she does allude to the idea that the narrator portraying Lurie's character is not entirely reliable and that Lucy is filtered through Lurie's lens (Ghosh-Schellhorn 207). In the sub-section "Approaching Lucy Through Words", Ghosh-Schellhorn suggests that "she, who has been treated 'like a dog' by Petrus's familiars, now needs to seek Petrus's protection […] since she has meanwhile been turned into his 'dog'-woman" (Ghosh-Schellhorn 211). While this situation generates a myriad of emotions within Lurie and the reader, particularly a sense of internal conflict, it is worth noting that Lucy is depicted through her father's gaze and serves as a metaphor for white people, particularly the younger generation needing to come to terms with a powerlessness and marginalization in the new South Africa. This idea is further extended by the manner in which Lucy intends to start "[w]ith nothing" (Coetzee 205 quoted in Ghosh-Schellhorn 211) when questioned by her father, much like, to Lurie's mind, a dog.

Lucy's defiance towards her father's will is identified as "doggedness", a play on the use of the word "dog", which is somehow echoed in Petrus's character, who also refers to himself as "The Dog-Man". Ghosh-Schellhorn underpins this idea by saying "Lucy's 'doggedness' is directed at keeping herself 'eingewurzelt' in her piece of Eastern Cape 'earth', while Petrus closely resembles her in his pursuit of this very goal" (Ghosh-Schellhorn 211). While Lucy may be seen as losing her rights to bodily autonomy and her property in a rather degrading way when she accepts Petrus's marriage proposal, the portrayal of her character, which is brought forward by Lurie, is set in a positive light. Even though the female characters in the novel are often passive and flattened into two-dimensional surfaces (owing to Lurie's ostensibly two-dimensional view of women), and generally with regards to their sexualized appearance, Lucy is identified as having a sense of ownership over the earth she

walks on. In “Petrus, The Dog Man”, Ghosh-Schellhorn argues that “prior to her ordeal, we’re told in no uncertain terms that [Lucy’s] ‘bare toes’ firmly ‘grip the red earth’” (Coetzee 62 quoted in Ghosh-Schellhorn 212). This idea of ownership and feminine strength is further brought forward when Ghosh-Schellhorn reiterates that Lurie’s perspective of the female characters in the novel, particularly victims of sexual violence, is not necessarily dependable: “Bev, too, nudges us to mistrust Lurie’s perspective when she tells him that she does not fear for Lucy; she is ‘is adaptable’ because she ‘lives closer to the ground’” (Coetzee 210 quoted in Ghosh-Schellhorn 213). Lucy’s strength, or rather her ‘doggedness’, is clinched by her connection to the earth. Even though Bev is also portrayed as a rather passive character who Lurie makes use of to fulfill his sexual urges, she is able to identify that Lurie is incapable of empathizing with others. This reading is particularly useful as in my thesis I wish to argue how the use of framing brings a sense of foreclosure to the question of empathy concerning Lurie in *Disgrace*.

Similarly, Jana Giles ponders Lurie’s tendency to objectify women and whether he is able to develop some sense of empathy in his liaisons with Bev Shaw. In her chapter entitled “‘Beauty Does Not Own Itself’: Coetzee’s Feminist Critique of Platonic and Kantian Aesthetics” (also found in *Reading Coetzee’s Women*), Giles initially reflects on one of Lurie’s first encounters with Melanie, his student, when he states ‘a woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the beauty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it’(Coetzee 116 quoted Giles 87). Lurie makes use of this statement in an attempt to seduce Melanie. This statement also foreshadows the nature of their unequal relationship. Thus, Giles begs the question of what it means to own beauty, and in turn, what then makes a man the rightful owner? The following chapter thus attempts to remedy this question of what beauty essentially means to men like Lurie.

One particular avenue of thought which could be used to resolve this question is the portrayal of women in Western art which may influence Lurie’s perspective as a professor who lectures on Romanticism. Giles states: “His answer to the question - why does the male lover think female beauty does not own itself? - considers the European tradition of art which legitimises rape by aestheticising it” (Wolfthal 1 referenced in Giles 88). This statement may bear reference to the painting entitled

"The Rape of the Sabine Women" which Lurie comes into contact with at the Grahamstown Library, or the manner in which he pondered the word "rape" at a young age (Coetzee 159-160), and this may have warped his perspective on women and initiated "the problem of sex". However, Giles highlights that this is not a reliable framework in terms of understanding Lurie's mindset or a means to excuse him for his objectification of women. Giles claims that these "men in middle age remain bound by biological and ideological forces, yet if they offer little hope it is the younger generation that may bring new possibilities" (Giles 89). Once again, the onus is on Lucy ("the younger generation"), and perhaps her unborn child as well, to come to terms with and adapt to the circumstances of living in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Giles also argues here that the brief instances in which Lurie shows signs of possible redemption are not sustainable in terms of his quest to become a more empathetic person. While Coetzee has garnered criticism for the way in which he addresses controversial themes in his texts, like racism and sexual violence, such as in his interpretation of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, Giles argues that Coetzee does not wish to focus on who is the most appropriate narrator of a woman's sexual trauma, but rather what such a retelling can do to stimulate the reader's mind. Put differently, Giles argues that by "repeatedly drawing the reader's attention to male sexual violence […] Coetzee demands that his readers develop their own ethical self-awareness" (Giles 91). There is an allusion to the idea that the quest for empathy may not necessarily be for the protagonist to explore alone, but for the reader as well.

Like Graham and Boehmer, Giles also draws on the fact that the reader is not made aware of how Melanie feels and her passivity throughout the novel:

> What we never learn in *Disgrace* is how Melanie feels about their encounters, which, based on the evidence provided through David's focalisation, is ambivalent, at least. As is often the case in Coetzee's work, David performs a misreading of women by refusing to invite them to speak, refusing their account (or Lucy's refusal to provide an account), or refusing to interpret their non-verbal expressions as speech acts (92).

While this idea is extended to female characters in the novel in general, such speech acts can be identified in the case of Melanie as the "slight frown on her face" (Coetzee 19 quoted in Giles 92) and her "limbs [crumpling] like a marionette's" (Coetzee 24-25 quoted in Giles 92). While these actions suggest a sense of frustration and non-compliance, Lurie does not question whether this may be Melanie's attempt to say no to his advances and continues to inflict his sexual desires on to her. Even though he does not refrain from doing so, he is somewhat aware of the sexual violation as he refers to it as "not rape, not quite that" (Coetzee 25 quoted in Giles 92). Giles argues that in objectifying Melanie, Lurie objectifies himself as they are both "reduced to things" (Giles 92) in the process. Giles also demonstrates here that the brief instances in which Lurie shows signs of possible redemption are not sustainable in terms of Lurie's quest to gain a greater awareness of the feelings of others

Furthering this exploration of the idea of empathy, Laura Wright ponders the idea of whether Lurie actually has "it in him to be the woman", or more generally, "the other" (Coetzee 160 referenced in Wright 27). In an interesting twist, Wright also categorises Coetzee's portrayal of women in his novels as a form of literary drag, or rather (as coined by Wright) "dialogic drag" (Wright 19). While the protagonist in *Disgrace* is male in this instance, the manner in which Lurie and Coetzee portray women in the novel is questioned. Wright highlights particular moments in *Disgrace* to solidify this, such as the instance in which Lucy confronts her father for making her feel as though she were a minor character in her rape and in her father's life. Both the robbery at their Eastern Cape residence, and Lurie's dismissal from the university portray a time in which Lurie is "forced to consider the limitations of his imagination with regard to women's experiences" (Wright 27). However, the most poignant scene in this case, according to Wright, is "when three assailants set him on fire and lock him in the bathroom while they gang rape his daughter" (Wright 27). Despite Lurie's visible anguish and helplessness during the incident, which is conveniently framed by the bathroom mirror and window, the text still suggests that he is able to relate more to the men who are inflicting the sexual violence upon his daughter, than his daughter as a victim of said violence (Coetzee 160 referenced in Wright 27). Wright argues that "both author and characters continually explore the limitations of imagination, of articulation, and of ethical engagement with the 'other'" which subsequently begs the question of "who is writing who?", as well as the question of whether Lurie can

effectively embody the character of Teresa Guiccioli in his opera (Wright 27-28). Better phrased, do male authors (such as Coetzee, and within the context of the novel, Lurie) have the ability to "become sexed at a specific level in the creative process" (Wright 28). This question is answered in Wright's reading of *Elizabeth Costello* where she states (briefly referencing Coetzee) that

> Elizabeth 'remains a woman …. Whatever she does, she does as a woman. She inhabits her characters as a woman does, not a man' (23). This assertion offers that the converse is true as well, that whatever he does, Coetzee does as a man (Kossew & Harvey 34).

This asserts that although Coetzee makes use of "dialogic drag" in his literary texts, there may be limits to his ability to fully embody the female characters he presents, certainly in *Disgrace*. Thus, the female characters he creates are all made visible to the reader via the male gaze. As Wright puts it, "He inhabits his characters as a man does, not a woman" (Wright 34).

Drawing on Lurie's limited empathetic engagement with others in the novel, Deirdre Coleman discusses the anthropological way in which Lurie deems the "other" in "'The Dog-Man': Race, Sex, Species, and Lineage in Coetzee's *Disgrace*". While the idea of the "other", people who occupy more subordinate positions to Lurie, in the context of the novel refers to women, people of colour, and the animals which he comes into contact with in the Eastern Cape, there is a significant emphasis placed on the character of Petrus, Lucy's black neighbour and a fellow farmer, who he considers as a hybrid. While Petrus is considered Lucy's protector to some degree, Lurie's dislike for him is made apparent and particularly more so after the gruesome incident on the farm. Coleman suggests that Lurie's dislike for Petrus, as well as the manner in which he compartmentalises people, can be likened to the failure of the westernised model in South Africa and the manner in which people who benefited from this model struggle to grapple with their new reality in post-Apartheid South Africa. Thus, Coleman highlights that Lurie is a eurocentric character as he is known for his multilingual repertoire consisting of Italian and French, which only vaguely encompasses South African languages.

With regards to the role of animals in the novel, Derek Attridge discusses the motifs of dogs and music in his essay of a similar name entitled "Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's *Disgrace*". In a thoughtful play of words, Attridge suggests that his essay could be the prelude to Coetzee's novel *Age of Iron*. In this article, he discusses Lurie's fascination with music, which can be seen in the media he shows to Melanie when she visits his home (e.g "the Mozart clarinet quintet" (Coetzee 12) and the film of dance by Norman McLaren (Coetzee 14)), as well as in the musical piece he is working on which focuses on Teresa Guiccioli, a countess who Byron had pursued a romantic affair with. Lurie's love for music bleeds over into his sexual affair with Melanie Isaacs which he describes as "lyrical" (Coetzee 171) to her father, Mr. Isaacs. The motif of dogs however is brought forward in more of a tolerable than loving way. In the novel, dogs are most commonly found on Lucy's farm in the Eastern Cape and in the animal welfare where Lurie volunteers alongside his daughter's friend, Bev Shaw. In tending to the dogs at the shelter, an idea of atonement is brought forward in the sense that Lurie is able to heal or bring peace to living beings who are suffering, something which he is unable to do for the Lucy during and after her sexual assault, and for Melanie after sexually exploiting her. The motif of animals is also brought forward in the sense that Lurie is unable to make sense of change of political scenery in post-Apartheid South Africa, as well as the times. Further, Attridge states:

> The arrangement with Soraya breaks down because Lurie can't sustain his attempt - perfectly in keeping with the times - at a rational solution to what the novel's first sentence calls "the problem of sex" (1). Her disappearance also helps to precipitate the event that sets in motion the unfolding of the central plot: Lurie's seduction of Melanie Isaacs, a twenty-year old student in one of his classes. A different vision of "the times" is presented by the play in which Melanie is acting, and which Lurie surreptitiously watches in rehearsal (Attridge 101).

Attridge thus suggests that despite Lurie's initial claim of having solved "the problem of sex", his relationship with Soraya disintegrates owing to his problematic view of sex and his inability to build meaningful relationships with women. The disintegration of their relationships sets the tone for Lurie's affair with Melanie which follows

shortly after. By overstepping the ethical boundaries posed in these relationships (i.e. between escort and client, and lecturer and student), the reader is made aware of Lurie's limitations with regards to empathetic engagement with others.

3. A Framing Approach to the Novel

In order to exemplify framing devices in the novel, we could look at a number of key scenes: when Lurie sees Soraya and her two sons through the restaurant window at Captain Dorego's and composes the scene as a family portrait; Melanie and her boyfriend zooming past on the Ducati motorbike, as viewed through Lurie's rear-view mirrors and car window; Teresa's repeated yearnings to see her lover in the dark night beyond her window; Lurie's view of the executed dogs during the farm attack, from the point-of-view of the lavatory window; Melanie's theatrical performance, framed by the proscenium arches of the theatre - and so on. In contrast then to Simmel's conception of the frame as hermetically sealing off its content from seeping out into the outside world, in each such narratively constructed instance of framing in Coetzee's novel, the content of the scene cannot be contained, and subsequently spills out, thereby disrupting the desired stability of the story.

3.1. Lurie and Soraya

Soraya plays a significant role in the novel, although we also need to note that she is only featuring in one scene of the film version of the novel. Her character is important as the problems concerning ethical boundaries which are highlighted in her relationship with Lurie - and their ensuing collapse - set the main narrative in motion. Lurie's initial introduction to Soraya, an escort with "exotic" features, occurs in the context of a photograph in a catalogue which he views in the dimly-lit front office of Discreet Escorts. This scene makes use of the first photograph mentioned in the novel, but also features numerous architectural frames:

> His introduction to Soraya took place in a dim little sitting-room off the front office of Discreet Escorts, with Venetian blinds over the windows, pot plants in the corners, stale smoke hanging in the air. She was on their books under 'Exotic'. The photograph showed her with a red passion-flower in her hair and the faintest of lines at the corners of her eyes. The entry said 'Afternoons only'.

> That was what decided him: the promise of shuttered rooms, cool sheets, stolen hours (Coetzee 7).

