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Individual Guilt and Collective Memory in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Megha Prasad Bhattarai has completed his thesis "Individual Guilt and Collective Memory in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace"* under my supervision. He carried out his research from October 2013 to March 2016. I hereby recommend it to be submitted to the research committee for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Individual Guilt and Collective Memory in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Megha Prasad Bhattarai has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This present study explores individual guilt and collective memory of the disgraceful history of South Africa of white. The researcher basically explores the conscious or sub-conscious minds of whites who seek redemption for the sinful acts done in the past towards the blacks. Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a representative story of Post-apartheid South Africa where people, basically whites, are facing the outcomes of colonialism and apartheid rule. The novel presents story of David Lurie, a middle aged white South African college professor and his daughter; Lucy Lurie. Presenting Lurie who was once a member of privileged ruling group and has now lost all his powers and positions, Coetzee is trying to show the political, social as well as psychological changes among people of South Africa. Lurie's broken relationship, his perspective towards women, mostly black and his view towards life is shown to be changed. Ms. Lucy who becomes victim of criminal assault by some blacks is not willing to claim for justice but accepts everything silently and seeks refuge in the society of her attackers. By showing this Coetzee has exposed the deeper psychology of whites that they are suffering for what they (individually) and their ancestors (collectively) have done to the blacks in the past and their silent acceptance of the same as a way to seek redemption. Library consultation and review of literature methods have been used for performing this research work. Similarly post-apartheid and post colonialism theoretical approaches are applied for the analysis of the topic.

Contents

I. Individual Guilt and Collective Memory in Coetzee's *Disgrace*

This thesis examines J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a novel that explores individual or collective guilt felt by white people for the racist treatment of people of color by Whites during the colonial and apartheid period. A belief, often subconscious, among white liberals that being white is, in and of itself, a great transgression against the rest of the world for which one must spend their life making atonement. It is often exemplified by embracing the cultures and philosophies of various other ethnic groups while neglecting one's own roots. This research basically focuses on psychological effect of racism on whites individually and collectively. By presenting a story of a college professor; Mr. David Lurie and her daughter Ms. Lucy Lurie, the novel portrays the struggle and guilt of once dominant group to cope with a changing world in an apartheid-free South Africa.

Individual or collective guilt felt by some white people for harm resulting from racist treatment of ethnic minorities by whites both historically and currently is known as White guilt. White guilt has been described as one of the psychosocial costs of racism for white individuals along with empathy (sadness and anger) for victims of racism and fear of non-whites.

Shelby Steele, a conservative black political writer, discussed the concept extensively in his 2006 book *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era.* Steele criticizes "white guilt" saying that it is nothing more than an alternative interpretation of the concept of "black power":

> Whites (and American institutions) must acknowledge historical racism to show themselves redeemed by it, but once they acknowledge it, they lose moral authority over everything having to do with race,

> equality, social justice, poverty and so on. [. . .] The authority they lose transfers to the 'victims' of historical racism and becomes their great power in society. This is why white guilt is quite literally the same thing as Black power.

George F. Will, a conservative American political columnist, wrote: "[White guilt is] a form of self-congratulation, where whites initiate "compassionate policies" toward people of color, to showcase their innocence to racism.

Coetzee is known for the portrayal of his native country both during and after apartheid. His postcolonial orientation draws upon myth and allegory as freely as it does realism. Coetzee is further distinguished by his acute awareness of marginalization, his affinity for rural settings, and his unique take on ethno-linguistic identity.

Initially, his literary works received a somewhat uneasy reception in his native country, posing as it does uncomfortable questions about power and authority in often-allegorical form. His writing is simple, clean, and straight to the point, but underneath that straightforward veneer, his words reveal some really complex ideas and emotions. Coetzee is a well-educated man, and it shows in every little allusion and reference that he makes. Coetzee's writing exemplifies the amazing amount of content that he has read, researched, and absorbed over the course of his career, both as a scholar and a writer. With their powers combined, these elements – pithiness, immediacy, and bookishness – make for a unique, thought-provoking, and compulsively readable writing style. He was the first writer to be awarded the Booker Prize for two times. First for *Life and Times of Michael K* in 1983 and second for *Disgrace* in 1999.

Disgrace is Coetzee's powerful novel about life in post apartheid South Africa. It tells the story of David Lurie, a 52 years old professor of Communication and Romantic Poetry at Technical University of Cape Town. Lurie falls in disgrace after an affair with one of his students and gets out of the College. He takes refuge in his daughter; Lucy's farm in Eastern Cape. For a time, his daughter's influence and his involvement in the works of farm with his daughter provide him some solace and he feels as if his discordant life has been harmonized to some extent. He starts enjoying the works like, attending farmers markets where Lucy sells her wares, and in working with Petrus, a polygamous-married black African whose farm borders Lucy's and who nominally works for Lucy as a "dog-man". But the balance of power in the country is shifting. Shortly after becoming comfortable with rural life, he is forced to come to terms with the aftermath of an attack on the farm. Three men come to ask for help and request to allow them to use Lucy's phone to call for aid for a sick sister. Before Lucy and her father could suspect any danger, they force their way into the farmhouse. The men are armed with firearms, rape Lucy, and attempt to kill David by setting him on fire. In addition to these actions, they also shoot a collection of caged dogs which Lucy is boarding, in an action which David later relates to the idea that black people in South Africa are taught to fear dogs as symbols of white power and oppression. The men drive off in David's car: it is never recovered and they are never caught, although police once contact David to come pick up "his" car, which is in fact evidently not his car. Newspapers spell Lurie's name inaccurately ("Lourie"), meaning nothing will tie his persona of disgraced academic to the attack. Lucy becomes apathetic and agoraphobic after the attack. David presses her to report the full circumstances to the police, but she does not. She has become pregnant by one of the rapists, but ignores advice to terminate the pregnancy. She does not want to, and in

fact does not; discuss the attack with David until much later. Meanwhile, David suspects Petrus of planning and arranging the attack. This suspicion is apparently confirmed when one of the attackers, a young man named Pollux, attends one of Petrus's parties and is claimed by Petrus as a kinsman. Pollux ultimately comes to live with Petrus, and spies on Lucy bathing. When David catches Pollux doing this, Lucy forces David to desist from any retribution. David surmises that ultimately, Lucy will be forced into marrying Petrus and giving him her land, and it appears that Lucy is resigned to this contingency.

Set in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee searing novel deals with the racial revenge on the whites which seems to emerge as a neo-racism by the blacks from the political, ethical and psychological point of view. It also explores the psychological cost paid by the Whites for the racist treatment done to the Blacks during the colonial and apartheid period. During the colonial and apartheid system, the people of South Africa were divided by their race and the races were forced to live apart from each other. The Native American and African descents were physically and mentally tortured. They were beaten, raped, trapped, bought and sold as objects or possessions by the white European descents. Whites had enslaved and humiliated the color people only because of their skin color. Some whites, especially white liberals feel a sense of guilt about racism, imperialism, colonialism and other forms of oppression. This sense of guilt is termed as white guilt.

