

# “We are all souls”: Dogs, dog-wo/men and borderlands in Coetzee and Tyulkin

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Examining the notion of “dog-men” in Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Tyulkin’s documentary *Not about Dogs*, I argue that when the main characters become dog-men and dog-women they share with dogs the status of subaltern border-creatures. I view the spaces in the Eastern Cape and eastern Kazakhstan as borderlands which parallel the mythic lands of Dog-men from White’s anthropological study *Myths of the Dog-man*. These spaces of human-dog interactions, in turn, relate to Foucauldian heterotopias as sites that establish alternative modes of power relations. **Keywords:** borderlands; dog-man; heterotopia; marginality.

## Introduction

The lives of domesticated animals and companion species, alongside humans, are affected by cataclysmic events. Writers and artists often problematise the correlation between humans and domestic animals in societies undergoing major changes. The dismantling of Apartheid and the falling apart of the Soviet Union were two major processes that took place simultaneously, at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I give a reading of J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) and Vladimir Tyulkin’s internationally renowned documentary *Not about Dogs* (2010) as two responses to the fate of dogs in societies shaken by sociopolitical changes: post-Apartheid South Africa and post-Soviet Kazakhstan. I argue that both works use human-dog correlations to address the question of the dog’s ontological status vis-à-vis humans, a question partly triggered by the necessity to rethink what it means to be human in societies undergoing traumatic changes. The novel and the film suggest a monistic view of the natural world, especially in application to dog-human correlation. In the framework of human-dog parallelism I explore the notion of “dog-men” (*Disgrace* 64, 146), using cultural anthropologist David White’s work

*Myths of the Dog-man* (1991). The mythopoetic notion of the Dog-man implies commonality of dog alterity and human alterity as outsiders to dominant societies and cultures. It also takes into account the ontological status of both species. I argue that characters' becoming dog-wo/men means sharing with the dogs the status of border-creatures, who live on margins of society. I view the spaces in the Eastern Cape and Kazakhstan as borderlands and create a link between them and the mythopoetic lands of Dog-men and Foucauldian heterotopias as sites that establish alternative modes of ordering and power relations. Dogs, "dog-men", the dog kennels on the farm and the animal refuges are situated in these borderlands, carrying multiple and shifting meanings. *Not about Dogs* tells a story of Nina Perebeeva (1944–2007) who ran the only dog refuge in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, a state with multiethnic population and post-colonial tensions. To protect dogs she has to confront different cultural attitudes to these animals, similarly this creates a thematic nexus with the situation in which David Lurie, his daughter Lucy and other 'white' South Africans are positioned in relation to African neighbours in *Disgrace*. Both Perebeeva and Lurie choose marginality and expression of their alterity through association with dogs. Like Coetzee's novel, *Not about Dogs* works against anthropocentrism and speciesism. Both works' affirmation that dogs have souls is embedded in the societies' wider soul-searching in finding new ways of creaturely co-existence. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that dogs as animals who found "a new ecological niche" (Coppinger and Coppinger 137), as "natural frontier experts" (Berger 5), as "animals that emerge among others" (McHugh 12) have been represented "to figure cultural change and negotiate the borderlands in-between" (Williams 93). I argue that both works problematise the question of 'being human' through the notion of becoming a dog-wo/man via border-crossing shared with dogs as species, constructs and mythologised artefacts.<sup>1</sup>