The architectural frames employed in this scene include the confined space of the sitting-room with its corners marked by pot plants, the windows with Venetian blinds, and Lurie's fantasy of shuttered rooms. The mention of Venetian blinds and shuttered rooms is particularly significant as it shows the secretive nature of this liaison. It is also worth noting how Lurie selects an escort based on two factors: her being type-cast or compartmentalised as "exotic" and a vague, two-word description: "Afternoons only". The use of the "red passion-flower" can be construed as a form of parerga which becomes intrinsic in viewing Soraya as "exotic" as this is a species of flower that is not native to South Africa, but rather Brazil. From that moment on, Lurie becomes a client of hers and pays for her services once a week.

However, the subsequent encounter between Soraya and Lurie in the streets of Cape Town adds a precarious element to these framed, contained structures and their "promise" of staying "shuttered". While Lurie originally admits that he feels great affection for Soraya, in the opening pages of the novel, saying that it is not quite the same as love "but it is at least its cousin" (Coetzee 2), he seems to develop an obsession with her when he learns about her private life. The moment in which he learns about her private life is when he sees her in Cape Town, walking alongside her two sons. They enter a restaurant, and Lurie returns to the scene, observing them framed by the window of Captain Dorego's Fish Inn. The moment is worth quoting in full:

> Then one Saturday morning everything changes. He is in the city on business; he is walking down St George's Street when his eyes fall on a slim figure ahead of him in the crowd. It is Soraya, unmistakably, flanked by two children, two boys. They are carrying parcels; they have been shopping.
>
> He hesitates, the follows at a distance. They disappear into Captain Dorego's Fish Inn. The boys have Soraya's lustrous hair and dark eyes. They can only be her sons (Coetzee 6).

This moment in time, which can be seen through the transparent glass of the restaurant window, creates a distance and division of roles between Soraya and Lurie: observed and observer. While Lurie initially "hesitates", he then follows Soraya and her sons, overstepping an ethical boundary: the escort's right to privacy outside of her work. This is a moment akin to Lessing's Laöcoon as this pictorial moment becomes lifelike when Soraya meets Lurie's gaze, and inevitably has lasting consequences:

> He walks on, turns back, passes Captain Dorego's a second time. The three are seated at a table in the window. For an instant, through the glass, Soraya's eyes meet his.
>
> He has always been a man of the city, at home amid a flux of bodies where eros stalks and glances flash like arrows. But this glance between himself and Soraya he regrets at once (Coetzee 6).

While it can be argued that this scene creates some form of intimacy, albeit uncomfortable, it sets the downfall of their relationship in motion as a boundary has been crossed. Much like in the case of the *Laocoön*, the pictorial moment of Soraya with her children in the window depicts the relationship between art (which is static and occupies space) and literature (which is fluid and occupies a narrative progression of time). This moment of observing her in the window freezes Lurie's fluid movement of walking through the city streets as a flaneur. Through his gaze, he composes her and her sons as a static family picture; an idealized, pictorial scene that cannot be sustained. The moment in which the frame is broken occurs when Soraya stares back at Lurie, illustrating her awareness of being an object in Lurie's gaze. Lurie, in turn, becomes the object of her gaze, hence his regret. The concept of the gaze was originally examined by the French philosopher and playwright, Jean-Paul Sartre, in a famous essay entitled "The Look" in his book *Being and Nothingness* (1943). In this essay, Sartre considers the impact of being looked at and argues that once one is aware that they have become the object of someone's gaze, they begin to behave differently knowing that they are subject to the voyeur's judgment. In this sense, Soraya becomes what Sartre describes as belonging to a "group of temporal-spatial 'things'" (Sartre 254). While her initial position in this framed moment is that of a "privileged object", she remains an "additive" thing without "distance of the [surrounding] things" in the voyeur's perspective (Sartre 254).

Although Lurie constructs frames around female characters and various aspects of his life, such framed, pictorial scenes do not remain static, but seep out and contaminate the story. The lasting consequences of their encounter are made visible at their next encounter when the "memory hangs uneasily over them":

> At their rendezvous the next Thursday neither mentions the incident. Nonetheless, the memory hangs uneasily over them. He has no wish to upset what must be, for Soraya, a precarious double life. He is all for double lives, triple lives, lives lived in compartments. Indeed, he feels, if anything, greater tenderness for her. *Your secret is safe with me*, he would like to say (Coetzee 6).

While there are a number of architectural boundaries mentioned in the extract, namely: the table; window; glass; corner of the room; and her bed, there is also a form of bodily architecture. From Lurie's perspective, Soraya initially appears as a "slim figure" with her two children, who are described as "flank[ing]" her: now they can be seen as a burden for Lurie as they seep out of the frame of their relationship up until this point. Evidence of this can be seen in the use of the phrase "the memory hangs uneasily over them". However, despite this "secret" which weighs heavily on the frame, arguably breaking it, Lurie conjures up an unconventional and disturbing family portrait in his head where he begins to play the role of their "foster-father, step-father, [or] shadow-father":

> The two little boys become presences between them, playing quiet as shadows in a corner of the room where their mother and the strange man couple. In Soraya's arms he becomes, fleetingly, their father: foster-father, step-father, shadow-father. Leaving her bed afterwards, he feels their eyes flicker over him covertly, curiously (Coetzee 6).

This family portrait is conveniently framed by Soraya's arms and her bed. Their "presences between them" and "their eyes flicker[ing] over him" show Lurie's deluded but also narcissistic state of mind. The idea that he should imagine himself as the children's father is bizarre, given the fact that the relationship between Lurie and Soraya is on a contractual basis via Discreet Escorts where she as a sex worker would

then serve as an employee to him, as opposed to a romantic partner. As a character, Soraya is also initially described as being "quiet and docile" (Coetzee 1) and as property of Discreet Escorts (Coetzee 2). This further adds to Soraya's passive role in the novel and suggests the lack of agency she has in her own life. With this in mind, this conception of the frame thus challenges the idea of the parergon which Derrida denotes has "neither simply interior not simply exterior; not falling to one side of the work" (Derrida 33). As Lurie's relationship with Soraya has escaped the enclosure of the apartment at Windsor Mansions, and her private life has escaped through the window of Captain Dorego's, it can thus be said that the elements adorning this scene "[fall] to one side of the work" and affects the future of their relationship. While Immanuel Kant views drapery, framing, and ornamentation (in general terms) as secondary to the artwork itself, Jacques Derrida examines this very boundary between the ergon and the parergon. In doing so, he questions the limit that is posed by the frame. He suggests that the use of the frame excludes all that surrounds the ergon and this ambiguity is also visible in Lurie's crossing of boundaries in relation to Soraya. Lurie's inability to contain Soraya in this moment, or to take possession of her in the form of a companion, further entrenches his desire for her. This very "lack" is what I aim to make visible through my analysis of the text as the frame transitions from being fixed to malleable through the use of narrative progression. In such, the frame transforms from being an adjunct to an intrinsic part of the work.

Lurie's growing obsession with Soraya upon discovering intimate details of her private life is brought to a halt when he makes use of a private detective's services in order to regain contact with her. It is important to note that in the following scene, Lurie has a brief moment of self-awareness where he considers that this is an avenue that is not worth pursuing, yet proceeds nonetheless:

> There is still Soraya. He ought to close that chapter. Instead, he pays a detective agency to track her down. Within days he has her real name, her address, her telephone number. He telephones at nine in the morning, when the husband and children will be out. 'Soraya?' he says. 'This is David. How are you? When can I see you again?' (Coetzee 9).

While Lurie is aware that Soraya does not wish to have him as a client anymore, he calls her on her home phone and talks to her as one speaks to a friend. His greeting; however, is met with a "long silence":

> 'I don't know who you are,' she says. 'You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me here again, never.'
>
> *Demand*. She means *command*. Her shrillness surprises him: there has been no intimation of it before. But then, what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs? (Coetzee 9-10).

The word "vixen" has various meanings. In the more literal sense, it refers to the female fox (*Cambridge Dictionary*). However, in a more implicit sense, it refers to a woman who is sensual and flirtatious. The term carries negative connotations in the sense that a fox is a predatory animal which may also suggest that a subject who is described as having "vixen" qualities may be volatile and ill-intentioned. In general, the term vixen imbues a sense of femininity, autonomy, and sensuality. While Soraya would naturally be considered feminine and sensual owing to the nature of her job, she is quite a passive character who is denied agency in the novel, thus it is particularly disturbing that Lurie assigns her these zoomorphic qualities when recounting the details of their telephonic liaison as it highlights how protective she is over her family and private life. However, it would appear that Soraya resists Lurie's compartmentalised view of her, and in turn, regains agency by the manner in which she iterates: 'You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me here again, never' (Coetzee 10), with emphasis on the words "me" and "my own".

Despite the primal qualities assigned to Soraya, it is worth considering that Lurie considers himself a more menacing and powerful "predator". While Lurie is surprised by her "shrillness", he is aware that he has intruded on her private space, referring to it as the "vixen's nest" and the "home of her cubs" which indicates a sense of vulnerability. Lurie initially had shown possible signs of redemption in this extract, stating that he should "close that chapter"; however, he soon returns to his salacious tendencies as he envies the "husband he has never seen". The idea bears likeness with the manner in which Lurie previously constructed a family portrait of

himself, Soraya, and her two sons in his head during one of his encounters with her as it suggests that he is unable to identify ethical boundaries.

Towards the end of their relationship, Soraya develops a sense of self-awareness as she is made privy to the idea that Lurie objectifies her and eventually parts ways with him. The dissolution of boundaries between them also demonstrates that the relationship is no longer transactional. This further adds to Simmel's rigid conception of the frame which argues that once the frame (an absolute, clear, defined boundary between the work and the outside of the work) leaks or breaks open, it destroys the world which it originally encapsulated. A different story erupts through the moment of pictorial freezing at Captain Dorego's. In the eye contact and her return of the gaze, Soraya attempts to assert her own agency (which is further entrenched by how she breaks up with her own client) and thus shapes the relationship. Furthermore, she is no longer passive, despite previously being an empty frame which Lurie utilised to make sense of, or rather project, his compartmentalised, double life.

3.2. Lurie and Melanie

The disastrous rupture of the framing that had previously contained Soraya soon gives rise to a shift in the story. Lurie, now alone and without female company, is drawn to a catastrophic relationship with one of his young, female students. The reader is first introduced to Melanie on a Friday evening following the collapse of his relationship with Soraya, as well as with the women he uses to replace her. In this encounter she is described as having "close-cropped black hair", "Chinese cheekbones" and "large, dark eyes" (Coetzee 11). While her sense of dress is considered "striking", Lurie admits to being only "mildly smitten" with her (Coetzee 11). It is during this encounter where he finds her walking alone when he decides to converse with her and subsequently invite her to his home. An idea of vulnerability is made apparent in the sense that she is walking alone, and her hesitance is also noticeable in the manner in which she conjures up an excuse not to stay too long at his house - "A pause, cautious. 'OK. But I have to be back by seven-thirty'" (Coetzee 12). This scene sets the core theme of the novel – namely Lurie's disgrace - in motion.

The following scene is framed by the living room of Lurie's home which Melanie circuits during her first visit. This scene is particularly significant as it shows Lurie's attempts to seduce her as well as her attempt to ascertain his intentions:

> She makes another circuit of the room. 'Is this your wife?' she asks, stopping before the framed photograph on the coffee-table.
>
> 'My mother. Taken when she was young.'
>
> 'Are you married?' 'I was. Twice. But now I'm not.' He does not say: Now I make do with what comes my way. He does not say: Now I make do with whores. 'Can I offer you a liqueur?' (Coetzee 15-16).

Lurie's attempts to seduce Melanie are made apparent through his thoughts of sex in her presence, as well as by use of the phrase "But now I'm not". Melanie's need to establish boundaries is made visible by her circuiting the living room and the framed photograph on the coffee table which she fixates on. The use of the questions "Is this your wife?" and "Are you married" further entrenches this idea. The "problem of sex" is highlighted in this scene, not only by the manner in which Lurie pursues his student, but by the manner in which he ascertains that he is twice divorced.

Their following encounter is arguably one of the most controversial and most commented on moments in the novel, and can be viewed as a scene which shows Lurie overstepping an ethical boundary by beginning a sexual affair with one of his students. This ultimately becomes the crux of the narrative. It takes place on a Sunday afternoon after Lurie has taken Melanie to lunch upon extracting her contact details from the cabinet in the department office:

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

While this interaction seems to be, in some sense, consensual, it is visibly uncomfortable. The use of the word "passive" entrenches this idea. The sexual encounter is framed by the window, creating an outside perspective through which we

as readers are invited to look in. The manner in which this moment is framed through the window could also allude to Melanie's current state of mind; she is having sexual intercourse with Lurie in his living room, but mentally she is not present, and far removed from the situation. Lurie's lack of empathy and his sense of narcissism are quite apparent here as he is aware that Melanie is passive, yet he "finds the act pleasurable" and "tumbles into blank oblivion" nonetheless. This act of "tumbling" thus demonstrates that narrative progression comes to a halt in this scene. The liaison with Melanie can, however, not be contained in the living room, and its openness to the world outside (i.e. the transparent glass of the window) is perhaps a figure for the way the relationship eventually seeps out, leading to his dismissal from the university. The window frames Lurie's satisfaction with the act but it offers little insight into how Melanie feels, other than her silence. When the frame is broken, Lurie is no longer in control as his life disintegrates through a new story.

The moment is further framed, and more problematically so, when its likeness to a George Grosz painting is invoked:

> When he comes back the rain has stopped. The girl is lying beneath him, her eyes closed, her hands slack above her head, a slight frown on her face. His own hands are under her coarse-knit sweater, on her breasts. Her tights and panties lie in a tangle on the floor, his trousers are around his ankles. *After the storm*, he thinks: straight out of George Grosz (Coetzee 19).

It is important to note here that Lurie makes a direct intermedial reference to the German modernist painter, George Grosz, who often portrayed women on his canvases in nude and vulnerable positions. Lauren Murtagh refers to this aesthetic as follows:

> The grotesque corporeality of Grosz's female nudes elicits repulsion rather than erotic interest, thus annihilating desire along with the works' feminine subjects (Murtagh).

There is no record of a Grosz painting called "After the Storm", but we might speculate that Coetzee may have flipped the title, and had in mind the actual painting *Approaching Storm* (1940).

