

Power and Gender Relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa as Reflected in J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace

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Abstract

South Africa is one of African countries which experienced a unique form of colonialism. The country had been suffering under foreign conquest and internal colonization. Apartheid, one of the most brutal policies of racial segregation in the world had a tremendous impact on the life of the citizens of that country. Despite the nonviolence strategy of Nelson Mandela's first elected government, the citizens of the country were finding it difficult to get used to the post-apartheid social order. South African writers like their companions across the continent could hardly ignore this intriguing historical reality of their country. The well-known novelist, J. M. Coetzee, hence, vividly depicts the post-apartheid condition in the country in his much acclaimed novel, *Disgrace*. This paper focuses on examining power and gender relations in the aforementioned novel. As a literary enquiry, it employed textual or document analysis as a method. Based on this, a number of power relations and the nature of gender based relation among the characters is identified and elaborated in the study. Accordingly, racial, colonial, patriarchal, professional, institutional and cultural power relations are identified among the central characters of the novel. The impact of gender based power relation strengthened by conjoined forces of patriarchy and colonialism was also examined in the study. The suppression and denigration native South Africans suffered and the sexual assault women of both race experienced was vividly portrayed in the novel and carefully examined in the study.

Key Words: Power relations, gender, South Africa, Post-Apartheid, Coetzee

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Colonialism and patriarchy, as two interwoven systems, have created hierarchical power relations among people in post-colonial countries. Most African countries have been under the yoke of colonialism and suffering imposed power relations. Women in these territories were particularly under double burden since patriarchal gender stereotypes were also at work in addition to colonialism. Though political independence was achieved in all colonized nations, it was difficult to do away these long established power and gender relations in these countries.

Colonialism, by its very nature, being a system of societal stratification, had left the territories it has ravaged with a strong legacy of power relations. The colonizer had always claimed superiority over the colonized and it was difficult to create human to human relationship based on equality in these communities. Power relations created by indelible imperial policies during the colonial era were sources of conflict in several settler colonies in Africa after independence. South Africa which suffered the racial segregation policy of Apartheid is one these African countries with unique colonial experience. The citizens of the country already divided along racial lines were finding it difficult to adapt to the new social order in their country after official termination of Apartheid.

Women in colonized countries were under double tyranny, one from the imperial power and another from the patriarchal society. They were forced to remain submissive under unbearable conditions of physical and psychological abuse. Many have suffered sexual abuse and denied the right of property ownership merely because they were women. The situation turns rather worse during periods of political turmoil as is the case in South Africa during the end of Apartheid. As a result, power and gender relations have become prominent areas of query in post-colonial literary study. This paper focuses on examining how these issues of power and gender relations are depicted in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* in the post-apartheid South Africa.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most African countries were (and are still continuing to suffer) under western imperial hegemony. Africans and other colonized nations across the globe have of course earned the much envisioned political independence in the 1960s. The legacies of colonialism such as unequal power relationships among citizens and stereotypical gender relations, nevertheless, could never be done away easily. The struggle for economic and cultural egalitarianism was particularly intense in settler colonies where the colonizer and colonized continued to co-exist. It was not easy to adapt to the new power relations between the white settlers and the black natives in territories like South Africa.

The previously dominant settlers were finding it difficult to accept the disgrace that befall on them and adjust to the new social order to be based on equality. The subjugated who were quick in throwing away the yoke of colonialism and affirm their independence were also getting violent towards their settler African counterparts. This was perpetuating the stereotypical designations attached to the natives and the nation at large by the West and putting the country back into a state of chaos. South African black and white writers who could not remain indifferent to this captivating historical reality of their country were voicing their concerns through their diverse literary works.

J. M. Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace*, published a couple years after the end of Apartheid, is one of these works supposed to reflect on the post-Apartheid realities of South Africa. How the long established power relations based on racial and gender lines between the citizens of the nation is brought to challenge will be examined in this paper. A critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse in such countries helps us to learn much from the real dramas experienced by people in this part of the world.

1.3 Objective of the Study

General Objective:

The general objective of this study is to examine power and gender relations in J. M. Coetzee's post-apartheid novel, *Disgrace*.

Specific Objectives:

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- point out the power relations between White Afrikaners and black South Africans;
- depict gender relations among people of the same and different races;
- show the trend the shift in power relations was taking in post-apartheid South Africa; and
- depict any change in the stereotypical role attributed to women and girls.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Writers are the spokespersons of their respective societies. Despite the Western dictum 'art for art's sake', literary works document the social, political, economic and cultural life of their people. Writers in post-colonial contexts especially cannot head to ignore the dramas of human suffering due to unequal power relationship in these areas.

Power relations and gender issues are becoming important aspects of literary study in the modern world. The level of our civilization ultimately rests on how we treat each other within our respective power hierarchies and our attitude towards the position of women.

Literary works explicitly or implicitly reflect prevailing and upcoming power relations within their respective societies and the stereotypical roles ascribed to members of each sex. Examining how literary works depict power relations among diverse group of persons helps to find out the political realities of the society and suggest solutions for pervading problems.