### **Becoming a dog-man in *Disgrace***

The notion of the dog-man is one of the most intriguing notions in *Disgrace*. At first it is a non-white man Petrus who introduces himself as "the dog-man" (64) because he looks after the dog kennel on the farm; then it is the white professor of literature who takes over this function from him. Introduced as a linguistic pun, the word carries a strong structural and semiotic function that progresses in the novel and reaches philosophical depth at the end. While on the text's surface the concept of the dog-man implies a hybridity whose aim is to break or install the human-animal boundaries, it also allegorises the social transformation that has taken place in post-Apartheid South Africa: indeed, a white educated man in search of income takes over a job done by a simple country worker. The social change brings with it a new evaluation of the lives of domesticated species, and the countryside functions as a site where transformations take place in the lives

of both humans and animals. As such the farm in the Eastern Cape functions as an enclave in a new reworked sense, as a site of contestation and defiance of old norms because of the entitlement to the land of the native people. Historically, the Eastern Cape's frequently-changed colonial geography involved unstable borders; it was the place where nine Frontier Wars were fought between the British and the Xhosa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cornwell 44). But it was also a territory of the colonial pastoral which in the novel becomes the site of brutality and violence partly resultant from the injustices of colonialism and the old regime. The site of contestation between utopian dreams and dystopian reality (Easton 125), the farm is populated by Professor Lurie's grownup daughter Lucy and the small community of likeminded 'white' people who see a new dawn in a return to honest manual labour in the form of soothing contact with Nature—"a frontier farmer of a new breed" (*Disgrace* 62). This utopianism gets interrupted by the dystopian violence manifested in the rape of Lucy, the physical assault on Lurie, and the murder of kennel dogs. This dystopian intrusion makes Lurie question the very possibility of a future for his daughter and the rest of the 'white' community. In this kind of dystopia 'man's best friends', the dogs, get killed in a quasi-orgiastic outburst of class and ethnic hatred, or are put down in the Animal Clinic as a result of their owners' apathy and indifference.

I propose the farm, the dog kennel and the clinic function as Foucauldian heterotopian sites. As advanced by Foucault in "Of Other Spaces: Utopia and Heterotopias", the main principle of heterotopias is that as real spaces they exist in parallel to other spaces and establish alternative modes of being in relation to those dominant spaces. It is at these heterogeneous *frontier* spaces that the spiritual development of David Lurie materialises in his new relationships with humans and dogs, a relationship that is based on their mutual creaturely vulnerability. This conceptualisation of dog-human parallelism is brought about by his own new existence on the margins of society, his ostracism imposed by the University and academic community. A man of desire, he seduces a young student, and as a result goes through a sexual harassment procedure. While he resigns voluntarily, his rationalisation of his own action as the right of desire situates him close to the dog species. Like the dogs who embody the intersection between instinct and control, Lurie also is caught between nature and culture.<sup>2</sup>

Significantly, Lurie's refusal to cooperate with the ad hoc harassment committee is underpinned by his objection to the introduction of a confessional mode into the legal procedure. He considers admission of guilt to be part of religious discourse. This stance identifies him as a philosopher, a man who grounds morality in belief systems. Lurie becomes a voluntary exile as a thinker. And as a thinker he will think about the dogs; he will also become a dog-man by choosing to share dogs' life and to oversee their *graceful* departure from this life.<sup>3</sup>

There is evidence in the text that Coetzee researched the mythopoetic symbolism of dogs: a prime example is his describing Lurie's new role as that of a *psychopomp*. Moreover, his use of the term dog-man also points to his knowledge of this concept in anthropology. "A dog-man, once Petrus called himself. Well, now he has become a dog-man: a dog undertaker, psychopomp; a *harijan*" (*Disgrace* 146). This continuum—an undertaker, psychopomp and a harijan (member of Hindu Untouchable caste) encodes the ontological meaning underpinning the dog theme of the novel. The related themes include states of marginalisation as well as the eschatological symbolism. In what follows I will analyse the complex interrelations of these components.

### Race, breed and speciesism

Cultural anthropologist David White in his seminal study *Myths of the Dog-man* demonstrates that human-dog parallelism is reflected in the construct of the hybrid Dog-Man creature in popular imagination across cultures. This mythological construct illustrates various paradoxes associated with the ambiguities of the dog. The dog is 'man's best friend' and the creature with whom humans have had the longest symbiotic relationship. However, dog's ambivalent status between domestication and wildness produced human distrust of these animals and by proxy, distrust of those human Others whom cultures configure as dog-men.<sup>4</sup> This hybrid, while more human than the domesticated dog, is non-human in the sense that it belongs to an Other or foreign race. Notably, societies' exiles, those who were expelled and who went into a self-imposed exile, become synonymous with the groups of Dog-Men across cultures.

