Chapter 5

DISGRACE BY J.M. COETZEE

This chapter is devoted to a semiotic analysis of the post-apartheid novel, Disgrace written by J.M. Coetzee and published in 1999. If the preceding three novels are respectively pre-apartheid and apartheid novels, Disgrace is a post-apartheid novel not only from a chronological perspective but also from a thematic point of view. It was published after 1994, the year when the new government came to power under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the system of Apartheid was abolished in South Africa. It may be noted that this novel Disgrace is artistically and aesthetically more appealing because of its semiotic density. Even the title ‘Disgrace’ itself has plurisignification. For it could signify the disgrace suffered by the protagonist, David Lurie, the disgrace caused by him to his young African student, Melanie, the disgrace of his daughter Lucy Lurie, who is raped by three black youth, or it may be the disgrace thrust upon the suffering animals like dogs and other animals subjected to mercy killing (or euthanasia) at Animal Welfare League, W.O.1529, Grahamstown, maintained by Mrs. Bev Shaw.

It may also be noted that this novel, Disgrace won several awards like the Booker Prize in 1999 before it is emerged as the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003.

Born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1940 and educated in South Africa and the United States, J.M. Coetzee won a number of prestigious prizes for his works and at present he is a Professor of General Literature at the University of Cape Town.

The edition of the novel, Disgrace, considered for the present analysis is a Vintage publication of 2000. It consists of 220 pages divided into 24 chapters.

With these few observations, a semiotic analysis of this post-apartheid novel is as under and one thing should be kept in mind that if the victims of the three preceding novels are black people of South Africa the victim of this novel is a white lady, the daughter of a white professor in South Africa.

* The page numbers mentioned at the end of textual excerpts cited in the present work belong to this 2000 Vintage edition of the novel.
5.1 A SYNOPSIS OF DISGRACE

David Lurie, a white man, is a professor of Romantic Poetry and Communication Skills at the Cape Town Technical University, formerly Cape Town University College, in South Africa. He is now fifty two, and twice-divorced. One of his former wives, Rosalind, also lives in Cape Town. They meet quite rarely. David satisfies his sexual need by meeting a family woman, Soraya every Thursday evening at Windsor Mansion, Green Point. In twenty five years of teaching, he has published three books, the first an opera, Boito and the Faust Legend: The Genesis of Mefistofele, the second on vision as eros, The Vision of Richard of St Victor, and the third on Wordsworth and history, Wordsworth and the Burden of the Past. None of these works has brought him any name or fame. For the past five years, he has been planning to write a chamber opera, Byron in Italy. He has no respect for what he teaches, particularly, the communication stuff. He has no moral scruples and lives an anxious life of promiscuity. He has had affairs with several women. Soraya, the prostitute, has been absent for a few days and he enquires about her whereabouts but fails to get any information about her. He picks up Dawn, the new secretary of his department, and his sex attempt with her turns out to be a failure. He tries in vain to contact Soraya. One day, he meets Melanie Isaacs, one of his students, at the old college gardens. Having been attracted by her, and as it starts raining, he invites her to his house nearby. When she comes, he persuades her to stay for supper and after supper they watch a dance video. He gives her coffee with whisky, but she does not yield. The next Sunday, he manages to take her to the harbourside and then to his house, where he succeeds in having sex with her. Again there is rain and the girl leaves in a hurry. He often meets her and has sex three or four times. For a few days, she has been absent to his class having been busy with her drama rehearsals. On a particular Monday, Melanie attends his class accompanied by a young man, her boyfriend. The latter warns David and vandalises his car. One day, he also receives a pamphlet, stating ‘Your days are over Casanova’. She does not appear for the mid-term test, in spite of David’s advice. One day David receives a telephone call from Isaacs from George. Isaacs is Melanie’s father and requests David to persuade Melanie not to withdraw from the university course. After a few days, Isaacs meets David and accuses him of misbehaviour with his daughter. Isaacs makes a complaint to the university authorities and an enquiry committee is set up. David is instructed to attend the committee meeting. He does so, and the members of the committee find
irregularities in his records. Melanie had been absent in his classes and she did not take the mid-term test. But he has given her full attendance and awarded her seventy-four marks in the mid-term test. David says he has no defense. A final committee of enquiry is set up to finalise his matter. David meets his former wife, Rosalind, and she advises him to take legal counseling. He feels offended. There is a bad news item about him in the newspaper, *Argus*. The final hearing of the committee is held. The members, particularly, Mana Mathabane, Professor of Religious Studies and the chair, tries to persuade David to make a confession and apologize so that he can be protected. But David bluntly refuses to apologize and admits that he is guilty. When Mathabane finally contacts David on phone to help him, David refuses to submit any statement of apology. Finally his dismissal from job is recommended to the Rector of the University.

David leaves Cape Town and travels to his daughter’s farm at the Salem Town, on the Grahamstown-Kenton road in the Eastern Cape. His daughter, Lucy, lives on a small farm, where she takes care of others dogs, and grows vegetables. Every Saturday morning she sets up her market at Donkin Square on the road to Grahamstown. Helen, her former friend, who used to stay with Lucy has now left for Johannesburg for good. David is given Helen’s room to stay. His daughter tells him that he can stay there as long as he wishes to. Petrus, a black man, who lives nearby is Lucy’s friend and farming partner. One of Petrus’s wives lives in Adelaide. David is surprised to note the courage of his daughter who lives alone on the small holding surrounded by blacks in the neighbourhood. He wants to work on the farm for Petrus who is now developing his own farm and trying to build a house of his own. Lucy suggests that he can also help at the animal clinic run by Mrs. Bev Shaw. David finds his life in the uplands of the Eastern Cape quite tedious. He also tries to write his Byron opera but fails to make any progress. Often he goes to Bev Shaw’s animal welfare clinic, and helps her in her job of mercy killing of animals like dogs, goats, etc. The only white people in the neighbourhood, along with Lucy, are the Shaws and an old German, Ettinger. Every Saturday morning Lucy and other farmers from the neighbouring farms set up a weekly fair at Donkin Square, on the Grahamstown road with their produce like vegetables, milk, tea leaves, herbs etc. Lucy takes her potatoes, flowers, onions and cabbage there for sale. David accompanies her.
On a Wednesday morning when David and Lucy return home from their morning work on the plantation, three black men overtake them and wait for them at their place. The dogs in the cages bark at them. Lucy calls Petrus but there is no Petrus. They enter the house on the pretext of using the telephone. When Lucy also goes in, David lags behind. Sensing some danger, he shouts for help from Petrus but he is not there. David is hit on the head and becomes unconscious. He is dragged into the kitchen and then into the lavatory and locked in. He calls Lucy but there is no response. The three men, it seems, have raped Lucy, ransacked the house, took her rifle and escaped in David’s car. They also shot at the barking dogs. Before leaving, they sprinkled methylated spirits on David at set him on fire. Somehow he escapes from full burning by splashing water over his face from the toilet bowl and with wads of wet toilet paper. After the people left in David’s car, he shouts for Lucy and after some time Lucy comes and unlocks the door of the lavatory. His head and face are partly burnt. Lucy goes to Ettinger’s house and returns with him in his car. They take David to the hospital where his wounds are dressed. His eye is covered; his wrist is ice-pack strapped. Bill Shaw comes to the hospital and takes them home. They have also lodged a complaint with the police for the stolen car and other things. On reaching Shaw’s place, Lucy takes rest and David is not able to sleep. The next morning Bev Shaw serves him breakfast and attends on Lucy. Afterwards two young policemen come for investigation. Ettinger brings the telephone repairman. Ettinger expresses his sympathy and says that it would have been worse if the strangers had taken away Lucy forcibly along with them. Bev Shaw attends to the dressing of David’s injured eye-lid, the blisters on his scalp and his right ear which is injured very badly. He tries to raise the subject of rape, but Bev Shaw avoids answering him. Lucy is not normal, and David also feels completely weakened. He considers that Lucy is secretive about the attack while he feels, it is his disgrace. They change rooms: Lucy moves into his room and he into Lucy’s. Lucy does not talk to him openly. The distance between them widens. After that, Petrus returns with a lorry loaded with house construction materials. On Saturday he goes to the market along with Petrus, in spite of his own odd appearance with one eye covered and a white skullcap. There is a news item about the attack and burglary in *The Herald*. The sales are not good and they bring back the boxes of unsold flowers and bags of vegetables. David suspects that there is Petrus’s hand in the attack or at least Petrus was aware of it in advance and therefore he manipulated to be away on that particular day. Further he suspects
that Petrus, now the owner of his own farm, plans to take over Lucy’s land. Perhaps it is Petrus who engaged the three strangers to teach Lucy a lesson. David tries his best to get a clue by engaging Petrus in conversation about the incident, but it proves in vain. Outwardly he tries to be friendly with Petrus by helping him in his farm work though his contribution is only marginal. David suffers from bad dreams and nightmares. He also starts sleepwalking. He tries in vain to work on his Byron project though much of the Byron material has been kept in his car which was stolen. On a following Saturday there is a big party in Petrus’s house which he throws to mark his land transfer. Petrus invites them to the party. David accompanies Lucy to the party reluctantly. Lucy gives Petrus a beautiful bedsprea d as a gift. Petrus’ recently married wife is pregnant and expects the baby in October. David finds there in the party, the boy who was one of the rapists. Not heeding Lucy’s advice, David confronts the boy who pretends to be completely ignorant of the incident. Neither does Petrus believe it, nor does Lucy confirm it. They leave the party in humiliation. There is an argument between father and daughter and Lucy does not approve of his revengeful attitude. Lucy becomes upset and the gap between them becomes widened further. David again raises this matter with Petrus but the latter does not agree with him. When David expresses his anxiety about Lucy’s safety, Petrus assures him that he will protect Lucy. David also shares his anxiety with Bev Shaw. He wants Lucy to take a break and leave the country for a while. He does not want to leave Lucy alone and go away. Again, he tries in vain to work on his Byron project and also continues to work on the farm and help Bev Shaw at her animal clinic. He takes pity on the dogs which walk unknowingly into the trap of death. The morning after each killing session, he drives the Lucy’s kombi loaded with the dead bodies of the animals to the grounds of Settlers Hospital, to the incinerator where he hands over the black bags containing the dead animal bodies to be burnt into ashes. He earns the name, a ‘dog man’.

One day he has a talk with Bev Shaw who asks him about his life in Cape Town and his love affair with a young woman. He explains to her that it was he who was the trouble-maker and not the young girl. Bev Shaw falls for him and invites him to the clinic on the coming Monday which is not a working day for the clinic. They have sex in the clinic secretly. Petrus borrows a tractor and ploughs the whole of his land in a few hours. David thinks that Lucy should consign her land to Petrus and go back to her former occupation of ethnic weaving, ethnic pot-decoration, and ethnic
basket-weaving and selling beads to tourists. Petrus also agrees to be Lucy’s farm manager during her absence. One day there is a call from the police informing him that his stolen car has been recovered. He and Lucy go to New Brighton police station and finds that the car is not his car. Even the two men arrested are away on bail. David and They return home. Again David persuades Lucy to close down her kennels, to lock the house to be guarded by Petrus on payment, take a break and go to Holland where her mother, a Dutch woman, Evelina, lives but Lucy does not agree to it.

She wants to stay in her own house with her small landholding. Desperately David returns to Cape Town. On his way, he stops at George and visits Mr. Isaacs, first at his school and tries to speak his heart. He tells him that Melanie struck up a fire in him and in an impulsive moment he indulged in his ‘sudden few adventure’ and expresses his regrets over what had happened. Isaacs seems to forgive David and invites him to dinner. Melanie is at the University in Cape Town. David goes to Isaacs’s place. They are a neat small family. Melanie has a younger sister, Desiree. Melanie means the dark one, and Desiree means the desired one. The younger girl, who is a school student, is more beautiful than Melanie. David returns to Cape Town. During his absence of nearly three months, his house on Torrance Road, close to the University in Cape Town, has been burgled, almost all his valuables have been stolen and the house is totally ransacked. Having, still, his keys to the Communication Building in the University, he goes to his office room and knocks at the door. There is no response and he unlocks the door and enters only to find a new man, Dr. Otto in his seat. David tells him that he has come there to check his mail. Dr. Otto informs David that his materials and papers are in the storage room downstairs. There is also a box of mail. David takes the box to the lobby and sorts out his papers. On returning home, he feels restless and is unable to sleep. He goes to the bank, draws some money and takes his clothes to the laundry. In the evening he phones to Lucy and enquires about her welfare. She says, she is doing well and Petrus has been helping her inspite of his own busy work. David goes to the supermarket to buy some essential commodities and meets Elaine Winter, chair of his former department. Everything in the university is going on well. He returns home. Now he has enough time to work on his Byron project. He focuses on Teresa, late Byron’s lover, in her middle age, living alone in her old father’s house Villa Gamba, burdened with the memories of Byron and singing woeful songs calling back her deceased lover. Byron’s five-year old
daughter also calls her famous father. One day, Rosalind, his former second wife, meets him at a coffee shop in Claramont and suggests that he can try for his reinstalment in his post in the University. He refuses to do so and tells her that he is very busy with his opera on Byron and Teresa. He tells her that he is going to sell his house. She informs him about Melanie who is now acting a play at the Dock Theatre. She offers a standing invitation to him that he can go to her whenever he feels like eating something other than bread and jam. Remembering Melanie, David goes to the Dock Theatre to see the play “Sunset at the Globe Salon” in which Melanie plays the role of Gloria, a novice hairdresser. She plays her part in the play well. He feels proud of her. Suddenly, someone throws spitballs of paper at David. It is Ryan, Melanie’s boy friend who mocks at David. He follows David to the parking lot and warns him not to interfere with Melanie’s life again and tells him to find another life. David leaves the theatre and on the way picks up a young drunken girl and lacking fire in him unlike Teresa or Byron, drives back and leaves the girl where he has found her. Again he calls Lucy and she tells him all is well. Suspecting something wrong from her tone, he calls Bev Shaw but Bev is unable to clear his doubts. He calls Lucy and informs that he is coming to Salem to stop for a day or two on his way to Durban where he is likely to get a job.