The realization of guilt for the wrongdoings by the Whites in the past is prevalent mostly amongst educated and religious Whites. As they are more cautious regarding vice and virtues, sins and redemptions. As written in *The Bible*,

> And are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood,

> to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 24-25)

Some religious whites realize that what their ancestors did to the Blacks in the name of color was a sin and being their descendants, it's their responsibility to get penitence. The sufferings and lack of justice befallen upon the whites in the South African society soon after the end of apartheid, is accepted by some whites as the outrage of history of oppression and violence and a way for them to get redemption.

In the novel, David Lurie, after the tragic incident that he and his daughter face, comes to a realization that what has happened to him and his daughter is just the way how the divine justice works. His white fellows had victimized the blacks in the past, and the Karma now, is making them pay their deeds. They are being suffered in the hands of blacks just because of their race just like they made the blacks suffer because of the race in the past. He thinks,

> Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of the theory. Not human evil. Just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings, pity and terror are irrelevant." (Coetzee 98)

The setting of the novel itself is also suggestive to the fact that most of the whites suffered from the blacks only because of their race. The post apartheid South Africa was socio-economically divided by race. It was by no means idealized. Violence increased significantly in the country. Incidents of car stealing increased. Many farmers either emigrated or gave up farming because of violence committed

against them. From 1989 to 1994 the murder rate doubled, and a young South African woman could be expected to be raped twice in her lifetime on an average. The changing landscape encouraged many of the wealthier South Africans to move into gated communities. The circumstances of life in post- apartheid were the same like before. The only thing that changed was the power/ position relation. Now, the shoe is on the other foot. It is whites turn now to suffer. Whites have to go through lots of physical and mental torments. The tormenting contemporary issues of post apartheid stage are violence, crime, homosexuality and the spread of AIDS virus in continental Africa. Additionally, there are pervading poverty and unemployment. The majority of blacks in South Africa imagine that women are there for their sexual entertainment, and that the women have absolutely. There is this idea of revenge in the back of the minds of many "previously disadvantaged" South Africans that the Whites have to be paid back for the sins of apartheid. This is why (at least in the beginning) most of the crimes were committed against the whites. Sadly, crime is now so way out of control, that the whole nation suffers. This surely also gives a message to the petty criminal that he is likely to get off scot free because his court will not even go to the court.

In these circumstances, a white privileged minority can not be able to survive without compromising and showing submissiveness towards the color people. In the novel *Disgrace*, Lucy who becomes the victim of rape and robbery from three black men in her own home does not make any complaint in the police fearing the possible outcome. Despite her father's suggestion and repeated request to file a complaint against the criminal, she does not make any move rather she says, "as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It's my business, mine alone" (Coetzee 112).

She does not believe that the law would provide her justice in that condition. She silently accepts the assault as she thinks that it would be impossible for her to continue living in such a remote and lawless area if she called in the police and she would be open to future reprisals as well. Therefore, in order to continue living the land where the people of the race are minorities, she shows submissiveness.

Lucy and her father become helpless because of their unfortunate background. They wonot be able to do anything at all without gone through lots of negotiation to live a dignified life. If they try to do anything to protest against the Blacks, they have to lose their life or be victimized terribly. There is no hope of continuing a life without showing gratitude to the colored people. And showing gratitude means accepting the assault silently. Therefore, the act of accepting their assaults without protesting against them in order to survive in that situation is a white submissiveness. Lucy, even after knowing the main culprit behind her rape and the robbery in her home, does not file a case about her rape. She says, "I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to put trials like this, not to have to justify myself, not to you, not to anyone else" (Coetzee 133). Lucy is not willing to confess what happened to her even with her father. She does not allow his father to explain her part of assault to the police. Immediately after the attack, she asks David, “Would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you?” “You tell what happened to you,” she continues, “I tell what happened to me” (Coetzee 99). Later still, however, Lucy confesses—in her only unprompted discussion of the attack with David—that she was baffled and shaken by exactly the personal investment of her attackers, “It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest

was … expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them" (Coetzee 156).

It shows that whatever she has done in that situation is the result of her helplessness and submissiveness. So she negotiates with Petrus, her former assistant and the man behind the crimes committed upon her, to live a life ahead. She bears a child and even becomes ready to become the third wife of Petrus by sharing her property with him. She did all these in order to secure enough protection to live on the land she loves. It implies that there is a terrible and haunting situation for the people of white color. In order to live on post apartheid situation, people have to show compassionate policies towards other as Lucy shows towards Petrus in the novel *Disgrace.*

David tries to persuade his daughter by saying, "Lucy, Lucy, I plead with you! You want to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way you do it. If you fail to stand up for yourself at this moment, you will never be able to hold your head up again …" (Coetzee 133). From the remark made by her father, it is clear that Lucy is hiding the truth about her rape because somewhere in her mind, there is a guilt of wrongs done to the blacks in the past and the guilt of being a white in that changed condition where their power and positions have been taken away. They are no more the privileged race.

After the mishap, a gradual change in the thinking of Lurie is noticed. He starts becoming empathetic towards others. Even his thinking about animals change. During a conversation with his daughter in which he is asking her why she is not filing a report against her rape by the intruders, he suddenly realizes seeing his daughter's silence and says 'Are you trying to remind me something ? of what women undergo at the hands of men?' (Coetzee111) This is the point he realizes that the fate

faced by his daughter is similar to the fate faced by other women with whom he was physically involved. He realizes that terrible outcome of his attitudes and conducts to women, especially black. Similarly, this is the point where the novelist is trying to expose the fact that the sufferings the whites are facing in the post apartheid South Africa is the outcome of history of crimes and oppression done to Blacks by the Whites of colonial period. His daughter is raped, his car is stolen and he is injured, but he has very slight chance of getting justice by the law. He can not make his daughter even file a case of her rape. Such condition of absence or passive presence of law and government is the result of the protest against the oppression, exploitation and violence committed over the blacks by the whites.