The ethnic otherness of dog-people who live on the margins, across the border, is a motif played out by Coetzee. Lurie becomes a dog-man not only because he took over from the former gardener the task of attending dogs, but because he found himself in a new space. Having entered the territory of the farm, having left the city, he finds himself both literally and symbolically in the position of the dog-man, he is now the Other not only of the city 'whites', but also of Petrus and his family who live across the dug-out border between the old farmhouse belonging to Lurie's daughter and Petrus's land. While Petrus makes a transition from dog-man into dig-man, Lurie makes a transition from a city man to an Other, a dog-man who lives on the other side of the farm. The changing power relations between the *dig-man* and the *new dog-man* become inverted.

It is as the Other that Lurie the dog-man becomes the victim of the new anti-dog force who are yesterday's under/dogs themselves; hence their hatred of specific kinds of dogs and new dogmen. This new complex dynamic is played out in the novel's most disturbing episode when the former underdogs rape Lurie's daughter, set him on fire and shoot the kennel dogs. This overt continuum creates a par-

allelism between the dog-wo/men and domesticated dogs, all of whom become quasi-ethnicised in this outburst of violence. The construct of the dog-man works in the novel on the level of this politicised ethnic intolerance and hatred. Indeed, the dogs that the black men shoot have been trained to attack the non-whites. All the breeds of shot dogs—Rottweilers, German Shepherds, Dobermans, Bull Terriers—have been bred by (European) humans as working watchdogs. As such they are associated with the dominant classes via the notions of status and race. Being of identifiable breeds they become metaphoric of racial exclusivity and purity of blood—the foundation stones of apartheid. Yet these shot-down dogs are also victims of the institution of the kennels. Being kept behind bars these dogs cannot protect themselves; the robust walls and bars of the kennel overtly parallel prisons. These dogs are forced to become territorialised animals. The scene plays out the ever-shifting meaning of dogs as species and sign. Dogs in the novel become sites of convergence of class, racialism, and sexism; and those who hate (white man's) dogs and those who save them view dogs from their distinct politically-determined vantage points.

This episode has been interpreted as the beginning of Lurie's "salvific" journey (Dekoven 847). Marianne Dekoven, in her feminist animal studies approach, rightly notes that Lurie develops an affinity with the abandoned old female dog Katy. While Dekoven sees compassion to this gendered female dog as the beginning of his spiritual transformation, I suggest that the affinity lies in a broader intersection of meanings, kinds of meaning that present the dog as a sign in its link with the mythological Dog-man. This meaning is produced by a wider semiotic field of being on the margins and being marginalised. Embedded in speciesism of the Dog-man/dog nexus, it often converges with racialism (Singer 9). Becoming extra-territorial is something that the dog Katy, Lurie, and the mythopoetic Dog-men have in common.

There is evidence in the text that Lurie conceptualises his new guise of dog-man as belonging to extra-territorial racialised people, the Jews. I propose that Coetzee deliberately creates imagery which evokes historical and symbolic notions of Jews as marginalised Others. The signifier of this Otherness is Lurie's white skullcap that he starts to wear as a result of his head being set on fire by the three intruders. The cap metonymically becomes more than a sanitary item. The scene takes place during Petrus's house-warming party where Lurie and his daughter are the only 'whites'. Having confronted one of his daughter's rapists whom she has recognised among the guests, Lurie is ostracised by Petrus and the whole party as a troublemaker. At this moment when, standing outside the group and challenging them with his presence, he reflects that for the first time he wore his white skullcap with pride. The chapter concludes with these words: "He lifts a hand to his white skullcap. For the first time he is glad to have it, to wear it as his own" (*Disgrace* 135). At this juncture, I propose, the skullcap becomes a marker of unmistakably ethnic

