



Original Article

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: EXPLORING DAVID LURIE'S STRUGGLE WITH AGING AND SOCIAL SHIFT IN J.M COETZEE'S DISGRACE

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ABSTRACT

Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee is a novel that deals with the protagonist David Lurie, a twice-divorced professor. The story is set in post-apartheid South Africa where Lurie is struggling with the loss of his relevance. His refusal to acknowledge old age and change in society leads to his downfall. Viewing Lurie through the lens of an individual who opposes change, this study considers Lurie's personal downfall against the backdrop of the changing society. It looks at Lurie's unwillingness to change behaviour, revealing that his obsession with youth and discomfort with changing social norms are the result of a larger crisis of his identity and entitlement. The novel, taking place during the turbulent times in South Africa when the government changed from apartheid to democracy, shows Lurie's downfall that is characterized by dwindling authority, professional disgrace, and physical aging. His downfall is in fact a representation of the larger cultural crisis. By way of close reading, the study sought to find out how Lurie's nonconformity to the evolving social norms, especially in terms of race and status, is a sign of the deeply ingrained ways that people and organizations hold on to outdated hierarchies. Besides that, the study wants to point out the fact that Lurie's eventually, very reluctantly, turning towards the vulnerable side of himself (like his work at the animal shelter) signifies the redeeming power of the limited recuperation in the midst of the systemic transformations. By associating Lurie's personal battle with the socio-political situation in post-apartheid South Africa, this research sheds light on the resistance to change that the novel depicts and takes implications for the understanding of the issues of identity, power, and transition in the case of transitional societies.

Keywords: Aging, Entitlement, Power, Post-Apartheid, Social Shift

INTRODUCTION

J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* was published in 1999. The protagonist David Lurie is a 52 years old twice divorced professor. He is a character who can't figure out his status in a society that is going through a radical change. He is depicted as a character who is stuck between a dying past and an incessantly critical present. The novel, set against the backdrop of the transformation of South Africa from apartheid to democracy, parallels Lurie's personal downfall that is characterized by growing old, losing respect, and having to change one's lifestyle according to the new social conditions. He is living in a world where power is being shared differently and where the very ground of his entitlement is challenged. His relationships with women like Soraya, Melanie, and Lucy testify to the fact that he still has a hard time letting go of power. Besides, the moral landscape he occupies is as complex as the society he lives

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in. Coetzee through Lurie's narrative digs deeper into life, power, and accountability, intertwining those themes with questions of justice and injustice in a shifting society.

Fixing on the youth Lurie finds it extremely hard to face the reality of his old self. He embarks on a ruthless fight against aging by resorting to his fixation on youth. Lurie's fixation on youth and desire revealed about his fear of irrelevance. Women in Lurie's life, such as Soraya, Melanie, and Lucy, and his relationship with them were reflections of his struggle with aging, which had made him a dominant figure in their lives. Lurie's obsession with youth, contempt for the new South Africa, and unstable relations with women have pointed to the causes of his difficult adaptation, which has resulted in isolation and moral vagueness. This non-acceptance of change is what causes his crisis. Yet, his non-acceptance of change is not simply a personal matter; it is indicative of a larger cultural inertia as society is trying to come to terms with the abolishment of the entrenched hierarchies of race, gender, and class. Studying Lurie's resistance yields the discovery of intricate links between age, power, and identity in a society that is on the brink of transformation.

Examining the intersections of aging, gender, and race in *Disgrace*, this research analyses David Lurie's struggle with aging and shifting societal norms. Lurie's resistance to aging and social change is a reflection of larger societal tensions. The way in which Coetzee uses Lurie's relationships to underscore his resistance to societal changes is one of the questions that this research attempted to answer. By analysing Lurie's confrontation with his aging self and the changing moral standards, it can be said that Coetzee is questioning how people and nations deal with continuity and rupture when the old power structure has started to collapse. This research will consider Lurie's battle against old age and his denial of social transformation to show the painful, sometimes brutal, process of giving up power, thus revealing both the personal and the social cost of fighting against the inevitable change. A very important question is how the resistance to change leads to Lurie's isolation. The ways in which Lurie's sense of superiority inhibits his adjustment to the new South Africa of the post-apartheid era are also examined. This research will also cover Lurie's ultimate change, and what it uncovers about forgiveness and acceptance. The question of how Coetzee employs Lurie to challenge patriarchy and racial power structures is also significant.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research will consist of an analytical study of J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace*. This research has a limited focus on the specific interplay of aging and social resistance in *Disgrace*. The research is based on postcolonial theory and existentialist ideas. Through the lens of Postcolonial theory, David Lurie's discomfort with changing power dynamics and his eventual resistance to change are examined in this research. Existentialist ideas were also taken into account to explore the ideas around aging and authenticity. This paper will also examine the moral ambiguity of David Lurie, analysing how Coetzee uses Lurie's character to comment on the intersections of power, privilege, and mortality in post-apartheid South Africa.

STRUGGLE WITH AGING

In J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, the protagonist, David Lurie, is a 52-year-old professor. He perceives both his intellectual and physical strengths as diminishing. His preoccupation with Romantic poetry and his self-perception as a person of letters clashes with his growing irrelevance in a modern, practical university of the day. The shifting politics of South Africa led to the internal restructuring of the university, and Lurie undergoes demotion from a professor of modern languages to an adjunct professor of communications, a field he looks down upon. The narrative depicts this process as:

Once a professor of modern languages, he has been, since Classics and Modern Languages were closed down as part of the great rationalization, adjunct professor of communications. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

The decline of his career coincides with his physical aging and compounds his feeling of being worthless in a transformative society. In this way David Lurie's personal decline is linked to his aging and loss of vitality.

The novel describes Lurie as a lover of women; it states:

He himself has no son. His childhood was spent in a family of women. As mother, aunts, sisters full away, they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, a daughter. The company of women made him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

A significant part of Lurie's identity has always been built on his ability to effortlessly attract women.

With his height, his good bones, his olive skin, his flowing hair, he could always count on a degree of magnetism. If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for decades, that was the backbone of his life. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

But with his growing age, Lurie lost his power to attract women.

Then one day it all ended. Without warning his power fled. Glances that would once have responded to his slid over, past, through him. Overnight he became a ghost. If he wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her; often, in one way or another, to pay her. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie eventually developed a fear of losing sexual attractiveness and identity. As he ages (he is 52 at the start of the novel), his physical magnetism fades, leading to a profound identity crisis. His fear of becoming unattractive pushes him towards increasingly desperate sexual encounters, initially with a prostitute like Soraya, and later a student, Melanie Isaacs.

He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

It is also crucial to keep in consideration that Melanie and Soraya were women of colour. Lurie being sexually involved with women of different races implies his desire to retain control as a White.