By showing the change in thinking of Lurie resulted by the devastation befallen upon him and his daughter and silent acceptance of the same by his daughter, Coetzee is trying to explore the subconscious minds of the Whites where the guilt of being White; a race that tortured and exploited the blacks only in the name of color; is hidden. The whites have collectively compared the crimes committed over them in the post apartheid nation with the crimes committed over the blacks during the apartheid. In the novel, Lurie's sense of guilt for his exploitative attitude towards women symbolically configures a sense of collective responsibility of oppressor generally and of the white writer particular for a history of abuse. In the wake of the outrages committed against them, David still struggles with the language. His angry demands of justice get no response from the overstretched police, and his attempts to confront one of the assailants whom Petrus is apparently protecting produce only stony silences and bald faced lies. Lucy seems to understand what David cannot; that to live where she lives, she must tolerate brutalization and humiliation and simply keep going. "Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept", she tells her father. "To start at ground

level. With nothing… No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity… Like a dog (Coetzee 205). If David actually reclaims some dignity by the end of *Disgrace,* it is only because he gives up more than dog ever could- his daughter, his ideas about justice and language, his career, his dreams of the opera on Byron and even the dying animals he has learned to love without reservation, without thought for himself. Lucy and David are only the representative whites who have suffered the violence and assaults in the initial years of post apartheid. The novelist has presented the cases of these characters in order to present a collective memory of the oppression by the whites to the blacks and the cost paid by the whites for the same later on. Every white individual must have felt a sense of guilt at some point of time for the inhuman treatment done by their ancestor whites to the blacks.

Therefore, the way the whites have internalized and accepted the misdeeds done upon them by the blacks in the society after the abolition of apartheid as a cost of the extreme torture and exploitation towards the black during the apartheid, is termed as the White Guilt. The guilt noticed in individual level and also is expressed as a collective memory. By collective memory of the guilt, what it is meant here is, the Whites may not have done anything wrong to the blacks by themselves, but they might have a sense of guilt recollecting what their ancestors had done to the blacks in past.

Psychologists define the guilt felt by the Whites as the dejection or compunction that Whites feel when they witness a discriminatory act or observe the consequences of a racist act. The guilt manifests itself in common settings and everyday interpersonal encounters. This feeling of guilt may arise from simple realizations of white privilege to the complicated cognitive processes.

White guilt is a pejorative term usually leveled against liberals to suggest that white people, rather than accepting and challenging systematic racism by focusing on their own behavior and those around them, instead try and focus on gaining forgiveness and redemption from people of color for the crimes their ancestors have committed.

The guilt not only has provoked a fear of colored people, a fear of engaging with people of color and an empathic response to racism, but it has also been one of the psychological costs of racism to white people. People of color got killed; raped, beaten, tortured and white people got a few psychological costs to be paid in the form of individual guilt and their collective memory.

It is stated in "The Review and Commentary on *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee" that "In many ways, this is a story about the powerful and powerless". Initially, David Lurie is in a role of power which turns to powerlessness after a sad turn of events. David, a professor who is reciting a poem by Byron to his class, states that the poem is about a fallen angel "condemned to solitude" (Coetzee 34). "There is some small redemption in the end when David, in spite of his failures at life, love, and women, chooses to support his daughter's decision to keep the baby that she does not love since he feels that "love will grow [because] one can trust Mother Nature for [it]" (Coetzee 216).

Coetzee examines the underlying theme of powerlessness through the rape of Lucy. Rape has been a way to subjugate women since ancient times when a rape was conducted as a regular means to bring a woman into a man's tribe or nation. Whites possessed and raped the blacks women during their days and the same things are being done towards the white women after the end of the apartheid. These activities are being done as revenge and as a symbol that the power has now been shifted to the

hands of blacks. Simply to prove that the whites are no more a privileged people and to take revenge of the treatment of the past, the blacks raped and tortured white women. The whites are silent because they have lost their power and are guilty of the past abuses. Similarly, on an individual level also a white feels guilty for the brutal and inhuman treatments done to blacks.

Hence, in a deeper level, this novel is about the psychological acknowledgement of white people for an atonement of what they had done in past towards the color people in the name of racism. This kind of psychological change is also a result of a wide spread racist propaganda campaign launched against European-Americans by various racist groups. The goals of such propaganda campaigns were to diminish any sense of European-American's pride in oneself and their community. European-Americans feel that the only way for them to cleanse their sins is self-sacrificing for non-whites and to ignore their own interest. And to tarnish history with over exaggerations, wild claims all while pressuring publishers of books to underplay great accomplishments of history. As an outcome of this consciousness, many whites were ashamed of their own race and could never feel comfortable talking about the race. They persistently tried to make a friendly space in the society of the blacks. Whites no longer wanted the hierarchy. They only wanted to secure their life in the country where they were born.

II. Post-colonial and Post-apartheid Perspective in *Disgrace*

Post-colonialism is a theoretical approach that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization of former colonies. It deals with the condition of previously or currently colonized countries. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing cultures distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority of the colonized people. And on literature by colonized people which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. According to Joanne Sharpe, "Post-colonialism has two meanings, referring to a temporal aftermath – a period of time after colonialism – and a critical aftermath – cultures, discourses, and critiques that lie beyond, but remain closely influenced by colonialism" (4).

It offers the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Islands, and South Africa. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the languages, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized countries. In *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew B. Irvine, it is mentioned that Postcolonial theory has been used in many ways- as a methodological approach, as a resistant or oppositional strategy, or as a discursive category (159).

Postcolonial theory is built in large part around the concept of otherness. There are, however, problems with or complexities to the concepts of otherness. For instance,

Otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference, so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define:

The western concept of chaotic is based on: if the west is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the orient is chaotic, irrational, feminine and evil. Simply to reverse this polarizing is to be complicit in its totalizing and identity-destroying power (all is reduced to a set of dichotomies, black or white, etc.).

Colonized people are highly diverse in their nature and in their traditions, and as beings in cultures they are both constructed and changing. So that while they may 'other' from the colonizers , they are also different from one another and from their own pasts, and should not be totalized or essentialized through such concepts as a black consciousness, Indian soul, aboriginal culture and so forth. This tantalization is often a form of nostalgia which has its inspiration more in the thought of the colonizers than of the colonized, and it gives the colonizer a sense of unity of his culture while mystifying that others.

The colonized people will also be other than their pasts, which can be reclaimed but never reconstituted and must be revisited and realized in partial, fragmented ways.

Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance, as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry but with the haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of resisting: it is a two-edged sword. As well, the concepts of resistance carries with or can carry with its idea about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality, etc, which ideas may not have been held, or held in the same way, in the colonized culture's view of humankind.

On a simple political/cultural level, there are problems with the fact that to produce a literature which helps to reconstitute the identity of the colonized one may have to function in at the very least the means of production of the colonizers-the writing, publishing, advertizing, and production of books, for instance. These may well require a centralized economic and cultural system which is ultimately either a western import or hybrid form, uniting local conceptions with western conceptions.

