

Shameful disgrace reframed by 'amazing grace', probing into 'dog's life' within the pigmentocratic polarisation of a 'post-apartheid bubble'



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Despite the dawn of a non-racial democracy, many black people still experience public life as being treated as the 'underdog' (*Canis Africanis* as ostracised dog). Within the demeaning pigmentocratic categorisation of 'white' and 'black', the post-apartheid euphoria seems to become merely an artificial slogan denying undergirding racial polarisations. The phenomenon of 'shameful disgrace', as articulated by, inter alia, the novel of J.M. Coetzee, is critically researched. The metaphor of Cruella de Vil is used to analyse the legacy of the apartheid ideology and the impact on self-blame. The following question is posed: Is the predicament of shameful disgrace, due to the long-term impact of the ideology of apartheid, an inevitable curse that will accompany the existence of all South African citizens while trying to live together? Is there no remedy for shame and disgrace within the parameters of pastoral care? A literature research, by means of a critical analysis and pastoral hermeneutic, has been performed. It is proposed that the notion of Christ as divine 'underdog' (dying outside the walls of the religious establishment under Roman imperialism) brings about a theology of destigmatisation in order to start thinking beyond racial categories. Spiritual healing is about self-grace (new identity) as exponent of 'amazing grace'. A theopaschitic paradigm can help to interpret the intriguing dynamics of shameful disgrace from a Christological perspective: the spiritual healing of a divine substitutional form of disgrace.

Contribution: The article contributes to analysing the complexity of shame within pastoral caregiving and the implication thereof on God-images in pastoral theology.

Keywords: *Canis Africanis*; Christ the divine underdog; disgrace; Cruella de Vil-metaphor; post-apartheid bubble; pigmentocracy; racial polarisation; shame; underdog.

Introduction: A personal existential dilemma (*homo vulnerabilis*) within a polarised society

My personal existential dilemma: I benefitted from the advantages of the apartheid-dispensation despite my disgust of the brutal evil it inflicted. Overwhelmed by shame, systemic guilt has become a haunting disposition without any option of becoming whole again. Any attempt to explain my dilemma, seems like merely a disguised attempt of self-justification associated with the smugness of self-exoneration. Even sharing my disgust and shame seems merely to become a disguised form of 'white innocence', a kind of Pontius Pilate denial of any responsibility. Dusenbury (2021) calls this Pontius Pilate form of self-exoneration: the 'secularity of innocent tolerance'; the epitome of all forms of shameful disgrace.¹

Eventually, I realised there seems to be no apparent healing for the 'self-blame of shame'. For the existential predicament of disgrace, the Christian spiritual categories of 'forgiveness', 'remorse' and 'reconciliation' seem to be not appropriate enough to find personal closure. Shame as an existential condition, created by systemic forces and driven by skewed ideologies, is too complex for the traditional ecclesial formulae for formal confessions. As, in the case of the poet Nathan Trantraal (in Viljoen 2017), even the sacrament of baptism could not renew his stigmatised dog's life and free him from the demon of disillusionment and the suffering of

1. It is difficult to differentiate between *shame* and *disgrace*. Shameful (something to regret) disgrace (state of being dishonoured) refers to a humiliating form of discriminatory disrespect and unkindness that leads to the disregard of the other (to mock at), while causing a haunting pain of self-blame due to failure and the consequences of improper behaviour. See also the following explanation (WikiDiff 2021): As nouns, the difference between *shame* and *disgrace* is that *shame* is uncomfortable. It refers to painful feelings due to recognition or consciousness of impropriety, dishonour or other wrong in the opinion of the person experiencing the feeling; it is caused by awareness of exposure of circumstances of unworthiness, or of improper or indecent conduct. *Disgrace* is the condition of being out of favour, loss of favour, regard, or respect. As verbs, the difference between *shame* and *disgrace* is that *shame* is (obsolete or intransitive), that is to feel shame, be ashamed while *disgrace* is to disrespect another; to put someone out of favour. As an interjection, shame is a cry of admonition for the subject of a speech, often used reduplicated.

disgrace.² Framed by disgrace, Nathan Trantraal is convinced that even forgiveness can become a kind of stigmatising social and personal poison (*die gif in vergif-nis*).³

Wekker (2016) refers to the phenomenon of 'white innocence', as an:

[I]nnocence regarding the anger and violence that accompanied the imperialist agenda of modernity, an innocence that constructed an entire epistemology of not understanding the racialisation that took place during the past 500 years. (p. 17)

The fact is, the interplay between disgrace and shame confronts one with the whole notion of *systemic responsibility, improper behaviour, the complexity of regret, collective guilt, dishonour, discriminating prejudice and humiliating behaviour*. The combination 'shameful disgrace' refers to what Schüssler-Fiorenza (1988:14–15) calls the notion of *historical accountability*. As human being, I am systemically rooted, that is, my life is bracketed by the before of many generations, the current living generations, as well as the coming future generations (the dynamics of intergenerational interconnectedness). The further dilemma of systemic responsibility, improper behaviour, disrespectful treatment, and collective guilt are that I am intrinsically and inevitably linked to wrongdoings of the past. This chain of interconnectedness exposes one immediately to an awareness of total relativity and defenselessness. I am a frail, and vulnerable human being – *homo vulnerabilis* (Weyns 2018:3). The latter frames my personal existential dilemma which I share with all other human beings.

In South Africa, vulnerability within the context of a very frail democracy, are constantly exposed to schismatic polarisations. Due to defusing polarisation, 'whites' and 'blacks' are still estranged from one another within the bubble of a post-apartheid dispensation.

Polarisation within spatial divisions

Without any doubt, the following statement could not be denied: Under apartheid, white oppression of the black majority was extreme, and South Africa became one of the most highly polarised countries in the world (Southall 2018:1). It is indeed true that democratisation defused polarisation. Nevertheless, Southall (2018:1) makes the very profound statement that, unfortunately, processes of democratisation are becoming hallowed out by the African National Congress' (ANC) construction of a 'party-state', politicising democratic institutions and widening social inequalities: 'This is stoking political tensions, which, despite societal interdependence, are provoking fears of renewed polarisation along class and racial lines.' Given the endurance of historic inequalities along lines of race, space, class, and wealth, South Africa remains deeply divided. Taking the lootings (July 2021) in KwaZulu-Natal into

2. '[...] ek is sieke/ ek het met minner dywels deerie water gegaan/ as wat ek mee ytekom het' (Viljoen 2017).

3. 'Ammel het hystoe gegaan/ Hulle na hulle hyse langsie sea/ ôs na ôs shacks/ langs poeletjies stagnant water/ waa die gif in vergifnis/ ôs ammel/ siek gemaak het' (Viljoen 2017).

consideration, it seems that we are spiralling back into a politics of polarisation last seen during the later years of apartheid.