He flies to Port Elizabeth and from there goes to “Lucy’s patch of earth” in a hired car. After tea, Lucy tells him that she is pregnant which shocks him. He questions her why she has not gone for an abortion. Her reply is that she doesn’t want to go through the suffering once again. This means that Lucy had an abortion before. He is very much upset. Over supper, Lucy informs him that the boy is back, that his name is Pollux and he is a brother of Petrus’s wife. He again advises her to leave the place. Next morning David meets Petrus and accuses him of being untruthful. Petrus tells him not to worry about Lucy because the boy will marry Lucy. Or, as the boy is too young, he himself will marry Lucy. When he tells Lucy about their conversation, Lucy is not upset at all and instead, says that Petrus’s offering is reasonable. She would give away her land to Petrus as bride-money and marry him, just for protection. David becomes angry at this and suggests to Lucy that she should leave the place and go to Holland to her mother. As he is selling his house in Cape Town, he can finance her and arrange for her travel. But Lucy does not accept his proposal. She wants to live there and requests him to take her message to Petrus that she is ready to accept
his offer. David considers this as a great humiliation to him and his daughter. For him, her future life will be a dog’s life for which she is fully prepared, she says. Next mid-morning when he is returning home from a morning walk, Katy following him, he notices Pollux peering through the bathroom window, peeping at Lucy. He becomes furious and hits the boy; when the boy starts running in fear, the dog, Katy, pounces upon him and bites his arm. Lucy comes out and calls back Katy. Lucy tells the boy to come in but he runs away threatening that they will kill all of them. As Lucy observed earlier, the boy is mentally retarded, “a violent child in the body of a young man”. David decides to strike Pollux again, if he misbehaves with Lucy. He meets Bev Shaw at the clinic and tells her that Lucy’s life is like that of spider living in a bottle and he does not want to live like a spider along with Lucy. Bev Shaw tries to understand him but feels that Lucy is more practical than him. David requests Bev Shaw to find a room for him to live in, because he doesn’t want to live in Lucy’s house. Bill Shaws helps David in this respect. He finds him a room on a rental basis. David buys a second hand truck and moves to the room at D.Village near Grahamstown, telling his landlady that he stays there for medical treatment. He buys a half-ton pickup for dogs which he is planning to feed before they are driven to Bev Shaw’s clinic. He also buys some household things and occupies the room which is dark, stuffy, overfurnished with a lumpy mattress. He keeps visiting the clinic which is nearby and helps Bev Shaw in her mercy-killing of dogs and other animals. He takes the dead bodies of the dogs to Settlers Hospital, to the incinerator. He also goes on Saturday mornings to Donkin Square market to help Lucy at the market stall. From Lucy he comes to know that Petrus has almost finished building his house. It seems that Lucy has totally adjusted herself to live under Petrus’s protection. Her pregnancy advances. David imagines himself to be a grandfather, a Joseph. On the following Sunday, as usual, he helps Bev Shaw with her work, at her clinic, and carries the dead bodies of dogs to Settlers Hospital. In his free time, he plays the banjo and sings songs about Teresa and Byron. There is a young lame dog which he sets free and which moves freely in the premises. It seems the dog understands him, loves him and enjoys his music. But, in spite his love for this dog, he moves it to Bev Shaw’s clinic and after it is dead, he takes its dead body along with those of other dogs to the incinerator at Settlers Hospital. By giving up this dog, it appears he has also given himself up to fate and time.
5.2 A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF DISGRACE

As already mentioned above, this novel by John Maxwell Coetzee, *Disgrace* consists of twenty four (24) chapters, running into two hundred and twenty (220) pages.

In this section, a semiotic analysis of the novel is presented. This novel is narrated from the third person point of view, interspersed with dialogue, interior monologue etc.

5.2.1 Chapter 1: Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.1-10)

David Lurie, a white man lives in Cape Town, South Africa. He has been professor in Cape Technical University (formerly Cape Town University College), teaching a course on the Romantic poets and Communication Skills (Nos.101 and 201). He is fifty-two, twice divorced. His first wife Evelina (Evie) is a Dutch woman, now living in Holland with her second husband. His second wife, Rosalind, lives alone in Cape Town. To satisfy his sexual needs, he keeps in touch with a married woman, Soraya, almost in a business way and meets her every Thursday afternoon at door No.43 in Windsor Mansion at Green Point in Cape Town. Soraya is a beautiful woman and earns extra money in this way secretly to meet her family expenditure. He doesn’t know any details about her family background because she keeps everything about her secret. So does David, not revealing anything to her about his job etc. Once he sees Soraya and her two sons from a distance, at a shopping place. She also sees him. On the next Thursday meeting neither of them mentions this incident. It is clear that Soraya has been living a precarious double life. Before meeting Soraya, David lived a life of an anxious flurry of promiscuity (7). The narrator makes the following observations about David’s life:

He himself has no son. His childhood was spent in a family of women. As mother, aunts, sisters fell away, they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, and a daughter. The company of women made him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer. 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 years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life.
Then one day it all ended. Without warning his powers 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 buy her.

He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the water front or at the Club Italia: he slept with whores. (7)

But this kind of waywardness has stopped with his introduction to Soraya. This has continued for one year and he gets bored with her. On a certain Thursday when he is leaving Soraya’s room she tells him that she will not be able to meet him because she is going to take a break to look after her sick mother. Then he goes to the agency and they refuse to give him Soraya’s phone number as it is against their rules. But they arrange another girl for him. She is quite young and inexperienced. Then he develops friendship with the secretary in his department. Her name is Dawn. Once they go out and on the way he takes her to his house. His attempt at sex with her ends up in a failure. He feels anxious and avoids her. He tries to contact Soraya. He gets her address, her real name and phone number through a detective agency on payment. Her response is cold and she pretends that she doesn’t know him. She also accuses him of harassing her. Thus his Soraya chapter gets closed.

This chapter operates in terms of two codes: Semic and Cultural. The Semic Code which occupies a greater part of the chapter throws ample light on David Lurie’s character. He is a twice-divorcee, crossing his middle age. Though highly educated and teaches at a prestigious university as professor, he is not interested in teaching. He has no moral scruples. He is a great lover of the Romantic poets, particularly Byron. Consequently he behaves like a Don Juan. The Cultural code in this chapter reveals the kind of life in Cape Town (and that in South African cities, at large) where white males can have unscrupulous sexual relations with women whom they come across, to satisfy their sexual urge. Thus the Semic and the Cultural codes in this chapter provide the necessary background to the story of ‘Disgrace’ of David Lurie.

A white man’s unscrupulous behavior in a South African city and his sexual bouts are the two important archetypes in this chapter and they recur in the ensuing chapters.
5.2.2 Chapter 2: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.11-16)

Without the Thursday meetings with Soraya, David’s life becomes boring and he spends more time in the University library. One Friday evening when he is walking home through the old college gardens, he notices one of his girl students, Melanie Isaacs. She is an average student; but she is attractive. He accosts her and invites her for a drink. It starts raining. She does not belong to Cape Town and is from George a suburban town. She shares a flat across the road. She accepts and comes to his house. He offers her biscuits and cheese and plays Mozart’s clarinet quintet music. He slowly draws her into conversation first about Romantic poetry, next about love. Naturally, she is a little surprised. Then he forces her to stay for supper. She agrees but wants to make a phone call. After a long call, in response to a question of his, she tells him that she is planning to take stage craft and designing as her prospective careers and presently she is also doing a diploma course in theatre. Then he shows her a dance on the video. His plan is to capture the girl, but he fails. She looks at the piano and touches it. When asked, he says he will play it another time when they come to know each other better. Then she looks into his library and David playing more music, tells her that he is working on Byron. He tells her about Byron and other romantics, as follows: Byron died at thirty-six:

… They all died young or dried up. Or went mad and were locked away. But Italy wasn’t where Byron died. He died in Greece. He went to Italy to escape a scandal, and settled there. Settled down. Had the last big love-affair of his life. Italy was a popular destination for the English in those days. They believed that Italians were still in touch with their natures. Less hemmed in by convention, more passionate. (15)

She walks in the room and mistakes his mother’s photograph for his wife’s. There is a short conversation about his marital status. Then he offers her liquor, but she accepts a shot of whisky in her coffee. All the time David touches her and asks her to stay for the night with him. He praises her beauty indirectly. He touches her cheek. Though not withdrawing from him, she does not yield. He suggests to her that she share her bounty of beauty with others more widely. When he further advances, she rises and says that she has to leave as she is expected. He accompanies her to the gate and embraces her. She slips and goes.
In this chapter, the Narrative code operates through the progression of events whereas the Cultural code reveals the kind of life led by white men in Cape Town. Consider the following paragraph in this context:

He is mildly smitten with her. It is no great matter; barely term passes when he does not fall for one or other of his charges. Cape Town: a city prodigal of beauty, of beauties. (12)

The Semic code throws further light on the character of David, a devotee of Byron. In this chapter, the archetype is Byron and his (love) escapades. This archetype repeats itself in many chapters of the novel.

5.2.3 Chapter 3: Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.18-28)

On a Sunday morning David telephones to Melanie’s flat and tells her that he will take her out for lunch. At lunch time he goes to her flat and takes her to Hout Bay on the harbourside. She is not hungry and doesn’t eat much. Observing her to be worried, he assures her that he will not allow their affair to go too far. The narrator makes an interesting observation in this context which also reflects David’s feelings, as follows:

Too far. What is far, what is too far, in a matter like this? Is her too far the same as his too far? (19)

As it starts raining, they leave the restaurant and return to his house. He makes love to her. She gets up, gets dressed and leaves. He feels happy, next morning. He orders for twelve pink carnations. On Tuesday, it rains continuously and David gives a lift to Melanie in his car and drops her at her flat. On Wednesday she attends his class on Wordsworth’s The Prelude. He tries to explain why Wordsworth felt disappointed when he first visited the majestic white mountain, Mont Blanc, in the Alps: stark reality is not as appealing as a living thought, a great archetype of the mind because “pure ideas, find themselves usurped by mere sense images” (22). When the students don’t seem to understand this, he brings in the parallel of “being in love”. He says: “It may be in your better interest to throw a veil over the gaze, so as to keep her alive in her archetypal, goddess like form” (Ibid). This appears to have confused the students further. He dismisses the class to meet her, but she disappears. The narrator describes David’s condition:

A week ago she was just another pretty face in the class. Now she is a presence in his life, a breathing presence. (23)
David goes to student union auditorium and sitting unnoticed there in darkness, watches the rehearsal of the play *Sunset at the Globe Salon* in which Melanie is playing the part of maid in the hairdresser’s shop. He leaves the auditorium. Next day she is absent in his class. He takes the register and gives her full attendance and enters seventy four marks against her name for the mid-term test which she has not attended. In the afternoon at four o’ clock, he goes to her flat and forces himself in and makes love to her in spite of her unwillingness. She is afraid that her cousin Pauline would be back any moment. He drives off while Pauline returns. Melanie does not attend his class the next day. A week passes, he telephones her, without getting any reply. At midnight on Sunday she knocks at his door and requests him to allow her to sleep there that night. He offers some tea, but she wants to sleep. He makes up a bed for her in his daughter’s old room, where she sleeps. Next morning, when she gets up he enquires if there is anything serious. She doesn’t reveal anything. She wants to stay there. So leaving her in his house, he goes to the University to meet his classes. At noon he returns home and finds her quite at home. He persuades her to tell him if anything is wrong, but she wishes to tell him about it later and now she goes.

In this chapter one can find that the Cultural code operates at the classroom level in which David attempts to explain some lines from *The Prelude* by Wordsworth. His explanation reminds the reader of the Reader Response theory of America and the Reception Aesthetic of Germany. Wordsworth was greatly disillusioned when he physically saw Mont Blanc in the Alps because the actual sight of the mountain could not reach up to his own imagination of the mount. In terms of the Semic code, this chapter throws further light on the character of David who is a habitual womanizer and who like Wordsworth, feels disappointed in the real act of love making and therefore moves from one woman to another in search of satisfaction. The Hermeneutic code also operates in this chapter as Melanie who has usually been unwilling for sex with him, herself comes to his house, stays for the night and promises him to tell him about her problem when they meet next time. The Hermeneutic code thus creates a certain kind of suspense.

5.2.4 Chapter 4: Narrative, Hermeneutic and Semic Codes (pp.29-35)

This chapter narrates the progress of action further. David has sex one more time with Melanie in his daughter’s bedroom. She asks him questions whether
womanizing is his habit and about his wives. His replies seem to be honest. That afternoon, Melanie’s boy friend comes into David’s office room and warns him not to meddle with Melanie’s life. This ‘bravo’, i.e., this black young man also vandalizes his car: the tyres are deflated, glue is applied into the door locks, the windscreen is pasted with newspaper, and the paint work is scratched. David has to spend six hundred rand for the repairs. Melanie keeps her distance. But she attends his Monday class accompanied by her black boyfriend. The students also behave in a strange manner and keep silent because of the presence of a stranger in the class. David feels pity for Melanie as she looks exhausted. Then he starts reading ‘Lara’, a poem by Byron in which the poet describes Lucifer (i.e. Satan) as ‘a stranger, an erring spirit from another’ world etc., perhaps to deride Melanie’s black boyfriend. Most students do not answer David’s questions on the poem, but Melanie’s boyfriend gives a correct answer to David’s question about Lucipher: “He does what he feels like. He doesn’t care if it’s good or bad. He just does it.” (33) David further explains by saying that Lucifer’s “madness was not of the head, but heart”. Then he asks for an explanation of the phrase ‘a mad heart’. There is silence in the class. David ends the class early and tells Melanie to meet him in the office alone. He closes his office room door when she enters, thereby keeping her boyfriend outside. David advises Melanie to attend his classes regularly and also to take the mid-term test. He does not want her boyfriend to come and disrupt his classes. Melanie says she can’t take the test because she has not read much and not prepared well for the test. He tries to encourage her by saying that she can prepare herself now during the weekend and take the test in his office room, the following Monday. She leaves without saying a word. That evening when he is driving home from a concert, at the traffic light he observes Melanie’s boyfriend taking her as a pillion rider on his motorbike. Both are wearing helmets. But he recognizes them and Melanies’s sitting posture titches his feelings of sex for her.