The concepts of producing a national or cultural literature is in most cases a concept of foreign to the traditions of the colonized people, who had no literature as it is conceived in the western traditions or in fact no literature or writing at all, and did not see art as having the same function as constructing and defining cultural identity, and were, like the people of the West Indies, transported into a wholly different geographical/political/ economic/cultural world. (India, a partial exception, had a long established tradition of letters; on the other hand it was highly Balkanized sub-continent with little if any common identity and with many divergent sub-cultures). It is always a changed, a reclaimed but hybrid identity, which is created or called forth by the colonized' attempts to constitute and represent identity.

The very concept of nationality and identity may be difficult to conceive or convey in the cultural traditions of colonized people. There are complexities and perplexities around the difficulty of conceiving how a colonized country can reclaim or reconstitute its identity in a language that is now but was not its own language, and genres which are now but were not the genres of the colonized. One result is that the literature may be written in the style of speech of the inhabitants of a particular colonized people or area, which language use does not read like Standard English and in which literature the standard literary allusions and common metaphors and symbols may be inappropriate and/or may be replaced by allusions and tropes which are alien

to British culture and usage. It can become very difficult then for others to recognize or respect the work as literature.

Postcolonial studies critically analyses the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Hans Bertens in *Literary Theory: the Basics* (2001) talks about postcolonial studies as follows:

> What all postcolonial theorists and critics would agree on is that they are all engaged in a reassessment of traditional relationship between the metropolis and its colonial subjects and in the radical deconstruction either along poststructuralist or along more traditional lines of the imperialist perspective. They agree in their focus on colonial and (neo-colonial) oppression, on resistance to colonization, on the respective identities of colonizer and colonized, on patterns of interaction between those identities, on postcolonial migration to the metropolis, on cultural exchanges between colonizers and colonized, on the ensuing hybridity of both cultures, and so on and so forth. Central to these interests are issues of race and ethnicity, language. Gender, identity, class and above all, power. (202)

For Coetzee writing is clearly an answer to what he explains as his feelings of helplessness before the fact of suffering in the world. Coetzee's novels seem to replay the agony of his implications in apartheid. In this sense, then, his novels would seem to be manifestations of a melancholic or even masochistic repetition compulsion. At the same time, however, they are a mode of protesting this forced connection. They are thus minimal, highly qualified forms of action; as a mode of waiting for the end of apartheid, they too hand undecidedly between activity and passivity. (Coetzee 19)

South Africa after apartheid still provides horrors to be punished, though now the shoe is on the other foot. Whites, however innocent, can be the victims of black revenge. Coetzee's post –apartheid novel *Disgrace* (1999) is a pessimistic novel, in which any sort of pastoral possibility is placed under tremendous new strains, not least of which are the statistic exigencies or crisis that drive rural people to informal settlements and threaten to collapse the old distinctions of country and city. While it does revisit and rewrite some of the themes of the earlier (anti) pastoral novels. *Disgrace* is no longer concerned with clarification. The reversal of margin and center, or figure and ground, has become outmoded and unnecessary in the context of a wholesale reversal of roles and redefinition of social space. To quote Barnard in *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place,* "Petrus and the other black people are in the position of colonizer, and White people like David and his daughter Lucy are colonized" (10)

According to Robert, Mc Crum, in *The Guardian*:

> *Disgrace* addresses the complexities of black and white relations in the dying days of apartheid. As readers, we want our 'great nobels' to include as much as possible of experiences and to address the great issues of our time. The ominous drumbeat of race continues to reverberate through English and American Culture, in different ways. (para 18)

Further Rita Barnard, mentions in *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* that:

> The signs of apartheid still shape South African politics and society. Even though apartheid has legally ended, its legacy still haunts the country. Robbery and destruction visit frequently the countryside.

> Rape is a common occurrence. The outrage from a history of oppression and violence cannot be suppressed. The question of whether post-apartheid South Africa will in fact allow an untroubled pastoralism to emerge animates Coetzee's novel *Disgrace,* and the answer it seems to give is no. Even "not yet" seems too optimistic. The temporality of this work is no longer that of waiting, and its critical impulse is no longer anti-realist, meta-fictional, or deconstructive. A new era has arrived, and it is an era not just of political relation and land restitution (a reformed land Bank now resists black peasants to become landowners) but also of "revenge". (33)

The spatial scheme of *Disgrace* comprises shifts from Cape Town to the countryside and back. The protected life that David enjoyed changes metonymically into a rural area with unknown dangers. To avoid city and college life, David goes to his daughter's farm. When he is set on fire, his car stolen and his daughter raped, he realizes the dystopian vision of modern, post-apartheid South Africa. The attack provokes David to a stream of consciousness discourse. The opposition between country and city is upon the threshold of being effaced by the demographic demands of the new South Africa. "The country is coming to the city", Lurie thinks as he observes a child herding a cow in one of the proliferating squatter settlements on the fringes of Cape Town. "Soon there will be cattle again on the Rondebosch Common" (Coetzee 175). The time-honored associations attached to the terms "Country" and "City" are consequently destabilized: the idea of country as a place of moral simplicity, from which a critique of the city may be staged, is rendered untenable. Nor is it possible any longer to view the city as the locus of progress and the country as the locus of "backward, nostalgic glance" of the pastoral mode. The new black peasantry,

grasping and scheming, is efficient and modern "unlike Africa" in Lurie's stereotypical conception. Petrus with his land Bank grant and founder's ambitions savors the term "forward-looking". Most importantly, the old South Africans of "baas en Klaas", of "boys" doing the labor for white landowners have been abolished. Furthermore, Barnard states in *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* that:

> The notion of the country as refuge, moreover, is decisively challenged in the course of the novel: the crime that takes place on the farm to which Lurie retreats in *Disgrace* only plunges him further into that abject state. But it is not only the binary pair of country and city that is undermined in the novel: all established oppositions and boundaries seem to be under threat of collapse, especially the oppositions between stranger and kin, confounded as it is by the act of rape. (34-35)

Native and subaltern people, and especially women, were doubly or triply marginalized in South Africa. Since they were introduced as disadvantaged on the ground of gender, race, social class, cast sexuality and regional status. There are some examples of subaltern and marginalized women in Coetzee's *Disgrace,* Bev Shaw as dog keeper with low status in society, Melanie who is abused, and also Soraya who unwillingly work as prostitute. The colonial situation reveals itself through severance and broken relationship between parents and children and between males and females. Disrupted relationships are bleaker and subtler than Magda's in *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). In *Disgrace,* David is a predatory father; his wayward daughter Lucy is physically and ideologically distant from him; practically no links exist between his former wives; his weekly encounters with Soraya are almost professional; those with his student Melanie Isaacs verge on the pathetic; the rape of Lucy is tragic and brings