In a doctoral research project, Machema (2019:1) finds that from 1993 to 2008, as inequality rises, both notions of bi-polarisation and polarisation are increasing rapidly due to inequality and unjust distribution of income. 'Income polarisation among blacks is the highest and has widened further' (Van der Berg, Burger & Louw 2021:1). Polarisation, thus, contributes to deepen social schisms and economic division in a post-apartheid society. 'Institutional practices and market forces are tending to reinforce spatial divisions, with costly consequences for the poor majority of the population and for the wider urban economy and society' (Turok 2001:2349).

Polarisation leads to a heightened exposure of accelerating disgrace, that is to become robbed of dignity, to be forced into a position of stigmatised deprivation; to become boxed in by a paralysing state of torment regarding past wrongdoings without being directly instrumental to the long-term destructive consequences. Polarisation feeds processes of becoming dishonoured and being constantly discredited. Eventually, *homo vulnerabilis* becomes a victim of a daunting state of self-blame and disgrace.

Disgrace: The existential pain⁴ of 'low life' – yes, like a dog

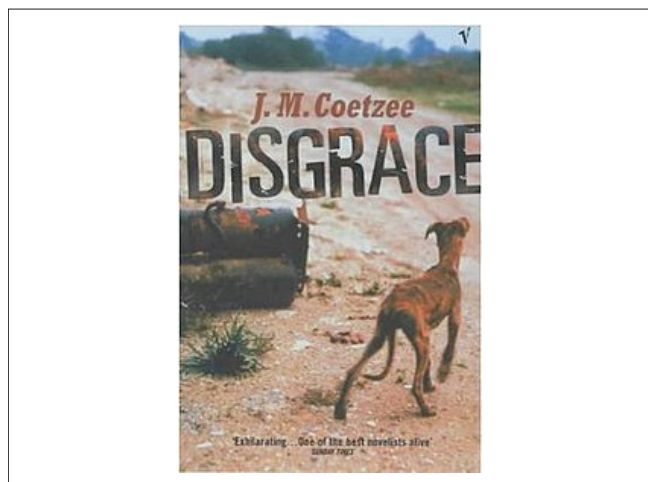
In his novel *Disgrace*, Coetzee (1999) indicates that dogs symbolise the existential pain of low life (StudyCorgi 2020). Both the characters David and Lucy agree that a dog's life is painful, lifeless, and without dignity. Moreover, David and Lucy also agree that a dog's life offers no cards, rights, weapons or property (see Figure 1).

The author utilises dogs to symbolise a life of low status.⁵ It refers to a very specific social setting of racial discrimination. For instance, dogs are mentioned in *Salem*, mainly a black occupied setting where Lucy and David toil to earn a living within an environment of severe poverty. In one instance, Lucy mentions that she does not want to go back in another existence like a dog, but she must live like a dog (Coetzee 1999:71). David and his daughter express their existential predicament due to the constant exposure to disgrace, namely of having to learn to live 'like a dog', as Lucy stresses: 'yes like a dog' (Coetzee 1999:122–124).

It becomes clear that disgrace, as linked to shame and disgust, is not merely/solely an existential category. It determines the very core of our being human in our quest for dignity and meaning. It becomes an ontic feature of

4. For a philosophical and existential analysis of shame and its impact on 'Dasein', our orientation within the dynamics of intersubjectivity, see Van Raalten (1965).

5. The character, David, is disgraced from being a university lecturer to caring for dogs, a statement that symbolises his move from a modern to a traditional lifestyle. As the novel unfolds and reveals a specific mode of living, a dog is utilised to symbolise poverty, life without dignity, rights, chance, property or human acknowledgement (StudyCorgi 2020, October 29).



Source: Coetzee, J.M., 1999, *Disgrace*, Penguin, New York, NY

FIGURE 1: Disgrace = being discredited and dishonoured resulting into loss of reputation or respect as the result of inhumane treatment and skewed prejudice. Cover of the novel *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee with the symbol of a dog as a state of humiliation in a township: Disgrace.

personal identity itself. Shameful disgrace should, therefore, be rendered as a spiritual category infiltrating the realm of purposefulness and meaning (destiny). In this respect, shameful disgrace challenges the human quest for meaning and dignity. It also penetrates the realm of healing and credibility of caregiving, that is, how to become engaged in civil societal life issues that shape the dignity, purposefulness and hope of ostracised people within the public sphere of political dynamics.

Thus, the following soul-searching spiritual question: Is it possible for people, degraded to the social status of a 'dog's life', to become whole again? Furthermore, can the Christian notion of 'grace' bring about a spirituality of healing and a sense of wholeness, despite pigmentocratic estrangement and discriminating practices of racial polarisation in a post-apartheid society – the healing of grace within the pain of disgrace? How can pastoral caregiving help people, struggling with the existential pain of shame, to integrate disgrace as constructive component into their struggle and quest for meaning and hope?

Before one can deal with options for healing, the first step is to face the contextual reality of deep-rooted schisms within the public of civil society in South Africa.

The social pathology of racial estrangement: Schismatic pigmentocracy and unconscious racism

Shame and disgrace in a post-apartheid society are closely related to racial polarisations based on the demeaning impact of what can be called cruel practices of schismatic social pathology, namely, the *schismatic pigmentocracy*⁶ between, on

6.A system of social or class distinction or schismatic racial polarisations and power abuse, based on skin colour irrespective of personal or cultural identity, or socio-economic status, or idiomatic disposition or conviction or historical context; a social

the one hand the privileged white people who benefitted from the advantages of the apartheid system, but struggle how to come to terms with systemic guilt and toxic self-blame, and on the other hand the stigmatised black underdogs of a cruel racial regime, struggling how to deal with revenge, hatred, humiliation and the blemishes of disgrace. In both cases shame plays a decisive role:

- *The shame of 'whites':* The disgrace of self-blame and eventual masochistic self-devaluation with the haunting self-blame, due to the systemic colonial smugness of the spoiled, pure-bred upperdog of Western civilisation. The shameful disgrace of white people is constantly threatened by the slogan: Get rid of the colonialists – Kill the Boer! 'The slogan "One settler, one bullet" is a reminder that the white community's origins are non-African, becoming a necessary desirable for the abolition of whiteness in South Africa' (Horrel 2011:25).
- *The shame of 'blacks':* The disgrace of being always the colonial underdog in 'dark Africa' (the Third World) with the eventual psycho- and socio-pathology of inhumane inferiority and suppressed anger – social degradation and exclusion. Pigmentocratic forms of exclusion still determines the filter of public observation.