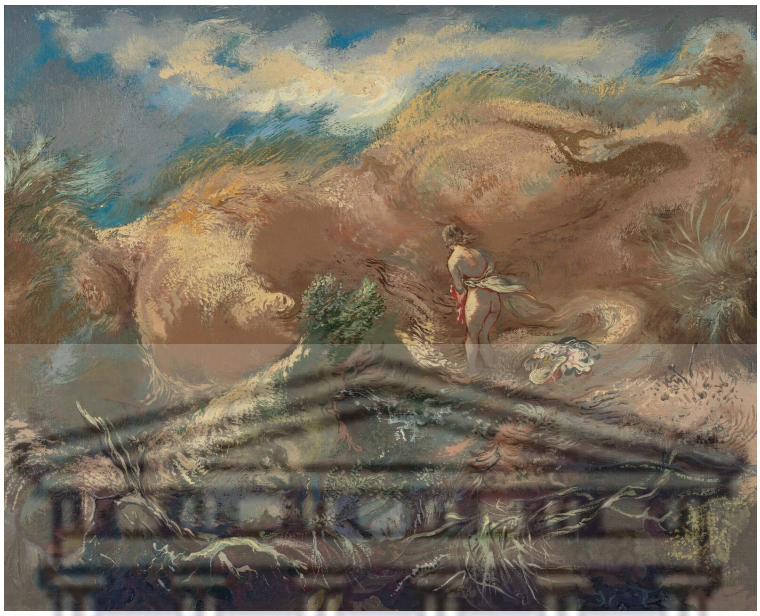


Image 2: *Approaching Storm* (1940)

By invoking an actual Expressionist painting, Lurie "reframes" them in a manner which allows these works to adjust with his current state of mind. The fact that Lurie likens their encounter with a painting could also illustrate that he views Melanie as a blank canvas which he can project his narrative on.

By referencing the Grosz work as an intermedial moment in the text, new interpretive perspectives may become visible. In the original painting, a scantily clad feminine figure can be seen fighting against a violent storm on what appears to be a hill with little vegetation. Her back is turned, illustrating a sense of vulnerability, and the dull colour palette (composed of khaki green, shades of brown, grey, and blue) further entrench this idea. In referencing George Grosz, Lurie appears to imply that what he has experienced with Melanie is the sequel to this painting - evidence of this can be seen in the word "after". In the scene, Melanie can be likened to the feminine figure as she is lying on Lurie's living room floor, scantily clad, both during and after a storm, and her eyes are closed (similar to the manner in which the feminine figure's face is turned, distorting her identity); however, Melanie's appearance appears corpse-like. Evidence of this can be seen in her body language: she is lying on the floor; face

up, her hands are slack and above her head, and her eyes are closed. The only indication that she is actually alive is the "slight frown" on her face. The storm, in his case, could refer most immediately to the sexual passion, a desire so strong that he appears to momentarily lose his sense of consciousness. But Lurie's renaming of the painting to "After the Storm" also serves to obscure the implications of the "Approaching Storm", namely the repercussions to come from the choices he has made.

We also need to consider that the use of natural imagery in this scene, such as the raindrops on the window pane, offer an optical distortion of the moment in question as there is a lack of transparency and a blurring of boundaries. In the metaphorical sense, his job and life as he knows it are swept away before this storm about to break loose in his life.

The relation between Lurie and Melanie takes a fateful turn when Lurie visits Melanie at her apartment unannounced after viewing her on stage during her play rehearsal. Even though Melanie's violation is visibly foregrounded for the reader, it is still critical to note that Lurie's perspective of their encounters bears much likeness with the manner in which rape is attitudinised in Western art. To Lurie's mind, the liaison between the two of them is romantic which can be seen in the way he thinks about the encounter

> Nothing will stop him. He carries her to the bedroom, brushes off the absurd slippers, kisses her feet, astonished by the feeling she evokes. Something to do with the apparition on the stage: the wig, the wiggling bottom, the crude talk. Strange love! Yet from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves, no doubt about that (Coetzee 25).

This moment is framed by the bedroom in Melanie's apartment which she shares with her cousin, Pauline. It is worth noting that when Lurie observes Melanie's style of dress, he often uses adjectives with negative connotations (for example, during her on-stage performance he refers to her face as being "garishly made up" (Coetzee 191)). In this case, he refers to her shoes as "absurd slippers"; however, "nothing will stop him" or deter his sexual desire for her, even her "crude talk" which translates to

her “Kaaps accent” (Coetzee 191) that she exhibits on stage. Lurie’s critique of Melanie’s culture reveals not only his prejudice towards people of colour, but his inability to come to terms with his reality in the new South Africa which is not governed by racial segregation or inequality. He likens this unequal relationship between the two of them to “strange love” owing to his ideas on power relations between men and women, as well as white people and people of colour. His desire for Melanie is reinforced by the reference to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty and love, whose character is embodied by themes of agape, but also eros (ThoughtCo). In invoking the image of Aphrodite, Lurie attempts to justify the manner in which he forces himself upon Melanie. Lucy Graham argues that

> Lurie kisses Melanie's feet before indulging in an act he describes as 'not quite' rape, but for her part is 'undesired to the core'. At times the narrative viewpoint seems to be located outside of Lurie, but in the paragraph beginning 'not rape, not quite that' the reader's perspective is destabilised, such that the distance between narrative voice and 'focaliser' collapses (443).

This serves to demonstrate the complex narrative lens employed in the novel. While the novel is written in a way that the reader is able to establish some critical distance from Lurie in order to formulate their own judgments, this boundary somewhat collapses in this scene. In essence, I would refer to this as a dissolution of the frame in my analysis as an ethical boundary has been crossed In destabilising the frame, it is made apparent that the perpetrator of such a violation may be able to justify or excuse their actions in equivocal terms. It also pinpoints the disjuncture between the victim’s voicelessness (however, the lack of consent is made apparent in her body language and in the comments made before the act) and the perpetrator’s freedom of speech and movement. As this scene leans more towards Lurie’s perspective, it can be said that it portrays how people in positions of power can distort the reality of the victim’s sexual trauma. This idea is made visible when Lurie details that

> [Melanie] 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. Little shivers of cold run through her; as

> soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him (Coetzee 25).

This scene can arguably be referred to as a rape scene. While the lines have been blurred between student and professor, there is also only indirect insight as to how Melanie feels about this event. There are only non-verbal cues which can be seen in the repetition of the word "avert". There are also implicit statements that she makes before and after the event, such as when she states "not now" (Coetzee 25) and "Pauline will be back any minute" which show her apprehension. However, Lurie does not make an effort to interpret her non-verbal cues nor her implicit statements of rejection as he is too enthralled by his desire for her. What makes this moment more meaningful is the manner in which it is framed by Melanie's bed and the quilted counterpane. By "slip[ping] under the quilted counterpane" important details are omitted from Lurie's (and the reader's) view, such as how she feels about the incident which would perhaps be most apparent on her face. This idea is further entrenched by the way in which she is likened to a mole, a type of rodent which is commonly known for being blind, "burrowing". By averting her gaze and covering herself with the quilted counterpane, Melanie blinds herself in a bid to remove herself from the situation at hand. Much like a mole burrows, she hides underneath or seeks comfort in the quilt, and in this case she is framed by the quilt in the same way that a burrow in the ground could enclose a mole. The statement which follows next raises questions about Lurie's self-awareness:

> Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core (Coetzee 25).

The above statement is quite paradoxical in the sense that the idea of rape is inferred, and yet there still seems to be a a grey area between sexual violence and sex that is consensual. It is important to acknowledge that the topic of rape is mentioned by Lurie here (Graham 433). While it is evident that the victims of said sexual violence are not given a voice in the novel, Graham also argues that Lurie is the one who infers the idea of rape, which may also indicate that events which occurred in the novel may have been fallacies which he conjured up to suit his desired reality. Such a reflection could also suggest that he could be capable of redemption; however, the repetition of

"not" illustrates a lack of accountability and empathy for the victim owing to the matter-of-fact way in which he brushes over the idea of sexual assault. Once again, the motif of animals is utilised to illustrate the nature of Lurie's relationship to women. Much like he previously referred to Soraya as a vixen protecting her cubs from a more threatening predator (Coetzee 10), he invokes the idea of Melanie being a rabbit whose neck is within the jaws of a fox, indicating a power struggle between him and her:

> 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 (Coetzee 25).

The use of the word "decided" also suggests that Lurie may think that the prey decides to be preyed upon.

The relationship with Melanie continues to haunt Lurie afterwards. The following scene is framed in a more explicit sense by the rear-view mirrors and the windows of Lurie's car. While Melanie and her boyfriend's faces are partially covered by the helmets they wear, their eyes, most notably Melanie's, are framed by the opening of the helmet. Lurie's desire for her is made apparent by the manner in which he recognises her through isolated features:

> Driving home from a concert that evening, he stops at a traffic light. A motorcycle throbs past, a silver Ducati bearing two figures in black. They wear helmets, but he recognizes them nevertheless. Melanie, on the pillion, sits with knees wide apart, pelvis arched. A quick shudder of lust tugs him. *I have been there!* he thinks. Then the motorcycle surges forward, bearing her away (Coetzee 35).

The above scene can be likened to the conversation Lurie has with Soraya over the telephone as he displays a sense of masculine rivalry over a woman who does not belong to him, which somehow acts as a catalyst for his "lust". Drawing on this, her objectification is made visible in the way in which he states "*I have been there*" which invokes ideas of an animal marking its territory. In this excerpt, the idea of the

motorcycle “bearing [Melanie] away” depicts her slight nature and the manner in which she is objectified, as the motorcycle is seen as having more agency than she, or he himself. In a sense, Melanie is depicted as an extension or accoutrement of her boyfriend, suggestive of a parergon. This idea is further entrenched by the manner in which Melanie’s body is positioned on the motorcycle as her “knees are wide apart” and “her pelvis is arched”. The focus of her character is placed on the desire Lurie feels towards her which is brought forward in the territorial sense in which he refers to that section of her body. This once again underpins the idea of ownership.

Graham asserts that the manner in which Lurie treats women, particularly women of colour, can be seen as an abuse of power (not only owing to his role as a professor at a well-known university, but also owing to his position as a white man in a country that has been deeply affected by racial segregation and colonialism). She states:

> Lurie's misuse of Melanie exposes power operating at the level of gender and at institutional level (Graham 437-438)

While Lurie’s abuse of Melanie can be seen as an abuse of power on an institutional level owing to his race and his profession, it can also be seen on a gendered level owing to the history of men traditionally having more influence and freedom than women. Graham asserts that this can be seen in his relationship with Melanie as she is reduced to a flattened, sexual object as opposed to a subject with actual feelings and agency. The idea of objectification is congruent with a flattening of subjectivity, or pictorial framing. This relationship also underpins the idea that there are either no consequences for preying on the vulnerability of a marginalized figure, or regard for the consequences which may ensue.

However, in Melanie’s personal life she is passionate about dramatic arts and takes part in theatre productions, which suggests that she is not quite as passive as Graham claims. The following scene is explicitly framed by the stage and the proscenium arches of the Globe Salon:

> Melanie has kept her part as Gloria, the novice hairdresser. Wearing a pink caftan over gold lamé tights, her face garishly made up, her hair piled in loops on her head, she totters onstage and on high heels. The lines she is given are unpredictable, but she delivers them with deft timing in a whining *Kaaps* accent. She is altogether more sure of herself than before - in fact, good in the part, positively gifted. Is it possible that in the months he has been away she has grown up, found herself? *Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger*. Perhaps the trial was a trial for her too; perhaps she too has suffered, and come through (Coetzee 191).

It is critical to take note that this scene occurs after Lurie's hearing regarding his sexual misconduct with a student and subsequent dismissal from the university. Despite this career-ending incident, Lurie still pursues Melanie from a distance. Instead of acknowledging Melanie as a victim of his actions, he victimises himself by stating that she "too has suffered" and "come through" a trial of her own accord. This suggests to the reader that there is minimal chance of redemption for him. He also fails to consider how his unwanted attention may have impacted on her mental health, and instead implies that it was a form of character-building - evidence of this can be seen in the phrase "grown up, found herself". However, the use of high heels accentuate her presence and gives her a form of power, unlike the passive character which Lurie has previously referred to.

This idea of ownership over marginalized figures, particularly women, is carried over into Lurie's idea of beauty, which also draws on his teaching of romanticism. Graham refers to this as being "immersed in a falsifying Romantic tradition" in which:

> David speculates that 'beauty does not belong to itself', and thus justifies his underlying assumption, as Melanie's educator, that she is somehow his property. This is revealed when he watches her in a play, claiming her achievements as his own: 'When they laugh at Melanie's lines he cannot resist a flush of pride. Mine! He would like to say to them... as if she were his daughter' (Graham 438).

Lurie's analysis of Melanie's beauty as well as her skills as an actress draw on Romantic ideals of beauty which can be understood as having a beholder. This demonstrates that as opposed to Melanie being beautiful for the sake of beauty itself, she is instead seen as an extension of him in the same way he would view his daughter. In saying this, Graham suggests that one's beauty is non-existent without a spectator or a beholder who can assign meaning to it. In this instance, Lurie feels a "flush of pride" when watching Melanie deliver her lines on stage and in seeing how the audience reacts to her performance, suggesting that the credit is owed to him as opposed to her. This idea can be understood more generally when considering the racial and gendered power imbalances in South Africa.

3.3. Lurie and Lucy

Lucy's character plays a crucial role in the middle and end of the novel, as Lurie moves in with her at her Eastern Cape residence after his dismissal from the university. She is his only daughter and lives on a farm.. Most of her time is dedicated to tending to the animals on her farm and cultivating vegetables and flowers to sell at the local market. She maintains the farm with the help of her foreman, Petrus. However, trouble starts to ensue when Petrus's younger male relatives appear on the farm unexpectedly. While they initially ask Lucy for permission to use her telephone for an important call, their story lacks credibility. Lurie and Lucy's seemingly peaceful rural life is suddenly shattered when the young men violently attack them, rape Lucy, assault Lurie and rob them of their possessions. The following moment is framed by the bathroom window of Lucy's house as Lurie is initially knocked out and locked in the bathroom by the three men in order to separate him from his daughter. It occurs when Lurie peers through the burglar bars during the robbery at their Eastern Cape residence:

> From behind the house comes the sounds of voices. The barking of the dogs grows louder again, more excited. He stands on the toilet seat and peers through the bars of the window (Coetzee 95).