Lurie's fixation on youth is a coping mechanism against mortality, highlighting his inability to accept aging. Lurie once thought of castration so that he could shift his focus from desire and physical pleasures towards the business of the old, as sexual gratification is something that is most suited to the younger generations than him. The novel states:

He ought to give up, retire from the game. At what age, he wonders, did Origen castrate himself? Not the most graceful of the decks, at least, so that one can turn one's mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie's thoughts get deeper. He thinks of the process and how animals go through castration almost every day. However, Lurie ends his thoughts by claiming "There is still Soraya" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Soraya could mean every other prostitute who accepts to sleep with an old man for money.

The novel starts with the lines, "FOR A MAN of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie viewed sex as a 'problem to be solved' and a way to exercise control and power, but these pursuits ultimately leave him feeling empty and further alienated. His affair with Melanie is an attempt to cling to his former virility but results in the scandal that costs him his job and status.

As a professor, Lurie tried to take advantage of Melanie. Lurie believes that a woman's beauty is something to be shared. Lurie tells Melanie "...a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). However, he was aware of his age when he was trying on Melanie. Lurie felt like a parent when he tried to make advances towards her, "Melanie! He says, trying to keep his tone light. But he has forgotten how to woo. The voice he hears belongs to a cajoling parent, not a lover" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie forgetting how to woo someone's affection explains how his days of youth had long passed by. He feels his voice appear like a parent rather than a lover when he was talking to Melanie. The difference in age was felt by him. His morals were acting inside his head, but his sexual desires were overpowering his morals. The lines describe Lurie's mental state, "A child! He thinks: *No more than a child! What am I doing?* Yet his heart lurches with desire" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). However, Lurie's mind was taken over by desires. Desire for young women like Melanie underscores his insecurity for aging. His sexual desires make him morally weak.

On a visit to Melanie's flat one afternoon, Lurie makes sexual advances towards her. She verbally says, "No, not now!" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). But he makes love to her. When it is over, Melanie asked him to leave as her cousin Paulina will be back any minute. On that day Lurie realises his mistake of engaging with a student as young as his daughter. When Melanie asked him to leave:

He obeys, but then, when he reaches his car, is overtaken with such dejection, such dullness, that he sits slumped at the wheel unable to move. A mistake, a huge mistake. At this moment, he has no doubt, she Melanie, is trying to cleanse herself of it, of him. He sees her running a bath, stepping into the water, wyes closed like a sleepwalker's. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

He feels invisible to younger women and is forced to confront the idea that he is considered too old to be sexually desirable, an awareness that his ex-wife Rosalind makes painfully clear. Rosalind tells Lurie:

You're what – fifty -two? Do you think a young girl finds any pleasure in going to bed with a man of that age? Do you think she finds it good to watch you in the middle of your...? Do you ever think about that? [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie also realises that Rosalind is right:

...perhaps she has a point. Perhaps it is the right of the young to be protected from the sight of their elders in the throes of passion. That is what whores are for, after all: to put up with the ecstasies of the unlovely. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie's attempt was however not termed as rape. The novel's third person limited narration, which reflected Lurie's perspective, describes the encounter as "Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). The lines implied Melanie's passivity rather than active consent. Lurie's actions were characterised as an abuse of power that amounts to sexual harassment and abuse.

Lurie's character portrays the erosion of authority. When the mid-term test took place, Melanie was not in the class, and he marked her as present and gave her a score of seventy. His role as a teacher had enabled him to exercise his power over the students' future by granting them the grades. Lurie misuses his authority to take physical advantages from a student. As a compensation he provided her with attendance and marks for her un-attempted mid-term test. However, "At the foot of the page he pencils a note to himself: 'Provisional'. Seventy: a vacillator's mark, neither good nor bad" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). His footnote to himself is a way he reassures himself that the grades he provided her were not very influential. His morals were acting against him, which made him leave a footnote to himself so that his mind could accept that he is not taking advantage of his authority. Later Lurie came to know that

Melanie wished to drop out of the university. Her father, Mr. Isaacs, met Lurie asking for help. Mr Isaac tells him that she has much respect for him as a professor, claiming that she would listen to his advice if he told her not to drop out. Lurie ought to say, "Respect? You are out of date, Mr Isaacs. Your daughter lost respect for me weeks ago, and with good reasons" Coetzee (2000). But he instead replied "I'll see what I can do..." Coetzee (2000). Lurie was aware that he would be paying for his actions this time.

You will not get away with it, he tells himself afterwards. Nor will father Isaacs in faraway George forget this conversation, with its lies and evasions. *I'll see what I can do. Why not come clean? I am the worm in the apple*, he should have said. *How can I help you when I am the very source of your woe?* Coetzee (2000)

Melanie eventually lodged a formal complaint against Lurie. The notification that arrived at Lurie's office:

...in an envelope marked *Confidential* – is accompanied by a copy of the code. Article 3 deals with victimization or harassment on grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, sexual preference, or physical disability. Coetzee (2000)

This situation resulted in a university committee hearing at which Lurie was pronounced guilty of sexual harassment and compelled to resign after he refused to express any remorse or make any apologies. His dismissal for misconduct and his forced resignation symbolises the collapse of his personal and professional identity. Lurie, however, never felt guilty of his actions. During his hearing from the committee that was established to provide a judgement against the complaint that was registered against Lurie:

He does not feel nervous. On the contrary, he feels quite sure of himself. His heart beats evenly, he has slept well. Vanity, he thinks, the dangerous vanity of the gambler; vanity and self-righteousness. He is going into this in the wrong spirit. But he does not care. Coetzee (2000)

Lurie claims that, "I have no fear of the committee. I have no fear of the observer" Coetzee (2000). He was trying to make the committee realize that his actions with Melanie were purely a result of his sexual impulses and desire for pleasure. His identity is at stake, which makes him rationalize his actions instead of transforming himself. His conduct is an expression of his struggle against the shifting power relations in post-apartheid South Africa. He is not ready to apologize in front of the committee that was supposed to deliver justice to Black women. He tells the committee "I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorced at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros" Coetzee (2000). Lurie pleaded guilty for following an impulse he could not resist, not because he abused Melanie. One of the members of the committee Farodia Rassool states that:

Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specificity, all of a sudden it is not abuse of a young woman he is confessing to, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part. Coetzee (2000)

Rassool wanted to bring into light the exploitation of Blacks by the Whites calling Lurie's abuse of Melanie a part of it. The committee wanted to make the trial fair and just because the incident involved a White university professor who abused a Black student. As the country is in transition from apartheid to democracy, the committee wanted to set an example by punishing a White that in the new South Africa there is equality.