After the verdict that former president Zuma has to go to jail, his daughter, Duduzile Zuma, tweeted as follows (29 June 2021): 'What is different between @Presjzuma and Botha? SA justice system looks at the skin colour and makes a determination. SA law has eyes. Murderers walk scot-free with R10k fine!' (Tweets, Dudu Zuma-Sambudla@DZumaSambudla 29 June 2021).⁷ Another Tweet responded as follows:

[E]ven Koos Beker refuses to testify at that commission but nothing's happening to him WHY? Because he's white and he belongs to a certain faction/Slate that bought them freedom in Dec 2017 with Zizi Kodwa-Klerk. (Tweet. Publish CODESA Minutes@msancanana June 29. Replying to @DZumaSambudla and @PresJGZuma 2021)

Under the leadership of Julius Malema, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) often expressed the anger and pain of blacks as linked to enmity, because of what blacks suffered under apartheid:

[I] don't want blacks to work for whites, I want you to work for yourselves; white people will work for you. That will be true freedom. You must teach them how to carry babies on their back. They must feel what our parents have been feeling. (Malema to supporters outside the Newcastle Magistrate's Court February. Malema 2019)

(footnote 6 continue ...)

hierarchy based on a certain skin tone or affiliation tag by adjectives describing human beings in terms of the colour of their skin; inhumane, stigmatic categorisations, classifications due to group or ethnic or national identification based on skin tones, generally considered of lesser value, or accused of human exploitation.

7.According to SACC's Khuthalani Khumalo, Zuma's decision has the potential to incite violence in the country and could strengthen the perception that denial is a form of justification. Khumalo pointed out that they hope Zuma will change his mind for the sake of the country. He urges him to rather use the opportunity to appear before the Commission to defend himself against the perception that he is involved in corruption (Khumalo 2021, SABC News).



Source: Yahoo!news, n.d., South African white farmers, Black protesters face off over farm murder, viewed 07 May 2021, from https://www.google.com/search?q=julius+malema+whites+stole+our+land&rlz=1C1GCEU_enZA8732A873&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj6

FIGURE 2: Woman holds up sign at the Black Lives Matter protest in Washington, DC, 6/6/2020.



Source: Banks, C., n.d., Woman holds up sign at the Black Lives Matter protest in Washington DC 6/6/2020, viewed n.d., from <https://unsplash.com/photos/zlHsQqJ71IE>

FIGURE 3: Due to fear regarding the due to the killing of white farmers, reactionist campaigns started in South Africa. The EFF were confronted by angry farmers due to the killing of a white farmer, Brendon Horner. The 21-year-old's body was found tied to a pole after he had been strangled at the farm he managed in the Free State province.

Already on 08 May 2011, Julius Malema told an enthusiastic crowd in Kimberley where he appeared on the same platform as President Jacob Zuma, that whites who own land in the country should be treated like 'criminals', because 'they stole it from black people. We must take the land without paying. They took our land without paying. Once we agree they stole our land, we can agree they are criminals and must be treated as such' (Malema 2011 News24) (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

One can say and conclude that, currently, the total South African society, suffers under the phenomenon of 'reactionary, subconscious racism' – subdued and habitual racism. In this regard, racism becomes subtle, hidden in the mindset of people who are absorbed in a system of polarised perceptions regarding the being qualities of white and black people.⁸ It is a kind of categorised prejudice and biased

⁸The same tendency lurks behind processes of democratisation in the USA. The ambivalence of black-white polarisation is called the 'zero-sum game', that is the fear, namely that the progress for people of colour will take away what white Americans already have. The activist Heather McGhee in her book, *The Sum of Us*,

pre-disposition according to past experiences during the apartheid dispensation, and even way back, to the class-distinction imposed on South Africa by British imperialism. Reactionary and masked racism function as a kind of metaphysical threat, piercing through the rainbow-curtain of a democratised South Africa, exposing both the previous victims (black people) and the current victims (unwelcomed colonialists).

Thuli Madonsela: The South African praxis of unconscious racism

During the *Jakes Gerwel Conversation Series*, Madonsela (2021:15) made a very bold statement: 'We are all racists because racism is in our DNA'. Madonsela said, before blaming others, and before people are abusing the label of racism, we must turn to ourselves. In fact, we are all victims of race-based prejudice and a fundamental intolerance regarding the foreign other.

The point is that the stigmatising legacy of apartheid still plays a decisive role in post-apartheid South Africa. The latter is like an artificial bubble with underneath the existential pain of demeaning disgrace. The bubble causes painful forms of skepticism. It leads to skewed forms of prejudice on both sides of the so-called 'colour spectrum'. Another example is the phenomenon of shameful disgrace experienced by white people in a post-apartheid dispensation, since merely being white and speaking Afrikaans, is a disqualification to claim legitimacy in a non-racial democracy.

Branded by apartheid: 'My shame' and 'evil stigma' forever: *Jou boer* (?)

In the novel, *The song before it is sung*, by Cartwright (2007), the notion of shame as linked to events that can be rendered unforgivable assaults to our being human, is addressed. It describes the attempts of Count Axel von Gottberg to get rid of Adolf Hitler.⁹ The novel basically deals with the predicament of collective and cultural shame due to inhumane cruelty and evil within social and existential realities. The predicament is captured as follows: 'This is our shame that the German people will have to bear forever. Kristallnacht was the turning point. Six thousand Jews are in there. Six thousand. Can you imagine?' (Cartwright 2007:135). This suffering of shame is closely related to the connection of systemic evil.

In his novel *Iron in the soul* (Sartre 1974), Jean-Paul Sartre, describes the soullessness of the desolated city as follows:

[B]ut nothing happened. All around him stretched a desert ... The only gay note in all this mineral landscape was struck by a Nazi flag flying over the Hôtel Crillon ... In the middle of the

(footnote 8 continue ...)

argues: 'The logical extension of the zero-sum story is that a future without racism is something white people should fear, because there will be nothing good for them in it' (Semuels 2021:14).

⁹The novel is a version of the German aristocrat Adam von Trott, who studied at Oxford in the early 1930s and participated in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. His conspiracy to kill Adolf Hitler, failed. So, he was hung naked and tortured by pulling out his toenails.

blood-red rag, a circle – white as that of the magic lantern shining on the sheets of childhood: in the middle of the circle a knot of black serpents: The monogram of evil, *my* monogram. (p. 133)

In South Africa, apartheid will forever be the ‘unforgiveable’ evil and guilt of being an Afrikaner. In an article on the quest to be exonerated from the cruelty of historical injustices, the historical analyst, Leopoldt Scholtz, declares that he has no problem to say that apartheid was morally wrong. He argues that one has to try to make a rational analysis of the context and reasons why people opted for that form of social system, that is, referring to the British colonial system of discrimination and oppression of the Afrikaner (Scholtz 2021:19). However, to my mind, exoneration, and pardoning, can merely be understood as rubbing salt into painful wounds framed by the disguise of *privileged aloofness* (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1988:12).