about further severance between father and daughter. Now, these characters have a metonymic function. The fact that David has sex with girls young enough to be his daughters is a subtle way of introducing the failure between the colonizer and the colonized. Further, Soraya and Melanie are black and dark respectively, recording a subliminal way of describing exploitative colonialism. Similar subalternity has been extensively employed by Coetzee. The deep flaw in relationships is seen through a case of white arrogance, objectification of natives, subalternity of women. Lack of communication is almost inherent in the characters. The objectified girls are silent whilst he boasts of a "strange love . . . from the quiver of Aphrodite" (Coetzee 25) and of the flame-god (Coetzee 166). The by owner Petrus is impenetrable. "Talking to Petrus is like punching a bag filled with sand" (Coetzee 153). Even Lucy cuts communication with her father when he tries to embrace her after the attack. "'My child, my child!' he says, holding out his arms to her. When she does not come, he puts aside his blanket, stands up, and takes her in his arms. In his embrace she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing" (Coetzee 99). Needless to say this amounts to the voicelessness of the colonized and to the deep chasm between blacks and whites, a recurrent theme in Coetzee. *Disgrace* further parallels the racial oppression of blacks in South Africa with the treatment and view of dogs in the country. This is illustrated in the discussion that Lucy has with David about the animals when he states, "as for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from 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" (Coetzee 74).

The struggle for power starts and anarchy is rife. Violence will repeat itself as sure as anything, but Lucy refuses to leave or prosecute the gang. Further, she refuses

abortion and accepts the child from the rape. While in the past she was the landowner and Petrus the sharecropper or bywoner, after the attack she gives her land to Petrus, lives on his land and becomes his subaltern third wife. The shift of power is complete. However, Lucy sees things on the personal plane. “It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. . . . Why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them”. . . Lurie’s point of view is on the social and historical plane. “It was history speaking to through them. A history of wrong. . . It may have seemed personal, but it was not. It came down from the ancestors” (Coetzee 156). It seems that she tries to reconcile the two opinions. Lucy reaches the conclusion that living in a “foreign” country, or rather, living in a country that till recently had been considered as a European homeland, without any qualms of conscience as regards to the fate of the natives, has a price. “What if . . . what if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors” (Coetzee 158). Lucy acknowledges that whites are on the debit side of the ledger and henceforth will live as “intruders” in South Africa. Land ownership has always been the great political and strategic support of European colonizers. Consequently, an initializing of the power shift occurs. A changeover may be seen in a metafictional interpretation of the novel: property and sex. At the beginning of the novel Lucy is a landowner, albeit a mere subsistence farmer; whilst Petrus is a former sharecropper, an ex-landless farmer. “Petrus is my new assistant. In fact, since March, co-proprietor” (Coetzee 62). Due to changes in government policy and to the fact that the wails of Kaffraria are gone, Petrus knows that a postcolonial/ post-apartheid era has begun. He celebrates this reversal of fortune by a big party. “Because of the land transfer, I would guess. It goes through officially on the first of the next month. It’s a big day for him” (Coetzee 124).

An overturning of power in sex is another emblem of the colonizer's downfall. At the start David finds the use of Soraya entirely satisfactory, or rather, an unquestioning and silent object to be had weekly. All of a sudden and without notice, the object transforms itself into a subject. The Negro prostitute shrills to him, "You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me here again, never" (Coetzee 10). The reaction of dark Melanie is subtler still since she destroys the college professor and dislocates him. Even though the displacement of a white man is a very distant echo of the displacement of thousands of Negroes in colonial times, it is a reversed metonym of one of the most important features in post-colonial literatures. It is now the white self that will be eroded by dislocation, non identity and non authenticity. Further, there seems to be a parallel between the "violence" of the predatory father alluring twenty-year-old Melanie and his daughter's rape in front of his very eyes. In colonial and apartheid time native South Africans had to suffer injustice and the indignity of compromise in order to stay alive. In the post apartheid era whites have no choice. Perhaps this is the chasm between Lucy and David and which harrows David's conscience. While Lucy feels that she has to come to terms with this situation if she is to be able to continue her chosen life, David still bluffs himself that moral principles may bring orderliness to human nature. Even though more difficult and outrageous for the lesbian and autonomous Lucy, her aim is the amnesias of the past and, above all, survival to carry on with life.

Post-apartheid literature comprises works written by South African authors, both black and white, in the last decade of the twentieth century and beyond. When the National Party took control of South Africa in 1948, the government enforced a strict code of racial segregation known as apartheid, which severely limited the freedoms of the nation's black citizens. The African National Congress (ANC)

remained virulently opposed to the apartheid and after they were banned by the South African government in 1960, the ANC proposed establishing a military wing to combat their prejudicial treatment. In 1964 the president of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, was arrested for treason and sentenced to life imprisonment. During his incarceration, Mandela became the defining figure of the anti-apartheid movement, attracting international sympathy for his plight. Due to massive unemployment a shrinking white minority, and international boycotts, the South African government began reassign their apartheid policies during the late 1980s. In 1989 F.W. de Klerk was elected as the new South African president, promising a non racist South Africa for the future. He lifted the country's ban of the ANC and released Mandela from prison in 1990. Together, Mandela and de Klerk negotiated the ending of South Africa's apartheid policies and drafted a new national constitution.

J.M. Coetzee had been instrumental in bringing world attention to the legacy of colonialism and the unjust apartheid laws in their native country. The end of apartheid, however, ushered in a new transitional stage for South African author. Ernest Dominic Cole quotes in his book, *Post-Apartheid and Its Representation: The Interregnum as Motif in Selected:*

> The concept of post 1994 literature of South Africa as post- apartheid makes possible the distinction between the literary periods of apartheid and post apartheid. In effect, the literature of South Africa that deals with oppression, resistance and liberation is labeled apartheid literature while literature of the 1990's and after, with its emphasis on integration and reconciliation, is the conceived of as post-apartheid literature. (3)

As author Andre Brink has commented, a post- apartheid literature "can no longer slip so easily into the silences previously imposed by the government. . ." (202) Writers who were once content to address polemic political themes in their prose are now challenged to explore original subject material and envision a new future for South African culture. Such authors are not confronted with the difficult task of neither ignoring nor dwelling in South Africa's racially-charged past. The end of apartheid witnessed the emergence of new social problems that writers have attempted to confront in their works. Post-apartheid writing is marked by an abrupt shift away from a racial focus towards a wider concern with all the many and various dimensions of human existence, In the novel *Disgrace*, after Lucy traps herself into the bathroom, David trickled down water on his back to wash off the ash and speaks to himself:

> It happens every day. Every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a dogna with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy. (98)

South African texts published after the first democratic elections in 1994 are commonly referred to as post-apartheid literature because, despite the lingering after effects of the former political system, this event marked the eradication of legalized racial segregation. The key element in the classification of South African literature is no longer racial difference but the language used by writers. Whereas during the apartheid era we spoke simply 'black' or 'white' literature, now we refer to South African literature as Zulu literature of Afrikaans of Xhosa of English.