difference, of ultimate otherness—that of a Jew in a *yarmulke*. But the cap is also a point of intersections with other outsiders. The white skullcap can be a marker of a Muslim in line with the fluidity of the construct of racialised Othering. As such it can epitomise what the French philosopher Lyotard calls “the jew”—the always rejected, projected, and repressed Other, written in a lower case in quotation marks to indicate that it is a construct (Lyotard). Moreover, the link between the dog-man and “the jew”, I suggest, is materialised via the connection with the mythic dog-man. In mythological geographies Israelites and Ishmaelites (Saracens) were constructed as races related to legendary cynocephali, the dog-headed people imagined to live in the Eastern borders of the Eurasian continent (White 114). Lurie embodies the shifting sign of both historical and imaginary alterity, which he, significantly, decides to perform “as his own” (135). The Eastern Cape as a frontier site in relation to the Western Cape where Lurie comes from becomes for him the place of this newly-found Otherness, a kind of Otherness that he can articulate through his physical difference. Smallish, disfigured and burned, with a skullcap covering his wounds, he bears the signs of victimhood.

His victimhood in turn links him to animal victims, creating an uneasy intersection with racialised humans. In *The Lives of Animals* Coetzee reflects on a controversial parallelism between the killing of animals and the extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust, governed by the conflation of nonhumans with ‘subhumans.’<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps for this shared vulnerability that Lurie not only looks after and secures a graceful departure for dogs in the Animal Clinic, but also tries to take care of the two sheep that Petrus has brought to the farm for slaughter. The sheep were turned into chops which Lurie intends to eat in order to partake in the communal meal at Petrus’s party, understanding its ritual significance as a gesture of reconciliation. The partaking, however, does not take place because at this moment his daughter recognises her rapist, Lurie’s abuser and the dog-killer among the group. At this narrative juncture the Jewish origins of Lurie’s surname become for the first time obliquely signified in the text.<sup>6</sup> Up till now he has not carried any ethnic markers: he has been just an urbane academic and cosmopolitan and multilingual scholar of literature who liberally quotes in French, Italian and Latin. It is when Lurie stands on the spatial margins of the all-Xhosa party, and literally occupies a space between the old farmhouse and Petrus’s newly built one, when exiled from his university campus habitat, that he becomes an embodiment of the dog-man, “the jew” and the dog by proxy. His similarity with the dog can be paralleled to Jacques Derrida’s definition of this animal as “the fraternal allegory”, “of the excluded, the marginal, the ‘homeless’” (Derrida 143). The pairing of the Jew with canines in Christian and European traditions held that Jews are closer to beasts than to humans; it led to the signs “No Jews or dogs allowed” which Napoleon’s troops famously took down after entering Frankfurt (Livak 75). The mythopoetic construct, and the history of religious and political

human-animal Othering converge in this nexus. To emphasise this construct as a sign that escapes categorisation, Coetzee leaves Lurie's skullcap and surname open for identification and interpretation. It is because of the shifting nature of constructs of Otherness that, I propose, Coetzee makes Lurie change the spelling of his surname to *Lourie* (*Disgrace* 211) when he starts lodging in a room next to the Animal Clinic towards the end of the novel. Ethnic and Other (self)identities are fluid and escape classification, and dogs as a species and as a sign embody transgression and destabilization of our human orderings.