Melanie's decision to voice against Lurie made him lose his reputation. However, Lurie did not accept that Melanie lodged the complaint herself. "Melanie would not have taken such a step by herself, he is convinced. She is too innocent for that, too ignorant of her power" Coetzee (2000). He considers women nothing more than a means to satisfy his desires, and as such, he completely ignores their independence and power. Lurie's perspective is that women exist merely for his pleasure, completely ignoring their rights and ability to decide for themselves. His refusal to accept his aging and the decline of his career leads to a situation where he defends rather than changes his ways consistent with the new social order. He explains his conduct by shifting blame onto others for his bad luck and not accepting his part in the incident. He explains to Lucy, his daughter, how he was offered a compromise, but he wouldn't accept. The compromise was "Re-education. Reformation of the character. The code-word was *counselling*" Coetzee (2000). When Lucy questioned him "And are you so perfect that you can't do with a little counselling?" Coetzee (2000). He replied to Lucy that he can simply choose death rather than apologising for his deeds. He says:

It reminds me too much of Mao's China. Recantation, self-criticism, public apology. I'm old-fashioned, I would prefer simply to put against a wall and shot. Have done with it. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy tells Lurie that the affair between teacher's and student had been going on for a long time and was quite normal until recent times, "It certainly went on when I was a student. If they prosecuted every case the profession would be decimated" Coetzee (2000). But Lurie replies that, "These are puritanical times. Private life is public business" Coetzee (2000). Lurie's lines explain how the post-apartheid society is trying to bring personal matters into public spheres, if it involves individuals with both the races. He called the post-apartheid society as 'puritanical'. Puritanical because like the puritanical times the post-apartheid society is having a very strict attitude towards moral or social issues. The novel shows the backdrop of post-apartheid period. It portrays how Whites were treated during post-apartheid times. Lurie's incident with Melanie was something that is common in every educational institution. But because Lurie was White, the university punished him. They wanted to record that a White person has been punished duly, and the university does not discriminate on races.

When Lurie visited his daughter Lucy's farm, he came across the realisation that he is growing old. It was when Lucy tried to convince Lurie to let go of the past as he had paid the price for everything that had associated him with Melanie. She tells Lurie that

Melanie won't think too harshly of him. She believes that "women can be surprisingly forgiving" Coetzee (2000). Lurie thinks, "Is Lucy, his child, presuming to tell him about women?" Coetzee (2000).

His daughter, whom once upon a time he used to drive to school and ballet class, to the circus and the skating rink, is taking him on an outing, showing him life, showing him this other, unfamiliar world. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy's farm is like a new adventure to him. When he was living with Lucy, he tried not to act as a parent. He urges himself to adopt habits or make preparations that will lead to a better life when he is old.

He has stayed with his daughter only for brief periods before. Now he is sharing her house, her life. He has to be careful not to allow old habits to creep back, the habits of a parent: putting the toilet roll on the spool, switching off lights, chasing the cat off the sofa. Practice for old age, he admonishes himself. Practice fitting in. Practice for the old folks' home. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy tried to know the actual case that had happened with her father Lurie and his university student Melanie, as she had partial knowledge of the incident from Lurie's second ex-wife Rosalind. She was also curious why Lurie did not try to defend himself. Lurie tells her his reason for not defending himself. He says, "The case you want me to make is a case that can no longer be made, *basta*. Not in our day. If I tried to make it I would not be heard" Coetzee (2000). What Lurie meant is that, in the new South Africa, in post-apartheid times the agony of White was ignored. If Lurie had tried to justify his actions, there would have been no one to hear him. Lucy, however, is determined to hear Lurie's story; she says, "Even if you are what you say, a moral dinosaur, there is a curiosity to hear the dinosaur speak. I for one am curious. What is your case? Let us hear it" Coetzee (2000). Lurie tells Lucy that "My case rests on the rights of desire.... *I was a servant of Eros*: that is what he wants to say, ... *It was god who acted through me*" Coetzee (2000). Eros was the Greek god of love, desire, passion, and procreation. Lurie tried to justify that his action was a result of desire and passion, and to him there is no moral attached when someone acts out of sexual impulses. He gives an example of a dog to justify himself further. He says:

One can punish a dog, it seems to me, for an offense like chewing a slipper. A dog will accept the justice of that: a beating for a chewing. But desire is another story. No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy questions, "So males must be allowed to follow their instincts unchecked? Is that the moral?" Coetzee (2000). Lurie replies that:

No, that is not the moral. What was ignoble about the Kenilworth spectacle was that poor dog had begun to hate its own nature. It no longer needed to be beaten. It was ready to punish itself. At that point it would have been better to shoot it. Coetzee (2000)

What Lurie meant is that he had started to hate his own nature. He does not need any punishment for acting on his desires. He is ready to punish himself. With the phrase 'better to shoot it', Lurie tried to imply that when an individual starts hating oneself for one's actions, it is better to end such life. Perhaps he might have realised his moral degradation and physical aging. Lucy, however, provides another option for such a degraded state of life; she says "...have it fixed" Coetzee (2000). But Lurie does not want to change himself; instead, he preferred being shot. He says "Perhaps. But at the deepest level I think it might have preferred being shot" Coetzee (2000). Lurie's age acts as a barrier to adapting to new social norms.

In the course of the novel, Lucy's rape acted as the major event that made David Lurie realise his growing age. After her rape, the way Lucy treated Lurie made him come across a thought that told him that his daughter had grown up. He notices that "...for the second time in a day she spoke to him as if to a child – a child or an old man" Coetzee (2000). Lurie was, however, severely hurt by the robbers who raped Lucy. He went into a state of shock and his body felt weak and trembling. "For the first time he has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future" Coetzee (2000). He tries to regain control over his mind and body but deep inside he had already given up. "His pleasure in living has been snuffed out. Like a leaf on a steam, like a puffball on a breeze, he has begun to float towards his end" Coetzee (2000).

While living with Lucy, Lurie came across Bev Shaw. Bev is a Black woman who is Lucy's friend. She runs a local animal clinic near Lucy's farm, where she provides care for sick, abandoned, and unwanted animals. After spending much of his time at Lucy's farm and working at the animal clinic, Lurie gets close to Bev Shaw. He sleeps with her. When he was lying beside her, he thought:

Let me not forget this day, he tells himself, lying beside her when they are spent. After the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs, this is what I have come to. This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this. Coetzee (2000)

This thought reflected how Lurie had accepted his degraded state in life. He had accepted that he had grown old and therefore he was unappealing to younger and beautiful women. He believes that now he can only attract women like Bev Shaw who are unappealing according to him.

When Lurie met Rosalind after he returned to Cape Town, she took a dig at his current state of life. She tells him "You are going to end up as one of those sad old men who poke around in rubbish bins" Coetzee (2000). To this Lurie replied that "I'm going to end up in a hole in the ground... and so are you. So are we all" Coetzee (2000). With his reply, Lurie meant that everyone ends up being buried in the ground. Everyone has one destination, one end i.e. death. Whatever goes through in life, the end remains the same for every human.