As this chapter narrates the progress of events between David, Melanie and her boyfriend, we can see that the Narrative code operates here. Next, the Hermeneutic code also operates in this chapter at two levels : first the level of love-sex relation between Melanie and David because it is not clear whether Melanie is willing to continue her sex relation with David Lurie and second, whether the lines from Byron’s poem ‘Lara’ describe Melanies’ black boyfriend from David’s point of
view, or they refer to David’s own relationship with Melanie from the narrator’s point of view or they represent the feelings of Melanie’s boyfriend about David not clear and consequently, a multiplicity of meaning is achieved owing to the Hermeneutic code. Third, the Semic code pervades this chapter because it shows how David Lurie tries to help Melanie, his student (and not as his lover) thereby showing Semically and symbolically David’s split personality. Finally, the Semic code also throws light on Melanie’s character by showing how she is being distanced from David, most probably under the force of her black boyfriend. A skillful combination of these codes embellishes the narrative technique adopted by the author in this chapter.

5.2.5 Chapter 5: Cultural, Hermeneutic, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.36-46)

In this chapter, the consequences of David Lurie’s affair with Melanie are narrated. Melanie who does not appear for her mid-term test on Monday also withdraws from David’s course of Communication 312. Then David receives a phone call from her father, Mr. Isaacs at George, requesting David to persuade Melanie not to withdraw from this University course. Though David knows the actual reason for her withdrawal, he pretends ignorance and promises Mr. Isaacs that he will see what he can do. On Wednesday and Friday his classes are attended poorly indicating that the story is out. On Friday, Mr. Isaacs meets David in the latter’s office and accuses him of misbehavior with his daughter, Melanie. David leaves his office, but Isaacs shouts after him. Mr. Isaacs lodges a complaint with the University authorities against David for harassment. David is able to imagine how this has happened without Melanie’s willingness. He imagines that this complaint has been given by Melanie under force by Mr. Isaacs, her father, and Pauline, her cousin. He is dismayed that the hand which he kissed has signed the complaint against him. As summoned, he attends the committee meeting. The committee is chaired by Farodia Rassool of Social Sciences with Aram Hakim and Elaine Winter, head of David’s department, as members. To start with, they find fault with David for giving full attendance to Melanie who actually attended only two of his classes and for giving Melanie seventy four marks for the mid-term exam, which Melanie has not attended at all. David immediately accepts his fault and says he has no defense. The members of the committee, particularly Hakim who was his tennis playmate tries to protect him. But David does not change his stance. Then the committee has no alternative except to recommend his case for appropriate action, to the Rector. David consults his lawyer
who advises him to have counseling. David gets offended. A pamphlet by Women Against Rape (WAR) group is dropped in his office room. It says ‘WOMEN SPEAK OUT’ along with pencil scrolling at the bottom: ‘YOUR DAYS ARE OVER, CASANOVA’. He meets Rosalind, his former second wife. She does not approve of what he has done. He informs her that he is going to see Lucy, his daughter by his first wife now living at the East End. Rosalind questions about the propriety of his behaviour with Melanie, the love affair of a 53 year old professor with a twenty year old girl student. She says, she heard that Melanie attempted suicide by taking sleeping pills. David defends himself by saying that he loves her and Melanie also loves him and her complaint against him has been given under duress and therefore Rosalind should not blame Melanie. Rosalind’s response in this context, is noteworthy:

Don’t blame her! Whose side are you on? Of course I blame her! I blame you and I blame her. The whole thing is disgraceful from beginning to end. Disgraceful and vulgar too. And I am not sorry for saying so. (45)

She also draws attention to a news item printed in the latest copy of *Argus*, a newspaper, charging him with sexual harassment of one of his young female students.

This chapter is another example of how the author skillfully combines several codes in the process of his narration. The Cultural code is reflected in the behaviour of Mr. Isaacs, Melanie’s father, who first respectfully seeks David’s intervention to advise his daughter not to withdraw from a University course, later he meets David personally, accuses him of misbehaving with his daughter and finally persuades his daughter to make a written complaint to the University against David. This situation reveals the prevailing culture in South Africa. To quote the anguished father, Isaac:

We put our children in the hands of you people because we think we can trust you. If we can’t trust the university, who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers. No, Professor Lurie, you may be high and mighty and have all kinds of degrees, but if I was you I’d be very ashamed of myself, so help me God. If I’ve got hold of the wrong end of the stick, now is your chance to say, but I don’t think so, I can see it from your face. (38)
These words clearly reveal that the vestiges of the Apartheid still exist in Cape Town, in South Africa. A white professor perhaps, thinks that there is no wrong committed if he harasses his young and non-white (i.e., black) female student and no one can question him. In a similar fashion, Rosalind’s words quoted above reflect how patriarchy destroys the lives of women in general including the white and the black. Rosalind’s words go beyond the boundaries of Apartheid and reveal the domination of men over women as also men’s selfishness and arrogance. In both cases a white man’s arrogance, irresponsibility and unjust self-glorification are reflected in the most unambiguous way. In terms of the Hermeneutic code, this chapter partly raises expectations in the reader about David’s repentance and apology. The Semic code operates when the chapter vividly narrates how different characters react to the main events of the story, viz. David’s sex with seemingly willing Melanie a young black student due to youthful innocence and helplessness, and unsatiated lust for sex on the part of David a middle-aged white professor whose behaviour can be traced back to Apartheid white cruelty and to patriarchal aggressiveness. It is also interesting to note here that different codes combine with the Symbolic code (i.e., white-black and male-female confrontation) in this chapter.

5.2.6 Chapter 6: Narrative, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.47-58)

In this chapter, the University committee’s hearing of David’s case is narrated. The committee is headed by Manas Mathabane, Professor of Religious Studies. Hakim is his secretary while the other members of the committee are three female academicians in addition to a young female student who is an observer. The meeting is held in a separate committee room close to Hakim’s office. When David enters, he finds himself in a good mood, not at all nervous because he had good sleep on the previous night. The narrator’s words are significant here:

Vanity, he thinks, the dangerous vanity of the gambler; vanity and self-righteousness. He is going into this in the wrong spirit. But he does not care. (47)

These words indicate how wreckless Professor David Lurie is about his present situation and prepare the reader to predict that David is going to behave wrongly and to face a real risk in his career. David enters the committee room and nods to them. Two of the female members, Farodia Rassool and Dismond Swarts (Dean of Engineering) are known to him while the third is a female teacher from
Business School. Mathabane, at the outset, makes it clear that this committee has no powers beyond making recommendations and asks David whether the presence of any of the members is objectionable to David upon for which the latter replies that he has no objections legally. Likewise, he has no objection to the presence of the student observer from the Coalition against Discrimination. This is a continuation of the committee’s work which started the day before, when they conducted a similar inquiry with Miss. Melanie. Hence she is not present today. The first charge against David is his sexual harassment of Melanie, his student. The second charge is that David gave not only full attendance but also credit to all her written assignments and all the examinations though she attended only two of his classes and did not take the mid-term exam. David pleads guilty to both charges. Then Hakim in consultation with Mathabane suggests that David have someone as his representative. David declines to have any representation on his behalf as he “can represent himself perfectly well” (49). When it is suggested that David read Melanie’s statement, he refuses to do so, and, further, when Farodia Rassool inquires whether he would have counseling, David says, he does not need any counseling. He says:

No, I have not sought counseling nor do I intend to seek it. I am a grown man. I am not receptive to being counseled. I am beyond the reach of counseling. (49)

And he hints that they should hasten the inquiry and finish it soon. There is a short break-up for internal discussion during which David and the girl student representative are requested to wait outside in Hakim’s office. After the recess, they are called back in. To Mathabane’s question whether David accepts the charges brought against him, David says ‘yes’. Then Rassool objects to the way of mockery in David’s responses. David denies the presence of any mockery or overtones in his responses. He also responds to the observations of Mathabane and Dr. Rassool, asserting that he is crystal clear in his mind. Consider the excerpt below which gives the narrator’s opinion followed by David’s response:

It would be wiser to shut up, but he does not. ‘What goes on in my mind is my business, not yours Farodia”, he says. ‘Frankly, what you want from me is not a response but a confession. Well, I make no confession, I put forward a plea, as is my right. Guilty as charged. That is my plea. That is as far as I am prepared to go.’ (51)
Farodia protests to this and says that they should impose the severest penalty on David. Mathabane, at once, checks her by saying that this committee cannot impose penalties, but it can only make recommendations. Then Farodia proposes:

‘Then we should recommend the severest penalty. That Professor Lurie be dismissed with immediate effect and forfeit all benefits and privileges’. (Ibid)

To this Desmond Swarts, who has been silent all the time, reacts by saying that they should not be so coldly formalistic to their colleague and asks David whether he seeks a postponement to reflect further and consult, because he is facing the greatest risk of losing his job which is very serious. Even to this friendly suggestion, David gives a mocking reply. Hakim also tries to help David but David does not care, and confesses as follows:

‘Very well’, he says, ‘let me confess. The story begins one evening, I forget the date, but not long past. I was walking through the old college gardens and so, it happened, was the young woman in question, Ms. Isaacs. Our paths crossed. Words passed between us, and at the moment something happened which, not being a poet, I will not try to describe. Suffice it to say that Eros entered. After that I was not the same.’ (52)

To a further question by the member from the Business School, David clarifies:

‘I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorce’ at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros.’ (Ibid)

The arguments continue. A majority of the committee including the Business School teacher and Desmond Swarts who are women except Ms. Farodia Rassool try to convince David about the need for some statement or the other from David to protect him from dismissal from his job. He persists on his being guilty. Finally he agrees that he is wrong, saying:

‘Very well. I took advantage of my position vis-a-vis Ms. Isaacs. I was wrong, and I regret it. Is that good enough for you?’ (54)

The meeting concludes, and David comes out. A group of students and press people surround him jeering at him, asking questions and recording his responses. He tries his best to avoid them but to some questions he has to answer. To one question he answers that he was enriched by the experience. The next day all this appears in the
student newspaper showing a ridiculous photograph of David’s. That evening he receives a phone call from Mathabane who even prepares a statement for David as follows:

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

It is obvious that Mathabane has been trying to protect David. But David does not agree to submit such a statement saying, that he has pleaded guilty in secular terms whereas according to him, “repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse” (58). Thus the final result is clear that the committee recommends for his dismissal from service.

This is a very important chapter because it narrates how David, being arrogant or self-righteous and unresponsive to the efforts of his own colleagues to protect him, loses his job as Professor in Cape Town University.

The narrative technique of the author is very effective in the sense that he manipulates a perfect combination of different codes, particularly the Narrative, Semic and Hermeneutic codes. The Narrative code in this chapter operates through the detailed description of the different episodes in the inquiry committee meetings chaired by Professor Manas Mathabane. The Semic code operates in the progression of arguments and also throws sufficient light on different characters in their attitudes towards David Lurie. For instance, Dr. Farodia Rassool (who usually chairs the university committee on discrimination) is out-and-out against David. She accuses David of mockery and strongly recommends that the severest penalty be imposed on David for his ‘abuse of a young woman’ the pain he caused to the girl and his long exploitation of the girl. In this context, the narrator tells us:

Abuse: he was waiting for the word. Spoken in a voice quivering with righteousness. What does she see, when she looks at him, that keeps her at such a pitch of anger? A shark among the helpless little fishes? Or does she have another vision: of a great thick-boned male bearing down on a girl-child, a huge hand stifling her cries? How absurd! Then he remembers: they were gathered here yesterday in this same room,
and she was before them, Melanie, who barely comes to his shoulder.
Unequal: how can he deny that? (53)

On the other hand the two male members, both Mathabane and Hakim try their best to save him while other two female members appear to be neutral. Seeing David through their sensibilities enables the reader to have a deeper understanding of David’s character. The Semic code also throws light on David’s reckless behaviour often mingled with his type of intellectualism and self-righteousness. David is able to see the difference between secular and non-secular worlds when he objects to the world ‘repentance’ (58). The Semic code in this chapter is so powerful that it also incorporates in itself, an element of dramatic or tragic irony. For when his own daughter Lucy is gang-raped later by three black men (including a boy if eighteen), David Lurie, the white father is obsessed with plans of revenge. But now in this chapter, he is seriously offended by the use of the word ‘abuse’, by Farodia Rassool. Consider her words:

Farodia Rassool intervenes. We are going round in circles, Mr. Chair. 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 any mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part. That is why I say it is futile to go on debating with Professor Lurie. We must take his plea at face value and recommend accordingly’. (53)

Farodia’s words, ‘the long history of exploitation of which this is part’ has both contextual and historical undertones. Contextually, the ‘exploitation’ means David’s continual abuse of Melanie and historically it means the prolonged and unchecked exploitation of the blacks by the whites in South Africa during the period of Apartheid. Note that she is not a white woman. So far as the Hermeneutic code is concerned, in this chapter, this code operates during the investigations of the committees; suspense is maintained on the issues whether David renders his apology and whether David loses his university job. The first issue is resolved in this chapter itself but the second one is left unresolved explicitly. However, this second issue is resolved by the reader in an implied manner and later explicitly in the ensuing chapter. (i.e. Chapter Seven)
5.2.7 Chapter 7: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.59-67)

If the first six chapters narrate the story of David Lurie’s life in Cape Town, the ensuing twelve chapters (i.e. from seven to eighteen) deal with his story on his daughter’s land-holding near the town of Salem in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Likewise the remainder of the novel can be divided into two subdivisions. The first subdivision running from nineteen to twenty-one chapters narrates David’s return to Cape Town via George and his stay there for a few days while the second subdivision from twenty-two to twenty-four chapters describe his return to the Eastern Cape and final stay at D. Village near Grahamstown. Thus, one can see that the narration in the ensuing chapters begins at Cape Town and ends at D. Village.

In this chapter, one can find David leaving Cape Town and arriving at the five-and odd hectare landholding of Lucy, his only daughter, near the town of Salem in the Eastern Cape.