This moment in time functions as a pictorial moment as it depicts Lurie's anxiety as a parent being separated from his child in a potentially fatal situation. In this moment, Lurie is helpless as he has been locked in the lavatory and is unable to escape through

the window. This pictorial moment is disrupted by the actions of the men outside of the window. Through the burglar bars, one of the men can be seen

> [c]arrying Lucy's rifle and a bulging garbage bag, the second man is just disappearing around the corner of the house. A car door slams. He recognizes the sound: his car. The man reappears empty-handed.

This scene troubles Lurie's ability to observe events as they escape the frame: Lurie is unable to see what occurs when the man disappears around the corner of the house, and he has to rely on his sense of hearing rather than the scopic power of his eyes. Similarly as in the previously discussed Captain Dorego's moment, the scene becomes further destabilized as the dynamics of the look are inverted:

> For a moment the two of them look straight into each other's eyes. 'Hai!' says the man, and smiles grimly, and calls out some words. There is a burst of laughter. A moment later the boy joins him, and they stand beneath the window, inspecting their prisoner, discussing his fate (Coetzee 95).

The frame is destabilised by the eye contact which is exchanged between Lurie and the man carrying Lucy's rifle. This, coupled with the manner in which Lurie is laughed at and inspected like a "prisoner" through the window further amplifies his helpless state. He ponders the idea that he is unable to decipher what the man and the young boy are discussing owing to his ties to his eurocentric ideals:

> He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa. He is helpless, an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron. Mission work: what has it left behind, that huge enterprise of upliftment? Nothing that he can see (Coetzee 95).

The languages Lurie mentions in this instance are not part of the new official languages in South Africa, which suggests that he mentally distances himself from his nationality as a South African. In referencing the "mission work" and referring to the country as "darkest Africa" he reveals his inability to come to terms with the post-

colonial and -apartheid era. This idea is further entrenched by the manner in which he refers to colonialism as an "enterprise of upliftment". Furthering this chain of thought, he considers how the armed robbers fail to "administer a *coup de grâce*", going as far to eliminate the dogs who are caged:

> Now the tall man appears from around the front, carrying the rifle. With practised ease he brings a cartridge up into the breech, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs' cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a *coup de grâce* (Coetzee 95).

In the sub-section titled "Reading Past 'the Peril'", Graham examines how Coetzee subverts the 'black peril' narrative in a way that reveals his own self-reflections. The 'black peril' narrative is commonly known as a racist trope which portrays black men as being predatory towards women. With reference to Sol. T Plaatje's 'the white peril', Graham argues that Coetzee makes the "sexual exploitation of black women by white men [which] has existed for centuries" (Graham 437) visible. This "sexual exploitation" is made visible through the lens of framing. Not only does this reflect on the power relations between white people and people of colour in post-Apartheid South Africa, but it also reflects on the power struggles between men and women universally. The use of architectural frames within the novel not only makes these moments in time static, but they also flatten women in the sense that they become two-dimensional surfaces and voiceless in those points in time. This suggests that Lurie sees things from a myopic point-of-view and tends to objectify the women in his life (particularly in a painterly or picturesque manner), and often for sexual gain.

A further examination of the subversion of the black peril narrative can be seen in the way Lurie contrasts Melanie and his daughter, Lucy, through the use of light effects. Such light effects can be seen in the way the characters are named - for instance Melanie's name is derived from the word "melanin" and by the same token, Lurie considers her to be "the dark one" (Coetzee 164, quoted in Graham 437) and

Lucy's name connotes light, which is often brought to the forefront in moments where she is framed. Graham refers to this as an "[exposure of] 'black peril' stereotypes and the residual threat of the 'white peril that prevailed under colonialism and apartheid" (Graham 437). Thus, perpetuating the white stereotype of being associated with purity and light, and the black stereotype of being harmful and predatory which is often seen in the black peril narrative.

In contrast to the manner in which Lurie's perception of Melanie and Soraya is centred on darkness, his perspective of his daughter is closely associated with light, which is further entrenched by "the gentle sun". In the excerpt below, taken from the closing pages of the novel, Lurie observes his pregnant daughter in the mid-afternoon sun. I have deliberately quoted this scene in full to illustrate how this painterly moment, or rather the frame, once set up, is then broken by the use of dialogue:

> 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.
>
> The truth is, he has never had much of an eye for rural life, despite all his reading in Wordsworth. Not much of an eye for anything, except pretty girls; and where has that got him? Is it too late to educate the eye?
>
> He clears his throat. 'Lucy,' he says, more loudly. The spell is broken. Lucy comes erect, half-turns, smiles. 'Hello,' she says. 'I didn't hear you.' Katy raises her head and stares shortsightedly in his direction. He clambers through the fence. Katy lumbers up to him, sniffs his shoes.
>
> 'Where is the truck?' asks Lucy. She is flushed from her labours and perhaps a little sunburnt. She looks, suddenly, the picture of health (Coetzee 218).

The above moment is frozen in time by the idea of a painting which is invoked (i.e. "a Sargent or Bonnard"). John Singer Sargent was a well-known impressionistic painter during the late 19th and early 20th century ("Sargent Biography in Details"). While he

predominantly painted in watercolours, he created a significant amount of oil paintings too. He was notable for his "alla prima" method (a style of painting which makes use of copious amounts of paint placed directly on the canvas with a special emphasis on tonal values). He is considered one of the most significant portrait painters during the era in which he was active. The other painter evoked by Lurie is Pierre Bonnard, a French post-impressionistic painter who was active during the late 1800s to mid 1900s and known for his portraits and landscapes. He is most noted for his attention to decorative details which were accompanied by a bright colour palette. His primary medium was oil, and his style of painting made use of painterly strokes, similar to Van Gogh. One of the most central aspects of his works was his choice of muse - Marthe de Méligny eventually became his wife, while Reneé Monchaty subsequently killed herself. Both lovers can be seen in his artwork *Young Women in the Garden*, further entrenching this idea of a love triangle (Delistraty).

What brings both artists together is their affinity for painting windows and doors. Sargent famously painted *A Hotel Room* (1906-1907); *Scuola di San Rocco* (1903); *Bridge of Sighs* (1903-1904); *A Study of Architecture, Florence* (1910); *Rio dell'Angelo* (1902), *The Garden Wall* (1910); and *A Window in the Vatican* (1906) (among others) (*Sargent Complete Artworks Reproductions*). *Rio dell'Angelo* captures Sargent's love for watercolour as well as his signature, loose brushstrokes. His use of colour is liberal, with specific emphasis on the colour blue which seems to convey a sense of calm. This idea is further entrenched by the gentle ripples which indicate that the scene is captured during the morning and signifies the idea of the "fleeting moment" which was a commonly used style during the impressionistic period. This thus suggests why Coetzee specifically mentions both artists in the novel. While the content matter (a female figure depicted in a rural landscape) seems to indicate a thematic congruence; upon deeper inspection, Coetzee may have mentioned the artists to illustrate the manner in which Lurie compartmentalises his life (which is often seen through the use of windows, door frames, and painterly moments) and how these framed structures could allow further insight into his relationships with women (i.e. Lucy being a two-dimensional painting, and Soraya and Melanie being framed (often through windows) similarly to the manner in which Bonnard framed his lovers and Sargent captured feminine beauty through portraiture, often alongside a window, door, or colonnades).

Lucy is described as being a universal image of beauty that even "city boys like him" can appreciate. This contrasts with the manner in which the women Lurie desires are described, as they are often limited to certain categories (i.e. Soraya is categorised under "Exotics" in the Discreet Escorts catalogue (Coetzee 7)). Not only does Lucy imbue a sense of light and beauty, but her image also connotes the idea of fertility. This is not only made visible by her "lightly pregnant" womb, but by the "bees busy in a field of flowers" as well. Considering this scene in full allows the reader to observe the timelessness of a pictoral moment. Not only does the painterly moment momentarily freeze time, but Lurie also suggests that Lucy's beauty cannot be contained by time as he refers to her as "das ewig Weibliche" which translates to "the eternal feminine". The "spell", or rather the frame, is broken by Lurie's dialogue which suggests Lessing's idea that literature represents the passage of time, unlike art which is frozen in time and space. As Lessing argues, the two cannot co-exist as they disrupt each other. However, the moment in which Lucy is framed evinces a sense of solace for Lurie. In this frame she is likened to notable European landscapes and associated with light. In doing so, he in a sense lifts her from the turbulent political landscape in South Africa, and places her in a European context, as if bringing her to safety, despite her feet being placed firmly on the soil (as discussed earlier). This framed picture of Lucy can also be understood as a final sublime moment, not only created by the natural landscape surrounding her and the use of lighting, but elevating her, through the imagined medium of a European oil painting, out of her threatening South African context of sexual violence and land dispossession.

3.4. Framing Lurie Himself

As a character, it is made apparent to the reader at an early stage that David Lurie has a somewhat unusual approach to human relationships and intimacy. Evidence of this can be found on the first page of the novel where Lurie not only provides a brief biography of himself, but also discloses the intimate details of his affair with a sex worker, which is incorporated as part of his weekly routine:

> FOR A MAN of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well. On Thursday afternoons he drives to Green Point. Punctually at two p.m. he presses the buzzer at the entrance to Windsor

> Mansions, speaks his name, and enters. Waiting for him at the door of No. 113 is Soraya. He goes straight through to the bedroom, which is pleasant-smelling and softly lit, and undresses. Soraya emerges from the bathroom, drops her robe, slides into bed beside him. 'Have you missed me?' she asks. 'I miss you all the time,' he replies. He strokes her honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun; he stretches her out, kisses her breasts; they make love (Coetzee 1).

The brief biography he provides of himself depicts an elevated sense of self-importance. Here Coetzee, or rather the narrator, also entrenches that the short-sighted and compartmentalised ideas expressed in the novel are Lurie's and no one else's, which can be seen in the phrase "to his mind". In stating that "he has […] solved the problem of sex rather well", one can gather that Lurie does not view sexual intercourse as a consensual or pleasurable act, but rather a "problem", which foreshadows the issues regarding sex which will unfold in the novel, particularly the rape of Melanie Isaacs. In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that while it is implied that Soraya is an escort and that sex is a problematic act for Lurie, he attempts to feign a romantic relationship with her. This idea is emphasised by use of the phrases "I miss you all the time," and "they make love" as they indicate some form of emotional intimacy. The moment in question is enclosed by various architectural frames - namely; "the entrance to Windsor Mansions", "the door of No. 113", and "the bedroom". While Soraya emerges from the bathroom, there is no description provided of this room which may suggest the lack of importance which is placed on her, as well as her voicelessness in the novel. In excluding the description of the bathroom, the reader is left to question what happens beyond the confines of the frame. However, Lurie's movements are documented in a methodical manner as if he were recorded through a photographic lens, from the entrance of Windsor Mansions to the bedroom. The liaison between Soraya and Lurie is also framed by the bed which they share, which is the only place where the reader is able to develop a mental description of Soraya. However, the description of Soraya is mainly physical with emphasis on her "honey-brown body" which is "unmarked by the sun" and "her breasts". In omitting details about her personhood in the first paragraph of the novel, it implies a merely physical nature of their relationship, pointing to the manner in which Lurie objectifies the women in his life. Ironically, Lurie also iterates that Soraya is "unmarked", "not effusive", "quiet, quiet and docile" and "moralistic"

which contrasts with the nature of their liaison as well as her line of work (which is an old yet taboo and illegal profession). In referring to her as "unmarked" he suggests that he has a preference for women who are more innocent in nature and perhaps impressionable as she would thus serve as a blank canvas which he would be able to project his myopic views on. Additionally, the phrase in full, "unmarked by the sun" describes the secret nature of these encounter, further reiterating that the architectural framework they share is "softly lit" and hidden from public view, but it is also an indirect reference to her race as a coloured woman.

What is particularly interesting about Lurie's character is that he is both the framer and the framed in this text, which illustrates the fragility of the frame owing to the constant shift. The moment in question depicts the day when Lurie is seen leaving after the formal inquiry before the committee regarding his affair with Melanie Isaacs in which he pleads guilty. He is approached by journalists and equally inquisitive bystanders. This encounter between Lurie and what appears to be a student journalist - in the sense that she is referred to as a "girl" who thrusts "[a] tape recorder toward him" (Coetzee 55) - is framed by a photograph in the student newspaper. Not only does this photograph unintentionally portray Lurie's true nature, and the extent of his current situation, but it also bears likeness with *Reputations*, in which Mallarino frames the politicians he depicts in his political caricatures for the newspaper. The subject of the photograph, Lurie, extends beyond the frame:

> The photograph appears in the next day's student newspaper, above the caption 'Who's the Dunce Now?' It shows him, eyes cast up to the heavens, reaching out a groping hand toward the camera. The pose is ridiculous enough in itself, but what makes the picture a gem is the inverted waste-paper basket that a young man, grinning broadly, holds above him. By a trick of perspective the basket appears to sit on his head like a dunce's hat. Against such an image, what chance has he? (Coetzee 56).

The manner in which Lurie is framed in this extract is particularly striking, as although this is a fictive image, photographs have an undeniable force in providing a sense of truth. Quite literally, the photograph "shows him" in his truest form as rather dismissive of the actions he commits. The use of the waste-paper basket creates the

association between Lurie and rubbish which foreshadows his disgrace within the novel. The use of perspective; however, leads the reader to question if all photographs are true: Lurie is not physically wearing the basket as a "dunce" on his head, even though he is facing a disciplinary hearing as a result of this scandal. In asking "[a]gainst such an image, what chance has he?", Lurie appears to accept his guilt, even though he suggests that he may have been "framed" for the misdeed he has been accused of. The frame provides a fixed identity which boxes Lurie. In addition this, it can also be said that the frame is broken owing to way in which Lurie extends his hand to the camera, "groping" at it. The use of the word "groping" also has sexual connotations and an association with force which further points to the severity of the incident.

In what may be considered one of the most revealing and telling moments of insights into Lurie's state of mind occurs after the violent farm attack during which he was doused with petrol and set alight. After being treated for burn wounds, Lurie looks at himself in the mirror:

> He inspects the image in the mirror, with its neat white cap and blanked-out eye. 'Shipshape,' he remarks, but thinks: Like a mummy (Coetzee 106).