As a thinker and a mystic Lurie made his first monistic statement on his first visit to the dog kennel: "We are all souls. We are souls before we are born" (*Disgrace* 78). Significantly, he articulates this thought in contrast to the opinion of the Church Fathers that animal souls do not have an afterlife. In *Myths of the Dog-man* White notes that according to a great number of myths the first creatures that God placed on the earth were man and dog. Moreover, in a great number of cultures the pastoral, cynegetic and protective role of the dog is extended beyond the world of the living into the world of the dead. "Psychopomps, guardians of the gates of hell, dog's place lies between one world and other" (White 14). White argues for the tripartite link between the dog-man-god in his explanation of a unique role this animal occupies across cultures. Dogs' ontological status vis-à-vis humans is determined by this shifting status:

Ultimately, the dog, with its ambiguous roles and cultural values, its constant presence in human experience coupled with its nearness to the feral world, is the alter ego of man himself, a reflection of both human culture and human savagery. Symbolically, the dog is the animal pivot of the human universe, lurking at the threshold between wilderness and domestication and all of the valences that these ideal poles of experience hold. There is much of man in his dogs, much of the dog in us, and behind this, much of the wolf in both the dog and man. And, there is some of the Dog-Man in god. (15)

In his new occupation as "a dog psychopomp" (*Disgrace* 219), Lurie articulates his own kinship with dogs and via this kinship starts to mediate between one world and another.<sup>7</sup> He systematically puts dogs' corpses into black plastic bags, which at the end of the novel he refers to as a black "shroud" (219). As he progresses with this task, he affirms that he puts both their bodies and souls into these bags, and elaborates on the idea that dogs' souls get released and escape from the room where they are put down. "Here the soul is yanked out of the body; briefly it hangs about in the air, twisting and contorting; then it is sucked away and is gone" (219). This vivid affirmation of the soul goes in parallel with Lurie's quest to save the dogs' bodies intact. One of the reasons for taking upon himself the task of burying dogs' bodies after they have been put into the incinerator was to intervene in the practice of beating the rigid corpses into a convenient shape. Lurie's aim is to preserve intact individual bodies. Importantly in his reference to the soul he

does not denote that it is a dog’s soul that gets sucked out of the room. While his quest to save every individual dog’s body implies that every dog has an individual soul, he importantly does not specify the soul as that of an animal. Moreover, by referring to corpses without denoting that they are dogs’, Lurie homologises dog and human material substance. This distinctly monistic and non-species-centric approach allows Coetzee to converge the ontological status of dogs and humans in line with his own significant “more-than-academic interest in the transmigration of human/animal souls” (Huggan and Tiffin 110).

### **Dog-women in the frontiers of Kazakhstan: Nina Perebeeva and *Not about Dogs***

The drastic socio-political changes that took place in South Africa coincided with major political changes in the former Soviet Union. In post-Soviet spaces dogs among domestic animals became the first victims of the mass impoverishment of the country’s population, and streets of cities became populated by stray dogs (Mondry). Tyulkin’s documentary *Not about Dogs* (*Ne pro sobak*) deals with the situation in Kazakhstan. This Central Asian state, situated on Russia’s eastern borders, in both a literal and a metaphoric sense evokes the land of the Dog-men. Construed by Russian imagination as a mythical land of non-Christian Others (pagans, Muslims or Jews), it is the frontier space from which nomads of the steppes raided medieval Russia. It is also the space that the Russian empire colonised and lost after the falling apart of the Soviet Union.

The documentary about real people and dogs explores the human/animal relationship and correlation. At the same time the film makes use of cultural iconicity that enriches its creaturely representational field. The film focuses on the only dog refuge in Kazakhstan. It is run by two women—Nina Perebeeva and her old mother. On her tiny pensioner’s income, Perebeeva looked after some 120 dogs at a time for thirty years. It shows that women rescue dogs by paying a menacing dog-catcher a ransom. Unlike in *Disgrace*, where dead dogs are of no interest to the locals since they have no use for them, in the documentary there is a market for dead dogs. Koreans consume dog meat and thus are potential customers of the dog-catcher. The film shows a scene with a woman poking her fingers into the skinned dog body trying it for freshness. The camera shows the dog-catcher skinning the dogs, tanning their skins and burning the bones in an open stove. The camera’s focus on the oven allows the viewer to reflect on its disturbing similarity to the shapes of the ovens in Nazi concentration camps’ crematoria. Whereas Lurie in the *Disgrace* tried to preserve the individual dog corpses intact, in the documentary dogs’ bodies are being butchered and dismembered. The dog-catcher is not concerned about their souls or bodies. While Coetzee implies the parallelism between the Holocaust victims and dogs that are put into the incinera-