Having been asked to resign by the University authorities, David Lurie submits his resignation, clears his fridge, locks up his house and starts his journey to his daughter’s place in the Eastern Cape, in his car. He stops at Odtlshoorn and by mid-morning next day, arrives at his daughter, Lucy’s five hectare landholding near Salem town on the Grahamstown-Kenton road. The small holding is marked by a wire fence at the front boundary. The land is arable and it has a wind-pump, stables, outbuildings and a yellow-painted farmhouse. There is an old Vaulks Wagon kombi (truck) in the drive way. David parks his car behind the kombi and walks towards the farmhouse. Lucy is not able to recognize him from distance. It is nearly one year since they met last time. She comes forward from the shadow of the stoep and welcomes him with an embrace and a kiss on his cheek. He feels happy. One of the rooms in the house was occupied by another woman named Helen, but Helen has left, for good, for Johannesburg. David is offered that room to put up. In fact, six years before Lucy and Helen were living in a commune as members. The commune was a group of young people who did petty business as peddlars selling leather goods and pottery in Grahamstown. Later, the commune broke up but Lucy and Helen remained there. David helped Lucy to buy this land as Lucy loved the place and wanted to stay and undertake farming there.

Now, Lucy lives alone on the farm. David appreciates her courage. Presently Lucy is providing kennels to villager’s dogs on rent, is growing potatoes and other vegetables on the farm, selling her goods in the market fair conducted every Saturday.
morning at Donkin Square on the Grahamstown road. She has the protection of dogs and also a rifle which she has never used so far. Consider the following passage that describes David’s reflections about his daughter:

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

David settles in Helen’s room which is vacant now. After having home-made bread and jam with tea, David unpacks his suitcase. Both father and daughter take a tour of the premises. There are different species of dogs in the kennels. One dog, named Katy, remains with Lucy because its owners failed to pay and take her back. Petrus, a former assistant and now a co-proprietor of the farm helps her in work. He lives nearby. On returning home David tells Lucy that he does not need any entertainment because he has brought his books and will work on his Byron project – a musical opera on Byron. He also tells her about his resignation to his University job. Of course, she has already had this information on phone from Rosalind. Now Petrus comes for the spray for the vegetable garden. She introduces him to her father, goes to her kombi to fetch the spray. David and Petrus have a small talk. David forms a good opinion about Petrus who is about forty or forty-five years old.

After Petrus goes taking the spray, Lucy tells her father that Petrus and his wife live on the old stable for which Lucy provided electricity. Petrus has another wife who lives with their small and grown up children in Adelaide (Australia). David takes a stroll as far as the Kenton road. He finds the land to be poor, fit only for goats to live on; and wonders how long can Lucy live there. Suddenly he remembers Melanie and her young body. Lucy has put on weight and is becoming heavy. They have a simple supper with sweet potatoes which he normally dislikes, but now they are tasty in Lucy’s special preparation. Lucy assures him that he can live in her house as long as he wishes to. There is some humorous talk between them about his present status as a refugee or a person seeking asylum. He tells her briefly about the circumstances that forced him to leave Cape Town. Rosalind also gave her some information in this regard, on phone. Their conversation is interesting. He tells her that he hated to be counseled or reformed unlike in Mao’s China. He says:
'It reminds me too much of Mao’s China. Recantation, self-criticism, public apology. I am old-fashioned, I would prefer simply to be put against a wall and shot. Have done with it’ (66)

But Lucy has a different point of view. She responds:

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

Nevertheless, Lucy feels that David should not have been ‘so unbending’. She tells him that he can stay in her house as long as he likes. David goes to bed early but his sleep is disturbed by the flurry of dog-barking. Lucy tells him, that is routine and he should get used to it.

As stated above, this chapter marks a new phase in David’s life. A former University professor from Cape Town now comes to live on his daughter’s farm in the Eastern Cape which is a cold countryside. In this chapter three codes – the Narrative, the Semic and the Cultural codes – operate. The Narrative code describes the chronological and topological progression of events while the Semic code throws further light on the character of David and on the newly introduced character, Lucy. Further, this code delineates the differences of temperament between father and daughter. Then, the Cultural code depicts the life of the countryside life of the African folk in the Eastern Cape which is not so much different from the life of village folk in other parts of South Africa, perhaps, except in climate.

Furthermore, under the Cultural code, one can also notice a very important historical fact. A male teacher having an affair with one of his girl students was not a very serious crime in the past, i.e., during the days of Apartheid. This was normal when Lucy was a school students, i.e., approximately fifteen years before (Lucy is about thirty now). Now things have changed culturally in the post-Apartheid period i.e., in 1999, five years after political independence of South Africa in 1994 when Apartheid was abolished.

5.2.8 Chapter 8: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.68-74)

This chapter describes a morning walk of David and Lucy to the road, through the scrubland and then through the sparse pine forest. It is a cold winter morning, very
cold for David. Two young Dobermanns on a leash held by Lucy and the bitch, Katy, let free, follow them. Katy has a problem of defecation. Lucy asks him whether his affair with the young girl at the University was serious. Rosalind has not given her the details. David tells her that this girl came from George, of the Eastern Cape; she is an average student, but very attractive. He says that the girl was in a difficult position with a young lover bullying her and strain of studies and pressure from parents. In addition, that girl had also the problem created by David. Now his contact with her has ceased. It seems he tells a lie to Lucy because he still remembers Melanie and he is sympathetic to her. Lucy asks him whether he is planning to marry again, and he replies in the negative. He also says that every woman who came into his life made him a better person. Lucy adds that those women also might have become better persons because of their contact with him. She hints that life may be more difficult for him in future. While returning home, he finds that Lucy grows cycads also on her farm. On Saturday Lucy, David and Petrus take their produce to the weekly market at Donkin Square, in Lucy’s kombi. Several African men and women open their stalls. They sell milk, masa, butter, soup-bones, potatoes, onions, bottled jams, preserves, dried fruit, buchu, tea, honey bush tea and herbs. Lucy sells cleaned potatoes, flowers, onions and tomatoes. Many customers know Lucy by name and show appreciation for her. When introduced, they tell David that he should feel proud of his daughter. He agrees with them. Lucy informs David that Bev runs an animal refuge, she helps Bev sometimes and says they will visit Bev’s place on their way. But David does not like Bev Shaw because she is not attractive. After the Animal Welfare League, a charity agency at Grahamstown closed due to lack of funds, Bev Shaw has taken charge of the animal clinic in the old premises. They visit the house of Shaws. Their house is not at all neat and orderly. Bill Shaw who is drinking tea invites David for a cup of tea.

They don’t stay for long and return. On the way Lucy inquires about David’s opinion on Shaws. They don’t have children. David says that theirs is a subculture of its own. He also opines that Bev’s work in the animal clinic at D.Village is a losing battle. When Lucy expresses her appreciation of Bev’s work, David is straightforward in his dislike for her and her work. Now their car is moving on the open road and in response to Lucy’s assertion that she cannot lead a higher life as wished by her father and for her, people like the Shaws are role models. She also wants to serve animals like Bev Shaw. She wants to share life with animals to avoid being born as an animal
in her next birth. She knows that her father wants her to be a painter, or a Russian teacher because he does not approve of friends like Bev and Bill Shaw. Then David makes himself clear by saying:

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

Lucy who feels guilty that humans are unkind to animals, draws a long breath and they return home in silence.

In this chapter, the Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic codes operate in conjunction. The Narrative code manifests itself in the progression of events while the Cultural code reveals how the village folk sell their produce at Donkin Square weekly market to make a living. Lucy and Petrus are also among them. Lucy, in spite of being a white woman, mingles with the local black women folk who like her very much. So is her intimacy with and admiration for Bev and Bill Shaw who lead a simple life although they are also white people. The Cultural code shows clearly the process of acculturation in the case of Lucy and the Shaws. The Semic code operates by throwing adequate light on the characters of Lucy, Bev and Bill Shaw and David. Except David all the others are alike in the sense that they do not show any air of superiority because they are white. They seem to have identified themselves with the countryside and the village folk whereas David is totally different with his education, intellectualism and urban background. The Symbolic code projects the differences of attitudes on the part of Lucy and David in respect of their view points about animals. Lucy thinks that humans are sinning against animals like dogs and others, and therefore humans should not only care for them but also love them. That is, Lucy is ready to identify herself with the animals because the latter cannot talk about their suffering. It seems that Lucy believes in the cycle of births and retribution like the Hindus. In contrast, David considers that animals are of a different order of creation. Humans should be kind to animals as a point of generosity but not as equals. This divergence of attitudes is the content of the Symbolic code here.
This chapter narrates how Lucy is successful in showing David some kind of engagement to avoid boredom by persuading him to help Bev in her work at the animal clinic.

When the chapter opens, one can find David watching soccer on TV. The running commentary on the game alternates between Sotho and Xhosa, the local languages not known to him. Saturday afternoon in South Africa is devoted to men and their pleasures. He reduces the volume and nods. He wakes up when Petrus comes, sits there and raises the volume. The two football teams on TV are Bushbucks and Sundowns. The former is Petrus’s favourite. So he enjoys watching the game and when the Bushbucks goalkeeper stops and catches the ball, he becomes very happy. Leaving Petrus, David goes to Lucy’s room. She is reading a book, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* which surprises him because it is not such stuff that he expects his daughter to read. He sits on the bed and fondles her bare foot. He realizes that Lucy is beautiful like her mother. Lucy assures him that everything is perfectly well here. She is glad that he is also here and tells him that when he gets used to this kind of life, there won’t be any boredom for him. While she is talking, David is absorbed in his own thoughts: in spite of her beauty, courage and hard work Lucy’s life as a woman’s is not fulfilled and incomplete. He regrets his failure in guiding her to a better life. He wonders whether his excessive love for her daughter has misguided her and whether he, with his love for her, has become a burden for her. She suggests to him, in order to keep himself busy, he can cut up the dog-meat, assist Petrus in his work and help Bev with her work at the animal clinic. Perhaps, Petrus who is prosperous with the Land Affairs grant can pay him wages, but Bev can’t do so because, she has no income in her work at the clinic. He agrees to do so if there are no efforts of reforming him. She assures him that no one will ask him to change. David is happy at her teasing him like her mother and he is also reminded of Melanie who is very beautiful but without any wit like Lucy or her mother. Lucy’s wit is sharper. He goes out and stretches out in Katy’s cage beside Katy and falls asleep. Lucy comes with a water can and wakes him up. There is a talk between them about souls of human beings and animals. He says animals have no proper souls like humans. The chapter ends with David’s readiness to help Bev at her animal clinic.

In this chapter, the Narrative code, as usual, takes care of the progression of events while the Cultural code informs the reader about the African men’s craze for soccer. In conjunction with the Semic code, the Cultural Code also creates some
humour, from David’s viewpoint, about the conclusion of the football game without any score on either side and the boxing event in which two tiny men ‘belabour each other’ in a comic manner. The Semic code extends itself by revealing the characters of Lucy and David. They love each other as father and daughter normally do. David’s love for Lucy is excessive because she resembles her mother. Further he regrets his failure to guide her properly. But Lucy thinks differently; she declares that she is happy and everything is perfectly well. Finally, the Symbolic code, reveals itself by showing the different views of David and Lucy on the souls of animals and humans. So are their opinions about Bev Shaw. Lucy thinks that Bev is an extra-ordinary woman while David considers Bev to be the most unattractive and ordinary woman.

5.2.10 Chapter 10: Semic, Symbolic and Cultural Codes (pp.80-87)

In this chapter, David’s experience at Ms. Bev’s animal clinic is described. David is led into the inner room of the clinic, Animal, Welfare League W.O.1529 near D.Village. People with their animals are waiting outside. In the inner room which smells pungently of urine, Ms. Bev Shaw is treating a dog for an abscess in an impacted tooth. Since there are no antibiotics, she is trying to lance the abscess. A barefoot child who is the dog’s owner is assisting Bev to do her job. David also helps them. After Bev probes the abscess with the lancet, the dog spatters blood and saliva on the table. The dog is released. Bev cleans the table and thanks David for his help. She compliments that his presence has had a positive effect on the dog. To him Bev seems to be ‘remarkably unattractive’ (82). She says that for eating animals, humans will have to give justification. David doesn’t understand and thinks that humans will have to justify their eating of animals at the Great Reckoning. The next animal treated is a goat, a fullgrown buck. The goats scrotum is partly swollen and partly filled with blood and dirt. David fastens its legs as requested by Bev while she touches the scrotum with a swab so that the dirt comes away. She tells the goat’s owner, (a woman) that it is late. The goat was attacked by dogs and wounded. As it is not possible to wait until Dr. Oosthuizen, the veterinary doctor, who visits the clinic on Thursday, Bev tries her own treatment. She whispers friendly words to the goat as if hypnotizing it. The goat seems to obey her. Nevertheless, the goat’s owner is not prepared to leave the goat at the clinic until Thursday as suggested by Bev and takes back the goat. Bev advises her to bring back the goat afterwards. When David inquires as to her future treatment she tells him that it will be subjected to mercy
killing with the help of lethal. That is the treatment she gives to bad cases of suffering animals: it is euthanasia. Yet, Bev greatly loves and pities such of her animal clients. David who has considered her as the most unattractive woman, slowly understands her. To quote the narrator:

Things are beginning to fall into place. He has the first inkling of the task this ugly little woman has set herself. This bleak building is a place not of healing – her doctoring is too amateurish for that – but of last resort. He recalls the story of – who was that? St. Hubert? – who gave refuge to a deer that clattered into his chapel, panting and distraught, fleeing the huntsmen’s dogs. Bev Shaw, not veterinarian but a priestess, full of New Age mumbo, jumbo, trying, absurdly, to lighten the load of Africa’s suffering beasts. Lucy thought he would find her interesting. But Lucy is wrong. Interesting is not the word. (84)

David helps her all the afternoon, she takes him round the yard where there is a fish-eagle with a splintered wing and mob of scrawny mongrels filling two pens. He helps her in feeding them. Bev Shaw runs the clinic with the public donations which are meager whereas the animals are too many. David remarks that these animals are very egalitarian without class discrimination or high or low and mighty or meek. Bev, of course, does not kill all of them. She resorts to mercy-killing when it is the last resort and inevitable. Some of the animals are taken by owners or others. She asks him about his trouble as she has so learnt from Lucy. He says that it is not just trouble but ‘disgrace’. He doubts whether she has any use for him. She does not give a full reply.