Lurie remorse's his actions after realising what he did with Melanie was his mistake. He believes that the trial that was held against him was set up to punish him because:

If the old men hog the young women, what will be the future of the species? That, at bottom, was the case for the prosecution. Half of literature is about it: your women struggling to escape from under the weight of old man, for the sake of the species. Coetzee (2000)

At this point Lurie accepted his aging self. "He sighs. The young in one another's arms, heedless, engrossed in the sensual music. No country, this, for old men" Coetzee (2000). He regretted his past actions as he realised that there is no place for the old men. No sensual pleasure, no desires; the old men only wait for death to come. Lurie's struggle with aging and dis-satisfaction with the social shift is manifesting as a crisis of identity and power in the post-apartheid South Africa.

When Lurie returned to Lucy's farm after spending some time at Cape Town, he came to know that Lucy is pregnant. He questioned Lucy, "Do you love him yet?" Coetzee (2000). He meant the child in her womb. A child of an unknown father who had a different race. Lucy replied that her love for the child would grow. She tells him "I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too" Coetzee (2000). What Lucy meant is that, she wants to love her child unconditionally even though the child will not carry a pure White lineage. She wants to be a good person who believes in equality of all races and wants Lurie to adapt the same. Lurie replied "I suspect it is too late for me. I'm just an old lag serving out my sentence. But you go ahead. You are well on the way" Coetzee (2000). Lurie believes that he is already old and does not have much time to change himself. He had accepted his growing self in a way that demotivated him. Lurie's resistance to accept social change is one of the central ways Coetzee critiques the old South African order. His inability to evolve reflects a broader societal struggle — those unwilling to let go of privilege and tradition are left alienated and morally bankrupt. Lurie thoughts go back to Lucy:

So: once she was only a little tadpole in her mother's body, and now here she is, solid in her existence, more solid than he has ever been. With luck she will last a long time, long beyond him. When he is dead she will, with luck, still be here doing her ordinary tasks among the flowerbeds. And from within her will have issued another existence, that with luck will be just as solid, just as long-lasting. So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten. Coetzee (2000)

The lines express how Lurie views the process of life. Through his thoughts he somewhere questions his own existence.

Lurie had sexual obsession, which made his struggle with aging a central theme. His gradual decline corresponds with the massive societal transformations; thus, his individual deterioration is a mirror to the political alterations in the bigger context. Lurie's aging body is a symbol which represents the decay of old South Africa—stubborn, resistant, and unable to adapt. His eventual shift in personality when he worked for abandoned dogs symbolised the growing acceptance in a new South Africa which is based on empathy, acceptance, and equality.

RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL CHANGE

David Lurie is a representative of the crisis of a post-apartheid South Africa that is trying to transform. Lurie still holds to the old views of privilege, gender, authority, and race and does not want to change to the new moral and social order built on the post-apartheid values of equality and accountability. He sees himself as the sole authority and any opposition to this is a danger to his existence.

Lurie's behaviour towards women, especially Melanie and his daughter Lucy, is a manifestation of his patriarchal and repressive views. Lurie looked down on Lucy and her life choices as she chose the country life rather than the city. The third person narrative of the novel put it as:

Dogs and a gun; breads in the oven and a crop in the earth. Curious that he and her mother, cityfolk, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. Coetzee (2000)

Lurie's treatment of Lucy reflects his discomfort with her choices. This resistance to accept Lucy's way of life manifests as oppressive behaviour, particularly towards women and those he perceives as inferior. Lurie's patriarchal attitude is evident as he says:

One wants to leave something behind. Or at least a man wants to leave something behind. It's easier for a woman...Easier, I mean, to produce something with a life of its own. Coetzee (2000)

Lurie wanted to leave something behind after him, something to this world when he himself is not physically present. That is why he chose to write an opera called 'Byron in Italy' based on the last years of the famous poet Byron. However, he felt that it was easier for women to leave something to this world. Easier because they could produce children. His belief presents the idea that women's contribution to this society could only be their children, and nothing else that is intellectual. He tells Lucy that, "being a father is a rather abstract business" Coetzee (2000).

However, while living in Lucy's farm, Lurie soon realises that his daughter is moving away from his parental control. She is living independently. And to an extent Lurie felt that this change in Lucy was good.

As a child Lucy had been quite and self-effacing but never, as far as he knew, judging him. Now, in her middle twenties, she has begun to separate. The dogs, the gardening, the astrology books, the asexual clothes: in each he recognizes a statement of independence, considered, purposeful. The turn away from men too. Making her own life. Coming out of his shadow. Good! He approves! [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie also possesses a racial attitude. Lurie, to some extent, does not want to face his racial biases directly, but through his relations with the Black people, he shows his discomfort with the White privilege that has been abolished. For him, the transition of power dynamics breeds insecurity about his position and dominance. Lurie's dealings with Petrus, a Black dog man, expose his unease over the reshaping of race relations in South Africa.

Over the course of the novel, Lucy was raped and her house was robbed by three Blacks: two Black men and a Black boy. They even killed her dogs. Lucy's incident presents a picture of post-apartheid South Africa where Blacks were taking control over. They were committing crimes with the justification that they were providing equality. Lurie finds it hard to save his daughter from the hands of the imposter, who initially told Lucy that they wanted to make a phone call and entered her premises.

On the day when Lucy was raped at the farm, Lurie felt helpless. When one of the men asked for his keys, Lurie says, "Take them, ... Take everything. Just leave my daughter alone" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). He just wanted to save his daughter from the hands of the men. "He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie's intellectual knowledge will not help him in a place where people were desperate to settle their scores with the Whites. The third person narrative calls it 'darkest Africa'. The 'darkness' implied both the darkness of skin and the darkness of civilization as it further states, "Mission work: what has it left behind, that huge enterprise of upliftment? Nothing that he can see" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). The lines directly question the civilizing mission of the Christian missionary. The Whites considered it a mission, a great enterprise of upliftment, to civilize the dark continent i.e. Africa but the state that South Africa holds during post-apartheid made the works of the missionary questionable. After the incident Lurie tries to console himself:

It happens every day, every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie's thoughts portray a deeper picture of the lives in South Africa. The amount of violence the country is experiencing, Lurie feels he is fortunate that his life is spared. He is not made captive and his daughter Lucy is also safe. Lurie further thinks:

A risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose working pity and terror are irrelevant. This is how one must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. Cars, shoes; women too. There must be some niche in the system for women and what happens to them. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

The lines give an explanation of how things were running in South Africa during post-apartheid times. There were not enough resources and the Black felt the need to revolt against Whites and snatch away every luxury they possessed. Everything seems a luxury during those times, be it a car, a pair of shoes, or a packet of cigarettes. The Black, or the natives of South Africa had made a circulatory system. They believed that everything should be circulated and everyone should have access to everything and be happy. It has developed as a theory, and they were acting according to it. They did not consider it as an evil to snatch away or rob anyone else's possession; for them, it is just part of a larger circulation process. Lurie tries to convince himself that in South Africa it is the new normal; one must see life in this county in this way. One has to accept this circulation process and the evil that it encompasses; otherwise, they will go mad. But the major issue that Lurie's thoughts point out is about women and their lives. Like cars and shoes, women also became part of the greater circulation process, particularly White women like Lucy.