In Europe, totalitarian imperialism and colonial expansionism will forever be the tag around the neck of Britain, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. Hitler, apartheid-nationalists, and European imperialists are forever branded as the evil villains of Western Civilisation – the disguised devil as anti-hero. Even within globalised forms of a market-driven imperialism, the attempt of American regimes to promote a kind of ‘benevolent or obligatory imperialism’ in the Middle East (for example the intervention in Afghanistan and the cruel murder of Saddam Hussein under the slogan of liberal democratisation), led to many forms of cruel violence and imperialistic exploitation. Due to its evil impact on local people, I want to call it a form of *Cruella de Vil-imperialism*.

The evil factor (villain) ‘behind’: The stigma of ‘Cruella de Vil’-imperialism¹⁰

In dealing with the phenomenon of shame and its connection to bitterness and the anger of victims, normally the first step is to identify the cause. The tricky exercise is to delineate the culprit or perpetrator ‘behind’, mostly in demonising terminology and denunciatory and convictive categories. When an appropriate demon has been formulated, the formalised terminology becomes a buzzword to generalise the problem and to oversee the complexity of the undergirding issues. One such word is the notion of colonialism and its connections to Must-Fall campaigns within vicious attempts, to get rid of colonial symbols (*decolonialisation* campaigns). The intention behind the identification of a kind of Cruella de Vil-causal factor, is to establish a postcolonial utopia of democratic freedom, even though EFF members protested at a school while singing ‘Shoot the farmer, shoot the boer.’

Without any doubt, apartheid was an evil assault, a crime against humanity, a cruel ideology that robbed human beings of their dignity. In a quite provoking article, Zacharek (2021:90) points out that the identification of the villain in the

cruel stories of inhumane exploitation, is quite tricky and complex. Zacharek (2021) concludes:

[V]illains are bad – but they have good reasons for being bad. They are capable of terrible things – but only because we have failed to understand them. We live in a world of people demanding to be heard – not just those who have been genuinely disenfranchised for decades and centuries, but also those who merely feel they’re under attack. (p. 91)

Even those who still suffer the pain of shameful mourning due to the monstrosities of the past, want to be heard.¹¹ Therefore, while probing into the evil of past background stories in South Africa’s history of discard, both white and black people should deal with the fact that we are all sharing in the Cruella de Vil-archetype. We are all villains trying to exploit the other in order to compromise for personal loss and wrongdoing. This Cruella de Vil-factor is even quite evident in the shunning of imperialistic exploitation (colonialism) and pigmentocratic deprivation (apartheid-ideology).

I will first attend to the villain of colonialism (framed by imperialism), and thereafter to the villain of pigmentocratic deprivation, by making use of stories related to the suppressing metaphor of ‘underdog’ (see Figure 4).

(a) The villain of colonialism

Over several decades and hundreds of years, colonialism clouded the skies and horizons of many countries in the Americas and the African continent. Perhaps, colonial enterprises combined with imperialistic expansionism, are features of political totalitarianism and power exploitation. Colonialism and imperialistic ideology are therefore not exclusively Western. With reference to history, one also needs to take cognisance of aggressive and violent exploitations by the Egyptian empire, the Persian empire, the Macedonian empire, the Islamic empire, the Mongol empire, the Chinese empire and the Aztec and Inca empires in the Americas (Higgs & Smith 2015:58).

Due to class distinction, there were always the ruling upper-class exploiting the less civilised under-class – the inferior under-class.

Scholarly research estimates that Europeans and Euro-Americans enslaved as many as 5 million indigenous Americans in the western hemisphere during the colonial period. ‘In the 1600s European explorers would seize Indians for sale or training as interpreters and guides’ (Silverman 2020:77). In 1611 Englishman Edward Harlow, for example, went on a captive-taking rampage. In 1614 Thomas Hunt kidnapped 27 Wampanoags and sold them into slavery in

10. Cruella de Vil: Cruelty + devil = demon acts of exploiting, ostracising, or killing the defenseless other in the disguise of a Dalmatian dog (puppy).

11. In the animated version of *Cruella de Vil*, from Disney’s 1961 *One hundred and one Dalmatians*, it tells the story how Estella, a troublemaking schoolgirl who suffers a devastating personal loss that she believes is her fault, changes into the badness of Cruella (Zacharek 2021:90). The character became a pop-culture icon and a famous symbol of greed, vanity and evil. From the unsuited symbolic name to her sinister physical appearance, Cruella’s evil is overt. She plans to kill dogs for a coat. She even drowned dozens of her own cat’s kittens (Cruella de Vil, Wikipedia 2021). In this sense, Cruella is an archetypal corporate villain who will seize on any scheme to make money and to exploit the other, even the underdog.



Source: Cruella de Vil, 2021, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, viewed 28 June 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruella_de_Vil

FIGURE 4: Image: Cruella de Vil. Metaphor for greed, vanity, evil and exploitation.

Málaga, Spain (Silverman 2020:77–78). In this sense, the captive victim became the stigmatised outcast of a so-called civilised society.

(b) *Canis Africanis*: The wounded and ostracised underdog

The enslaved underdog as byproduct of Western civilisation and imperialistic colonisation encompasses more than a class, a group, a person, a race. The enslaved underdog is a condition, a mindset, an attitude. It is an indication of a state of being due to systemic powers and totalitarian ideology.

To understand the predicament and suffering of ostracised people, the first step is to start listening to the stories of disgrace, as told from the perspective of the underdog. In the case of our South African complexity and diversity, from the perspective of *Canis Africanis*. The latter as symbol of the powerlessness of many African people who must live like dogs in slums and townships beyond wire and railway lines.

According to J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (1999), the victim of social discrimination, the dehumanised human being, becomes an ostracised 'underdog'; that is, life in a post-apartheid South where racial discrimination is still rife and discriminatory is still exposed to racial humiliation. For example the character David, is disgraced from being a university lecturer to caring for dogs, a statement that symbolises his move from a modern to a traditional lifestyle, forced to live 'like a dog', as Lucy stresses, 'yes like a dog' (Coetzee 1999:122–114).¹² To live in Salem, a black occupied setting where Lucy and David toil to earn a living, equals daily forms of disgrace. It is in this regard that the symbolism of 'dog' is used to convey insecurity, segregation and racial discrimination in the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa (dog's life) – a life discredited by shame.

The shameful disgrace of a dog's life is a multi-layered phenomenon. It is therefore important to attend to some of the links between shameful disgrace and an African perspective,

¹²In a review on *Disgrace*, Coovadia (2014) refers to Nadine Gordimer criticising Coetzee for sympathising only with the dogs. According to Gordimer, Coetzee's sympathies, in fact, avoid the living and breathing dog, pissing and bumping noses and following scents. Distaste for the dog carries over to Lurie's own daughter Lucy and her pregnancy, degrading a woman, 'marking her with semen like a dog's urine'.

that is, what it entails for different people forced to the lower-level of canine life, still suffering from racial exclusivism despite the political slogan of a post-apartheid society.