As writers are the mouthpieces of the realities in their society, it is up to literary scholars to study the works and indicate the concerns echoed through the works. This paper, which intended to examine power and gender relations in J.M. Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace*, would play a tremendous role in revealing the realities of South Africa which experienced a unique (form of external and internal) colonialism.

II. Review Of Literature

2.1 Colonialism and Power Relation

Colonialism as “a system of political, economic, and cultural domination forcibly imposed by technologically advanced foreign minority on an indigenous majority” implies a clearly delineated power relation between the colonizer and the colonized (Gellar 1995, 140). As Diler and Emir (2015) further elaborate, under colonialism, the dominant groups employ their supreme power and domination over the colonized people through the medium of exploitation, degradation and torture. Hence, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is the relation of domination. The sole purpose of the colonizers was to keep the colonized subjects under their control. As Pakzad explains, the rationale for perpetrating such inequality of power is that the inferiority that is attributed to the east [colonized] simultaneously serves to construct the superiority of the west [the colonizer] (2010). The construction of an inferior other in colonizing discourses normalized the superiority of the colonizing power (Howard-Wagner, 2007).

As revealed in Edward Said's seminal post-colonial theory ‘Orientalism’, the fabricated bifurcation into occident-orient, center periphery, self-other, etc. by the west and labeling of the other in derogatory terms is a common phenomenon. They [people out of the eastern camp] are, for instance, described as people driven by emotions rather than logic along with characteristics such as cruelty, decadence, laziness and sensuality (Hassel, 2013). Colonial based power relations and such denigration of the colonized are very common in post-colonial literary works. Achebe, for example, notes that the novel [*Heart of Darkness*] portrays Africans as a pre-historic mass of frenzied, howling, incomprehensible barbarians..." (Tyson 374-375).

2.2 Race and Power Relations

One of the evils of colonialism is its legacy of racial segregation and implantation of race based power relations. In most colonial contexts, white colonizers were dominant over the indigenous (black) populations. The situation was worse in settler colonies where the colonizers and colonized continued to live together. Race based power relations were intense in such contexts such as South Africa. In relation to racist problems Ashcroft et al. states that “in colonies where the subject people were of a different race, or where minority indigenous peoples existed, the ideology of race was a crucial part of the construction and naturalization of an unequal form of intercultural relations” (2000: 46).

2.3 Gender and Power Relations

Women in traditional societies are easy targets of a number of systems in the society. Patriarchy, strongly embedded in culture, for example, plays a significant role to legitimize perceptions that render male dominance. According to Luo, patriarchy is a system for maintaining class, gender, racial, and heterosexual privilege and the status quo of power – relying both on crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like laws; to perpetuate inequality (2007). Any form of resistance against this unequal relationship results in further violation of women's right as going against the status quo is highly disapproved by tradition. ‘The historical nature of gender-based violence confirms that it is not an unfortunate aberration but systematically entrenched in culture and society, reinforced and powered by patriarchy’ (Luo, 2007).

In post-colonial societies, gender based power relations are rejuvenated by colonialism, a system which upholds hierarchical power relations between men and women as it does between members of different races. Postcolonial feminists argue that colonial legacies are central to the forms of gendered oppression prevailing today (Salem, 2019). Women were not merely undermined and pushed aside to the periphery in these contexts. They were harshly exposed to different apparatuses to keep them subdued. According to Nasir (2019) that is what makes men in these contexts more adept at using power over women.

2.3.1 Gender-based Violence against Women

Unequal power relationship between men and women expose the vulnerable to a number of unjust brutalities. Women for example are subjected to sexual and other forms of abuse by men who want to ascertain and sustain their superiority. According to Johnson (2005) men who hold positions of authority exert control through the use and threat of violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against women and girls (VAWG), according to World Health Organization (WHO), is a global pandemic that affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. These might manifest itself in different forms such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence (Le May, 2018). One characteristic of gender-based violence, according to *World Bank Group* brief, is that it knows no social or economic boundaries and affects women and girls of all socio-economic backgrounds (2019). In colonial contexts, as Sokoloff and Dupont point out, native women experience violence more frequently than non-native women (Qtd in Le May, 2018).

2.3.2 Gender Based Violence in Colonial Contexts

Under colonialism all women were not accorded equal right of protection from sexual abuse and other forms violence against them. In the colonial worldview, only “clean” and “pure” bodies deserve to be protected from violence. Violence done to “dirty” or “impure” bodies simply does not count (Schertow, 2006). As Schertow notes, prostitutes, for example, were denied protection due to such an assumption. The same was true about the fate of black women in colonial contexts. The myth that black women were vessels for sexual desire were used to justify enslavement, rape, forced reproduction, and other forms of sexual coercion (Rajnauth, 2017).

2.4 Colonization in South Africa

South Africa is one of African countries with unique colonial experience. According to Oliver and Oliver (2017), the country experienced a colonization process that can be divided into three categories, namely an 'unofficial colonization', two 'official colorizations' and lastly an 'internal colonization'.