After Lucy's incident her neighbour Ettinger tells Lurie that, "The best is, you save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, not any more, you can be sure" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). He is another White man living in the same neighbourhood as Lucy. He warns Lurie to save himself on his own, as in this new South Africa the power had now shifted to the Blacks. Those that have lived all their lives under Whites oppression had finally got their hands on power. The police are also not going to save the Whites if any of the crimes upon them involve a Black native South African. Lurie later tried to convince Lucy to give up on the farm. His interaction with his daughter also reflects his controlling behaviour. He tried to have an idea about Lucy's further plans as her farm was not safe for her anymore. But Lucy had made up her mind to continue her life on the farm itself. Her regular life. On that day Lurie realised that Lucy is "Not her father's little girl, not any longer" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#).

Lurie once felt that whatever had happened to him and Lucy should be kept a secret. Otherwise, people would point a finger; they would be a topic of gossip. He tells himself "Lucy's secret; his disgrace" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). The incident was Lucy's secret, but it was also Lurie's disgrace because he could not save his daughter from her plight. Lurie's thoughts turn towards those three imposters who raped Lucy.

The men will watch the newspaper, listen to the gossip. They will read that they are being sought for robbery and assault and nothing else. It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. *Too ashamed*, they will say to each other, *too ashamed* to tell, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit. Coetzee (2000)

The imposters will chuckle because they will feel that their deeds were concealed. Silence is drawn like a blanket over Lucy's body. They will feel a victory because the woman they raped was *too ashamed* to voice her assault. Moreover, after her incident Lucy had lost her confidence:

Because of her disgrace. Because of her shame. That is what their visitors have achieved; that is what they have done to this confident, modern young woman. Like a stain the story is spreading across the district. Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for. Coetzee (2000)

The third person narrative called Lucy a visitor. A visitor in the country of Blacks, not a native. It points out how the situation in South Africa had turned a confident modern young woman into someone timid and submissive. Lucy's story had spread across the district, but it is not exactly her story. The owner of the story is the Black rebels who believed that they were serving equality by working through violence. They showed that they had put a White woman in her place who was living independently on her own farm. Her place where she is underconfident and submissive to men. They have shown her that a woman was for man's pleasure, not living independently on her own terms. Lucy's rape and her disgrace had painted a broader picture of how women are objectified.

Lucy's distress after the incident is unmatched with Lurie's. She is completely shattered. Her mind is rather tormented by the thought of their being such hostility against her; a hostility that was so personal.

'It was so personal,' she says. 'It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was ... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them'. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy struggles to comprehend the reason behind their extreme aversion towards her and at the same time, she tries to reason how that could ever happen, given the fact that they haven't even met. She never exerted any effort in trying to be more powerful, controlling, or oppressive than them. Lurie provides her with an answer. He tells her:

'It was history speaking through them,' ... 'A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors'. Coetzee (2000)

Lucy's incident was a reaction initiated by the history of injustice. It was the history of suffering that had made the natives of South Africa hate the White population. The actions of the imposters were a desire for revenge that came down from their ancestors. Lucy tells Lurie that she feels the imposters will come back for her. She says, "I think I am in their territory. They have marked me. They will come back for me" Coetzee (2000). The lines express how alienated Lucy feels on her own farm. The line gives an impression of a jungle with fixed territories. If anyone tries to settle themselves in a marked territory of someone else, they will be uprooted. When Lurie suggested that it is better to leave the farm for her own safety, she tried to explain Lurie her way of looking into the matter. She tells him:

But isn't there another way of looking at it, David? What if ... what if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves. Coetzee (2000)

For Lucy the incident that happened with her was the price for living in someone else's country. According to her, native Blacks of South Africa felt that she owed something to them and saw themselves as debt collectors. The debt might be of all the years of living freely in a foreign land with all the power and luxury while making the natives their slaves. And in the post-apartheid times, when the natives had finally found freedom and power in their own land, they wanted the foreign settlers to pay for staying. Nevertheless, Lurie's perspective differed from that of Lucy. Lucy sympathises with the natives. She tries to understand their point of view for committing crimes in the name of justice. Lurie on the other hand tries to blame the nature of Blacks. He tells Lucy, "I am sure they tell themselves many things. It is in their interest to make up stories to justify them. But trust your feelings. You said you felt only hatred from them" Coetzee (2000). Lurie's attitude defines how he does not want to recognise all the years of suffering of the Black race.

Lucy, however, never wanted to lodge a complaint for her rape. She reported to the police only about robbery. But it was Lurie who tried to convince Lucy to lodge a complaint against the three imposters on the charges of rape. He tells her:

'Lucy, my dearest, why don't you want to tell? It was a crime. There is no shame in being the object of a crime. You did not choose to be the object. You are an innocent party'. Coetzee (2000)

Lurie's assault on Melanie is crucial here. Lurie has never accepted that Melanie had lodged the complaint against him. He felt that she was too ignorant of her power. He believed that Melanie was made to do it either by her father Mr. Issac, her boyfriend Ryan, or her cousin Pulina. But on the other hand, Lurie wants his daughter to have the courage to voice against her rape. Lurie, being Lucy's father, encourages her to voice against injustice. In Lurie, we can find a sense of hypocrisy. He finds Mr. Isaac being the reason for Melanie to lodge a complaint against him. But he himself tries to make his daughter lodge a complaint against her injustice. Nevertheless, Lurie realises his fault in Melanie's case. He questions Lucy, "Can I guess? he says. Are you trying to remind me of

something? Of what women undergo at the hands of men" Coetzee (2000). The lives of women which are surrounded by men; men who always try to seek physical pleasure from their bodies. And how women's lives are full of fear and uncertainty in the hands of men.

Lucy eventually expresses her reason for not reporting her rape to the police. She tells Lurie:

The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone.... This place being South Africa. Coetzee (2000)

By considering her matter as private, Lucy tried to stress the fact that she is a White woman living alone on a farm in South Africa. What had happened to her is private because the same incident of rape would not have been committed to a woman who is a Black, native of South Africa. During the time of transition from apartheid to democracy, the landscape and power structure in South Africa are constantly in change. In this period, any violence committed against the Whites is not considered a crime because of their long history of dominance and oppression of the Blacks. Lucy tells Lurie that if her incident had taken place in another time, it could have been a public matter. And the incident could have been considered a crime. But in South Africa during post-apartheid, her incident was a private matter. It is not something that anyone would give much importance to. In Lurie's own case, he considered his affair with Melanie a purely private matter. But he refused to justify himself because he believed that in the post-apartheid times the private matters were made public. There is a contrast in Lurie's and Lucy's cases. Because Lurie was White, his incident with Melanie received widespread attention and he had to lose his job in the name of justice. Even though his crime was not as severe as those imposters who raped Lucy and robbed her house.