As David stayed only brief periods earlier, he decides to behave carefully with his daughter and her surroundings. He has some strange thoughts about the relationship between Lucy and Helen: perhaps there was Sapphic love between them. He does not like that. Instead of him being Lucy’s guardian, she has become his guardian now. He is not able to have undisturbed sleep at night. He reads Byron’s letters of 1820. At thirty-two Byron was living with Teresa at Ravenna. Byron considered that after thirty there wouldn’t be “any real or fierce delight in the passions”. (87)
In this chapter, besides the Narrative code, three other codes, the Semic, the Symbolic and the Cultural codes operate. If the Narrative code presents the sequence of events chronologically as well as topologically, the Semic code throws light on the two important characters in the chapter, namely David and Bev. Next the Symbolic code reveals the differences between David and Bev: David’s initial poor opinion about Bev gradually changes as he is able to perceive her kind heart behind her unattractive appearance. The Cultural code manifests itself in the behaviour of Bev with the local people who bring their suffering animals either for her (amateurish) treatment or for mercy-killing. The reader also understands how the life of Byron and his letters influence David’s thinking and behaviour.

5.2.11 Chapter 11: Narrative, Semic, Cultural and Symbolic Codes (pp.88-99)

This is a very important chapter because; among other things it relates the incident of Lucy’s rape by three black men.

It happens on a Wednesday afternoon. David gets up early in the morning. Lucy has already gone out and is watching three wild geese on the dam. These three lovely geese visit her every year and she feels lucky to be the visited and the one chosen. “Three” reminds David of himself, Lucy and Melanie, Melanie and Soraya. They return home and after breakfast take a walk with the two Dobermanns. Then there is an interesting conversation between them. Lucy asks him whether David can live in the country. He replies by asking her whether she needs a new dog-man. She suggests that he could try for a job at Rhodes University or at Port Elizabeth. He says that he doesn’t want to join a university job but wants to work as a ledger clerk or a kennel attendant in this part of the country. When she asks him whether he allows gossip about him to multiply by running away from a university job, he tells her that his scandal will not leave him and he can’t get a university job anywhere. He feels happy that Lucy has grown independent and lives an asexual life. When she asks about his case, he says that his case ‘rests on the rights of desire’ (89). He cannot tell her directly about the spur of Eros in him when he made love to Melanie. He cites the instance of a retriever (a male dog) in their neighbourhood at Kenilworth during her childhood which would get excited and unmanageable when it saw a bitch. Its master used to beat him mercilessly. It is wrong according to David, because it is unjust to punish an animal for following its instincts. It would be better to shoot it to death. He is like that dog for which he has been punished wrongly. He knows that “desire is a
burden we could do well without” (90). She agrees with him saying that it is what she applied to her own life. When she compares him to a scapegoat, he corrects her by saying that in the case of a scapegoat there are religious implications of cleansing while in his case there are no such implications. He has adjusted himself to the life of a dog-man and helper to a woman who specialized in sterilization and euthanasia (91). Lucy tells David that Bev is afraid of her grammar mistakes in front of David who is a professor. When father and daughter are talking on their walk back home like this, three black men walk past of them. When they reach home, they find these three men waiting for them. They want to use Lucy’s telephone because a woman is suffering from labour pains and they want to telephone as there is no phone in their hamlet, Erasmuskraal. Lucy opens the back door telling the tall and handsome man to come in. Suddenly the second man also enters forcefully pushing David aside. Suspecting some mishap David shouts for Petrus, but there is no Petrus. When David also enters, he is hit on his head and dragged across the kitchen door and he is not able to stand up. Now he is pushed into the lavatory and its door is locked. He croaks for Lucy. He battens the door in vain. He begs the men hitting him to take everything but to spare his daughter. That man locks him up again in the lavatory and leaves. The dogs in the kennels start barking. The boy who is outside tries to threaten the dogs. Now after some time, the tall man appears and shoots at the dogs with a rifle. There dogs die. There is a hush. Then the second man comes again pushes David into the lavatory and splashes methylated spirits on David and throws a burning match stick so that David’s body catches fire. Having been locked in, David tries to save himself with the water in the toilet bowl and washes his face with wads of wet paper. His eyes and hair are burned. He calls Lucy. There is no response, but he hears his car being started. At last Lucy comes, opens the lavatory door, rushes out and watching the dead dogs, feels sorrowful. When he asks about Lucy’s situation, she doesn’t reply. Then David muses:

It happens every day, 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. (98)
In this country, he thinks that there is a risk to own anything, a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes and women too. Now Lucy comes and when he expresses his anxiety for her, she does not show any response but points out that his head is terrible with burns. The telephone is smashed and the tyres of her kombi are let down. So she goes to Ettinger’s place for help. She suggests to him that when people ask him what happened, he should talk about himself and she would talk about herself. He tries to soothe her in a weak manner.

This chapter, as mentioned above, is a crucial one as it narrates the mishap at Lucy’s house i.e., rape and burglary. In terms of the Narrative code, this chapter relates the progression of events chronologically. The Semic code throws further light on the characters of David and Lucy and their attitudes to the ‘disgrace’ of David at Cape Town University. Their moral perspectives are different. The Cultural code reveals how the black people in South Africa are taking revenge against the whites in view of the suppression and humiliations meted out to the blacks by the whites during the period of Apartheid. That is why David feels that there is a risk for people to have valuable things or women and such risky incidents occur everyday and everywhere in South Africa. In this sense the Cultural code leads to the Symbolic code which records the implicit and explicit rivalry between the whites and the blacks in South Africa, a nightmare legacy of Apartheid.

5.2.12 Chapter 12: Narrative, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.100-105)

Ettinger, an old and lonely German, in the neighbourhood comes along with Lucy in his vehicle to Lucy’s farm-house. He says that he never goes out without his gun because there is no safety and the police are not going to save you. They drive to the hospital against David’s expectation that they are going to the police station. Lucy assures him that she alone will lodge a complaint at the police station. Lucy leads him to the causality ward and leaves him there because he has to wait, telling him to wait till she comes back to fetch him. After two hours, he is called in and the Indian woman doctor treats him. She tells him that he is lucky because it was not petrol they had used. His head is dressed and bandaged, his eye is covered while his wrist is ice-pack strapped. Bill Shaw comes to take him. David is surprised at the friendly and helping behaviour of Bill Shaw with whom he had tea only one time. In the car Bill Shaw observes that what happened to David and Lucy is very atrocious and like being in war. He also informs David that a complaint has been lodged with the police and a
bulletin is out for his car. David enquires whether Lucy has seen a doctor; Bill replies in the affirmative. They reach Shaw’s house and Bev Shaw takes care of David while Lucy is asleep on a sedative. Declining to take any food because he is not hungry, David settles on a sofa with Bev’s help. He has a vision or dream in which he sees Lucy calling him to save her with outstretched hands in a field of white light. He moves to Lucy’s room where she has been resting. When he tells her about his dream, she says she was not calling him and tells him to go and sleep. It is three in the morning but he is not able to steep. In the morning Bev Shaw serves him a light breakfast. When David asks her about Lucy’s position, Bev does not reply verbally. David wonders whether women in general are happy in the company of women. He also suspects that the news about their mishap might have been around. He asks Lucy whether she has seen a doctor whereupon Lucy answers that she saw her G.P (General Physician) the night before. Over his other questions she gets irritated. About their plans for the day, Lucy tells him that they will go back to the farm, clean it up and live there as before. David says that it is not a good idea. But Lucy tells him that she is going back not for the sake an idea and she is just going back. She says that, the place was never safe and not just at present, while David feels helpless.

In this chapter, it can be noted that the Narrative code as usual describes the chronological progression of events while the Semic code reveals the attitudes of the different characters and the Hermeneutic code keeps the suspense about what actually happened to Lucy during the mishap: it is not clearly revealed whether she was raped or it was just a burglary. Nevertheless, for David it was a case of gang-rape of Lucy, his daughter. He seems to be more worried about his daughter than himself but Lucy’s behaviour is quite the opposite.

5.2.13 Chapter 13: Semic, Cultural and Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.106-112)

In this chapter the gap that develops between David and his daughter, Lucy, is described. David and Lucy move to their own house from that of Shaws. Before leaving, Bev Shaw changes his dressing. She does it so devotedly that David feels in her hands the same peacefulness as the goat in the clinic.

After dressing he sees his image in the mirror and says it is ‘shipshape’ and thinks, he looks like a mummy. He raises once again the topic of Lucy’s rape with Bev but she advises him to ask Lucy once again. Till past eleven Lucy does not come
out and he roams about the garden. Yesterday’s events completely shocked him. He becomes weak and trembles which he thinks is only an outward sign and feels that a vital organ inside, his heart, has been bruised and abused. He feels quite helpless and meek. Now Lucy cannot help him and he has to take care of Lucy and her farm himself. In the words of the narrator:

His pleasure in living has been snuffed out. Like a leaf on a stream, like a puffball on a breeze, he has begun to float toward his end. He sees it quite clearly, and it fills him… with despair. The blood of life is leaving his body and despair is taking its place, despair that is like a gas, odourless, tasteless, without nourishment. You breathe it in, your limbs relax, you cease to care, even at the moment when the steel touches your throat. (108)

Two young policemen come for investigation. Lucy refuses to take breakfast, Bev drives the policemen to their farm. The dead bodies of the six dogs are lying where they fell. There is no sight of Petrus. Lucy tells the policemen as follows:

There were three men, she recites, or two men and a boy. They tricked their way into the house, took… money, clothes, a television set, a CD player, a rifle with ammunition. When her father resisted, they assaulted him, poured spirits over him, tried to set him on fire. Then they shot the dogs and drove off in his car. She describes the men and what they were wearing; she describes the car. (108)

Lucy does not make any mention about the rape. She tells them the whole criminal operation lasted for twenty or thirty minutes. Though, David does not contradict her, he is surprised as to why Lucy suppressed information about the rape and mentioned the time of invasion only as twenty or thirty minutes whereas for him the whole incident had taken much longer time. He feels that it is Lucy’s secret and his disgrace. The policemen examine the other rooms in the house and tell them a detective will call on later to take fingerprints. After the police leave, Ettinger remarks that not one of the black people can be trusted. He promises to send a boy to repair the kombi. He further remarks that it must have been worse, if they had taken Lucy also with them. When he is left alone with Lucy, David comments that she has not told the policemen the whole story. He feels that the rapists will laugh at them victoriously when the incident is reported in the newspapers as a mere burglary and think that the
whites are too ashamed to report Lucy’s rape. He buries the corpses of the six dogs and feels gratified. Because Lucy does not like to live in her room, David and Lucy exchange their rooms. In the evening they eat as a matter of ritual. David raises the question of rape again. But Lucy tells him and it is her business. In contrast, David thinks of vengeance. Lucy does not agree with him and hints to him not to have this kind of conversation with her again. Thus the gap gets more widened between father and daughter.

This chapter combines the Semic, Hermeneutic and Symbolic codes. The Semic code operates in the description of the scene and the events associated revealing characters and the implications underlying their talk. The Hermeneutic code further keeps up the suspense regarding Lucy’s rape. Finally the Symbolic code is manifested in the confrontation between father and daughter.

5.2.14 Chapter 14: Hermeneutic and Semic Codes (pp. 113-122)

This chapter describes the efforts made by David to extract information from Petrus whom he suspects to be an indirect accomplice for the attack made on him and Lucy by the three black men.

It is Friday. Ettinger phones David offering him a gun for protection. David thanks him and defers his acceptance. David repairs Lucy’s house – the kitchen door etc. He wants to provide protection to Lucy’s farmhouse as Ettinger did for his own house. He is worried about Lucy’s life. The bitch, Katy settles in the kitchen. They have to be alert constantly. Petrus returns with a lorry loaded with house-building materials, his wife and two men to unload the cartons and two sheep. Both Petrus and his wife go into their house. His wife is a handsome woman. David informs Lucy of Petrus’s return and she feels happy. She cannot order or question Petrus about his recent absence as he is not her subordinate and he is his own master, and only her neighbour. Lucy shows no interest in anything and spends time lying on her bed. David joins Petrus in his work at the dam and tries to get information from his to clear his suspicion. But Petrus is very casual and natural in his behaviour and talk and David fails to elicit any response to prove him guilty.

On Saturday, as Lucy is not able to come, David goes to the market along with Petrus. Several women enquire about Lucy’s welfare. David politely responds to their questions in spite of his shyness of his odd appearance. In the newspaper, Herald, a
news item appears about the attack and burglary, without any mention of rape. Their trading at the market is not good, their taking home being only three hundred rand. They take back the unsold flowers and vegetables. Still David is unable to get any information about the whereabouts of Petrus during his absence. In old days (perhaps during the period of Apartheid and white rule) David would have ordered Petrus to reveal facts, but now it is not so possible. Yet David is convinced that Petrus is capable of honest toil and honest cunning like any village folk or peasants. Further, David finds that the story of Petrus would be distorted if the language is English. David’s thoughts in this context are interesting:

More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. Stretches of English code whole sentences long have thickened, lost their articulations, their articulateness, their articulatedness. Like a dinosaur expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened. Pressed into the mould of English, Petrus’s story would come out arthritic, bygone. (117)

David suspects that in near future when Ettinger, the lonely white farmer dies, Petrus will occupy his land and house and likewise taking advantage of the present helpless condition and amateurish farm work of Lucy, Petrus will gradually grab her land and house also. David also suspects that the Petrus was the master-mind who plotted the scheme of attack by the three unknown black men. Consider the following excerpt:

The worst, the darkest reading would be that Petrus engaged three strange men to teach Lucy a lesson, paying them off with their loot. But he cannot believe that it would be too simple. The real truth, he suspects, is something far more – he casts around for the word – anthropological, something it would take months to get to the bottom of, months of patient, unhurried conversation with dozens of people, and the offices of an interpreter. (118)

Once while helping Petrus in his work of cleaning the dam, David asks Petrus whether the strangers attacked them because they were the first white folk they met that day. But Petrus is practical. He says that the police must find them and put them in jail. That is the job of the police. When David expresses his wish that the invaders should be brought before the law and punished, Petrus says that David is not wrong. David is not satisfied with this, he wants Petrus to call the attack a ‘violation’ or an
‘outrage’. In this manner, David spends his time on the farm. He is busy throughout the day. He also sends a letter to Rosalind, his former wife, now scouting in Madagascar, the darkest part of Africa, that he and Lucy have had some bad luck - a burglary but not very serious. There is no improvement in Lucy’s condition. David is not able to sleep at night and suffers from nightmares. His Byron project has not made any progress. Except two volumes and letters of Byron, the other materials were lost along with his car. He visualizes how the dark trio of Byron, Teresa and her husband behave in old Kaffraria and not in Cape Town.