- Haunting dogs: Shame as manifestation of sadistic brutality

Wahbie Long, in his publication *Nation on the couch, inside South Africa's mind* (Melinda Ferguson Books, 2021), dissects the cadaver of apartheid, structural violence, and social estrangement (*Entfremdung*) within the very fiber of capitalism (see Figure 5).

His argument is based on the following premise: Shame forms the primordial basis for the sadism of brutality, destructive violence and mutual enmity – shame as the outcome of existential inequality and humiliating, forced self-abnegation. The latter fuels community jealousy and violent manifestation such as #Must-Fall campaigns. It is in this context that the symbol of 'dog's life' also points to the cruelty of the fierce upperdog – the watchdogs of the ruling white class, or the detecting dogs of the police force.

- Racialised canine invective: Who let the dogs out?

The earliest record of domestic dogs – *Canis familiaris* – on the African continent are fossils found in the Nile estuary and dated to 4 500 BCE. The name 'AfriCanis' is a junction of 'Africa' and 'Canis' (the Latin word for dog). It stands for 'dog of Africa' and refers to the subequatorial native African dogs, namely the aboriginal dogs which for centuries have been an integral part of the life of the Bantu and Khoisan speaking people in Southern Africa.¹³

According to Baderoon (2017):

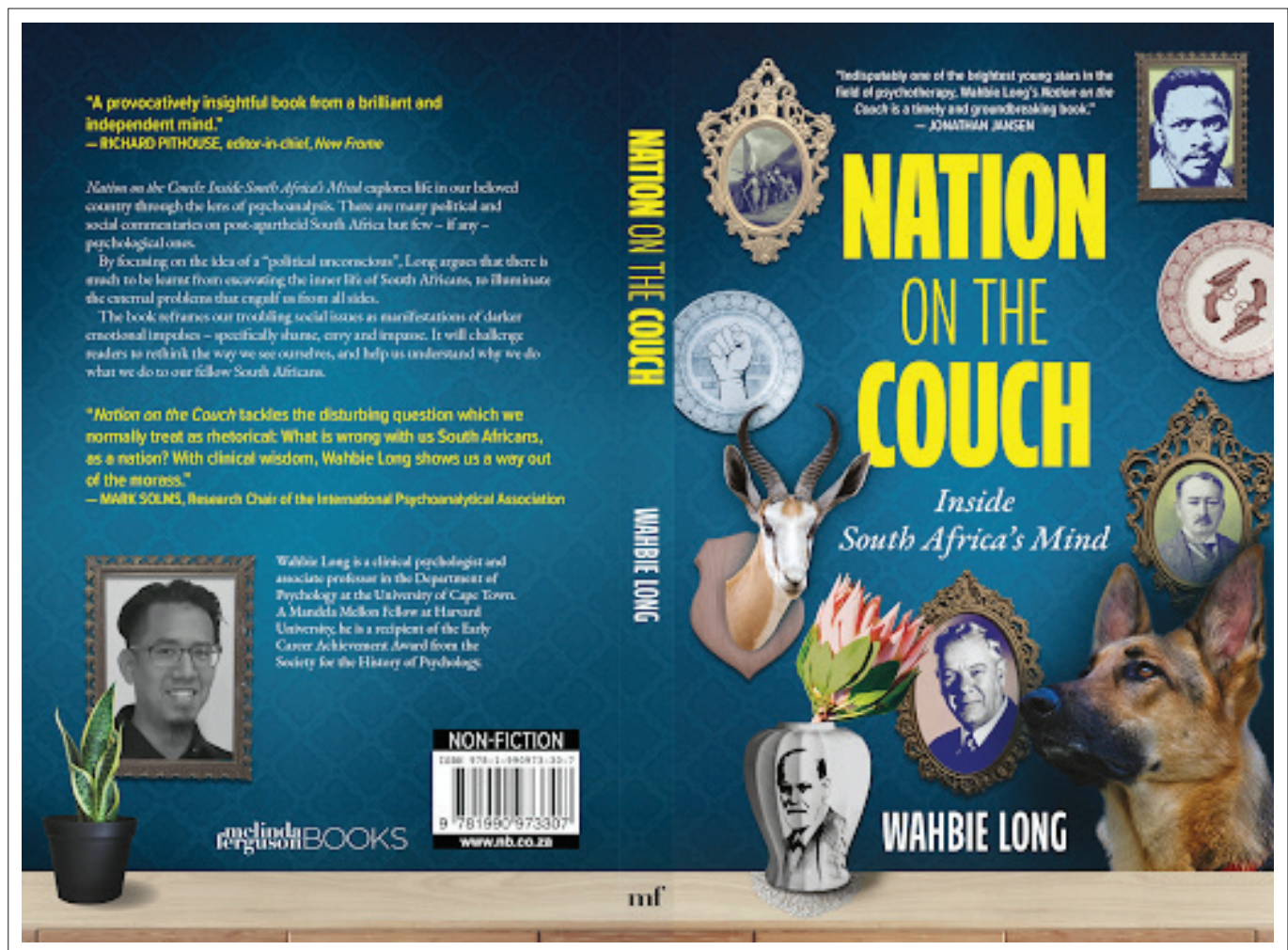
[T]he dog is a charged and powerful symbol in South Africa. Racialized canine invective played a formative role in colonial efforts to dispossess Africans of land. However, the symbolic meanings of dogs in South African culture range far beyond insult.¹⁴ Recent portrayals of canines have turned suggestively, if equivocally, from denigration toward signaling post-apartheid racial authenticity. (p. 345)

The notion of 'Who let the dogs out' was used by the South African artist Willie Bester, to refer to the role of police dogs trained to attack protesting blacks. German Shepherd dogs were trained to bite and kill. They became symbols of cruelty and destruction caused by white police officers to protect the evil of an apartheid ideology. Even though Willie Bester's sculpture and video was made in the so-called post-apartheid era, it shows how violence is still ingrained in the South African society (Gray 2021:1) (see Figure 6).

- Zuma: Cultivated dogs – symbol of being non-African

¹³*Canis Africanis*, above all, is a symptom of disorganisation. South Africa has limited collective capacity (Coovadia 2014).

¹⁴Activist against apartheid, archbishop Desmond Tutu, often received hate mail as well as death threats from white far-right groups like the *Wit Wolwe* (kind of detective dog that can snoop around and can scent the criminals out) (Baderoon 2017).



Source: Long, W., 2021, *Nation on the couch, inside South Africa's mind*, Melinda Ferguson Books, Cape Town

FIGURE 5: Cover of Wahbie Long's publication on shame as the factor behind sadistic exploitation of human beings. Of importance is the different disgusting symbols on the front cover. Online: Wahbie Long, *Nation on the couch, inside South Africa's mind*. For academic purposes only.