Nevertheless, Lurie does not give up on Lucy. He tries to make her understand that her suffering won't erase out the years of injustice of the Blacks in the hands of Whites. He tells her, "That is not how vengeance works, Lucy. Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets" Coetzee (2000). Vengeance is exactly the same thing as the desire of revenge. Just like fire, it spreads and never ends; on the contrary, it becomes more and more greedy and stronger as time goes by. Lurie questions Lucy "Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present?" Coetzee (2000). By 'crimes of the past', Lurie meant all the injustice, domination and power struggles. It counts from forced settlement to slavery.

Lurie's discomfort with post-apartheid shifts reflects a broader resistance to loss of traditional power. It is evident through Lurie's conflict with Petrus. When Lurie first met Petrus at Lucy's farm, he introduces himself as "I am the gardener and the dog-man" Coetzee (2000). When Lurie was watching soccer on the television, he did not understand a word because the commentary was made in native South African language.

The commentary alternates between Sotho and Xhosa, language of which he understands not a word. He turns the sound down to a murmur. Saturday afternoon in South Africa: a time consecrated to men and their pleasures. He nods off. Coetzee (2000)

Saturday afternoon is a day of relaxation and men spend the evening watching soccer. But to a White person like Lurie, the Saturday afternoon is no longer an evening to relax and watch soccer. It is because in new South Africa, during post-apartheid circumstances, the television commentaries were made in the native language. Whites like Lurie do not understand a word, and so they chose to turn down the volume. "When he wakes, Petrus is beside him on the sofa with a bottle of beer in his hand. He has turned the volume higher" Coetzee (2000). Petrus, being a Black and a native of South Africa, understands the language of commentary very well. He sits on the sofa with a bottle of beer in his hand, all ready to enjoy his Saturday evening. During post-apartheid times, the lives of Blacks were improving. Their language was getting recognition and they were not forced into slavery.

After Lucy's rape, Lurie's suspicion on Petrus grows. Lurie felt a connection between Lucy's rape and Petrus's involvement. Lurie, however, realised that he cannot dismiss Petrus on the grounds of suspicion.

He sells his labour under contract, unwritten contract, and that contract makes no provision for dismissal on grounds of suspicion. It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Coetzee (2000)

Petrus was not Lucy's slave. He offered his help on Lucy's farm, perhaps he is just a hired labourer. If there is a contract between Lucy and Petrus, it was unwritten. Therefore, there is no ground to dismiss him. Lurie had to prove himself if he wished to blame a Black man for any involvement with crime. He cannot dismiss him simply because he grew suspicious of him. For Lurie:

He would not mind hearing Petrus's story one day. But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. Coetzee (2000)

English not being a native language would not present the truth of South Africa. To hear the stories of natives like Petrus, English is surely not the exact medium. English will not hold the true essence of South Africa.

When Lurie was working with Petrus at the farm, he tried to bring up the event of the day when the imposters arrived at their farm. He tried to tell Petrus how desperately he wanted the men to be punished. He says, "I am Lucy's father. I want those men to be caught and brought before the law and punished. Am I wrong? Am I wrong to want justice?" Coetzee (2000). Lucy's incident made Lurie realise the feeling of a parent when their child goes through suffering and injustice. Lucy's incident makes Lurie and Mr. Isaac

the co-passengers of the same boat, a boat with a destination to their child's justice. When Bev Shaw tried to comfort Lurie by telling him that he should leave his daughter to live her life on her own terms, Lurie tells her:

I let go of Lucy long ago. I have been the least protective of fathers. But the present situation is different. Lucy is objectively in danger. We have had that demonstrated to us. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

With Lucy's incident, Lurie realised the importance of the father figure in his daughter's life. In the new South Africa, Lucy is in danger because she is a White. That is why Lurie wanted to be a protective father; protect his daughter from all evils. "Despite Bev's counsel, despite Petrus's assurances, despite Lucy's obstinacy, he is not prepared to abandon his daughter" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). He expresses himself to Bev Shaw. He tells her, "Lucy says I can't go on being a father for ever. I can't imagine, in this life, not being Lucy's father" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#).

When Lurie encountered the same young boy who raped Lucy at Petrus's party, he wanted to call the police and hand him over for interrogation of a crime which is much severer than just robbery. But Lucy was head strong not to report the crime. She had accepted her fate in the new South Africa. Lurie, however, constantly tries to change her mind:

Lucy, Lucy, I plead with you! You want to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way to do it. If you fail to stand up for yourself at this moment, you will never be able to hold your head up again. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

Lurie had not accepted the social shift of the time. He strongly believed that his voice would be heard. Lucy's acceptance of the new times is evident from Petrus's statement as he tells Lurie, "The new pipe will have to cross Lucy's land ... it is good that she has given her permission. She is 'forward looking'. 'She is a forward-looking lady, not backward-looking'" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). According to Petrus, Lucy is forward looking because she has accepted her fate. She does not want to be an enemy with Blacks; she accepts whatever is asked of her. She is not 'backward looking' in the sense that she does not try to hold on to her former power.

After living with Lucy for a long time, Lurie decides to return to Cape Town. He went to his house that was located close to the university. Upon putting his foot in the house, he noticed that his house had been robbed. Nearly nothing was left.

No ordinary burglary. A raiding party moving in, cleaning out the site, retreating laden with bags, boxes, suitcases. Booty; war reparations; another incident in the great campaign of redistribution. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

In Cape Town, he went to the Dock Theatre where Melanie's play was being staged. While he was watching the play, seated with the crowd, "Though they are his countrymen, he could not feel more alien among them, more of an imposter" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). It was because even though he was a White, he had a history with Melanie but still he is there watching her play. In the Dock Theatre, Lurie met Ryan, Melanie's boyfriend. He tells Lurie "Stay with your own kind" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). The line is ambiguous. On the surface, Ryan was telling Lurie to stay with his own kind, with people of his own age. However, the line somewhere also meant that Ryan was warning Lurie to stay with his own race. To not get involved with the Blacks.

Lurie returned to Lucy's farm after living in Cape Town for a while. On his return, he found out that Lucy was expecting a baby with one of the intruders. Lurie did not understand what Lucy wanted. He thought that Lucy had already taken care of the situation when she was raped. Nevertheless, Lucy tells Lurie how she wants to deal with her life.

David, I can't run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not anymore. You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

She makes it clear that she can take care of her life on her own. She does not need Lurie to make decisions for her life. Lurie replies "Very well. This has come as a shock to me, I confess but I will stand by you, whatever you decide. There is no question about that" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie never expected such a confession from his daughter. But as a father he decides to support her decision. His reply to Lucy resembles a father's unconditional support for his daughter.