tor (referencing his own *The Lives of Animals*), Tyulkin creates the same allusion. The difference is that the man who deals with the corpses is not a compassionate *dog-man* who shares with dogs their creaturely vulnerability, as in *Disgrace*. He is a different kind of a dog-man, a villainous perpetrator and executioner, the nightmarish incarnation of the fears of the Other. Ironically, he is Russian and not a member of such former ethnic Others as Muslim Kazakhs or 'pagan' Koreans, the very peoples who were imagined as the mythopoetic dog-headed dogmen. Here, I propose, the menacing dog-man of mythopoetic imagination turns out to be one of the insiders, thus laying bare the mechanism of projection that drives fears of the Other, both dogs and dog-men.

The documentary works on establishing a parallelism between dogs and dog-wo/men as marginalised outsiders in the society and as ontologically equal species. The dog-women become-animals through erasing hierarchical inter-species boundaries. The large part of the film shows the two women in day-to-day contact with the large number of dogs that they have adopted and which they treat as part of their family. They clean up after them, feed them, caress them, hold them on their laps. In so doing they transgress the barriers between humans and dogs as separate species. Anat Pick in her *Creaturely Poetics* notes that these women's lives, shared with the dogs as if they were all members of an extended family, challenge the notion of the Oedipal animal as advanced by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Pick 129). Deleuze and Guattari's often-quoted attack on human treatment of pets as members of their family criticises this form of human-animal relationship because it is based on the principles of propriety, clannishness and a protectionist economy (Deleuze and Guattari 233). While Deleuze and Guattari see becoming-animal as a way forward they at the same time set in opposition domestic animals against wild ones; such a juxtaposition is always loaded with prejudices and taxonomies. As Kari Weil notes in her *Thinking Animals*, when "domestic is pitted against wild in a binary opposition of enslaved to free [it] carries a host of gendered, raced, and otherwise hierarchically organised associations" (55). In Perebeeva's case their walled family house is an enclave which both protects and separates them from the hostile outside world. It functions as a paradoxical space, akin to Foucauldian heterotopian sanctuary where ostracised 'lepers' form a community on the margins of the dominant society and where they establish alternative power relations. In this case there are no hierarchies between women and dogs.

The documentary explores eschatological underpinning of the dog-wo/men and dog parallelism by challenging superstitions and addressing an uneasy status of these 'species' in Christian tradition. It shows that Perebeeva keeps the dogs in her house which has various Christian emblems, such as icons and images of Jesus on the wall, and where the dogs excrete, multiply and die. She pronounces her daily Christian prayers in the presence of her dogs. This nexus of scatology

and eschatology, I suggest, emblematises the paradox inherent in western cultures' view of dogs as anti-Christian animals and yet visualising St Christopher, the Christ-child bearer, as a dog-headed saint. Many of his images were destroyed in Western churches during the Iconoclasm in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and only a few survived in Eastern Europe. Perebeeva's behaviour challenges culture-specific superstitions and prejudices against the dogs. Based on self-sacrifice and a lack of disgust for the scatological animal life, her life links hagiographic and apocryphal narratives. In saving dogs from the dog-catcher she undertakes multiple acts of mercy. At the same time, less fortunate dogs, in being beaten, killed and skinned by the treacherous dog-catcher, parallel the tormented heroes of Judaic (Rabbi Akiva) and Christian martyrdom tales (St Bartholomew). At one point, the film uses a montage sequence to show the tears in the eyes of the suffering Christ as represented on the icon in Perebeeva's house and the suffering eyes of real-life dogs. This parallelism hints at the shifting status of 'dog-men' and dogs in historical dialectics and conflates the suffering of Christians, Jews, and Other species in various historical contexts.