Source: Police and anti-black violence, n.d., *Photo on line for academic purposes only*, viewed 05 May 2021, from https://www.google.com/search?q=Photo+police+dog+unit+let+dog+free+on+victim+of+apartheid&rlz=1C1GCEU_enZA873ZA873&source=lnms&tbm=isc

FIGURE 6: Police using fierce dogs to counteract anti-black violence.

On boxing day 2012, at rural Impendle in his Zulu-language heartland, Jacob Zuma distributed Christmas gifts of groceries and wheelchairs, blankets and lawnmowers, and

warned his supporters against adopting outside customs. 'Even if you apply any kind of lotion and straighten your hair', Zuma explained, 'you will never be white'. The domestic dog, he said, was also a locus of delusion. After serving a 10-year treason sentence, Zuma had worked as a labourer in a pet shop in Durban in 1974 before rejoining the underground. Now the former president diagnosed those who loved dogs more than people, as suffering from 'a lack of humanity'. Blacks who lavishly spent money on their dogs, took them to the vet, and walked them, rejected African tradition (Coovadia 2014).

- The colonised dog

By certain accounts, the Soweto uprising of 1976 started when a police dog chased children into a school only to be beaten to death when they turned on it. As late as 1994, just before the first democratic elections, there was a court case regarding a labourer's dog who mated with the bitch of his boss. A financial penalty was issued on the couple who beat the labourer to death (Coovadia 2014). Even the colonised dog should not 'consummate' with the township dog.

According to Coovadia (2014), the dog was imagined as the most zealous defender of the colonial project. He points to the story of *Jock of the Bushveld*, published in 1907, but framed it with what Imraan Coovadie calls, 'prejudicial racial references'.

- 2008 – the year of the dog: 'Bulalan'inja!' [Kill the dog!]

Njabulo Ndebele, the eminent South African critic and university administrator, found that his name, according to reports, was one of four on a list of these 'dogs' – a supposed conspirator behind the scenes along with Mbeki. Ndebele turned this around, suggesting that:

[T]he dog, so long denigrated, so long a symbol of abuse, should become a national symbol for the humanity of South Africans [...]. Let us declare 2008 'The Year of the Dog'. (Ndebele 2006)

In his essay, Ndebele describes an imaginative scenario wherein outside the court where Jacob Zuma was recently on trial, Zizi Kodwa, a spokesperson of the ANC Youth League, was reported to have called for the dogs to be beaten until their owners and handlers emerge. Kodwa, leading a crowd with fighting sticks, knobkieries, sjamboks, metal pipes and pangas, summoned the group to hit a dog so hard that its owner and handler must emerge and plea for mercy on its behalf. The hitting was regarded as a revolutionary task (Ndebele 2006).

- The postcolonial dog: From hunting and companionate dog to patrolling dog

A rich man's dog gets more in the way of vaccination, medicine and medical care than do the workers upon whom the rich man's wealth is built. In the meantime, the postcolonial farm dog and suburban dog have replaced the colonial squad car as the cheap defense of private property. This animal tirelessly patrols the limits of property. Indeed, he is the penumbra of property, so tender to his owner and alien to the person of the stranger. Fixed in position, he is unlike the mobile precolonial dog, visible in Khoi and San rock paintings from a thousand years ago, as well as the traditional Zulu hunting dog Africanis, and the township or pariah dog drifting from poor man's yard to poor man's yard to be fed or beaten by hand. (Coovadia 2014) (see Figure 7)

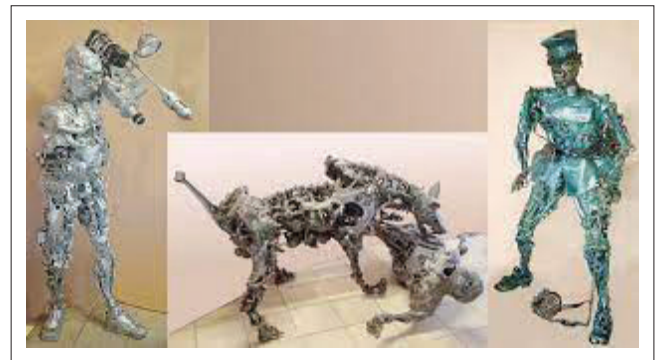
- A painful, even intoxicated, memory: Treated like dogs (*voetsek!*)

The notion of 'post-apartheid' cannot be separated from the painful memory of people suffering from inhumane treatment during the apartheid period. Ndebele (2006), therefore, refers to the *Native Land Act* of 1913, when tens of thousands of Africans were thrown out of their lands 'like dogs'. Due to influx control laws, hundreds of thousands of African families were uprooted and moved around 'like dogs'. Even during the time of 'post-apartheid', there are farmers who, having exploited Africans for decades, still throw out black families into the wilderness like dogs. With reference to the events of 16 June 1976, when thousands of school children were shot at 'like dogs', other dogs from the hostels were sent by the State to attack township dwellers 'like dogs'. He refers further to a



Source: Coovadia, I., 2014, 'Best friends and worst enemies: Years of the dog in South Africa', in *Los Angeles review of books*, 29 August, viewed 05 May 2021, from <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/best-friends-worst-enemies-years-dog-south-africa/>

FIGURE 7: Alf Kumalo's shot of Nelson Mandela, taken before the Treason Trial, with his Rhodesian Ridgeback. The guard dog also differs from the companionate dog, like Mandela's Ridgeback (Coovadia 2014).



Source: Atkinson, B., 2001, "'The Dogs of War' – Willie Bester at the Goodman", *Artthrob Archive*, p. 51, November, viewed 05 May 2021, from <https://artthrob.co.za/01nov/reviews/goodman.html>

FIGURE 8: Left: Seven years after the formal demise of the apartheid regime, Bester's exhibition 'Dogs of War' comes as a blunt, even brutal refusal to make nice about racial politics in South Africa, and its three key installation pieces distil a power which has been detectable, but not always fully realised in his previous sculptural work.

very recent case, where policemen, acting on behalf of protestors, were killed 'like dogs' by criminals using AK-47s – the weapon glorified as 'imshini wam'.

You can see why the word 'dog' is never far away in the imagining of violence and abuse in our society. You can see how often we have treated people and things as if they were 'just a dog'. '*Njamgodoyi!*', starving dog, is an insult that lays the ground for the beating of someone. '*Voetsek!*' many of us say to people we unwittingly consider 'dogs'. 'Dog' is a pervasive metaphor regularly used to justify unrighteous brutality (Ndebele 2006).