This major political shift prompted many questions in the minds of critics and commentators on South African writing. Some predicted the disappearance of many committed writers who used to denounce political oppression in their texts. Others again wondered whether South African writers would be able to adjust their writing to the new political climate, since the end of racial oppression implies liberation from the old racial discourse.

The sudden socio-political mutations that took place subsequent to the demise of apartheid were one manifestation of the transitional phase of a transforming society. In the South African political context, 'the transition' has come to mean the period running from the late 1980s to the first democratic elections in 1994. Within this historical timeframe the apartheid regime and the anti-apartheid activities embarked on political negotiations in order not only to liberate all political prisoners but also to construct a new political system based on respect for democratic values and human rights. Political turmoil in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War were the main factors that increased internal and external pressure on the oppressive political system.

The early years of democracy were characterized by a new form of writing called 'honeymoon literature' or 'the literature of celebration'. The most striking feature of honeymoon literature is its overriding tendency to praise the miraculous materialization of the so-called multiracial 'rainbow nation'. This emphasis on describing the feeling of euphoria was more dominant in poetry and drama. Authors such as Athol Fugard and Mongeni Ngema are well known for their obsession with this form of writing. In fact, honeymoon literature basically took up the themes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by highlighting the importance of

confronting the truth about the traumatic past in order to promote forgiveness and reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of violence.

However, South African literature has subsequently taken a path similar to that followed by post-colonial authors in African states that gained their independence in the 1960s. The representation of euphoria has quickly been replaced by a feeling of disillusionment as the past continues to haunt people's everyday lives.

Many post-apartheid texts are still influenced by apartheid era writing, which is to say they can be characterized by three dominant tendencies: an obvious interest in political issues, resistance to oppression and the obsessive reference to race. The well known South African critic, Lewis Nkosi for example, acknowledges that the apartheid inheritance continues to influence the thematic choices of South African writers. Nkosi explains that:

> While some black writers remain somewhat stunned by the sudden change, another category of white writers suddenly quite numerous see the end of apartheid as the occasion for inventing black villains whose function is to serve as pawns in a game in which roles are suddenly, conveniently, revised. (253)

In fact, one can identify two dominant approaches in post 1994 literature; the presence of certain striking features of apartheid writing and the emergence of new ways of writing that are free from ideological determinism ideological determinism of the past.

The allusion to a South African 'literature of the transition' should not be taken to refer simply to South African literature produced during the period of political transition. Rather, it refers to a transitional phase in South African literature itself. In fact, despite socio-political transformations, the effects of apartheid have not

totally disappeared from South African fiction. In other words, when we refer to post apartheid writing in its transitional phase, we mean the unpredictable ongoing change in the new literature emanating from South Africa. In fact, the nuance between literature of transition and literature in transition is based on the dynamic aspect of change. Bohemer's formulation seems to be more appropriate as an adequate description of the characteristics of post struggle literature. The first phrase is potentially confusing as it refers to a particular period of South African history, while 'literature in transition' emphasizes the ongoing nature of change.

The dominant characteristic of the transitional phase of post apartheid literature are the persistent presence of apartheid features in post liberation writing and the sudden change of perspective in the representation of contemporary social phenomena.

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) address the rape issue, still a dominant preoccupation in public debate. However, these three authors all present the topic of rape with apartheid- era racial determinism, in which the villains stand on the other side of a racial boundary. Their description of race in South African society is still bound up with stereotypical representations. The first two novels depict black women victim and black men as perpetrators. In the novel *Disgrace,* the main characters David and Lucy suffer from black and they fear of being white, David says to Petrus:

> Do you know Petrus, I find it hard to believe the men who came here were strangers. I find it hard to believe they arrived out of nowhere and did what they did and disappeared afterwards like ghosts. And I find it hard to believe that the reason they picked on us was simply that we were the first white folk they met that day. (Coetzee118)

Despite the lingering remnants of the past in post apartheid literature, we can still observe a great demarcation from the traditional portrayal of racial difference. Zakes Mda, for instance, in his novel *Ways of Dying* (1994), exposes political atrocities of the pre 1994 elections. The author is particularly outraged at the bloodshed that was the result of political skirmishes between ANC loyalists and the Inkata Movement. Mda's criticism of black-on-black violence indicates a sudden shift away from a traditional perspective on the political struggle. One might also argue that post apartheid euphoria turned out to be ephemeral because it was replaced by mourning for the victims of the present. Mda notes many ways of dying arising from political instability of the transition period. Mda seems to suggest that since apartheid has been officially defeated writers should start addressing the issues of the present social realities rather than those of the past. In a similar vein, the critic Sten Pultz Moslund investigates the impact of history on cotemporary textd by looking at major changes occurring in post liberation literature. In anticipation of the new dawn, South African publishers of literature were preoccupied in the first half of the 1990s with the celebration of a break with the past, realizing anthologies that would supposedly capture the New South African fictional strands.

The aftermath of apartheid has brought about new problems in society. The South African poet and critic Andries Oliphant predicted that post apartheid writing would have many possibilities ranging from ecologically sensitive to gender conscious literature as well as cannibalized forms of literature. In fact, in the newly democratized South Africa, literature is no longer confined to the representation of the politicized racial environment. It has started to look at new aspects of power distribution and social relations. Post liberation writing has shifted from the representation of racial division to that of class difference, reflecting the new social

fabric. In fact writers have become interested in class relationships rather than race since the black empowerment policy (affirmative action) began to help black people join the circle of the white bourgeoisie, while the poor comprise both races even though blacks still dominate this group.

A common feature in post –apartheid literature is a concern with nation building projects. Authors explores the possibility of reassessing past identities in order to construct a new national identity based on a trans-cultural perspective. The representation of the present state of civil society puts individuals rather than politics in the centre, even though the interaction between the private and public sphere persists. One can identify a thematic change in much post-apartheid literature. In fact, South African texts published after 1994 are increasingly preoccupied with certain emerging issues that can identify by providing example of texts dealing with each social problem facing the new South Africa. Though they are still concerned with political and racial issues in South African society, post –apartheid writers have focused on such contemporary issues as violence, crime, homosexuality, and the spread of the AIDS virus in continental Africa. Additionally, their works offer meditations on poverty and unemployment, Western-influenced materialism, the task of building a national identity, and socio-cultural changes in the South African population.

Nowadays, many writers have adopted Njabulo Ndebele's approach of "rediscovering the ordinary", which implies leaving behind the propagandist form of writing in order to discern the individual within society. Andre Bring reckons that the techniques of magical realism-juxtaposing the fantastic and the real is a fitting feature of African story-telling. Mandla Langa also suggests that there is a need for writers to explore the folklore, myths and legends of South Africa as part of a new aesthetics.