Lurie's face in this scene is framed by the mirror and the moment illustrates his profound ambivalence: on the one hand he expresses a certain sense of confidence and satisfaction about his looks, but at the same time his own threatening mortality comes into view. The use of dialogue - "shipshape" – initially frames this pictoral moment in positive terms. The use of the "ship" demonstrates a narrative progression in time, despite his face being frozen as a mirror image. However, Lurie soon is unable to avoid the real force of the image when he likens himself to a mummy. This moment shows Lurie's struggle with his own mortality. The mummy signifies death, and the frozen moment in the mirror reveals that time has stopped. The truth of the mirror image also points to his inability to come to terms with the ageing process (e.g. "city boys like him" (Coetzee 218)). This brings to the forefront the idea that the frame can be dissolved or ruptured through such experiences.

As result of the farm attack and the sexual violation of Lucy he is forced to think about the larger question of rape. While Lurie ponders his first contact with the word "rape" as a child, he references a painting titled *The Rape of the Sabine Women* in the Grahamstown Library. The painting allows him to reflect on what he understands as sexual assault in the present day, with reference to his liaison with Melanie, and the violence which his daughter endured:

> He remembers, as a child, poring over the word *rape* in newspaper reports, trying to puzzle out what exactly it meant, wondering what the letter *p*, usually so gentle, was doing in the middle of a word held in such horror that no one would utter it aloud. In an art-book in the library there was a painting called *The Rape of the Sabine Women:* men on horseback in skimpy Roman armour, women in gauze veils flinging their arms in the air and wailing. What had all this attitudinizing to do with what he suspected rape to be: the man lying on top of the woman and pushing himself into her? (Coetzee 159-160).

Image 3: *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*

The reference to *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (also known as *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*) allows the reader to gain some insight into Lurie's thoughts on

womanhood and sex. The original painting is estimated to have been painted between the years 1633 and 1634 by the renowned artist, Nicolas Poussin. The oil painting depicts a festival which involved kidnapping young women (also known as Sabines) in a bid to forcibly marry them. In the painting, the viewer is made privy to how the men begin to violently grab the women upon Romulus's (the leader) instruction, which can be seen by the figure in the left-hand corner raising his cloak. This painting illustrates the artist's prowess with regards to capturing human gestures and motion. A notable element in the work, is the artist's deliberate use of colour. The artist makes use of a palette of grey, brown, and sage green (earthy colours). This is juxtaposed with shades of red, blue, and yellow (primary colours). The sky is filled with grey clouds and brown dust appears to be floating above the ground amidst the chaos which ensues. The subjects are seen with exaggerated poses and facial expressions; typical of Roman sculpture and portraiture. The men have taut muscles, the women's mouths are agape, and children who can be seen on the floor, as well as a horse which features in the middle of artwork, appear to be anguished. The men who feature in this work are typically seen raising their swords and daggers, in contrast to the women who are flailing and being forced against their will, feelings of anxiety and helplessness are conveyed. The drapery on the men and women's garments accentuate their presence. The man in the right-hand corner wears a bright-yellow (almost golden) "lorica"[3] made of leather, which evokes the idea of masculine strength and possibly heroism. His presence is; however, ambiguous as he thrusts himself between a woman and a man in red clothing. This could either illustrate that he is attempting to defend the woman's honour, or he is trying to take her away from the man who accompanies her. The women can also been seen with long and abundant hair fixed in a coiffure style, which may symbolize Roman ideals of beauty and fertility. However, this painting raises a pivotal question for Lurie and its viewers - to what extent does the western tradition of art romanticise sexual and gender-based violence?

Considering Lurie's convoluted idea of rape and his inability to take accountability, Lucy Graham describes Lurie's relationship with art, more specifically with the above-mentioned painting, as a potential intertextual reference to Shakespeare's 'The Rape of Lucrece':

[3] A "lorica" can be defined as "a cuirass or corslet of leather" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

> In Shakespeare's 'The Rape of Lucrece', the distraught Lucrece stands before a painting of the war that ensued after the rape (typically represented as an 'abduction' or 'elopement') of Helen of Troy. The encounter, framed within the literary text, is between the artwork and the viewer, and between representation and life. *Disgrace* depicts this confrontation, also via rape narrative, in a remarkably similar way. After the farm attack, David finds a reproduction of Poussin's The Rape of the Sabine Women in an art book in the Grahamstown library and asks: 'What had all this attitudinising to do with what he expected rape to be: the man lying on top of the woman and pushing himself into her?' (Graham 441).

The same ideas of beauty deriving meaning or credit from its beholder and the delicate tension between fiction and reality is employed here. Graham argues that in examining this image Lurie is struggles to make sense of what rape is, how effective an artistic representation of it can be, and how it affects victims of sexual violence. This then bears similarity with the manner in which Lucrece contemplates a painting of the abduction of Helen of Troy. Graham describes this kind of encounter as a "confrontation". The confusion and frustration both characters feel are indicative of the manner in which narrative concerning sexual violence are obscured in reality, whether it be owing to cultural beliefs or Western artistic representation. However, the contrast between Lurie and Lucrece lies in the fact that Lurie is able to develop a sense of self-awareness in that particular moment and question his own beliefs, while Lucrece remains anguished about the situation. This comparison thus illustrates how art can be both useful in raising awareness of sexual violence as well as the disjuncture between what occurs in real-life and what is captured on canvas.

3.5. An "Unbeautiful" Muse: Lurie and Bev Shaw

While Bev Shaw may arguably appear as a minor character in the novel, it is worth noting that even the most significant female characters are portrayed as minor through Lurie's perspective. Lucy provides validity for this idea when she expresses her frustration with her father for ambushing her over the testimony of her rape (Coetzee 198). Thus, with this in mind, as well as the manner in which she is juxtaposed with Teresa in the novel - which is pinpointed by Giles (93) - it is necessary to pay some

attention to her character in the novel. The moment below concerns the beginning of Lurie's sexual relationship with Bev. Their "congress" (Coetzee 150) is most notably framed by the blankets and the door of the clinic where they work:

> The clinic is not open on Mondays. He lets himself in, turns the key behind him in the lock. Bev Shaw is in the surgery, standing with her back to him. He folds her in his arms; she nuzzles her ear against his chin; his lips brush the tight little curls of her hair. 'There are blankets,' she says. 'In the cabinet. On the bottom shelf' (Coetzee 149).

By opening the clinic on a Monday and directing Lurie to the blankets stored on "the bottom shelf", Bev indicates her readiness to have sex with Lurie. The manner in which Lurie "turns the key behind him" suggests the secretive nature of this liaison, similar to the encounters Lurie previously shared with Soraya which were confined by the apartment in Windsor Mansions (Coetzee 1). The blankets being kept hidden in the cabinet further adds to this idea of secrecy. Bev's back being turned when he enters also ties in with this pattern of Lurie engaging in sexual acts with women who tend to avert their gaze or have their perspective hidden by Lurie's tightly framed perspective. The nature of this encounter proves to be uncomfortable for both Lurie and the reader as he is tasked with making a choice "between the operating table and the floor":

> He spreads out the blankets on the floor, the grey blanket underneath, the pink on top. He switches off the light, leaves the room, checks that the back door is locked, waits (Coetzee 149).

By switching of the light and ensuring that the back door is actually locked, Lurie entrenches that the idea that their encounter should not be exposed to the outside world and rather confined to the clinic as their liaison would subsequently affect Bev's marriage if it were to seep out of the frame. The manner in which Bev crawls in between the blankets which have been laid out on the floor bears likeness with an earlier scene when Melanie is likened to a "mole" (Coetzee 25). The reason for this comparison is that Bev's body is completely covered by the blanket, with only her "head sticking out" (Coetzee 149) This comparison extends beyond this as Lurie

likens Bev with "the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs" when he reflects on their "congress". In the aftermath, Lurie considers that he has fallen from the pedestal which he initially placed himself on and that he will have to come to terms with "this and even less than this" due to him being disgraced by society and his own internal conflict with the ageing process. This inner turmoil with the ageing process and Lurie's fixation with physical beauty is only made worse by the injuries he sustained from the brutal attack on Lucy's farm. The frozen image of the two of them is disrupted by Bev's dialogue which illustrates a narrative progression of time:

> 'It's late,' says Bev Shaw. 'I must be going.' He pushes the blanket aside and gets up, making no effort to hide himself. Let her gaze her fill on her Romeo, he thinks, on his bowed shoulders and skinny shanks (Coetzee 150).

The use of the blanket acts as a parergon in this scene. In providing a description of his physical appearance, Lurie also suggests that for Bev Shaw, he evokes a painterly moment. The mention of his "bowed shoulders and skinny shanks" bears reference to the western tradition of male sculpture, which is further entrenched by the mention of "Romeo". The moment is framed further by the "strip of waste land" and the door which Bev leans against:

> It is indeed late. On the horizon lies a last crimson glow; the moon looms overhead; smoke hangs in the air; across a strip of waste land, from the first rows of shacks, comes a hubbub of voices. At the door Bev presses herself against him a last time, rests her head on his chest. He lets her do it, as he has let her do everything she has felt a need to do. His thoughts go to Emma Bovary strutting before the mirror after her first big afternoon. *I have a lover! I have a lover!* sings Emma to herself. Well, let poor Bev Shaw go home and do some singing too. And let him stop calling her poor Bev Shaw. If she is poor, he is bankrupt (Coetzee 150).

While Lurie still implies that their liaison is a duty for him, he has a moment of self-reflection where he considers that the power imbalance which he originally conjured up is flawed, for if "she is poor, he is bankrupt".

In considering the close proximity between Bev Shaw and Teresa in the novel, Graham suggests that Lurie's attempt to write an opera about Byron's time in Italy takes another turn after Lucy's violation. As opposed to making use of the traditional romantic attitudinising of gender-based violence, Lurie attempts to imbue the female characters with a sense of agency:

> In *Disgrace*, David Lurie is composing an opera about Byron's relationship with the young Teresa Guiccioli, but after the rape of his daughter Lurie begins to alter the focus of his artistic work. Discarding a Romantic tradition that has legitimised his mistreatment of Melanie, Lurie moves away from an emphasis on Byron, and scripts the voices of Byron's abandoned daughter, and of Teresa, 'now middle-aged', asking whether he 'can find it in his heart to love this plain ordinary woman'. In his quest for the resonance of hidden voices and stories, Lurie discovers a certain amount of empathy and care, for the 'plain ordinary' Bev Shaw, and for the dog he carries to its death in the final pages of *Disgrace* (Coetzee 443).

Here Graham indicates that through Lurie's attempt to learn how to love a "plain ordinary woman" (Teresa) he is able to develop a sense of empathy towards Bev Shaw, as well as the dog he tends to at her animal shelter towards the end of the novel. In employing this new female perspective in his opera, Lurie disregards the romantic ideals of beauty and the manner in which western art aestheticised rape which he previously admired. Graham indicates that this subtle yet powerful shift in character may offer the reader some sense of hope for Lurie's redemption. She also argues that art can not only affect its audience in a positive light, but its creator(s) as well. In writing his opera through Teresa's point of view, he shifts from traditionally flattening women to two-dimensional, framed surfaces, to assigning them a sense of agency and a voice. This change in character is made visible in his sexual affair with Bev Shaw in the animal shelter's clinic. While previous critics, such as Derek Attridge, have referred to this affair as "inconsequential", Graham argues that the incident bears significance in the text as a whole:

> Yet the incident is important. Although marked by pathos, it contrasts with Lurie's previous exploitative and irresponsible sexual behaviour (Graham 443).

Lurie's relationship with Bev Shaw and the crippled dog in the shelter (who he grows attached to towards the end) are significant because they illustrate a growing sense of self-awareness in him. His affair with Bev is not for superficial reasons (as opposed to his previous sexual liaisons with women) as they bond over the trauma they experience in euthanising the dogs at the clinic and in their shared concern for Lucy's well-being. The crippled dog which Bev introduces Lurie to becomes a symbol for his current position - destitute, unwanted, and physically impaired to some degree. In the final act of the novel, Lurie assists Bev with the euthanisation of this dog which can be seen as a sacrifice in order to atone for his misdeeds and to possibly establish a sense of grace.

3.6. Teresa: the Woman's Point of View

As a character, Teresa is arguably one of the only women in the novel who Lurie assigns a voice to. In his later version of his opera, she is seen as middle-aged and ordinary looking as opposed to the "exotic", younger women which Lurie previously pursued. It is also worth noting that he prioritises her voice and sense of personhood over the character of Byron despite all the works on his bookshelf pertaining to him which Melanie previously points out. However, Lurie's description of Teresa and the ways in which he attempts to write from her perspective do raise questions concerning what in terms of female sensibility he cannot contain or inhabit as a morally flawed male character. As can be seen in the following example, Teresa is presented as static and framed by a window which shows her looking out wistfully in the dark:

> IN HER WHITE nightdress Teresa stands at the bedroom window. Her eyes are closed. It is the darkest hour of the night: she breathes deeply, breathing in the rustle of the wind, the belling of the bullfrogs (Coetzee 213).

While Lurie does imbue Teresa with a sense of agency, it is worth noting that the manner in which she is portrayed is negative. The manner in which her "eyes are closed" bears likeness with the way Melanie is previously described in the scene where a George Grosz painting is invoked:

> The girl is lying beneath him, her eyes closed, her hands slack above her head, a slight frown on her face (Coetzee 19).

Similarly, both characters' "eyes are closed" somewhat obscuring their emotions in that current point in time, much like the distortion of feminine trauma in Western Art traditions which I previously quoted from Graham in my literature review. The tone used in this extract also exudes desperation and longing, which can be seen in the way she begs Byron to come back to her in the darkness even though she is whispering into the abyss:

> 'Come!' she whispers. 'Come to me, I plead, my Byron!' She opens her arms wide, embracing the darkness, embracing what it will bring (Coetzee 213).

The natural imagery surrounding her creates a sublime quality about this moment. As Teresa is being described in more of a solemn tone, it begs the reader to question if Lurie is in fact assigning her a sense of agency, or if he is just employing the use of "drag dialogic" which Laura Wright has argued is a feature of Coetzee's novels.

While Teresa can be seen as the only female character who Lurie assigns some sense of agency to, it is worth considering that it is only to some degree. Teresa is still presented as an extension of Lurie's limited point of view (as can be seen in Wright's description of the "drag dialogic"). Her identity is also almost entirely based on her love affair and longing for Byron. Such ideas are made present by the use of the window in this scene, as a window naturally only displays a smaller part of a greater picture. In this sense, Teresa's identity is cropped as the window creates a portrait-like effect. The window also illustrates the distance between her and her lover, further entrenching this longing which seems to occupy most of her space and time. Other interesting details include the use of the white nightgown. It has been made apparent in previous scenes (such as with Lurie's liaisons with Melanie and Soraya) that he often imbues his more sensual female characters with a sense of purity. However, the use of the white nightgown could also be indicative of a burial shroud which would in essence foreshadow the future of her doomed relationship with Byron or the nature of her life without him. This scene thus begs the question of whether Lurie is fully able to capture life from a feminine gaze and the essence of what it means to be a woman, or if his myopic perspective brings forth more pressing questions concerning feminine reciprocity.