- Dogs of war

According to PopMatters Staff (2002), the exhibition at the Goodman Art Gallery of Willie Bester's sculptures, could be called a visual cultural commentary on the ideology and victims of the apartheid policy – 'piece de resistance'. Bester's work could be viewed as a kind of protest art on the indiscriminating realities in South Africa. The monstrosity of



Source: Luca Giordano, 1680, *Jezebel eaten by the dogs*, painting, Oil on canvas.

FIGURE 9: Jezebel eaten by dogs by Luca Giordano Gur.

apartheid on the identities of black and coloured people is captured by the interplay between the teeth of the snarling dog and the grotesque neo-Nazi figure of the policeman. In the cold indifference of the police official, white power and oppression is depicted as outrageously cruel and obscenely terrifying (see Figure 8).

The core question now is: How does one address the schismatic predicament and demeaning polarisations of 'Jou Boer' and 'Ostracised Dog' from a pastoral perspective of healing? Is it at all possible to change fierce and cruel dogs, even underdogs, into Saint Bernard dogs: working dogs credited with saving the lives of some 2 500 people in 300 years of service as pathfinder and rescue dogs at the hospice founded by St. Bernard of Montjoux in the great St Bernard Pass in the Pennine Alps?

Towards a spirituality of healing: 'Christ the underdog' (Divine disgrace)

As already has been pointed out, the problematic aspect for caregiving to disgraced people is, that for sheer guilt and true remorse there seem to be no formal mechanisms like confession and atonement. Furthermore, most of the times

shameful disgrace is merely ignored and rendered as an untreated state of mind. 'The Joker suffers from untreated mental illness and lives in a world where people just don't care enough. Maleficent is jilted by a swain who prefers power to love' (Zacharek 2021:90). 'Shame has no such remedies' (Pattison 2000:43). But what is the implication of spiritual healing from a Christological perspective (by grace alone) on the predicament of shameful disgrace in a pastoral approach of becoming whole again?

Within a more biblical context, the notion of 'dog' points to insult and a position of disregard.

- Dog in the Bible: Beware of the dog!

The notion of 'dog' in a biblical context refers to a despised position (Berković 2014: 80). Dogs are dangerous, evil, and unreliable. Psalm 59:6 compares the enemies of God and evildoers with snarling dogs: 'They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city'.¹⁵

¹⁵It is interesting that the Bible does not describe the wolf as an unclean animal, though the dog is. In the biblical text, dogs are neither domestic animals, nor pets. You would not have seen a picture of a dog in a typical Jewish courtyard with the message 'Fierce dog'. In terms of anthroponyms, dogs are rather discriminated against, unlike their relative the wolf (Berković 2014:78). In some biblical scenes, they are described as scavengers. Paul's warning in Philippians 3:2 relate dogs to danger and evil. 'Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh'.

- Dead dog as terrible insult

The dysphemism 'dead dog' is a terrible insult (2 Sm 16:9). It even describes a position of extreme self-humiliation. According to 2 Samuel 9:8, Mephibosheth again knelt before the king and said, 'Why should you care about me? I'm worth no more than a dead dog'. 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?' (2 Sm 9:8; Berković 2014:78–79). To be associated with a dog was therefore a terrible insult.¹⁶

See furthermore the scene where Jezebel is eaten by dogs (see Figure 9), 2 Ki 9:33–36.¹⁷ When Jehu saw her at the palace window he ordered: 'Throw her down!' So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses trampled her underfoot. 'Take care of that cursed woman', he said, 'and bury her, for she was a king's daughter'. But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. They went back and told Jehu, who said, 'This is the word of the Lord that He spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: "On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh"' (2 Ki 9:33–36) (p. 80).

To a certain extent, the suffering of Christ, and how he was treated by both the Roman soldiers and the representatives of the Sanhedrin, could be called: Degraded to the status of a 'dog's life'. He was humiliated, beaten, and crucified as outcast outside the walls of Jerusalem. He was thrown out like Jezebel. The soldiers cursed him alike.

Jesus as 'Underdog': The cross as the describes of divine dereliction

Wong (2009)¹⁸ referring to Isaiah 53:1–3, describes Jesus Christ the Messiah, as the world's greatest *Underdog of all time*. His rejection by Israel and suffering under the unfair

16.The Egyptian god Anubis had a canine head, and this may be one reason why dogs in the Bible are never mentioned in a good light. Pigs were unclean, both ritually and as food (Lv 11:7), but dogs were the embodiment of gluttony, scavengers sent by God to tear and devour. See in this regard the story regarding the fate of Jezebel, King Ahab's wicked wife (2 Ki 9:33–36).

17.The conclusion that shepherds were societal outcasts has been reached by many scholars, and they have repeated this concept repeatedly. For example, Farrar (in Croteau 2015:1) says in 1893: 'Shepherds at this time were a despised class'. Croteau (2015:1) also refers to Strack and Billerbeck (1924), who argue that shepherds were despised people. According to Stein (in Croteau 2015:1), shepherds were dishonest and unclean according to the standards of the law. They represent the outcasts and sinners for whom Jesus came. Utley (in Croteau 2015:1) points out that the rabbis considered shepherds to be religious outcasts and their testimonies were therefore not admissible in court. Even Aristotle (Croteau 2015:1–2) refers to shepherds saying that among people, the laziest are shepherds, who lead an idle life, and get their subsistence without trouble from tame animals. On the other hand, shepherds played an integral part in the economy of Israel. The best option is to admit that shepherds represented simply lower-class individuals who represent the poor and humble. In terms of social status, they were often overlooked and excluded from the upper ruling class and religious elite. In this sense, their adoration in the Bethlehem scenario, their presence relates the incarnation with the predicament of those excluded from authority and often treated with disrespect as outcasts, underdogs.

18.According to Wong (2009), an underdog is a person or team who is expected to lose a fight or contest. This term originated from the probability theory in the 17th century, as a result of a gambling problem involving dice throwing. Since those days almost every industry and individual use the probability theory daily. Insurance actuarial tables are probability charts, and so are sports betting odds that have the favourite and the underdog. From the point of view of a normal observer, the underdog has little or no chance of winning against his opponent, because of the insurmountable obstacles and problems that he must face, especially because of authority and the exercise of power.

justice system of Pontius Pilate made him, in terms of Christological and sacrificial terminology, the epitome of grace as framed by humiliating disgrace.

For healing, Augsburg (1986) argues, we need a disposition of virtue as well as a need for integrity. Augsburg calls the undergirding factor which develops both virtue and integrity, *Grace*. 'Grace offers the support that allows trust to replace anxiety; acceptance to restore honor where we were shamed, and forgiveness to resolve guilt' (Augsburger 1986:139). This kind of trust is fuelled by an understanding of Christ as the divine suffering underdog, replacing all forms of dog's life.