Tyulkin's documentary presents Perebeeva as a culturally marginal border-case by framing her behaviour and faith as similar to the typology of the Holy Fool figure. In Russian traditional culture Holy Fools were viewed as a combination of nature—unspoiled and untouched by culture and civilisation—and supernature, as being chosen by God (Figs 334). They were feared and ostracised for their powers of divination. They also subverted that which was orthodox and official. Perebeeva embodies the same paradox as the mythopoetic Dog-men—somebody to be feared for their special powers and yet to be ostracised and pushed into the periphery. The association with the Holy Fool typology is reinforced by the syncretism of her faith which is not canonical. While she thinks of herself as a Christian believer, her Christian faith is creative and subjective, as exemplified by the prayer that she invents: "Defend me, dog, when I will be called upon at the Day of Last Judgment". The fact that the animal is a dog attests to the exemplary and disturbingly uneasy place which it occupies in western cultures.

### On "grievable" life

The concept of the Dog-man, according to White, implies that there is a bit of the Dog-man in god, the ontological link between humans, dogs and god being at the core of the notion of the Dog-man. Both Lurie and Perebeeva's choices of devoting their lives to serve dogs and to secure that the animal bodies after death are treated in a dignified way relates to this aspect of the Dog-man. For both the dog's life is "grievable" (Butler), and there are features of the typology and eccentricity of the Fool-in-God behaviour in their chosen paths, the paths which bring them nearer to dogs, Dog-wo/men and god.

To prove that "we are all souls", both *Disgrace* and *Not about Dogs* use aesthetics as means to enhance the spirituality shared by the dog-wo/men and dogs. The film's sequence of scenes set in Perebeeva's house and the church shows the women and the church choir singing God-praising prayers while the dogs perform their whining singing at home. The parallelism between the human and dog vocal abilities expresses the similarity between the two species, thus producing 'creaturely' aesthetics. It is this metaphysical aesthetics that Lurie thinks of when conceptualising his opera *Byron in Italy* (Attridge). When describing his heroine's operatic singing he characterises it as "howling to the moon" (*Disgrace* 186). This description creates both ontological and eschatological likeness between canines and humans, who share the urge for this ultimate sublime—gazing at, addressing and celebrating the celestial sphere. Canine artistic abilities are further addressed in a scene when Lurie plays the banjo in the company of dogs in the Animal Clinic and the dog howls in a duet with Lurie's improvised music. The scenes show that both dog-wo/men and dogs, significantly in the peripheral locales of the borderlands, share the same artistic and metaphysical longings.

By admitting the dogs into the aesthetic world of art the two works break anthropocentric assumptions of human creativity as a feature that distinguishes human and non-human animals. Descartes claimed that animals are automatons that can perform movements but are not driven by the soul—a view that Coetzee challenged in his *The Lives of Animals*. He also brought into *Disgrace* the Church Fathers' verdict that animal souls are not "proper" (78) and therefore not immortal. Both Tyulkin and Coetzee frame the dog-dog-wo/men correlation as a response to the dehumanisation of certain groups at points of intersections within the discourse of species and speciesism. As Cary Wolfe notes, "the discourse of species" can be used to tolerate "violence against the other of *whatever* species—or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference" (Wolfe 8). Claims that some groups or populations do not have souls historically have served as justification for ostracism, marginalisation and justification of killing. By embodying the conceptual underpinnings of the subaltern Dog-wo/men both Lurie and Perebeeva work against the biopolitics and the ontology of speciesism. Significantly, both works actualise the themes of alterity and ontology in the tri-partite dynamics which underpin the notion of the Dog-man.