4. Conclusion

Disgrace examines the power dynamics of gender, race, and social status within South Africa; however, it is also applicable at a global level. Coetzee hones in on the idea of unequal power relations by depicting scenes which depict a dissolution of ethical boundaries. The notion of framing makes this idea visible as it reveals how Lurie reduces female characters to two-dimensional surfaces, thus stripping them of their personhood. It is thus a useful lens of analysis as it shows frozen moments which typically convey a sense of anxiety, as well as Lurie's myopic frame of mind. The central anxiety of the novel is centred on the dissolution of ethical boundaries between professor and student; father and daughter; client and escort; and landowner and tenant. By overstepping these boundaries, Lurie's inability to come to terms with other characters' sense of agency and humanity is made visible. The novel also delves into Lurie's inability to come to terms with his own mortality after being a "servant of Eros" (Coetzee 52) for the vast majority of his adult life. In facing his mortality upon the brutal incidents which took place on the farm, he is able to attain a sense of grace and, to some degree, ruminate on the consequences of his misdeeds. The novel thus explores the crossing of ethical boundaries across different power dynamics within the South African landscape, and ponders the idea of whether the country can make peace with its turbulent political past in the present day.

Chapter Three

Frames and Faces: Deconstructing the Power of Caricature and Visual Space in Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *Reputations*

1. Chapter Overview

This chapter will consider the novel *Reputations* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez which considers how the art form of the caricature relates to one's public image. Most commonly, the reputations of politicians are brought into question as demonstrated in Mallarino's role as a political cartoonist. However, as the novel shows, the character of Mallarino also caricaturises the people in his life by reducing them to a set of exaggerated features as opposed to considering them more fully as persons. *Reputations* is set in Bogotá, Colombia, and considers the lives of the protagonist; Javier Mallarino, as well as Samanta, the inspiration behind one of his oldest and most infamous cartoons; Adolfo Cuéllar, a conservative and the caricaturised politician of said cartoon, and Mallarino's wife, Magdalena, who he frames through sensual portraiture. The novel is set against a particularly turbulent political backdrop and considers the growing problem of gender-based violence in Colombia. Additionally, the novel depicts the time in which the caricature of Cuéllar was created and the lasting impact it has on the victim of the crime depicted in the cartoon twenty-eight years later.

In this chapter, I aim to discuss how the novel's protagonist, Javier Mallarino, compartmentalises the women in his life, as well as the public figures he sketches in his drawings, through the use of architectural frames (e.g. shower doors, windows, and door frames) and a caricature-like framework. In honing in on specific features through both language and art, he dissects and flattens those around him. Through framing, his problematic relationship with women is also foregrounded, and often becomes visible in painterly moments. In addition to this, this chapter also considers moments in which he himself is framed, and how this idea of "self-caricaturing" offers valuable insights into his own subjectivity and his relationship with others .

This chapter will thus provide a close analysis of scenes which encompass the above mentioned ideas by exploring the use of framing in both a physical,

architectural sense, as well as in a more implicit, painterly sense. By exploring themes of gender and power through this lens, I intend to demonstrate how Mallarino views himself in proximity to the manner in which he objectifies those around him through two-dimensional surfaces. This idea is made visible, I will argue, by the narrative deployment of the device of the frame. The frames, as used in the novel, illustrate how his myopic perspective limits his ability to empathise with others. To support this analysis, I will refer to the methodologies mentioned in my introductory chapter, as well as some ideas I have explored in my chapter on *Disgrace*.

However, before I begin with this close reading of the text, it is crucial to examine the term "caricature" more closely. In its noun form, the word can be defined as a "portrait or other artistic representation, in which the characteristic features of the original are exaggerated with ludicrous effect" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The art form originates from the Italian word "caricatura" (Tate). In 1600, when the word and the medium first came into circulation, it referred to Italian paintings which satirised Western culture. This resulted in the word later being established in the English language in 1748. However, in the late 18th century, James Gillray transformed the medium into what is now known as "political cartooning" owing to the manner in which he published his drawings in newspapers to make political commentary (Tate). This idea bears more likeness to the verb form of the word, which means to "represent or portray in caricature; to make a grotesque likeness of" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Caricaturing is essentially the lens through which Mallarino distorts politicians through his work, but also how he dissects those around him, and in turn, robs them of their individuality. As noted by Paolo Gervasi, the literary form of caricaturing undertakes the role of "deformation, exaggeration, [and] hyperbolic description of physical and behavioural traits" (Gervasi 1).

Vásquez, through the lens of Mallarino, emphasises Cuéllar's "large ears, the childish freckles on his face, and the severe line of his slicked-over hair" (Vásquez 84). In literature, it can thus be said that caricatures (both of verbal and ekphrastic description) act as a vehicle for critique and satire. Through his work as a political caricaturist, he exerts the power to both improve or destroy the reputation of public figures, making him an influential figure with political power in his own right.

2. Overview of *Reputations* as a Novel

Reputations is a novel set in modern-day Colombia, written by Juan Gabriel Vásquez. Much like *Disgrace*, the novel is centered on the life of a successful, middle-aged man, Javier Mallarino, and the controversy surrounding his career. While *Disgrace* details the nature of the protagonist's sexual affair which has career-ending consequences, in *Reputations* the alleged sexual assault of a minor affects Mallarino's career as a caricaturist. The assault in question occurs at a party at Mallarino's new house following the separation from his wife, Magdalena, in which both his eight-year-old daughter, Beatriz, and her friend, Samanta, are present. The event is interrupted by a conservative politician, Adolfo Cuéllar, who intends to confront Mallarino about his satirical cartoons in which he has featured. Unbeknownst to Cuéllar, his surprise arrival foreshadows the downfall of his career. Cuéllar is first spotted gazing through the framed interiors of the house and marveling at Magdalena's portrait:

> A man had just come in; he had stopped in the middle of the living room, looking off into space, as if he were waiting for someone, but Mallarino knew he wasn't looking off into space but at […] the wide white space inhabited by the single painting Mallarino had had time to hang (Vásquez 83-84).

However, he leaves the event abruptly after being chased out by Samanta's father for allegedly abusing his daughter. The reader is not made privy to whether the sexual assault which Cuéllar is being accused of has indeed occurred or not; however, Mallarino draws a caricature alluding to the event in the newspaper on the following day. This event acts as a catalyst in Mallarino's success in the journalism industry, while simultaneously destroying Cuéllar's career as a politician as well as his personal life, which ultimately ends with his suicide.

Set in the present day, long after the contentious event, the novel considers Mallarino's life as an esteemed caricaturist with national recognition, as well as the life of Samanta, the now-adult victim of this alleged abuse. Much like Cuéllar originally sought out Mallarino to gain clarity on the manner in which he has been portrayed, Samanta seeks out Mallarino to find answers to what actually occurred to her all those years ago. What is significant about this is that while Samanta is the

victim, she has an unclear idea of what exactly occurred, and her account of events was not considered before. She thus bears a likeness with Coetzee's women characters like Soraya, Melanie, and Lucy, in the sense that she is denied agency in an event that directly affects her, and is similarly objectified through framed moments. There are also numerous framed scenes in the narrative which provide insight into Mallarino's mind and Samanta's trauma. These pictorially staged moments also beg the question of whether the protagonist is truly capable of developing a sense of empathy beyond his own myopic, tightly-framed point of view.

3. Literature Review and Critical Reception of the Novel

Reputations has been described as an exploration of "power and ego" which parallels with the "moral and personal dilemmas [the author] had been facing in his own life" (Maloney) as a journalist. As an author, Vásquez has been described as "[o]ne of the most original new voices of Latin American literature" (Llosa quoted in Maloney). In contrast to *Disgrace*, there is much less scholarship on the novel. The aim of this chapter is thus to bridge this gap in extant research. Critical articles referred to in this chapter will refer more broadly to Mallarino's previous works and literary genre, as well as consider relevant articles penned by Vásquez himself. Some of this scholarship includes the following articles: "From Reality to Fiction, from Literature to Journalism" (2014) by Clemencia Ardila J, "All That Is Solid Falls from the Sky: Modernity and the Volume of World Literature" (2002) by Dominic Davies, "Restoring Continuity: Notes on History and Fiction" (2003) by Juan Gabriel Vásquez, and "The Story is to Blame: PW Talks with Juan Gabriel Vásquez" (2013) translated by Annasue McCleave Wilson.

Coetzee's idea in *Doubling the Point* that "all writing is autobiography" (17) is echoed in Ardila's "From Reality to Fiction, from Literature to Journalism". While Clemencia Ardila's article is written in Spanish, I have translated and paraphrased the article to the best of my ability. Ardila's article considers how journalism can be employed as a narrative strategy as well as a thematic motif and evoke questions of ethical relations. By drawing reference to particular world events, Ardila claims that authors like Vásquez ensure that a novel is "anchored in reality" and is "grounded in the testimonies of people who have experienced the event" (Pereira quoted in Ardila

229). She suggests that Vásquez incorporates this motif and curates his characters in order to touch on socio-political issues from the 19th to the 21st century.

In the article entitled "All That is Solid Falls from the Sky: Modernity and the Volume of World Literature" Dominic Davies considers the idea of "modernity" in Vásquez's previous novel, *The Sound of Things Falling*. Davies draws on Bruno Latour's insights to show how the novel stages a compartmentalisation of inner and outer worlds, creating a division between thought and action. This idea is further carried forward into the relationship between literature and the world. Davies argues that in the novel the objective outer world and inner subjectivity are interconnected:

> the world is not composed of subjects and objects, signs and signifieds, humans and nonhumans, as "the moderns" would have us believe; rather, we live in a universe of "quasi-objects," where the material world is always utterly enmeshed with the social and where the social always has material force (Davies 3).

Davies's reading of Vásquez rejects traditional modernist dualities, such as the rigid binaries that separate humans from non-humans, and the material from the social world. Davies uses Latour's idea of "quasi-objects" to remedy the "split". Quasi-objects refer to that which cannot be contained in a singular category. In this realm, the boundaries between social and material, human and non-human, are blurred, entrenching the interconnectedness or enmeshment between the two concepts.

With reference to Latour's philosophy, Davies considers how such a framework can be applied to the postcolonial novel:

> This novel, which self-consciously and somewhat satirically builds its diegetic world with several of Latour's concepts, shares both thematic and formal interests with many other postcolonial and world literary texts: innovative narrative structures, repeated border crossings, blurred boundaries between private and public histories, a reflexive interest in representation and translatability, and so on. (Davies 5-6).

Here Davies draws attention to ideas such as "border crossings", "blurred boundaries between private and public histories", and a "reflexive interest in representation and translatability" which are particularly useful for an analysis of framing in *Reputations*. The blurring of boundaries between the "private" and the "public", as identified by Davies as a feature in Vásquez's prior novel, feature in a more literal way in both *Disgrace* and *Reputations*. In this context, the metaphorical components are interwoven with physical objects through the use of "border crossings", which highlights Davies's notion of affect and effect. This idea is made visible when the characters' inners feelings result in tangible consequences which ultimately affect the narrative. The use of "blurred boundaries" thus aligns with Latour's notion of reality and symbolic meaning being interconnected owing to the interweaving of concrete and abstract aspects in Vásquez's narrative.

In comments that have bearing on his own work, Vásquez himself has written on the question of fiction and truth in an article entitled "Restoring Continuity: Notes on History and Fiction":

> Literature is uncomfortable because it is always rebelling against imposed narratives, introducing dissent, giving a version of our common history that is discordant or unsubmissive, preventing, by its mere existence, the establishment of a single, monolithic history. This literature may seek to restore that broken continuity. This, of course, is terribly annoying, at least for the authoritarian in office. But it's what fiction does: in the *overwhelming reality in which we live*, fiction enables us to contradict the story that something or someone is trying to impose on us, the story that will triumph *while it has novelty and goes unchallenged*. (Vásquez 6).

In this commentary, Vásquez argues that literature disrupts imposed narratives and offers alternative viewpoints on history. In this sense, it is discordant with the establishment of a "single, monolithic history". Through literary discourse, Vásquez argues that narratives, which were originally lost or censored by historical events or a political agenda, can be restored. Literature can thus act as a catalyst to encourage readers to question the world they live in. This idea is suggested in both *Disgrace* and *Reputations* where characters like Lurie and Mallarino, who both have rigid outlooks

on life, appear incapable of introspection and empathy. Despite their limited point-of-view, troubling events surround them and characters such as Lucy and Samanta challenge their perception of said events. This therefore motivates the reader to question the manner in which information is relayed to them.

Vásquez also considers the elusive nature of memory, comments which have a direct bearing on a reading of *Reputations*:

> As soon as they happen, events begin to recede from us, and their truth starts to become muddled. Misrepresentation is inevitable, at least in the documents we call official, from which so often history is made, and a deep distortion is created in the existing communication between us and our past (Vásquez 7).

Here Vásquez suggests that the break in continuity in recovering the past is not necessarily owing to the narrator's personal agenda or bias, but rather owing to the more general idea that a recall of the past is inevitably incomplete and partial. This idea is crucial when we consider the instability of memory in the case of Samanta's experiences in *Reputations*. She has difficulty in claiming validity and truth for her childhood trauma, and cannot reach closure. This also begs the question of whether Mallarino is a reliable narrator with regards to accessing her truth. As the novel makes clear, Mallarino's inability to recall the past is further impacted by elements such as alcohol, political bias and a series of architectural boundaries that impede his knowledge of the events.

In another analysis that is relevant for my reading of *Reputations*, Vásquez explores framing and the instability of truth in his examination of Doris Salcedo's work of art, *Fragmentos*. I find this moment particularly crucial as it bears likeness with the manner in which I intend to analyse Vásquez's work:

> In November 2020, as life traveled reluctantly from the most serious months of the pandemic to a kind of normality, I met the artist Doris Salcedo inside one of her works of art. *Inside*, yes: the work of art in question - entitled *Fragmentos*, or *Fragments* - is a small building in downtown Bogotá, a museum intended to house other works of art but whose main characteristic,

> what makes it unique, is the fact that its floor was built with materials resulting from the melting down of 8,994 weapons of war. Guns and assault rifles that were turned in by the FARC guerrilla as a part of the peace agreements of 2016 were then molded into solid sheets by the hammer blows of a group of women, all of whom were victims of sexual violence during our long war (Vásquez 9-10).