In this chapter the Hermeneutic and the Semic codes dominate. The former code delineates how David struggles to draw information from Petrus to prove the latter as an accomplice of or the brain behind the attack. But his suspicions are not properly confirmed. The Semic code throws further light on the characters of Lucy, David and Petrus. Particularly the traces of Apartheid are still present in David’s attitude and thinking whereas Petrus appears to be a simple, hardworking and practical black peasant. Therefore, David suspects that the reason for the attack was more anthropological and therefore ethnic. Yet he is aware of the political independence of Africa and the abolition of Apartheid and therefore cannot take liberties with Petrus. Lucy is a normal, practical and intelligent girl.

5.2.15 Chapter 15: Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.123-135)

This chapter is devoted to the narration of events at the party given on a Saturday by Petrus on his getting land on transfer.

The action of the chapter opens presumably, on a Thursday, i.e., two days before the Petrus’s party. He brings two sheep for the party and tethers them beside the stable. The sheep go on bleating continuously and annoy David. He tells Petrus to leave them to the damside to graze. Petrus does not reply, but informs David that he is giving a party on Saturday and invites David and Lucy to the party. When Petrus leaves, after one hour, David unties the sheep and takes them to the damside and leaves them for grazing. David’s reflections on the sheep in this context are noteworthy:

The sheep drink at length, then leisurely begin to graze. They are black-faced Persians, alike in size, in markings, even in their movements. Twins, in all likelihood, destined since birth for the butcher’s knife. Well, nothing remarkable in that. When did a sheep
last die of old age? Sheep do not own themselves, do not own their lives. They exist to be used, every last ounce of them, their flesh to be eaten, their bones to be crushed and fed to poultry. Nothing escapes, except perhaps the gall bladder which no one will eat. Descartes should have thought of that. The soul suspended in the dark, bitter gall, hiding. (123-124)

David tells Lucy about Petrus’s invitation. She tells him about the occasion and that it is a big day for Petrus and they should attend the party and give Petrus a present. When David says that two sheep will not be adequate, Lucy says that Petrus is a penny pincher, and in old days they would slaughter an ox. David expresses his disapproval of Petrus’s bringing the sheep and keeping them on display before slaughtering them. Lucy dismisses him by saying that this is country and Africa and people slaughter sheep in houses, and not in an abattoir. David is distressed by the growing snappiness in her attitude towards him. Trying to understand her moodiness because of the mishap, he asks her whether she is hiding anything from him, and whether she picked up something from those men. Lucy is surprised and tells him that she is not a child, she has seen a doctor and now she can wait. He expresses fondling concern for her. David, as a city man, hates the indifference and hardheartedness of the country people in slaughtering the sheep at the spot of the party itself. He even thinks of buying the sheep from Petrus, but it is of no use because Petrus will use the money to buy other slaughter-animals and will make a profit in the bargain. Nonetheless, David develops a bond for the sheep and a concern for their fate. He goes to the sheep and when a fly tries to creep into the ear of one sheep, he approaches it, but it backs away uneasily. David remembers Bev Shaw’s skill in dealing with animals. She is able to succeed in coaxing animals because, as a person, she has fewer complications than himself. He tells Lucy that he is not willing to attend the party where these sheep’s mutton will be served. Lucy mocks at his meaningless sensibilities. On Saturday, David cancels his going to the market day at Donkin Square. In the evening he takes a walk alone. At five in the evening, the guests start arriving at Petrus’s house. Lucy wears a knee-length dress, highheels and wooden beaded necklace and matching earrings. She tells David to put on a suit or at least a tie. They go to Petrus’s place in the dark with a tiny flashlight and the gift. They are the only whites there and are received by a small girl. Then Petrus joins
them and calls his wife. Lucy presents the gift of an attractive bedspread with Ashanti design. Petrus’s wife unwraps the festive paper. Petrus says that Lucy is their ‘benefactor’. The word is distasteful to David because of its double meaning. Petrus’s wife is pregnant and they expect the baby in October. Petrus wants a son and not a daughter because a girl is very expensive and he will have to pay the bride-money at his daughter’s marriage. He remarks that Lucy is different because she is as good as a boy. Lucy goes and dances alone and is later joined by a young man. They distribute plates of food. Suddenly Lucy stops, comes to David and says that one of the three men is there. As she doesn’t want to create a scene, she urges her father that they should leave. David understands her and wants to attack the boy. The boy is surrounded by his people and David approaches him and accuses him. Besides not being afraid, the boy starts a counter-attack. Petrus and others gather there while David accuses the boy as a thug. Petrus talks to the boy in Xhosa and informs David that this boy is innocent. David threatens them that he will telephone the police. He calls Lucy and both of them walk home in darkness as Lucy forgets her flashlight. After coming home, when David tries to phone to the police, Lucy prevents him saying that the evening will be destroyed for Petrus and that David should be sensible. He shouts that Petrus is not innocent because he is also a criminal, being an accomplice to the three invaders. Lucy becomes offensive and tells him that he should not interfere with her life and that she is not answerable to anyone including her father. Further, there is not any evidence against Petrus. The boy will not run away because Petrus knows him. David becomes very much annoyed and says that their fate will be dangerous. But Lucy is firm in preventing him from telephoning the police. She retires to her room and closes the door on him. David walks out and approaches the spot of the party in the dark. He watches what is happening there. An elderly man, who looks like a chieftain with a golden chain and a medal, is orating to the people around him. When the people find him, they feel disturbed and the man with the medal frowns at him, and raises his voice. David stands there stubbornly, touching his white skullcap.

In this chapter the Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic codes operate in conjunction and in consonance with one another. The narrator’s skill is manifested in the way he combines these codes. The Cultural code takes care of the preparations and events of Petrus’s Saturday party as well as David’s reflections on the fate of the
sheep to be slaughtered for the party. Next the Symbolic code reveals the differences between the city folk represented by David and the country folk represented by Petrus. Nonetheless, when they meet each other they pretend mutual courtesy. The Hermeneutic code creates a suspense as to the share of the boy in the burglary and Lucy’s rape. David accuses him but Petrus supports the boy’s innocence. Only Lucy seems to be sensible and practical. David’s worry about Lucy’s safety and future are quite understandable under the Cultural code, but his forgetfulness about his own affair with his student, Melanie, is intriguing and throws light on his split personality and double standards. This is partly Cultural code and partly Symbolic code. Further, David’s unknown bond or sympathy for the two Persian sheep also is part of the Symbolic code that reveals his hypocrisy and wavering norms.

5.2.16 Chapter 16: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.136-146)

This chapter narrates the continuation of David’s efforts to draw information about the boy and his depressed mood that ensues his failure in his effort, his service to the dead dogs and his feeling of identification with the anonymous and disgraced dogs.

On the next day of the party, Lucy completely avoids David. In the afternoon Petrus comes to their house to borrow tools and requests David to help him in his work of laying PVC piping from the storage dam to his new house. First David refuses to join Petrus because he knows nothing about regulators and plumbing. But Petrus tells him it is simple work and so David accompanies Petrus. His job is only to hold and to pass things, that of a ‘handlanger’. During the work, David questions Petrus about the details of the boy, but Petrus blames David that he is causing him trouble by calling the boy a thief. Anyhow, David is going to get a new car from the insurance company, whereas David does not hope so. Further, according to Petrus, this boy being sixteen and too young cannot be put in jail. David tries to argue further, and David tells him not to worry about Lucy because he will protect her. Then David reminds him that Petrus failed to protect her during the attack. He adds that this boy is also involved in a crime more serious than thieving. Petrus feels differently: it is wrong to implicate the boy as he is not guilty and too young. David leaves the spot. In the afternoon at the clinic, he expresses his worry to Bev, about Lucy’s safety. She says that Petrus is a good old chap, he helped Lucy in several matters and in future also he will protect her. David is suspicious that Petrus wants to grab Lucy’s land also
and will drive her away. Both of them share their sympathy for Lucy, particularly of what happened to her in the attack. David says that he knows what happened then, but Bev remarks that he doesn’t know anything because he was not there. He feels outraged since he is treated both by Lucy and Bev as an outsider. David buys a small television and Lucy and himself watch news and sometimes entertainment, sitting side by side on the sofa. In spite of Bev’s advice, Petrus’s assurance and Lucy’s obstinacy, he is not prepared to abandon his daughter. He spends daytime outdoors, works in the garden, sits by the dam observing the duck family and contemplating his Byron project. Instead of any progress in the project, his visualization of Byron’s life and Teresa’s passion etc. are slipping from memory causing him despair and a headache. He goes to the animal clinic at D.Village as frequently as possible and carries the dead bodies of dogs to the grounds of Settlers Hospital, to the incinerator, in a kombi on Sunday evenings. On the first Monday, he observed that the corpses had stiffened and the incinerator broke the bones of the dead bodies before loading them. This has made him unhappy and since then he has taken the job of loading himself. Further, he has started taking the bags of dead bodies of dogs on Monday mornings instead of Sunday evenings. Sunday evenings he brings the bags to the farm in Lucy’s kombi. He does not like even the bodies of dogs to be mixed in the hospital yard with sundry hospital waste dumped there such as syringes, pins, washable bandages. A number of women and children gather there early to collect these from the dump to sell them outside and to make some small money. He wonders why he has engaged himself in this job of canine corpses. On self-introspection, he understands that he does this for himself. He has become a dog-man as Petrus once called himself. To quote the narrator:

   But there are other people to do these things – the animal welfare thing, the social rehabilitation thing, even the Byron thing. He saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it. That is what he is becoming: stupid, daft, wrongheaded. (146)

This chapter is a ground for Narrative, Semic and Cultural codes. It is narrative because the chronological and topological progression of events is presented. The Semic code reveals the characters of David, Lucy, Petrus and Bev in terms of their actions and dialogues. The Cultural code manifests itself in how people look at the world from different points of view as governed by their own socio-cultural backgrounds. Consider the following passage which describes what happens at the grounds of Settlers Hospital:
For the fence has long been cut through; the gate and the notice are simply ignored. By the time the orderlies arrive in the morning with the first bags of hospital waste, there are already numbers of women and children waiting to pick through it for syringes, pins, washable bandages, anything for which there is a market, but particularly pills, which they sell to muti shops or trade in the streets. There are vagrants too, who hang about the hospital grounds by day and sleep by night against the wall of the incinerator, or perhaps even in the tunnel, for warmth. (145)

David is a familiar stranger to all of them. But they never talk to each other. Thus David becomes a dog-man and savior of the honour of the canine corpses.

5.2.17 Chapter 17: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.147-150)

This chapter is brief and describes the unexpected physical intimacy between David and Bev Shaw.

The Sunday work at the animal clinic is over and when David is cleaning the floor of the surgery theatre, Bev says she will do it because he was used to a different kind of work. She adds that life in the country must be boring for David as he is missing his women friends. She knows the Cape Town affair of David through Lucy and advises him not to be hard on the young woman in Cape Town who caused him trouble. He replies that, on the other hand, it was he who had given a lot of trouble to that girl. Bev asks him whether he regrets having lost his job at the University. This sounds nosy to David and he wonders how scandal excites women. He says that he is not unhappy here and adds that at the heat of the act he had no doubts. She blushes and remarks that comparatively life in Grahamstown is quiet. He replies that he doesn’t live in Grahamstown but on the farm of his daughter. Then he imagines that Bev could have had other men, perhaps. Impulsively, he touches her lips. Instead of flinching she kisses his hand, blushing heavily. He leaves the clinic. The next afternoon, she phones him asking whether they can meet at the clinic at four. The next day is Monday, and the clinic is not open on that day. He understands her motive: “the women telephoning her pursuer, declaring herself ready” (149). He enters the clinic accordingly and locks the door from inside. As she is in the surgery, he folds her in his arms. Between the operating table and the floor, he spreads two blankets taken out from the cabinet at her hint. Bev seems to have bathed and powdered and anointed herself. David muses:
Who thinks, because he comes from the big city, because there is scandal attached to his name, that he makes love to many women and expects to be made to by every woman who crosses his path. (149)

He had never dreamt that he would sleep with Bev. He switches off the light and ensures that the back door is locked. Meanwhile, she undresses and lies on the blanket covering her body with the other blanket. He touches her, and feels that she is ‘like a squat little tub’ (Ibid). She hands over a contraceptive to him showing that she has made thorough preparations for this occasion. They enjoy themselves, at least Bev seems to have enjoyed the act. After the act, she gets up to go because it is late. David says to himself:

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. (150)

On his return home, when the moon is rising, David likens Bev to Emma and muses again:

Well, let poor Bev Shaw go home and do some singing too. And let him stop calling her poor Bev Shaw. If she is poor, he is bankrupt. (Ibid)

In this chapter, Narrative, Semic and Cultural codes operate. If the Narrative code takes care of the progression of events, the Semic code reveals either the degradation or gratification of the two characters by providing details about their intercourse. Finally, the Cultural code throws light on general human behaviour which is, at times, quite unexpected.

5.2.18 Chapter 18: Narrative, Hermeneutic and Symbolic Codes (pp.151-162)

This chapter narrates several events, particularly Lucy’s decision not to leave her farm, even for a short break as suggested by her father.