### From heterotopian spaces to new horizons

Both Coetzee and Perebeeva in real life, and Tyulkin in the documentary, chose geographical borderlands as spaces that have some heterotopian possibilities. Coetzee and Tyulkin chose dogs as 'species' that escape categorisation because of the heterogeneity of the *canis familiaris*. Dogs challenge "the discourse of species" and the novel and the documentary conceptualise dogs as embodied heterotopian

sites of shifting power relationships. They also work on the concept of dog-dog/wo/men correlations. They take into account complex mythopoetic layers surrounding these 'species' as societal constructs as well as dogs' biological characteristics. As biologists point out, a species tends to be defined as an evolutionary lineage that is reproductively isolated from all other evolutionary lineages (Shapiro 29). In spite of a long history of domestication, dogs interbreed frequently with wolves and coyotes. Dogs thus present a fascinating paradox in science and fiction; both as a species and an artefact they escape neat classification and categorisation and embody heterogeneity.

While heterotopias are "sites of alternate ordering and are places of Otherness, whose otherness is established by their incongruous condition" (Hetherington 51) they importantly for the focus of this investigation are sites that "either provide an unsettling spatial relation or an alternative representation of spatial relations" (Hetherington 51). *Disgrace* and *Not about Dogs* albeit in an incongruous mode, explore the ways of living with the Others, through finding love, a kind of love that God has for his creatures. In the theology of their work, dogs have a special place as the species. Stephen Webb in his theological *On God and Dog*, puts forward a view that the animals who depend on humans will be included in God's final embrace of the world. He argues that God must love what people love, and in the midst of such infinite love, the differences between humans and animals begin to diminish. Domesticated animals like dogs are part of this configuration of love, submissiveness and dependence (Webb 124). He notes that the Hebrew Scriptures insist that one of the blessings of wisdom is to stand in peace even with the wild animals (Job 5:22–23), and that the believer leaps into the eschatological future as paradise lost. This paradise is a garden with peaceful and domesticated animals, of which dog is seen as the most representative.

*Disgrace* and *Not about Dogs* depict sites that represent human attempts to create enclaves of harmony. Like gardens of Eden and other sanctuaries, those places are under pressure. In spite of having to define and defy themselves, these heterotopian zones are attempts to break the order of things in both politics and biopolitics. Lurie's daughter's determination to give birth to a 'multi-racial' child and to keep a farm with dogs next to Petrus's land epitomises such an attempt. Dogs have been helping humans not only "to think with" but also "to live with" as companions (Haraway 5). The novel and the documentary make us hope that it is as frontier species that dogs will help us find new ways out of species-centricity. What lies ahead of the borderlands might become a Utopic site grown out of a dystopian past, shared by the former Others, such as Dog-wo/men, dogs and other non-human animals as real uncontested spaces.

## NOTES

1. Referring to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal in application to Lurie's ethical transformation in *Disgrace*, Heron rightly notes the importance of "reterritorialization" (482) and threshold-crossing in what he terms Lurie's becoming animal. Heron works with a broader notion of becoming-animal and does not explore the Dog-man as a cultural construct.
2. Lurie's sexual harassment case is complicated also because it has echoes of the South African Truth and Reconciliation procedure. For a feminist reading see Dekoven (847–75).
3. Attridge writes on grace as a theological category in the novel. Attridge (98–121).
4. I use "the Other" to denote alterity in line with postmodernist and posthumanist thinking.
5. In *The Lives of Animals* Coetzee is aware that any analogy with the Holocaust is controversial. See Garber.
6. I suggest that it is significant that Lurie shares his surname with a famous 16<sup>th</sup> century Jewish mystic Isaak ben Solomon Luria (variant of Lurie) who taught Kabbalah in an academy (Rothschild 260–61).
7. For a link to shamanism in the notion of psychopomp in this text see Wendy Woodward.

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