The word most interesting here is "inside". Through Vásquez's repetition of the word he foregrounds the curious position of being an active participant inside the frame of the artwork. This thus explores the possibility of how the outside environment can permeate the work or further accentuate its meaning once the boundaries surrounding it are overstepped. What is also quite interesting about this artwork is how the artist is able to recall, or rather rework, memories concerning loss and the effects of violence through fragmented pieces which ultimately contribute to one body of work. The women whose truths were previously suppressed regarding their respective individual traumas, are thus, in some way, able to reclaim their agency through the "hammer blows" of molded weapons "turned in by the FARC guerrilla", as well as by having a female artist recount their stories. Colombia's legacy of violence against women, despite being painted against a different political landscape, bears much similarity with the issue of gender-based violence in South Africa, which is also one of the key reasons I chose to do a comparative study of *Reputations* and *Disgrace*. Through an analysis of these post-colonial texts one can examine how the female characters are reduced to two-dimensional surfaces owing to their gender, allowing for an analysis of what is excluded by such framing.

4. Instances of Framing in the Novel

4.1 Framing Mallarino

The reader is initially introduced to Mallarino in present-day Bogotá, when he is having his shoes shined for an iconic event in his life - a tribute for his journalistic contributions as a political caricaturist. However, this initial encounter does not offer much insight into Mallarino's character and his social behaviour towards others. He appears more honest and vulnerable when he is confined to his living quarters; particularly his shower, as he mentally prepares himself to begin his drawings:

> In the shower, with the hot water flowing over his skin and producing delicate shivers of pores closing and opening up again, sometimes he couldn't even make out the words from the radio; but some mechanism of his imagination allowed him to guess or intuit them, and when he turned off the water and pushed open the sliding door - two or three extra movements, since the aluminum edge invariably stuck in its frame - it was as if he hadn't missed anything. Seconds later, leaving behind the bathroom world of steam, the day's image had been born in his head, and Mallarino had only to draw it (Vásquez 29).

This moment in the shower presents Mallarino in the nude, in a vulnerable position. However, the space he occupies in the shower also serves as a catalyst for his creativity. The details of the description foreground the enclosed nature of the space, and accentuate the boundaries between the shower cubicle and the outside world: the aluminium sliding door is "stuck in its frame" and will not open smoothly, and the radio sounds permeate from without, but in an indistinct manner so that Mallarino "couldn't even make out the words". Even the pores of his own skin, the boundary between himself and the world, open and close, thereby setting up a larger sense of an ambiguous response to the outside. The boundary, or the frame, between himself and the world is porous and permeable. In a sense, the mention of Mallarino's pores "closing and opening up again" foreshadows how his binary conceptions of others is capable of rupturing and spilling over into a more public/general space. The use of the aluminum sliding door, which invariably becomes "stuck in its frame", can be read as a metaphor for his perspective which is limited in terms of its flexibility. Instead, he finds solace in projecting his own ideas onto the outside world and those around him. This can be seen in the manner in which he "guess[es] or intuit[s]" the words on the radio when the sound is too dull to decipher, and the way that he conceives the "day's image […] in his head" which he believes can be manifested through drawing. This can be confined to a sheet of paper, or any other material which he wishes to make use of. Once Mallarino is seated by his desk and begins drawing, he enters a completely enclosed world:

> It was, and would go on being for a long time, the happiest moment of the day: a half hour, or a whole one, or two, when nothing existed outside the friendly

> rectangle of card and the world that was being born within it, invented or cast by the lines and marks, by the to-and-fro of India ink (Vásquez 29-30).

The above scene is framed by the "friendly rectangle of card" and further reinforced by the use of "lines and marks". What is interesting to note is that Mallarino refers to the card as being "friendly" and the time in which he conceptualises and creates his caricatures as "the happiest moment of the day". He further entrenches the joy he experiences through his artistic expression by likening it with sex. In his state of "total abandonment" he forgets what initially inspired his drawings:

> During those minutes Mallarino even forgot the indignation or irritation or mere rebellious instinct that had given rise to the drawing in the first place, and all his attention, just as happened in the middle of sex, concentrated on an attractive form - a pair of ears, an exaggerated set of teeth, a lock of hair, a deliberately ridiculous bow tie - outside of which nothing else existed. It was total abandonment, broken only when the drawing turned out to be difficult or stubborn (Vásquez 29-30).

The strange link between his experience of sex and his drawing of caricatures needs more detailed analysis. In this scene, Mallarino appears to momentarily lose consciousness, or at least some degree of awareness into the feelings which initially prompted him to begin his caricature. In both the activity of drawing cartoons and when he is having sex, he becomes transfixed by particular, ornamental details such as a "pair of ears", an "exaggerated a set of teeth", a "lock of hair", or a "ridiculous bow tie" as opposed to focusing on the ergon or the whole person who possesses these features. This artistic moment can thus be likened to the scene referencing Georg Grosz in *Disgrace*. Much like Lurie tumbles into "blank oblivion", Mallarino finds that this is a moment of "total abandonment" which can be likened to the euphoria he feels during sexual intercourse. He can concentrate only on a singular "attractive form", however; he forgets the "indignation", "irritation", or "rebellious instinct" that led to the manifestation of the drawing. His abandonment, much like the contents of the frame, can only be broken "when the drawing turned out to be difficult or stubborn".

In the above extract it can also be said that there are elements of Mallarino's personality - particularly his compartmentalised and rigid thought patterns. Within the confines of his "friendly rectangle of card", a framed space, Mallarino is able to establish a new world. In the case of his political cartoons, which I will demonstrate in my section on Cuéllar, he is able to intervene in the reputations of public figures, usually by diminishing them. Mallarino's creative process demonstrates a sense of power, but also his ability to focus solely on one task through isolation from the outside world. His ability to separate his creative process from the outside world can be likened to the manner in which Simmel argues that the frame protects the contents of the artwork from its external environment in the sense that Mallarino does not allow for any distractions which may permeate his work. In focusing solely on his creative process, he is also able to develop a sense of escapism which relieves him of his personal feelings towards his daily life and perhaps the subjects of his caricatures.

4.2. Framing Samanta

The character Samanta Leal in the novel can be seen as existing in the aftermath of a traumatic event which ultimately shapes her life as well as the plot of the novel. While it is an event in which she is portrayed as the victim, her role in the narrative appears secondary owing to the manner in which the event is recounted to her and her inability to recollect it. Instead, she appears as a supporting device in a narrative in which male characters play the major roles. However, there are physical details about her which are foregrounded and aid the reader in developing a more nuanced understanding of her as a character. Mallarino originally meets her when she is just eight years old and visits as a friend of his daughter, Beatriz. Beatriz; however, does not feature much in the narrative. She is briefly mentioned when Samanta first visits Mallarino's house and is welcomed by Beatriz at the door. Before I begin my close reading of Samanta's character, I feel it necessary to briefly discuss Beatriz's character in preparation for this reading:

> Beatriz, for her part, seemed to accept the matter naturally: she had come to the door when her friend arrived, completely in possession of her role as woman of the house, and she herself asked her friend's mother if Samanta could sleep over (Vásquez 78).

The “matter” which Mallarino refers to in this excerpt is the separation between him and Magdalena and Beatriz being forced to live in two separate homes. The frame of the door thus captures Beatriz’s natural acceptance of the dissolution of her parents’ marriage, as well as her newfound role as the “woman of the house”. However, despite the confidence she appears to have, it is worth noting that at that point in time, she is only eight years old. The above excerpt can be seen as unusual and possibly disturbing in the sense that Beatriz is tasked with adult responsibilities and appears to be the object of the male gaze which is filtered through the rigid perspective of her father. Her adult responsibilities are made apparent by use of the phrase “woman of the house”. It also suggests that she is made to conform to traditional gender roles. However, the manner in which she “naturally” accepts this suggests that she has been socialised into this role by her father. In doing so, Mallarino ignores the innocence of a child and the complexity of her personhood, and instead suggests her priorities are centred on her attributes as a woman and the societal expectations of her gender. This thus raises questions about Mallarino’s role as a father and his parenting style which places a significant amount of responsibility on his child (such as hosting guests and asking other adults for permission in place of her father) and does not believe that the separation has any lasting impact on her. Samanta; however, is described as a weaker character. She is a victim of child abuse who is denied a voice during the time in which the event occurs, as well as in the present day when she is unable to recall what happened to her.

Having looked at Beatriz in some detail, we can now analyse the representation of Samanta. In the novel, she is described as

> a girl who was even shyer than [Beatriz] was, with deep green eyes, a small but fleshy mouth and one of those little noses that have not yet begun to reveal what they will eventually become, framed by the fringe of an old-fashioned doll. She was wearing a little grey schoolgirl’s skirt (Mallarino thought that those knees would not be so clean or so unblemished by the end of the afternoon) and burgundy patent-leather shoes over ankle socks (Vásquez 78-79).

A key idea which is pinpointed in this excerpt, is the manner in which Mallarino views others, particularly women and children, in a caricature-like manner which focuses on specific parts or isolated elements of a person's appearance. The above scene can thus be likened to Mallarino's perception of "the happiest moment of the day", previously mentioned in this chapter, and his worldview. The similarity that is brought forward here is that he dissects, distorts and accentuates particular aspects of her looks. This is significant as it invokes the idea of a caricature of verbal description, as opposed to those curated on a "friendly rectangle of card" (Vásquez 29) in "India Ink" (Vásquez 30). However, the commonality also instills a sense of concern or discomfort in the reader, as he previously referred to the act of isolating specific physical features akin to an erotic act. This may call into question his responsibility as a guardian, as it suggests a dissolution of ethical boundaries. Additionally, it may also lead the reader to reconsider the alleged culprit of the trauma Samanta endured.

Samanta in this instance is defined by her physical features and her clothing. . Much like in Mallarino's creative process, emphasis is placed on her exaggerated facial features including her "deep green eyes", her "small" and "fleshy mouth", and her "little" nose. While these details may not be particularly useful for the plot of the story as a whole, they provide a portrait of her as a young girl, a picture which is further accentuated by her garments which are indicative of a school uniform. Her nose being described as "one of those little noses that have not yet begun to reveal what they will eventually become" evokes a sense of anticipation and suggests a foreshadowing of events. Her nose is further "framed by the fringe of an old-fashioned doll".

What is particularly interesting here is the emphasis Mallarino places on Samanta's skin, such as her knees which are still "unblemished". This bears likeness with the manner in which Lurie refers to Soraya's "honey-brown" skin which is "unmarked by the sun" (Coetzee 1), and Melanie's "clear" and "perfect" complexion (Coetzee 19).

In the following extract, occurring several years later, Samanta is framed by the interior of Mallarino's car. While in the previously discussed scene she is flattened into a two-dimensional object and thus voiceless, this later moment allows her to

regain her bodily autonomy in her search for answers, thus bringing the plot of the novel full circle. This scene marks the moment when Samanta brings the rape "home", as it presumably plays out in front of Samanta's former apartment building where she grew up. While Samanta admits that her father took frequent cross-country business trips owing to his job as an insurance salesman, she states that he seldom stayed away from home for longer than two days. In hindsight, she found herself feeling somewhat apathetic about his disappearance as there was nothing to find when she looked through the dirty windows of his car left abandoned at the airport car park (Vásquez 159). However, in the present day, she finds herself questioning what her "dad's leaving [had] to do with that night" and if there "[w]as any link" (Vásquez 159):

> 'What I want to know is what happened here,' Samanta said then. Her voice, damp and thick, had a sort of urgency in the rarefied air inside the car. 'Here,' said Samanta. She began to cry again, but her crying was more candid this time; it distorted her features, stole her beauty. Samanta was patting her belly and mouth, the expression on her mouth stretched. 'What happened here,' she was saying, 'I want to know what happened here.' Mallarino stared at her hands; he interrogated them, interrogated their tapping against her body; Mallarino didn't understand. There, parked in front of her building, Samanta grimaced with impatience and her mouth suddenly released a pent-up breath (Vásquez 159-160).

What is particularly significant in this scene is that although Samanta is finally given a voice, her face is still hidden by her crying which "[distorts] her features". Mallarino's emphasis on her "beauty" in her moment of vulnerability suggests his male perspective where, as opposed to offering her compassion, he appears to judge her physical features instead. To an extent, he thus denies her a sense of personhood as she is objectified in this instance.

In her frustration, Samanta strips herself of her clothing, as if on impulse, and exposes herself through the window of Mallarino's car. The moment which is originally framed by the vehicle, appears to seep out of the frame:

> [...] a rapid movement: she put both feet up on the dashboard and lifted up her hips and pulled her green wool tights and her soft white knickers down with a single skilful shove, sticking both thumbs under the elastic, under both elastic waistbands at once, and pushing forward, not in a straight line but tracing a curve in the air like a bowl, like a smile. The mess of wrinkled clothes bunched around her ankles, and in a brief instant Mallarino saw the calves clustered with red spots and a violet oval on one thigh, where she had a bruise. Samanta separated her knees and opened her legs and all the light in the world invaded the four-by-four and illuminated the pale sex, straight, blond, sparse pubic hairs, the insolent vulva (Vásquez 160).

While Samanta's body acts as a skeletal frame, the light which is described as "all the light in the world" invades the vehicle, illustrating that this intimate moment which was originally confined to the car seeps out into a more public space. The space in question is the window of her apartment building:

> Samanta's hand closed over her vulva, moved away, then closed again with straight fingers over the diaphanous skin of her lips: 'Here,' said Samanta, 'I want to know what happened here. Is this what you saw, Señor Mallarino? Was this what you saw twenty-eight years ago? What do you think? Has it changed a lot?' Mallarino looked up and saw, in a window of the brick building, the silhouette of someone who'd pulled aside the net curtains to get a better view. No it wasn't a curious man, not a peeping Tom: it was an older woman, and Mallarino managed to see her housecoat and her expression of revulsion before she hid behind the delicate white shadows of the curtains. (Vásquez 160-161).