Even though Lurie told Lucy that he would support her in her decision, he could not accept the fact that his bloodline got tainted. The third person narrative presented the thoughts of David Lurie, "A father without the sense to have a son: is this how it is all going to end, is this how his line is going to run out, like water dribbling into the earth?" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). If Lurie ever had a son, his bloodline would have continued. But now that he has a daughter who will give birth to a child conceived from an African man, Lurie felt devastated. Lurie's thoughts possess a racial attitude. His concern for his bloodline arises from the fact that the child Lucy will give birth to will be a mixed race. The child will not have a pure White lineage. "Standing against the wall outside the kitchen, hiding his face in his hands, he heaves and heaves and finally cries" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). The presented David Lurie's emotional breakdown. After going through immense experiences of suffering, Lurie finally releases his emotions through tears.

Towards the end of the novel, we came to know that Petrus had built his new residence near Lucy's farm. And the young boy who raped Lucy was also living with Petrus's family. Petrus claimed that the young boy was a brother of his wife. Lucy tells Lurie that "I suspect there is something wrong with him. But I can't order him off the property, it's not in my power" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lucy's line indicated the loss of power of the Whites. In the new times, the Blacks possess their rights and law protects them. Later, Lucy told Lurie that Petrus offered to marry her. However, she tells him that, "In any event, it is not me he is after, he is after the farm. The

farm is my dowry" Coetzee (2000). Lucy already knows what Petrus intended, but she does not wish to go against it. She tries to accept whatever comes her way. Lucy adds:

Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game. Coetzee (2000)

By marrying Lucy, he will gain control over her land, and in return she will live a safe life by being his wife. In the new South Africa, there is no safety for the Whites. But after getting married to a native, Lucy can live a safe life. She will receive his protection and her identity will become associated with him. Lurie does not accept the offer for marriage. He wholeheartedly rejects it. But Lucy tries to objectively explain her situation in a place like South Africa. She tells Lurie "Objectively I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here" Coetzee (2000). Her lines explain her powerlessness. She is in a state of vulnerability in a place like South Africa. She has no power, no protection. Lucy decides to get married to Petrus. She accepts all that he wants from her. She is ready to "...become a tenant on his land" Coetzee (2000). But she has her condition. It was "...the house remains mine...No one enters this house without my permission. Including him. And I keep the kennels" Coetzee (2000). Lurie felt humiliated to end up like this. Lucy agrees that this is indeed humiliating, but she wants to start anew. She had learned to accept, and decided to start her life again. This time with nothing. With no privileges and power. "No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. Like a dog" Coetzee (2000). The status of Whites in the land of Blacks has degraded to that of dogs.

When Lurie caught the young boy peeping at Lucy through the bathroom window his racial attitude is revealed.

Perhaps that all his life he has avoided seem suddenly just and right: *Teach him a lesson, Show him his place.* So this is what it is like, he thinks! This is what it is like to be a savage! Coetzee (2000)

The lines revealed Lurie's inner thoughts. All his life he tried to avoid his feelings regarding the Blacks. But suddenly he realises his feelings as just and right; to him, Blacks were indeed savage. Savage and lustful because the dark-skinned native of South Africa was peeping through the bathroom window to look at his daughter.

Towards the end of the novel, Lurie tells Bev Shaw, "I don't know. I don't know what the question is any more. Between Lucy's generation and mine a curtain seems to have fallen. I didn't even notice when it fell" Coetzee (2000). He felt a generational divide because Lucy had accepted the social shift around them. She is trying to frame her life according to the new circumstances. However, Lurie was not able to let go of the past. He cannot accept the current situation as the new normal. Lurie's resistance reflects a broader discomfort with loss of traditional power structures. His resistance becomes a lens to examine how individuals entrenched in power struggle to accept change. Lurie's resistance to change serves as a defensive mechanism, shielding him from the discomfort of acknowledging his own decline and irrelevance.

Lurie is depicted as a 'moral dinosaur' that prefers not to evolve with the new socio-economic and political order. He is very much stuck in the past, holding onto an archaic, glamorous picture of the past which makes it hard for him to deal with the loss of White control and dominance. Lurie's refusal to change and tyrannical manner are used as a vehicle to highlight the risks associated with power and privilege. His conduct led to the creation of an atmosphere where people feel entitled and dominant, thus making it hard for the others to rebel against the existing order. This resistance has a negative impact on his relationships, especially with his daughter Lucy, who has more practical and tolerant views concerning their new world.

CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTENCE

Lurie assessed the possibility of redemption through vulnerability in his life. Working at the animal shelter where he helped Bev Shaw in the killing of unwanted dogs, it became a meeting with death and a recognition of interdependence. Lurie's redemption is uncertain; his approval of vulnerability comes after a persistent wish for privilege. His social isolation results from his failure to change, to communicate, and to face his weaknesses. It is related to the larger themes of decline and disconnection; his physical, emotional, and cultural separation in the novel is reflected.

Lurie is trying to find his way in post-apartheid South Africa very difficultly. He feels like a stranger in a society that is moving on, already beyond him. His taste in art, literature, and culture is considered to be belonging to the past and elitist, thus further cutting him off from the world that is changing. As a White, the superiority and the entitlement feelings that Lurie felt have created a wall that separates him from the others. He is unable to see his flaws and admit his mistakes; this leads him to a state of loneliness and disconnection deep-rooted in him. Lurie is very lonely, almost on the verge of the downfall, but power struggle is still his way of dealing with the situation of being alone.

Lurie's actions cause his separation from society, family, and friends. His sexual relations with women are shaped by exploitation. He does not manage to build sincere relationships, but rather uses his power and charisma to take advantage of and control others. His unease with Black empowerment and his alienation on his daughter's farm emphasises his difficulty in adapting to a society where White privilege is under challenge. The very fact that Lurie is on his daughter's farm is also a sign of the isolation of those who do not want to deal with equality.

Lurie's relocation to Lucy's farm in the countryside of South Africa marks the transition of his exiled from the academic and social arenas of his dominance. While he is not on good terms with his daughter Lucy, the obligation to resign drove him to his daughter's land. The distance between them is accentuated by the awkwardness of their interactions; for instance, the conversations about his sins. He is living alone on her farm, with dogs as his only companions. To a great extent it indicates his detachment from the rest of the world. The moment Lurie gets close to the old abandoned bulldog Katy, he declares subtly his own abandoned identity, "He squats down, tickles her behind the ears. 'Abandoned, are we?' he murmurs" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#).

Lurie is not a simple character but one with many aspects presenting a morally doubtful inclination. He is a morally ambiguous person and this quality of his character is subtle and challenging. His moral ambiguity exposes the intricacy of human nature, especially when power struggles are involved. He knows what he is doing; however, he frequently explains or legitimizes it, making the distinction between good and evil very vague. He satiates his desires while often turning a blind eye towards the negative impacts on others. His sense of entitlement originates from his privileged status of being a White, middle-aged academic. Lurie's unwelcome attention towards Melanie is certainly a power misuse; however, he still chooses to call it 'passion'. He understands the power difference, but he still reasons his acts as being a matter of 'desire' or 'attraction'.