Post-apartheid literature is still in transition because the past still impacts on the new South Africa. However, significant changes are taking place in the thematic and an aesthetic aspect of post apartheid literature. Thus, we can argue that post liberation fiction has embarked on a journey towards the new horizons offered by various new pressing issues. Despite the long history if racial segregation; race is less and less the principal preoccupation of writers. By dealing with the present issues of their society, writers attempt to transcend race.

Disgrace finds an honored place within the genre of post apartheid literature. While both black and white authors, such as Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton and J.M Coetzee himself, played a major role in bringing apartheid to global attention to the condition of South Africa after apartheid as well. What distinguishes post apartheid literature from apartheid literature is primarily its thematic focus. Although race is a current throughout these works, post apartheid literature foregrounds the themes of poverty, crime, bloodshed, homosexuality, and the AIDS epidemic. Although abroad *Disgrace* was applauded for its brutal honesty, South Africa' political realm was not as receptive. The book sparked debate in parliament. Many members of the ruling party, the African National Congress, felt the book portrayed South Africa in too pessimistic light. In his sober, searing and even cynical book "*Disgrace*", J.M. Coetzee tells us something we all suspect and fear that political change can do almost nothing to eliminate human misery. What it can do, he suggests is reordering it a little and half accidently introducing a few new varieties. This view should not surprise any of the great South African novel, political and historical forces blow through the lives of individuals like nasty weather systems, bringing with them a destruction that is all the more cruel for being impersonal. According to Andrew O'Hehir, Salon;

> *Disgrace* is Coetzee's first book to deal explicitly with post apartheid South Africa, and the picture it paints is a cheerless one that will comfort no one, no matter what race, nationality of viewpoint… There is something fundamentally cryptic and unsummarizable about *Disgrace*, but I read it as an almost metaphysical journey from Romantic variety of love to the harsher, leaner strain David eventually learns from life on and around Lucy's farm. (para 11)

Disgrace was written after 1995, when the new constitution for South Africa was passed. This constitution gave men and women equal rights. The constitution also gave equal rights regardless of sexual orientation (a fact very relevant to Lucy in the book). The African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party, was one of the most prominent anti apartheid movement led by Nelson Mandela. In 1994, Mandela won by a landslide to become the first President of South Africa. Post apartheid South Africa was by no means idyllic, however. Violence increased significantly in the country. Incidents of car hijackings escalated, and many commercial farmers either emigrated or gave up farming because of violence committed against them. From 1989 to 1994 the murder rate doubled, and a young South African woman could be expected to be raped twice in her lifetime on average. The changing landscape encouraged many of the wealthier South Africans, particularly in Johannesburg, to move into gated communities . In a book a man is broken down almost to nothing before he finds some tiny measure of redemption in his forced acceptance of the realities of life and death. But Professor David Lurie, the protagonist of *Disgrace,* has farther to fall than unsophisticated Cape Town gardener. And the clarity David comes to at the end grows largely from his accepting an ever increasing portion of pain. "One gets used to things getting harder; one ceases to be surprised that what used to

be as hard as hard as hard can be grows harder yet," (Coetzee 219). That sentence also describes Coetzee's notion of life in the new South Africa, where, as he portrays it, brutal tyranny has been replaced by brutal anarchy.

A middle aged, divorced scholar of Romantic poetry, David would have undoubtedly been a pathetic figure under the old regime-one imagines an ineffectual white liberal teaching Wordsworth to bored Afrikaners while largely ignoring the atrocities perpetrated in his name. But in the Mandela era, David has become a victim of "the great rationalization": His University has been remade into a technical college, and he teaches courses in "communication skills" that he finds nonsensical. He is such a nonentity that the prostitute he patronizes weekly and for whom he has begun buying gifts, stops receiving him, He imagines her and her colleagues shuddering over him as one shudders at a cockroach in a washbasin in the middle of the night and wonders if he can ask his doctor to castrate him as one neuter a domestic animal.

This is the first of the many comparisons of human and animal existence in *Disgrace.* Coetzee has always placed his character in extreme situations that compel them to explore what it means to be human and before this novel is over, David must endure both psychological abasement and physical torment. But Coetzee has never before asked so clearly what it is not to be human. Later, in the novel, after David has fallen into disgrace and fled Cape Town for his daughter Lucy's remote farm, she tells him, "This is the only life there is, which we share with animals" (Coetzee 74).

Coetzee basically uses two incidents to point out situation in the post apartheid South Africa; the sexual harassment case posed against David Lurie and the tragic gang rape of Lucy. He induces one of his students into a disgraceful sexual affair not expecting the possible outcome of the act. Giving a big blow to his belief that the student will keep the affair a secret, she (Melanie) raises her voice against Lurie and

claims justice. On other hand, his own daughter refuses from even filing a complaint against the gang rape that she faces fearing possible future troubles and not having faith in the justice of the new political/social system. This is also where Coetzee has shown the gradual shift of power in post apartheid South Africa. Lucy is firm in staying back and she never estranged herself from the identity of being a white and a South African. This commingling of identities points to her ably negotiating the post-apartheid, post-colonial and post-historical power structures which to Lurie's viewpoint stand absurd and abstruse. The fissure between the father and the daughter deepens at Lucy's resolution to bear the pregnancy and her wishful submission as wife to Petrus in which she devoutly aspire her security. Lucy tells her father:

> 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. (Coetzee 203)

Lucy resolving to marry Petrus shows the drastic assimilative moves of the power structures of South Africa whose identity is no longer immune to the racial code but sheerly exists in a state of true hybridity alongside a plethora of post-apartheid identities

David is shaken by his daughter's self-dispossession after the incident, the more so because he, too, has very few resources left. His relationship with Lucy is breaking down. He realises that he will never finish his opera about Byron, which appears more and more irrelevant in the South African context. His face has been destroyed, signalling the end of his sexual identity. No longer attractive, and equipped by the rape with a sickening new appreciation of the ways in which women can be

used by men, he submits to a self-abasement not unlike that of his daughter by having a relationship with Bev Shaw, whom he does not desire. He also submits completely to the work at the animal clinic, where he puts down unwanted and homeless dogs, becoming emotionally attached to one crippled dog in particular. The final scene of the novel shows Lurie about to surrender this dog, bearing it 'like a lamb' to the killing table.

If David is reduced at times almost to an animal existence and finally to becoming a caretaker for dying animals, it is the mendacity of language that leads him there. Towards the end of the story, he reflects that the language he and others use has become tired, friable, and eaten from inside as if by termites and that he, an expert practitioner, is also hollow, like a fly-casing in a spider web. When he is hauled before an academic tribunal after a misbegotten affair with a student, he refuses to defend himself against the charges of sexual harassment. At first he resists the spectacle of public prurience and sentiment the committee expects. When he finally blurts out an apology, members of tribunal refuse to be satisfied, demanding to know whether it reflects his sincere feeling coming from his heart.