This experience concerns the idea of being watched and how being the object of another's gaze can affect one's behaviour. Mallarino is made aware of the older woman's silhouette in the window gazing at him and Samanta. Through her "expression of revulsion", Mallarino not only feels objectified but feels the impact of her moral judgment. The idea of the woman passing judgment as opposed to being curious and voyeuristic is entrenched by the phrase "it wasn't a curious man, not a peeping Tom". As a result of this quick exchange, he "turn[s] round" and "reach[es]

for his raincoat" to cover Samanta in a bid to alleviate his shame. What is perhaps ironic about this extract is that in this instance Mallarino is the object of the gaze, as opposed to the one objectifying others as he usually does in his caricatures.

This moment of shared contact is framed not only by the vehicle, but the window of the apartment building as well, and this emphasises the fragility of the frame. As curtains are generally used to disguise or hide a private space (further entrenched by the woman's "housecoat"), it is apt to see that in this instance, they foreground the woman's curiosity and attempt to get a "better view". The moment of contact between her and Mallarino and Samanta can be seen in the way she suddenly hides when she becomes aware that she has been seen. In an ironic turn of events, Mallarino assumes the role of a protector as he attempts to cover Samanta in order to preserve her dignity, "as if covering up a little girl with a chill. 'Here, here, here,' she was saying, and she covered her face with her hands (Vásquez 161).

This subtle moment of redemption contradicts with Mallarino's responsibility as a father and guardian of two young girls on the night in which Samanta is believed to have been sexually assaulted by Cuéllar, as on that night he failed to remain vigilant. This idea is further entrenched by the words "little girl", as at this point in the novel, Samanta is already thirty six years old. He exercises his role as a protective figure by comforting her with phrases such as "'There, there,'" and "'Everything's going to be okay'" (Vásquez 161). In this instance it would almost appear that Mallarino has gained a sense of compassion towards her. However, this brief moment of redemption is canceled out by the lines that follow: "He stroked her hair. He desired her, and detested himself for desiring her" (Vásquez 161-162). This scene bears likeness with the manner in which Lurie finds himself desiring Desiree, Melanie's teenage sister, when he visits the Isaacs residence to seek forgiveness for his actions (Coetzee 164). These subtle moments of redemption are thus canceled out by the characters' lack of empathy and self-awareness.

4.3 Framing Cuéllar

The character of Adolfo Cuéllar plays a crucial role in the novel as he is the perpetrator of an alleged rape of a minor which sets the plot in motion, and ultimately catapults the protagonist's career towards fame. To the reader, he is introduced as a

right-wing politician whom Mallarino has previously criticized through caricatures on the opinion page. What is unclear to the reader is whether he is actually guilty or is perhaps just a tragic hero. The reason why the truth is unclear is because the event is framed in ways that obstruct visual knowledge: in the first physical encounter Mallarino has with Cuéllar, he is described as follows:

> A man had just come in; he had stopped in the middle of the living room, looking off into space, as if he were waiting for someone, but Mallarino knew he wasn't looking off into space, but at the fireplace, or rather the wall above tiche fireplace, the wide white space inhabited by the single painting Mallarino'd had time to hang (Vásquez 83-84).

In this moment, there are several boundaries which obscure the event. For instance, the "door" (which is mentioned twice in the form of a "front door" and a "sliding door"), "the living room", and the "wide white space". There is also significant reference to the staircase which leads to the bedroom where the rape is believed to have occurred which creates a sense of narrative motion as opposed to pictorial freezing which would essentially help focalise the event. There is also a form of narrative freezing as Cuéllar pauses in the middle of the living room. Additionally, there is a tone of mystery as Cuéllar is referred to as "a man" with no name who looks "off into space" where his gaze fastens on a "single painting". In Mallarino's view, Cuéllar and the "single painting" come together. The painting which Mallarino refers to features Magdalena, his ex-wife but painted before they were married, lying nude on a bed. The ekphrastic passage describes the painting as follows:

> [O]ne of his first nudes of Magdalena, painted at the beginning of the 1970s or even earlier, before they were married, when Magdalena's body was still a discovery. Nobody could tell it was her, because the woman in the painting had her face hidden in the pillows, but the man was looking at her (looking at the messy sheets with their different tones of white, the naked torso and the beauty spot on the left breast, beside the relaxed nipple) as if he'd recognized her by way of mysterious arts (Vásquez 84).

What is significant about this single painting which is placed in Mallarino's living room, is that at this point in the novel he is already separated from his wife. We need to remember that both Lurie and Mallarino are divorced or separated men who maintain a form of closeness with their ex- or estranged wives. However, unlike Rosalind and Lurie, Mallarino and Magdalena are still engaged in a physical relationship. Mallarino's acknowledgement of her sensual beauty is made known to the reader throughout the novel, and often in the form of pictorial moments. The emphasis on her character coupled with articles like "the" contrasts with the lack of importance assigned to Cuéllar's character. The manner in which she is described as having her face hidden or distorted by pillows and messy sheets echoes closely with the George Grosz painting previously mentioned in this thesis, which, to some degree, denies her individuality and reduces her to a sexualised body. The manner in which her body is described also echoes closely with the manner in which Lurie describes his liaisons with Soraya and Melanie. While "nobody could tell it was her", Mallarino notes that Cuéllar appears to have "recognized her by way of mysterious arts". Cuéllar's supposed fixation with the nude painting of a woman could serve as a foreshadowing of the sexual nature of the events which unfold.

In Mallarino's description of Cuéllar he appears like a caricature where certain features are focused on at the expense of others, much like how Mallarino previously described his drawing process. For instance, he details how he recognises him "by heart", referencing his "large ears, the childish freckles on his face and the severe line of his slicked-over hair" (Vásquez 84). This familiarity stems from having "drawn more than once over the last few years and with a certain frequency a few months back" (Vásquez 84). The novel's title is specifically referenced in this following description of Cuéllar:

> His reputation had turned him into a target of several attacks from the Liberal press. Few public men carried their reputations the way Cuéllar carried his, standing on his shoulder like a parrot, no, draped around his neck the way a snake charmer carries his snake. Maybe that's what a reputation is: the moment when a presence fabricates, for those observing, an illusory precedent (Vásquez 84).

The above excerpt entrenches the meaning of the novel's name. It suggests that Cuéllar is one of the few civil servants whose reputation is easily distinguishable. The imagined "snake" that is "draped around his neck" indicates that as a politician his reputation is of a predatory nature, serving as a metaphor for his public image. The snake also acts as a figurative frame which encloses his head.

The incident regarding Samanta's alleged rape leads Mallarino to draw a caricature of Cuéllar which was published in *El Independiente*:

> That morning, Mallarino went directly to the opinion page. And there was his black-framed square, which this time he'd drawn a little thicker, and in the centre of the box, a sort of promontory that looked like it was made of earth, something like a small hill. At the base of the hill, surrounding it, there was a crowd of heads with long straight hair, all seen from the back, seen adorned with a girlish ribbon. On top of the hill, on the apex of the headland, was Adolfo Cuéllar – there were Adolfo Cuéllar's bones and cartilages – dressed in a diamond-patterned waistcoat, the lines of which were strained by the prominent belly. He had his arms open, as if wanting to embrace the world, and his freckled face looked towards the sky (Vásquez 107).

The ekphrastic passage conspicuously emphasizes the framed nature of the drawing, the "black-framed square" drawn "a little thicker" on this occasion. The explicit framing emphasises the significance of this moment; both for Mallarino and Cuéllar's careers respectively, as well as the plot of this novel. This conception of the frame echoes closely with Simmel's idea of the frame previously explored in this thesis. For Simmel, as we recall, the frame

> excludes all that surrounds it, and thus the viewer as well, from the work of art, and thereby helps to place it at that distance from which alone it is aesthetically enjoyable (Simmel 155).

Simmel's conception of the frame around a work of art or sets up a distinct boundary between the artwork and the public space which surrounds it. Within Mallarino's caricature, there are further forms of visual enclosure: the "crowd of heads" surround

the figure of Cuéllar. Cuéllar is also reduced to a skeletal frame of "bones and cartilages".

> Of direct significance to the meaning of the caricature in Mallarino's caption: *Congressman Adolfo Cuéllar – Suffer the little girls to come unto me* (Vásquez 107).

In this drawing, Mallarino not only seals Cuéllar's fate by boxing him into the space of thickly-drawn framed boundaries, but he transgresses an ethical boundary as well. He has no secure evidence of Cuéllar's transgression or a personal account from the victim to back up his theory. The only witness he appears to have is the victim's father, Señor Leal, who disappears in the narrative and Samanta's life shortly after the incident. His account is thus not entirely credible. Mallarino himself is aware of the tenuousness of his source as he states:

> It wasn't the first time Mallarino had drawn an "out-of-context cartoon," as he called a caricature without an obvious or immediate reference, such as a piece of news or something that was common knowledge (Vásquez 107-108).

In referring to the caricature as being "out-of-context", Mallarino entrenches the idea that he does not have complete confidence in the validity of this story. This therefore begs the question of whether Cuéllar is really guilty of the allegations made against him, or just a victim of Mallarino's power and ego owing to the fact that there is limited framed evidence but numerous framed fabrications of him.

5. Conclusion

In *Reputations*, Samanta is able to bring her trauma "home" by confronting Mallarino about the events that occurred 28 years prior in the same house in which it occurred. However, Mallarino is not able to provide her with a definitive answer, and she is not able to recall the events that occurred on that day.While Mallarino has momentary glimpses of redemption in the novel, his tendency to caricaturise others - instead of considering their full complexity as individuals - ultimately prevents him from gaining a sense of empathy and self-awareness. However, through Samanta's visit, he is able to see that there were greater ethical implications that resulted from his drawing of Adolfo Cuéllar.

The framing devices used in the extracts provided demonstrate how Mallarino quite literally compartmentalises people in his political cartoons, as well as how he views the world around him through tightly framed enclosures. This offers the reader insight into his rigid mental framework. However, through Mallarino's engagement with Samanta, the frames gradually start to break and shift, allowing him to see the greater ethical implications of his actions.

Chapter Four
Conclusion: Sealing the Frame

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the use of framing in two post-colonial novels from the Global South, namely, *Disgrace* and *Reputations*. As I have attempted to demonstrate, an attention to framing can offer a productive lens for literary analysis. Through the idea of framing, an awareness of pictorial and enclosed moments in the text are made visible. It also allows readers a sharpened sense of what exists inside of the frame, and what could potentially spill out of it, which contrasts with Simmel and Kant's conception of the frame being an absolute separation between the image and its environment. Both Coetzee and Vásquez draw inspiration from their personal creative pursuits in visual media - Coetzee's inspiration could arguably be drawn from his passion for photography and Vásquez's could arguably be drawn from his career as a journalist.

In order to develop the aim of my thesis, I have discussed articles written by key voices in the field of post-colonial world literature and intermediality, such as Elleke Boehmer and W. J. T Mitchell (among many others). However, Ayala Amir's article, "'What Used to Lie Outside the Frame': Boundaries of Photography, Subjectivity and Fiction in Three Novels by J.M. Coetzee", has much significance in this thesis as her attention to framing photographic moments in Coetzee's novels has helped shape my analysis. As I have shown, Amir contends that photographs used in Coetzee's novels are not only illustrative, but "arenas for ethical and political concerns" (60) as well. While my analysis has focused on architectural and natural frames as opposed to focusing solely on photographic images, her article has inspired an "exploration of subjectivity, its boundaries and the possibility of intersubjectivity" (Amir 60) which I have applied to moments captured in visually enclosed spaces.

In *Disgrace*, the idea of ethical boundaries is made visible through the lens of framing. The ethical boundaries which are crossed often directly affect female characters. In the cases of Melanie and Soraya, we are able to see the unequal power relations between white men and coloured women in post-Apartheid South Africa. These boundaries, invoked through painterly moments and architectural and/or natural

frames implicitly suggest that Lurie has a compartmentalised perspective of the world around him and views others, particularly women, as objectified by his gaze.

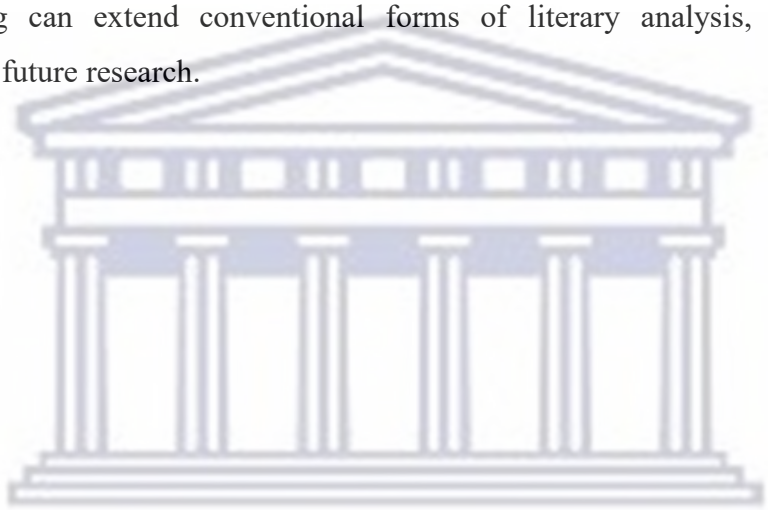
As part of a reframing, I visited the Windsor Mansions. While, it could be argued that this is the location Coetzee was referring to in the novel, it is important to note that this apartment building is situated in Rondebosch, Cape Town. The fictional apartment building in the novel is however situated in Green Point, Cape Town. Nonetheless, it could have been a source of inspiration for the novel. Visiting the building itself helped refocus my thoughts for Chapter Two.

(Image 4: Photograph of Windsor Mansions, Rondebosch, Cape Town)

Similarly, in the context of modern-day Colombia, the issue of gender-based violence is explored in *Reputations*. This issue, as well as the sense of political unrest in the country, is made visible through Mallarino's caricatures, which are framed

through clearly demarcated black-ink frames on "friendly rectangles of card". However, an awareness of those social and political issues are more implicitly framed through various architectural borders.

Despite the novels being penned by different authors and set in different countries and historical contexts, there are discernible connections between the two texts. There is a large body of scholarship on *Disgrace*. However, there is limited scholarship on *Reputations*. This is why I have attempted to bridge the connection between the two through an analysis that focuses on framing. This thesis demonstrates how framing can extend conventional forms of literary analysis, and perhaps contribute to future research.



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