Petrus borrows a tractor and fixing a rotary plough lying unused and rusting in the stable, he ploughs the whole of his land in a few hours. In olden days, it would have taken him days with a hand-plough and oxen. David is alarmed at the developments in Petrus’s life and his skill with which Lucy cannot compare. He thinks that in a short time Petrus can outplay Lucy. Therefore he wants that Lucy
should sell her land to Petrus, leave this place and open boarding kennels in the suburbs or resume her hobby of her youth, namely ethnic weaving, ethnic pot-decoration, ethnic basket-weaving and selling beads to tourists. Otherwise in the ten years to come she will end up in a defeated and desolate life. Therefore he meets Petrus and asks him whether he will keep Lucy’s farm running on payment, in case Lucy takes a holiday. That is, Petrus will be Lucy’s farm manager during her absence. Petrus questions about the details and says it is too much for him. One day there is a call from the Detective – Sergeant in Port Elizabeth stating that his car has been recovered and two men have been arrested. Both Lucy and David go in her kombi to the police yard at New Brighton Station. David goes in, parking the vehicle far down the road while Lucy waits in the car. There are scores of vehicles in the yard. The police officer, Estherhuse shows him a white Corolla which is not David’s car. Even the two men arrested are left out on bail. They return home disappointed. David tells them that the two men arrested were not those who stole his car. He talks to Lucy in a nagging manner and says that they should forget the whole affair. He suggests that she has two alternatives: Either to stay in her house full of ugly memories or to dispose of everything and start a new chapter elsewhere. Lucy is so much tired and annoyed that she can’t give a reply. When she says that David doesn’t know what actually happened during the attack, he doesn’t agree and tells her that he understands all too well, particularly that she was raped by three men. He expresses his regret that he was not able to save her. She consoles him saying that if they had come a week earlier before his arrival, the question of his saving her would not arise. But she thinks that those black men, especially the two adults were habitual rapists and before attacking her, they marked her as a white woman living in their territory and seemed to think that she owed them something and therefore they came to collect something like a debt or payment from her for living in their territory. There was deep hatred for Lucy in their behaviour. Sex with woman they hated might have made it more exciting to them. The third one, a boy was there only to learn. When David says that the men took her for their slave, Lucy corrects him, by saying it not slavery, but ‘subjection, subjugation’ (159). David wonders whether his dream in the past that Lucy was rolling in a pool of blood came true. The word ‘rape’ has always intrigued David since childhood. He thinks of Byron who had sex with legions of countesses and kitchen maids and wonders whether it was rape. But it was not certainly cutting a woman’s throat. Thus Byron looks old-fashioned. They return home. From his room
he inserts a letter into Lucy’s room reminding her of the two alternatives open to her and not to commit a dangerous error by making a wrong decision. In reply, Lucy also pushes her reply-envelope under his door telling him not to interfere with her life because she is no longer a child. At the clinic, he shares his concern for Lucy with Bev. She asks him about his first wife. He tells her that Lucy’s mother, named Evelina or Evie was Dutch, went back to Holland and remarried after divorce. Lucy could not adjust with her step father and came back. Then David helped her to buy this farm house with land. He wants that Lucy should join her mother in Holland at least for a break. That day David and Bev do not make love. David thinks again of Byron who began to understand that life is precious at the age of thirty-five. Bev assures David that they will take care of Lucy and Petrus also will protect Lucy like a father. She consoles him by saying that everything will be all right.

In this chapter, the Narrative, Hermeneutic and Symbolic codes operates in consonance. The progression of events is taken care of by the Narrative code while the dilemma about Lucy’s decision on David’s advice to her to take a break and the failed restoration of his car, the bail for the two arrested man manifest the Hermeneutic code. Finally the Symbolic code reveals itself in the difference of opinion between David and Lucy about her future.

5.2.19 Chapter 19: Narrative, Cultural, Hermeneutic and Symbolic Codes (pp.163-174)

This chapter describes David’s visit to George in the Eastern Cape and his meeting there with Mr. Isaacs, Melanie’s father.

David leaves Lucy’s farm and probably travels to Cape Town. On his way, he stops at George a semi-urban town, in the Eastern Cape. The house of Isaacs is neat and of a middle class type. He presses the calling-bell and a young girl, Desiree, Melanie’s younger sister, opens the door and requests him to sit down. When she tells him her name, David finds her more beautiful than Melanie and thinks:

Desiree: now he remembers. Melanie the first born, the dark one, then Desiree, the desired one. Surely they tempted the gods by giving her a name like that! (164)

He introduces himself and she informs him that Melanie is at the University in Cape Town. Her father is still at school. Taking the school address from Desiree,
David reaches the school and meets Mr. Isaacs who is busy checking attendance. David introduces himself but Isaacs receives him with the utmost calm, against David’s expectations. David tells him that he stopped at George on his way, to “say what is in his heart”. David says, if Isaacs is prepared to hear him, he will tell him his side of the story because Isaacs already knows Melanie’s side. He explains that his affair with Melanie started as a sudden adventure without any premeditation as Melanie had struck a fire in him. Isaacs seems to be irritated and asks David why he is telling him stories. Then David apologizes and that his behaviour is outrageous and enquires about Melanie’s well-being. Isaacs says that she is well and has resumed her studies at the University. Isaacs asks David about his life. David tells him about his daughter and her farm. Now he is also busy with writing a book. Isaacs wonders how the mighty are fallen. David rises, shakes hands with Isaac and finds his hand cool and hairless. He bids goodbye and goes to the door. Then Isaacs calls him back and invites him for dinner. David expresses hesitation about the reception of Mrs. Isaacs. He goes to Isaacs’ in the evening and finds that his wife and daughter do not come out to invite him. He takes a bottle of wine as a gift. Isaacs thanks him and goes in and tells his daughter to borrow the corkscrew from the neighbours. David finds their home as described below:

They are teetotal clearly. He should have thought of that. A tight little petit–bourgeois household, frugal, prudent. The car washed, the lawn mowed, savings in the bank. All their resources concentrated on launching the two jewel daughters into the future: clever Melanie, with her theatrical ambitions; Desiree, the beauty. (168)

He remembers his first meeting with Melanie, her trim little body, her sexy clothes. Perhaps she was not aware that she was:

Stepping out in the forest where the wild wolf prowls. (Ibid)

Desiree brings the bottle and a corkscrew. By now she has found out who he is, the unwanted visitor, the man whose name is darkness. Her father introduces him to Desiree. He also calls his wife, Doreen, and introduces David Lurie to her. She remains stiff. David feels guilty. He pours the wine in a glass. The dinner is served and the family prays to God before eating. During the meal David behaves as a good guest and tells them about his daughter, her farm, Petrus’s help, his work on the farm and at the animal clinic. However, he does not mention the attack by the three black
men, the incinerator at the hospital grounds and his affair with Bev Shaw. Before leaving, David again regrets that he made them sorry. Isaacs is a little sarcastic. Then Isaacs wonders what lessons they have learned not to be sorry again and to know what God wants from us. Then David confesses:

‘Normally I would say’, he says, ‘that after a certain age one is too old to learn lessons. One can only be punished and punished. But perhaps that is not true, not always. I wait to see. As for God, I am not a believer, so I will have to translate what you call God and God’s wishes into my own terms. In my own terms, I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter. I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day, trying to accept disgrace as my state of being. Is it enough for God, do you think, that I live in disgrace without term?’ (172)

Isaacs tries to explain God’s ways to David implying that it was God’s decision that David has visited them today. But David reveals the truth: he came to George only to speak to Isaacs. Now, David leaves the empty dining-room and by mistake opens the door of a room in which mother and daughter are sitting. They are shocked. He bows on his knees and touches his forehead to the floor, gets up and thanks them for their kindness and the meal, and leaves the place. In the night Isaacs phones him to the hotel and asks David whether he wants him to intervene on his behalf so that he can be reinstated at the university. David says ‘No’.

In this chapter, it is noticed how the Narrative, Cultural, Hermeneutic and Symbolic codes function to enhance the semiotic effect. The chapter is narrative as it presents the occurrence of certain events in a chronological order. The Cultural code covers the cultural aspects relating to the situation and to the characters. Isaacs’ are a normal petit-bourgeois family of simple and honest Christians who are Africans and who have simple and practicable ambitions. Isaacs, his wife and daughter are Christian enough to host David Lurie who has troubled their Melanie. In addition, Isaacs also expresses his readiness to help David in his reinstatement in the university. The Hermeneutic code reveals the suspense evoked by the unexpected meeting between the two men who are, in fact, enemies. This also manifests itself in the Symbolic code.
In this chapter, David’s home-coming to Cape Town and the subsequent happenings are narrated.

David Lurie returns to Cape Town. It is not a pleasant home coming for him. He has come back here nearly after three months and during this period his situation has almost worsened socially and financially. His house on Torrance Road, being very close to the University may expose him to his former colleagues causing him embarrassment. He has not paid his bill and his finances are in chaos. The city also has changed as the shanty settlements have extended to the airport and it seems the country is coming into the city with stray cattle walking and causing obstruction to cars on the streets. He is going to spend the life of a superannuated scholar in the shadow of the University. When he opens the front door and enters his house, he finds, everything is in pell-mell. The window panes are broken and dust have covered the floor. The house was burgled. In the words of the narrator:

His bedroom has been ransacked, the cupboards yawn bare. His sound equipment is gone, his tapes and records, his computer equipment. In his study the desk and filing cabinet have been broken open; papers are scattered everywhere. The kitchen has been thoroughly stripped: cutlery, crockery, smaller appliances. His liquor store is gone. Even the cupboard that had held canned food is empty. (176)

It was not an ordinary burglary. A raiding party must have done it. All his bags, boxes suitcases, shoes and the music records and discs – all have gone. A pigeon, trapped in the basin died leaving a bad smell, a mass of bones and feathers. He cleans the basin. The lights are cut off and the telephone is dead. Feeling depressed and weak, he sinks into a chair. In the afternoon after dusk, he goes to the University campus and reaches his former office room and knocks. There is a faint light under the door. As there is no response, he unlocks the door and finds a stranger by name Dr. Otto, a newly appointed teacher. David introduces himself to Otto and says that he has come to collect his mail. The room is completely changed. His books and pictures are gone. Otto tells him that his mail is in a box while his books are in the storage room downstairs. He takes the box, opens and sorts out the contents sitting on a bench in the lobby. He returns home and unable to sleep, he takes a long walk to the mountainside. He feels restless missing the duck family at the dam near Lucy’s farm. As he has
discontinued his service to the corpses of dogs, he feels guilty. Afterwards he draws money from the bank and takes washing clothes to the laundry. The coffee shop assistant pretends not to recognize him while his neighbor while watering her garden turns her back to him. He remembers William Wordsworth’s experience on his first sojourn in London. In the evening, next day, he phones to Lucy from a public booth and tells her that he is fine without mentioning the house burglary. He says he is ready to go to her place whenever she needs him. She says, she is OK, Petrus is helping her and that she will call him later if necessary. David goes to the supermarket and buys something. He meets Elaine Winter, the chair of his former department at the counter. She is carrying a trolleyful of purchases. There is a short formal courtesy talk between them. On returning home, he contemplates his Byron project, Byron with his mistress Teresa in the Villa Guiccoili, Revenna, spied on by Teresa’s jealous husband. To quote the narrator:

That is how he had conceived it: as a chamber-play about love and death, with a passionate young woman and a once passionate but less than passionate older man; an action with a complex, restless music behind it, sung in an English that tugs continually toward an imagined Italian. (180)

But as it happened on Lucy’s farm, the project again fails to engage his full attention. It is all right with Byron’s words, but Teresa’s words fail him and do not match up to the music. He attempts another direction: Byron dead and Teresa in her middle age wailing for her deceased lover, Byron. Teresa is no longer beautiful and attractive. Byron who called her My friend in his letters used to make jokes about her husband and her friends and talk carelessly about Teresa. It was only to escape her, Byron sailed to Greece and ultimately to his death. David visualizes the opening scene in which Teresa, living in her father’s home, wails for Byron calling him Mio Byron. In this way he conceives the opera, but the music part is troublesome. The piano notes do not suit. Therefore he recovers a little seven-stringed toy banjo from the attic which he had bought as a present for Lucy in her childhood. The notes of the toy banjo suit Teresa’s wailing song. David spends whole days on this Byron/Teresa project living on black coffee and breakfast cereal. David himself had once visited Italy, the forest between Ravenna and the Adriatic shore where one hundred and fifty years ago Byron and Teresa used to go riding. Thus, Teresa leads the play and he
writes page after page. He also includes the episode of Byron’s five-year-old daughter, Allegra, calling her father and complaining about his forgetfulness. But Byron cannot answer:

[B]ecause he has had enough of life; because he would rather be back where he belongs, on death’s other shore, sunk in his old sleep. (186)

The trio of instrumentalists plays music suitable to the spirit of Byron.

This chapter is a little bit longer than the other chapters as it is crowded with an account of the physical and psychological states of the protagonist, David Lurie. Three codes in full and the Hermeneutic code in part operate in this chapter. While the Narrative code covers the progression of events, the Cultural code reveals the changed status of David and the unfriendly reaction of his former colleagues and others to him. The Semic code depicts how his house has been raided during his absence and how his financial position is in doldrums. These two codes, viz. Cultural and Semic codes join the Hermeneutic code in order to delineate David’s struggle in writing the Byron opera as a creative artist. The overall feeling affected is that David identifies himself partly with Byron and partly with Teresa who lived in Italy one and a half centuries ago and consequently his action, thinking and behaviour seems to be dated.

5.2.21 Chapter 21: Symbolic, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.187-195)

This chapter presents three main episodes: David’s meeting with his former wife, Rosalind, his visit to the Dock Theatre to see the play, *Sunset at the Globe Salon* in which Melanie plays the role of a novice hairdresser and Ryan’s warning to David.