Coetzee seems to be attacking the New Age tyranny of therapeutic discourse here, but David's own language does not seem much more trustworthy. He rashly tells his judges that his liaison with the pretty and almost totally passive Melanie transformed him, if only briefly: "I was no longer a fifty two year old divorce at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros." (Coetzee 52) Readers may well be repelled by David's arrogance and his conduct with Melanie has fallen only a little short of rape. But judging him is not a simple matter. He is a student of Romanticism whose unrealized ambition is to write a chamber opera about Byron's life in Italy. No matter how little of our sympathy David may command, he has a point: If he genuinely

believed his passion for Melanie was the real thing, the flame he had been waiting his whole life to feel, then how could he not pursue her avidly?

There is something fundamentally cryptic and unable to summarize about *Disgrace,* as an almost metaphysical journey from his Romantic variety of love to the harsher, leaner strain David eventually learns from life on and around Lucy's farm. In Coetzee's fiction the stark and beautiful South African countryside has always played a half allegorical role a both a destructive and a regenerative environment. He certainly can not be accused of sentimentalizing rural life; shortly after David goes to live with Lucy, a stolid lesbian who, like him, seems to have been abandoned by the world, they become victims of a vicious criminal assault that may not be as random as it first appears. Their relations with Petrus, the African farmer who is their nearest neighbor, becoming increasingly troubled and ambiguous. David volunteers to work for Bev, a friend of Lucy's who runs a local veterinary clinic, and comes to realize that Bev's primary role, in this impoverished land, is not to heal animals but to kill them with as much love and mercy as she can summon.

In the wake of the outrages committed against him and his daughter, David still struggles with language. His angry demands for justice get no response from the overstretched police, and his attempt to confront one of the assailants whom Petrus is apparently protecting produce only stony silences and bald-faced lies. Lucy seems to understand what David cannot: that to live where she lives she must tolerate brutalization and humiliation and simply keep going. "Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept," she tells her father. "To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. Like a dog." (Coetzee 205) If David actually reclaims some dignity by the end of *Disgrace,* it is only because he gives up everything, gives up more than a dog ever

could-his daughter, his ideas about justice and language, his dream of the opera on Byron and even the dying animals he has learned to love without reservations, without thought of himself. Lurie, a white South African professor, who was at first in a position where he could benefit from all the sovereignty that his skin color and profession entitle him within the social structure of apartheid, gradually loses everything after the political change in the country.

III. White Submissiveness and Search of Redemption in *Disgrace*

In many ways, *Disgrace* is a story about powerful and powerless. Initially, when whites were the center of power during colonial and apartheid period in South Africa, they had hold over the all the aspects of life, like, social, economical, political etc. The African population during apartheid seemed to live in the desert, because the oppressive legislation that was created meant that restrictions were imposed upon them. Moreover, they were denied access to assets that are indispensable to improving their living conditions. They could not voice out their concerns, raise issues that affect their livelihood, because such issues were deliberately exacerbated to punish them further. Not only was that, the oppression from whites extended even further to the rape and murder of the black. Blacks were treated not as fellow human beings but simply as objects of possessions. Blacks were treated as merely an animal.

After the abolition of apartheid system in 1994, the scenario changes. Now, the power goes on the hands of blacks. Blacks start taking revenge of the traumas that they faced in the past. They took over the land that the whites had captured before. The blacks started taking revenge in the forms of robbery, murder, rape and other forms of crimes.

Some whites, basically those who were religious and who were aware of the misdeeds done to the blacks during the apartheid period, felt that they had committed a sin. Therefore, they stared believing that they have been getting the fruit from the tree they had planted in the past. The whites after the end of apartheid accepted the torments as result of their past deeds, a way of redemption.

Disgrace captures that guilt of whites. David and his daughter, Lucy Lurie are the representative characters.

Lucy believes that whatever happened to her is the price that she has to pay for living in the country she is currently living in. She has the feeling that she does not originally belong to the place but is only a momentary guest there. The blacks are the original owner of the place and so she has to pay the price to the blacks for using their land. Therefore, she accepts all that has befallen upon her. She never makes any complaints against the culprits and tries to continue has life as normal as she can.

The rape has made her confront the consequences of the apartheid and this completely undermines the enlightenment doctrines of instrumental rationality and progress. When Lurie accuses her in ironic terms for acceptance of suffering in the present to compensate for the misdeeds of the past, Lucy's response is striking. She answers that her father is misleading her and she has every right to live her life as per her wish.

The changing power status of another character, Petrus is also significant. He used to be only the caretaker of her farm, a dogman in the beginning. Gradually he becomes the co-owner of the land and finally marries her.

The submissiveness of Lucy towards her black neighours, especially to Petrus, is suggestive to the fact that she wants security. She wants to belong to somewhere. She wants to continue living.

Similarly, there has been significant change in the thinking and attitude of David Lurie. His perspective towards women, animal and life itself changes by the end of the novel. The established white male had dominated South African social and political spheres for so long that he had understood his own position as one that almost existed beyond change. In David Lurie's case, his means of communication included patterns of recognition where change was not needed. From being a professor of communication, David is forced to change to becoming a student of it,

seeking new and effective ways to communicate the new realities that besiege him. Over the course of the novel, he is forced to accept that there is change both outside of him and inside his own sense of self. He is forced to accept his own "disgrace," in that he is not the embodiment of Byronic womanizing with which he might have viewed himself. Additionally, he is compelled to understand that his own position in the white male reservoir of power is something that has undergone change as the fabric and landscape of South Africa changes. David is forced to accept the change that happens when one becomes victimized and is unable to fully grasp or understand the extent of the victimization. When Lucy contends that he will never understand what happened, it is a signal to change that reflects how much the dynamic within which he lives has changed and how he must adapt to that. In that, David Lurie exemplifies change on multiple levels.

Tragedy, change and redemption are three defining attributes that can be applied to David Lurie. He also becomes sympathetic towards animals and compares himself with one. His views towards women also change. In the beginning he considers women only as a means of physical pleasure and maintains disgraceful physical relationship with many women including a student as well. He never regrets on what he had done to the women. But later on, towards the end of the novel, the course of events in his life forces him towards the realization of the wrong doings. He realizes that he had broken many hearts, has always been selfish. He feels guilty and asks for pardon with his ex wife and with Melanie’s father.

In this manner, Lucy's submissiveness and silent acceptance of the violence done upon her and David's changing attitude towards women, animals and life in a whole, are supportive to the idea that J. M. Coetzee has explored the individual guilt

and collective memories of the history of oppression in apartheid and colonial South Africa and the yearning of the whites for redemption.

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