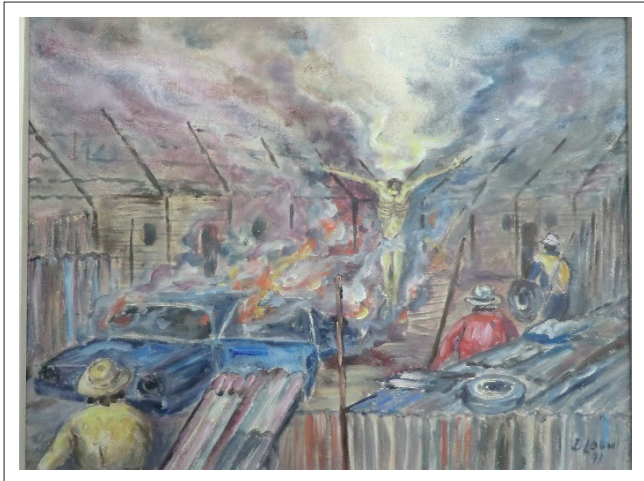
I now want to turn to the introductory remark, namely *homo vulnerabilis*, I cannot exonerate myself from any form of shameful disgrace. Through the stigmata of Christ, I share and partake corporatively in all forms of dog's life. In Christ, I am associated with the bleak predicament of those suffering as underdogs. At the same time, I cannot dissociate myself from the privileged watchdogs of the upper-class. Due to this tormenting ambivalence, I decided to turn to art to express my own predicament of becoming haunted by systemic guilt and corporative disgrace without any form of instant healing. Therefore, I depicted the suffering of Christ (the disgraced underdog) under the Roman upperdogs, as the suffocating, derelict outcast, outside the bastion of all forms of imperialistic exploitation and religious stigmatisation.

In religious terminology, the following painting can be rendered as a Christian spiritual version of 'piece de resistance'. It is a depiction of what a theopaschitic interpretation of the suffering, shamed and disgraced Christ, entails (see Figure 10).

Theopaschitic grace: Reframing disgrace into self-grace

In a theopaschitic paradigm, the argument is the following: in terms of the *passio Dei*, the substitution of Christ, representing in the cross the weakness (*satheneia*) of God (*theologia crucis*) (Moltmann 1972), grace is revealed as *hēsēd*, namely the mercy of God towards the sinner, suffocating the human being and the powerless underdog in society. Divine mercy (*hēsēd*) displays compassion, directed towards all forms of inhumane exploitation of human beings.

According to Davies (2001:234), grace as exemplified in comfort as compassion (the Latin word *commiseratio*; the Greek word *sumpatheia*; and the German *Mitleid*; in Afrikaans *medelye*: to suffer with) expresses a kind of pathetic mode of care. Other related concepts to grace as compassion are: *clementia*, *miser cordia*, *humanitas* and sometimes *pietas*; the Greek *eleos* and *oiktos*, the English *mercy* and *pity*, and the French *pitié* (Davies 2001:234). With reference to Davies, one can conclude that compassion as expression of grace (divine *hēsēd*), empowers the weak (exploited underdogs) with a corporate strength, granted by God (*hunc pietatis adfectum*). This kind of gracious fortification is not meant for a selfish



Source: Louw, D.J., 2014, *Imaging the unseen: On beauty and healing of life, body and soul*, Sun Press, Stellenbosch

FIGURE 10: *Crossroads, Cape Flats (Township Crucifixion)*. The necklaced Christ as victim of the Roman soldiers (Apartheid policy makers) within the hell of township life (the crucified, divine underdog). (Painting by Louw 1991). In the painting the dying Son of God was killed by the injustice of all forms of oppressive imperialism.

kind of ego-strength. It should be exercised in order to bestow kindness to others, love them and cherish them, protecting them from all dangers and coming to their aid (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35).

Compassion thus creates a bond of human society and displays human dignity. ‘*Humanitas* is to be displayed to those who are “suitable” and “unsuitable” alike, and “this is done humanely (humane) when it is done without hope on reward”’ (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35).

Churches and communities of faith should, therefore, become in fact a kind of hospice (*hospitium*), a place of refuge and safe haven for disgraced human beings in order to take up a moral responsibility by saying together: “Never again!” The challenge in a spirituality of healing is to establish mutual, trustworthy responsibilities. In the terminology of Emmanuel Levinas, trustworthiness is a source for authentic humanity, founded in the prior of a face-to-face encounter (*visage*) and directed by the principle of *l’un-pour-l’autre* [one-for-the-other; The St Bernard metaphor]. In this way a bond or alliance (*allégeance*) is established (Levinas 1991:45).

Conclusion

Grace opens God’s face¹⁹ of mercy anew in our contemporary society, struggling to attain a humane face within attempts to facilitate a trustworthy praxis that gives profile to the so-called post-apartheid society; a society moving into a

19. In his book, *Saving face*, Pattison (2013) addresses the issue of enfacement and shame in theology. His intention is to take some suggestive ideas emerging from the tradition of seeing the face of God, to develop some practical theological horizons. The heading of chapter 8 reads: *Shining up the face of God: Practical theological horizons for enfacement* (Pattison 2013:149). With reference to a methodology of critical ‘theological imaginary’ (Pattison 2013:149), Pattison wants to re-open the debate on the presence of God’s face in our human world. ‘Western intellectuals live in a world of thin, objectivist Cartesian seeing in which intellect is separated off from the sensual world’ (Pattison 2013:150). Our scopic regime has become a reduced horizon of limited seeing. ‘However, the tradition of a thicker, more sensual kind of theological seeing, not solely based on inward or mystical ideas of vision, might usefully question assumptions about seeing God’s face in the human world’ (Pattison 2013:150–151).

gracious postcolonial dispensation; a compassionate society that classifies human beings not according to race, social status, gender categories, but according to the humane categories of unconditional love and sacrificial grace.

To my mind, the best place to see and rediscover the presence of a co-compassionate God, is not in the formalism and clericalism of doctrine that formulated God in the *omni*-categories of immutability and the all-powerful categories of imperialistic force, but rather in the outside-categories of outcasts (outside the temple; outside the walls of Jerusalem). In this sense, Christ became the humiliated underdog suffering under the ‘Roman/institutional oppression’ and the evil exploitation of ‘Cruella de Vil’. In fact, Hebrews 13:13 summons us to the #Evil-Must-Fall campaigns of compassionate comforters and co-sufferers: ‘Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore’ (New International Version [NIV]). This is where both ‘underdogs’ and ‘upperdogs’ can discover self-grace within the complexity of systemic injustice and wrongdoing. It is in this regard that a theopaschitic paradigm can help to interpret the intriguing dynamics of shameful disgrace from a Christological perspective: the healing of a divine substitutional form of disgrace – the ‘divine underdog’ in the place of ‘cruel upperdogs’ and ‘despised underdogs’.

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Author’s contributions

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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