Rosalind telephones to David and they meet in a coffee-shop in Claremont. Lucy informed Rosalind that David is back in Cape Town. Rosalind says that David has lost weight and asks about his car. He says, it is nothing. David and Rosalind were two sensualists. He tells her that Lucy is alone as Helen had left for Johannesburg; Lucy is not safe but insists to stay there as a point of honour. And his car was stolen, because of his carelessness. Rosalind says that she heard that his performance in his trial or inquiry at the University was not good. He answers that he was standing up for a principle: freedom of speech, freedom to remain silent. Rosalind’s comments in this context are significant:
That sounds very grand. But you were always a great self-deceiver, David. A great deceiver and a great self-deceiver. Are you sure it wasn’t just a case of being caught with your pants down? (188)

He tells her that he will get as pension whatever he put in and he is not interested in any other job as he is busy writing an opera. He also tells Rosalind that he is not going to live with Lucy. Rosalind says that she saw the play at the Dock Theatre in which Melanie played a role. She knows now why David fell for her: big dark eyes, little weasel body, his type. Rosalind expresses her sympathy that David has thrown away his life. But he gets offended. Nevertheless, Rosalind insists:

“But it is! you have lost your job, your name is mud, your friends avoid you, you hide out in Torrance Road like a tortoise afraid to stick its neck out of its shell. People who aren’t good enough to tie your shoelaces make jokes about you. Your shirt isn’t ironed, God knows who gave you that haircut, you’ve got – She arrests her tirade. ‘You are going to end up as one of those sad old men who poke around in rubbish bins.’ (189)

It seems, Rosalind’s study of David’s character, and his present state, as cited earlier has an element of truth in it. But David is not a person to accept defeat. For he says that all people, including himself and Rosalind are going to end up in a hole in the ground, i.e., a grave. She leaves David offering a standing invitation to him that he can give her a call for a meal whenever he is tired of bread and jam. Melanie’s mention disturbs him and he wants to see her. He muses about the sexual relation between an old man and a young girl which is unnatural. He feels that this country is not for old men. He goes to the Dock Theatre late in the evening. Two years ago it was a cold storage plant for the carcasses of pigs and oxen waiting to be transported abroad. Now it is a spot of fashionable entertainment. Melanie, plays very well her role of Gloria, the new hairdresser in the play. His fascination for her rises again and he imagines her standing naked before him. He remembers his past escapades with young women and wonders what has happened to all of them. He recalls the newspaper report about his reaction ‘enriched’. It is true because he still feels that he was enriched by Melanie, by the German girl in Touws River, by Rosalind, Bev Shaw, Soraya and others. He feels grateful to them. As the play progresses, a spitball of paper hits him and this hitting continues. He finds Ryan, Melanie’s boyfriend,
throwing these pellets at him. He leaves the theatre and Ryan follows him to the parking lot and threatens him saying, ‘Find yourself another life, prof. Believe me.’ (194) He drives back slowly and on the way finds a tall girl in a small black leather skirt and in a drunken condition. He picks her up and enjoys sex with her in a cul-de-sac on the slopes of Signal Hill. Afterwards he drops her back where he has picked her up.

This chapter is another remarkable example of the author’s narrative skills in which Symbolic, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic codes operate in perfect combination. The Symbolic code depicts the love-hate relationship between Rosalind and David and the hatred of Ryan for David. The Cultural code reveals David’s seeming self-pride and his sex escapades while the Semic code throws adequate light on the scenic backdrop and on the characters of Rosalind, David, Melanie, and Ryan. Finally, the Hermeneutic code describes Ryan’s hitting of David in the Dock Theatre, with paper spitballs and Ryan’s warning to David.

5.2.22 Chapter 22: Narrative, Cultural and Symbolic Codes (pp.196-205)

It this chapter are narrated, David’s journey to Lucy’s farm from Cape Town and Lucy’s pregnancy, her final decision not to leave her place and to live under Petrus’s protection.

In his continual contact with Lucy on phone, David suspects that all is not well with Lucy in spite of her repeated assertion that she is fine. He verifies the facts with Bev Shaw who says that there have been developments but she doesn’t tell him what exactly these developments are. He calls Lucy and tells her a lie that he is going to Durban where there is a chance of a job for him and on the way he will stop for a day or two at Lucy’s place. He flies to Port Elizabeth, hires a car and in two hours lands at Lucy’s farm. He finds that there are changes: Petrus has almost completed his house and there is a wire fence between the properties of Lucy and Petrus. Over tea, Lucy tells him that she is pregnant. David is shocked, and questions her why she didn’t take precautions. She tells him that she didn’t want to have abortion and suffer again. That means, she had an abortion before. He blames her for not telling him the truth. When David asks her why had she kept it from him, Lucy gives an answer that interests the reader and dismays David:
‘Because I couldn’t face one of your eruptions. 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 half way 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.’ (198)

But David is not able to digest the fact that Lucy is going to have a child from one of her rapists. She expects the child in May. The new information that Lucy had an abortion earlier also dismays David further. Standing outside the kitchen, hiding his face, he heaves repeatedly and finally cries. After supper, Lucy tells him that ‘the boy’ is back and, his name is Pollux, he is a close relative of Petrus and lives with Petrus’s family. This angers David because, now he comes to the conclusion that Petrus is the author of the attack on Lucy. He hates Pollux in particular. He tells her:

‘Particularly when he may be the father of the child you are carrying. Lucy, your situation is becoming ridiculous, worse than ridiculous, sinister. I don’t know how you can fail to see it. I plead with you, leave the farm before it is too late. It’s the only sane thing left to do.’ (200)

Lucy objects to this and it is not a farm, but a piece of land where she grows things. That night David goes to bed with a heavy heart. The next morning David meets Petrus and blames him for telling lies. Petrus defends himself saying that Pollux is part of his people and besides, the affair is finished. Further, Petrus says that Pollux will marry Lucy. Or because Pollux is too young to marry her, he himself will marry Lucy, because it is too dangerous to live safely for a lonely woman like Lucy. David reports this to Lucy and she is not perturbed at all. Instead she agrees to be Petrus’s third wife. To a further annoyance of her father, Lucy says:

‘I don’t believe you get the point, David. 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 under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game.’ (203)
She is prepared to give her land as bride-money but wants to keep the house for herself. No one including Petrus should enter her house without her permission. Again David tries in vain to change her mind stating that he is going to sell his house in Cape Town and with the money, he will help her to start a new life in a different place. Lucy is firm in her mind and tells him to go and inform Petrus about her decision. David says that she will have to live like a dog and she says ‘Yes, like a dog’. (205)

In this chapter, it is noticed that the joint semiotic effect of the Narrative, Cultural and Symbolic codes. The Narrative code takes care of the sequential progression of events while the Cultural code clearly reveals the way Lucy has completely compromised with her situation – that of single pregnant white women surrounded by blacks in the country – which is highly risky and dangerous. She is also aware of the fact that her middle-aged father, David, cannot protect her in any way, as it has already been proved once. She, therefore, decides not to leave her farm and house and, from a practical point of view, decides to accept Petrus’s proposal to marry her. In contrast, her decision causes great pain to her father who hates Petrus, Pollux and other black people in the country. From Lucy’s analysis of David’s nature, the reader can’t but appreciate Lucy’s practical outlook. A similar analysis of David’s character given by Rosalind in the preceding chapter (21, p.188) also supports Lucy’s analysis. David seems still to suffer from the prejudices of the period of Apartheid. He is not able to forget the fact that he is a white man of a superior culture and sensibilities and therefore his daughter’s decision to identify herself with local blacks is a disgrace which he cannot tolerate. It is rather ironical that he fails to see his own sexual behaviour with Melanie, Soraya, Bev and many other women as glaring evidence for the aberration in his own character. Thus the Cultural code is very powerful in this chapter. The Symbolic code reveals the contradicting attitudes between David and Lucy, and David and Petrus in particular, which surface in the course of narration.

5.2.23 Chapter 23: Narrative, Symbolic and Cultural Codes (pp.206-212)

This chapter describes David’s attempt to teach a lesson to Pollux, the mentally retarded boy, and to show him, his place, in desperation, his arguments with Lucy over this episode, his sharing his feelings with Bev Shaw at the animal clinic and his final escape into Teresa’s music.
On a mid-morning, David while returning from a morning walk followed by Katy, finds that the boy Pollux is peering in through the bathroom window where Lucy is bathing. David becomes furious and hits the boy calling him ‘a filthy swine’. Katy jumps on the boy who screams and tries to pull free. David kicks the boy again in his attempt to teach him a lesson and show him his place. The dog bites Pollux’s arm and rips his shirt. Lucy rushes out hearing the boy’s shouts, releases him from Katy’s grip and offers to do first-aid to the boy. But the boy runs away threatening that they will kill them all. David observes the boy’s cocky gait and understands, as Lucy told him before, that something is wrong in his head and that he is “A violent child in the body of a young man” (207) but he doesn’t understand why Lucy is protecting the boy. Therefore when Lucy says he is a disturbed child, David retorts saying:

‘I don’t trust him’ … ‘He is shifty. He is like a jackal sniffing around, looking for mischief. In the old days we had a word for people like him. Deficient. Mentally deficient. Morally deficient. He should be in an institution’. (208)

Lucy disapproves it as reckless talk and says:

‘David, we can’t go on like this. Everything had settled down, everything was peaceful again, until you came back. I must have peace around me. I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice for the sake of peace.’ (Ibid)

David feels hurt and decides to strike Pollux if he insults his daughter again. He thinks of Teresa who doesn’t care for anyone and sings her longings. Perhaps, Teresa possesses him. He goes to Bev’s animal clinic and tells her, he is looking for a room in town. He tells her that he can no longer live along with Lucy because there are too many of them, “like spiders in a bottle” (209). Bev also doesn’t like the boy but Lucy will be all right, as long as Petrus is there; she advises him that time has come for David to stand back and let Lucy solve her problems. Lucy is adaptable, being young and she lives closer to the ground than David. He feels offended and says that he cannot stay with Lucy and wants to live separately in Grahamstown. He will help Bev at the clinic. From a friend of Bill Shaw, David buys a half-ton pickup (i.e., feed) for dogs and also buys a twelve year old truck both for which he pays with two cheques one for one thousand rands and another for seven thousand rands. He gets a room near
the hospital through a paper add He tells his landlady that his name is Lurie and he stays in Grahamstown as an outpatient for treatment and she thinks it is cancer. The room is dark and narrow but he compromises. He buys a small gas stove, an electric heater and other utensils but as he is told not to cook in the rooms, he takes them to Bev’s clinic and spends most of the time at the clinic. After breakfast he goes to the clinic and makes a nest for himself in the compound behind the building. Shaws give him a table, an old armchair and a beach umbrella. He makes tea and warms up canned food and eats it whenever he is hungry. He feeds the dogs two times a day and sometimes talks to them. When he is alone in the premises, he plays the toy banjo to create music for Teresa. He wants to lead this life until Lucy’s child is born. Some boys in the locality peer at him over the compound wall and perhaps take him for a mad old man sitting among dogs and singing to himself. Yes, he is mad to bring back Teresa to life.

This chapter incorporates in itself the Narrative, Symbolic and Cultural codes. While the Narrative code reflects itself in the sequential progression of events, the Symbolic code dramatizes the rivalry between David and Pollux as well as the opposite points of view between David and Lucy. David’s background of Apartheid does not completely leave him as he wants to teach a lesson to Pollux and show him his place as in the olden days. This is also part of the Cultural code which reveals the differences between David, Lucy and Bev in their understanding of reality.

5.2.24 Chapter 24: Narrative, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.213-220)

This is the last chapter of the narrative. David works on his Byron opera with a special focus only on Teresa who is wailing and singing in her nightdress, standing at the bedroom window. She is calling back Byron, her dead lover. She does not sleep and wants to be rescued from the pain, summer heat, from the Villa Gamba and from her father’s bad mood. Though David told Rosalind that he writes the opera as a hobby, it is no longer a hobby. “It consumes him night and day.” (214) But the opera is not progressing as it should. It is like the work of a sleepwalker. He doesn’t have great expectations or ambitions about his work. Perhaps some people will recognize it in future. Particularly Lucy may find a proof of his sincerity and thus think a bit better about him when he is no more. He tries his best to bring back Teresa alive from her grave. One of the dogs, which is young and lame earns David’s affection. The dog sits before him when he is writing, reading or playing his banjo and seems to enjoy the
sound and the music. He leaves the dog free in the compound. On Saturday morning he joins Lucy at the Donkin Square and afterwards takes her to lunch. Lucy’s pregnancy is not very conspicuous, but she becomes slow in her movements and placid in her looks. Petrus’s house is about to complete and they are planning to move shortly. This may coincide with his wife giving birth to their child. Lucy also may join Petrus’s establishment once she also becomes a mother. To his question whether she loves her own child, Lucy replies:

‘But I will. Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too’. (216)

But he says it is too late for him: “I’m just an old lag serving out my sentence. But you go ahead. You are well on the way”’. (Ibid)

One weekday he drives along the Kenton road, parks his truck in a distance and walks to Lucy’s place. At the dam he notices traces of the ducks’ visit. The flowerbeds are colourful because it is a blooming season. Lucy is with her back to him clipping and pruning the flower plants. He thinks that Lucy is becoming a peasant. Now from a small infant she has grown into an adult and luckily survives him for long. He will become a grandfather, a Joseph. But he lacks the virtues expected of a grandfather, like equanimity, kindliness and patience since he is unable to get rid him of passion. Watching Lucy working slowly on the farm is a like watching a beautiful picture. He calls Lucy for a second time loudly. She turns back and asks him about his truck. He tells her that he has parked it at a distance. She invites him for tea as if he were just a visitor. On Sunday, David works at Bev’s clinic. They work silently. By now he has learnt the ways of Bev. Twenty-three dogs have been disposed of and he ties the last bag and takes it out to load it in his truck. Only the lame dog who likes him and whom he loves is left. David is again fascinated at the patient and skillful work of Bev. Finally he brings the young lame dog also to the surgery carrying the dog in his arms like a lamb. Bev who thought he would save the dog for another week asks him: ‘Are you giving him up’. He replies, ‘Yes, I am giving him up’.

In this final chapter, the Narrative, Semic and Hermeneutic codes operate together and lend a philosophical touch to the end of the story. The Narrative and Semic codes respectively describe the succession of events and the scenic as well
episodic details while the Hermeneutic code provides a solution to David’s problem. He achieves a compromise in life by resigning and submitting himself to the reality of life. He appears to have attained a certain maturity of mind. This is symbolically revealed when he gives up the young lame dog to be liberated by mercy-killing in spite of his special love for the dog and the dog’s love for him. It is symbolic because by giving up the dog he loves, he also gives himself up to the reality of life thereby gaining peace of mind and freedom from his sense of guilt and sense of disgrace.

From the chapter-wise semiotic analysis of the novel as presented in the foregoing pages, one can note how successfully the author has narrated the story of David’s mistakes, his consequent suffering, his unwillingness to change and his constant escapism and his final resignation and submission to the reality of life. This kind of narration has been enriched by the way in which different semiotic codes have been brought into play, thereby making the narration plurisignificant with multiple layers of meaning, each layer having been revealed by a single code or a combination of codes. Here lies the artistic achievement and aesthetic impact of the novel *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee.

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