The way he deals with Lucy shows his fatherly attitude, even in light of his own immoral conduct. He feels uneasy due to her being independent in life, which manifests his inherent prejudices. Lurie is in the midst of a moral dilemma, not really adopting moral responsibility in full, and not completely giving it up either. His musings on his behaviours are usually a blend of reason and discomfort. The novel deals with morality, power, and accountability issues, thereby leaving the readers with no choice but to contend with Lurie's conduct. His deeds are a clear indication of the ways power can be abused for the purpose of exploitation and manipulation. The novel indicates that morality cannot be viewed as a Black or White matter, but rather as a complicated network of choices and their respective consequences. Lurie's non-acceptance of the moral aspect leads to the pondering of the very notion of responsibility and the ramifications of one's deeds.

Nevertheless, Bev Shaw is an important character, her influence made Lurie undergoes a subtle transformation. Initially, when Lucy suggested him to work for the animal clinic, he replied that, "I'm dubious, Lucy. It sounds suspiciously like community service. It sounds like someone trying to make reparation for past misdeeds". [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lucy somehow convinced Lurie to work at the animal clinic, but he has a certain demand. He tells her, "All right, I'll do it. But only as long as I don't have to become a better person. I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself. I'll do it on that basis" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie starts working with Bev at the animal clinic even though he initially finds her plan of working for animals irritating. However, with time, he starts to respect her selfless nature. Because funding for animal welfare is scarce, her work often involves the disgraceful but necessary task of euthanizing animals to end their suffering – an act she performs with deep respect. Bev serves as a foil to Lurie's vanity and arrogance. By working with her, Lurie begins to learn about compassion and humility, eventually taking over the grim duty of disposing of the euthanized animals with dignity. He grows empathy and humility, finally achieving a small amount of redemption and peace through his interaction with abandoned dogs and his last deed of 'giving up' a resilient stray for euthanasia, which represents his giving up of his old ideas of pride and power. He starts to recognize his limited existence and his reduced status in the world. His position at the animal shelter where he looks after stray dogs makes him face the same qualities that he has been trying to hide i.e. vulnerability and dependence on others. It is similar to his situation while growing old in the new South Africa that he needs to deal with. This can be interpreted as forced adaptation or slow acceptance. This slow, unwilling acceptance of change links to the possibility of both personal and social healing, although it is still uncertain and unfinished.

The attack on Lucy, and Lurie's subsequent reactions demonstrated his helplessness and isolation in the face of violence. After Lucy's incident, Lurie decides to meet Mr. Isaac in person so that he can apologize for his deeds. Lurie realised what Mr. Isaac would have felt regarding his daughter, because she was made to sleep with an old man like him. He tells Mr. Isaac:

In my own terms, I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter. I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not a punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day, trying to accept disgrace as my state of being. Is it enough for God, do you think, that I live in disgrace without term? [Coetzee \(2000\)](#)

With his apology, Lurie tried to tell Mr. Isaac that he had got his punishment. Lurie thinks that his present situation of disgrace is due to his actions with Melanie. He is bearing the consequences of his deeds. It is a punishment he cannot escape; he must go through life taking his disgrace. Lurie apologising to Mr. Isaac, a Black man, symbolises how Lurie had changed himself. He is no longer determined to justify his actions. He had accepted his position in the new South Africa. He considers Mr. Isaac's feelings as a father who demanded justice for his daughter, just like Lurie himself does. Lurie even gets down on his knees to ask for apologies, "With careful ceremony he gets to his knees and touches his forehead to the floor" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). However, Lurie's apology was not truly sincere. When he was apologising to Melanie's mother and her younger sister, "He raises his head. The two of them are still sitting there, frozen. He meets the mother's eyes, then the daughter's, and again the current leaps, the current of desire" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). He went to apologise for his deeds because of his realisation, but his desires for physical pleasure is still present in him. He still longs for pleasure, unable to direct his mind towards the businesses of the old.

Yet, when Bev Shaw talked about Melanie and their past scandal, Lurie replied that "Yes, there was a young woman. But I was the troublemaker in that case. I caused the young women in question at least as much trouble as she caused me" [Coetzee \(2000\)](#). Lurie

then tried to recall all the encounters he had with women; he described them as *enriching*. He recalls his youth and shows a feeling of gratitude.

By Melanie, by the girl in Touws River; by Rosalind, Bev Shaw, Soraya: by each of them he was enriched, and by the others too, even the least of them, even the failures. Like a flower blooming in his breast, his heart floods with thankfulness. Coetzee (2000)

The transformation of Lurie's character while working at an animal shelter and dealing with his 'disgrace' implies a forced and unfinished redemption. He is never resistant in a uniform way; his resistance only comes when survival asks for it, not through real acceptance. The final actions of Lurie open up the possibility of healing both on a personal and social level. Through his actions, Lurie shows if redemption is possible without the complete acceptance of change.

CONCLUSION

Literature is a way to look at the social changes and people's resistance. The resistance of Lurie to accept social change manifests the problems of a society in transformation. Lurie's conflict with aging and societal transformation can be taken as an allegory of South Africa. Some critics consider Lurie's conflict to be universal—aging, loss, and the human resistance to change. Others see him as a representative of the old White elite, who are forced to face the new moral order that has come in the post-apartheid South Africa. Through Lurie's denial of aging and discomfort with the changing power dynamics, Coetzee criticizes the traditional notions of masculinity and that of having the right to be in power.

Lurie's aging acts as a symbol of Cultural Decline. His physical and intellectual decay reflects the erosion of old South African values. Lurie's resistance points to the painful period of South Africa's history during which the old power structures are uprooted, but are still present in people's minds. With Lurie's journey, Coetzee raises the question: Can society really advance if the individuals that constitute it do not want to change? The solution to that question is to be found in Lurie's unwilling, partial transformation; a reminder that the acceptance of change is often a long, painful, and reluctant process.

The decline in David Lurie's physical health, his downfall as an intellectual, as well as his moral degradation, is all taken together as broad indications of the decline of the South African old order. His decay exposes the hollowness of his once-powerful position. He attempts to retain the earlier order of power, but, in the end, the labour that he is forced to perform at the animal's clinic is a slow but definite confrontation with time that humbles him. Ultimately, Lurie's struggle reveals the fact that aging, like history, cannot be denied. Social change is a continuing process and its acceptance comes only through loss. Loss of the earlier structure of power and privilege. Lurie's redemption, on the other hand, is complicated and not full at all. Redemption is possible only when one finally let go of the past.

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REFERENCES

Coetzee, J. M. (2000). *Disgrace*. London, Vintage.