For about 2000 years, the country was under an unofficial colonization by the black people groups from the north. This colonization was ended in 1880 when the country was divided into four polities, two being ruled by the British and two by the Afrikaners. Then the country falls under the first official colonization from the south by the Dutch VOC. This colonization came to an end when Britain finally took the country from the Netherlands in 1806. This official colonization of the country by Great Britain came to an end when the country became a Republic in 1961. The internal colonization of the country by the white Afrikaners, nevertheless ended in 1994 when the country became a Democracy (Oliver and Oliver 2017).

2.4.1 Apartheid

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word that means "separation." It is the name given to the particular racial-social ideology developed in South Africa during the twentieth century (Thompson, 2018). Apartheid is a racial segregation and white supremacy policy which led to the political and economic discrimination of South Africans.

2.5 Postcolonial Literature

The popular definition describes ‘Postcolonial literature’ as the literature of people from formerly colonized countries. As Ashcroft et al define in a bit technical way, postcolonial literature is writing which has been “affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 2). Colonialism is not only a system of economic domination. It has fabricated so many lies about its subjects who had no voice under the oppressive regime. To give expression to colonized experience, post-colonial writers, hence, sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization - the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination (Mishra, 2013:130).

In most colonial discourses, the colonizers are portrayed as civilized, superior beings who are burdened to shoulder the civilizing mission of the backward, inferior colonized subjects. Post-colonial writing and criticism is set out to critically and subversively scrutinize such colonial power relationship. Post-colonialism seeks to emancipate those living under colonial oppression, give them voice, and challenge discourses and structures that maintain its power (Larsen, 2000).

2.6 Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Literature in South Africa

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 (Ibinga, 2008). During the final years of the Apartheid era and subsequent transition to democracy, South African writers responded to the ever-present political turmoil and its daily effects on the people of that country (Bahri, 2014). The end of apartheid witnessed the emergence of new social problems that writers have attempted to confront in their works. South African writers have dealt with economic problems in diverse ways, and looked back at the pernicious legacy of apartheid which still haunts the country. As Ibinga summarizes, many post-apartheid texts are influenced by apartheid-era writing, which are characterized by three dominant tendencies: an obvious interest in political issues, resistance to oppression and the obsessive reference to race (2008).

The 2003 Nobel Prize winner, John M. Coetzee, for example, has been dealing with such politically charged issues in his new rainbow nation.

III. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Post-colonialism

Postcolonial studies analyze the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized people and tries to show the dominance of the colonizer over the colonized people not only in political, but also in social, cultural, and psychological aspects of life. Post-colonialism is of course by itself a cocktail of theories from diverse areas of enquiry. As illustrated by Pakzad (2010), it is strongly influenced by literary theories like deconstruction, feminism, Foucault's notion of power, and ideology in Marxism. Being enriched by these multitude of theories, it focuses on examining power relations in the colonial world.

With regard to power relation between the colonizer and the colonized, Edward Said's *Orientalism* notes that 'the inferiority that is attributed to the east simultaneously serves to construct the west's superiority' (1978). Using this theoretical frame, how the literary work under investigation upholds or subverts such attributed qualities can be examined. *Disgrace*, by J.M. Coetzee, is novel written in South Africa, a nation which experienced one of the complex kinds of colonial experience. Hence, as it would be futile to try to understand the work without regard to colonialism and its imminent realities, postcolonial theory is used as a major theoretical framework in this study. As Chitwan (2014), notes *Disgrace* exhibits the impact of western imperialism and its subsequent dissolution in South Africa and fits well into the postcolonial framework.

3.2 Feminism

One of the key objectives in this paper is to depict gender based power relations in the novel under investigation. The status of women in post-colonial contexts has been under jeopardy by host factors. They have been victims of foreign domination not to mention local cultural burdens. Marginalized and metaphorically 'colonized', women in many cultures share with the colonized races an experience of oppression and voicelessness. Viewing such an abject state of women in the postcolonial paradigm, Spivak believes that women have experienced double repression under the conjoined forces of patriarchy and colonialism (1988).

Hence, feminism, which like Marxism and post colonialism, invalidates unjust power relationships, is used as a theoretical framework in this study. Feminists having an oppositional stance started questioning their inferior status and asked for enhancement in their position in the society. As such they call for justice and equal opportunities for females (Mishra, 2013:130).

Theoreticians that follow feminist approach recognize that literature both reflects and shapes stereotypes and other cultural assumptions. Thus, feminist literary criticism examines how works of literature embody patriarchal attitudes or undercut them, sometimes both happening within the same work (Napikoski, 2020).

As it is primarily concerned with deplorable plight of women in postcolonial environment (Mishra, 2013:133), particularly, postcolonial feminism was used in this study. In addition to gender based discrimination, how other systems of power distribution such as race function in the novel was given due consideration. As Imene (2015), in her study entitled '*Writing Post-Apartheid South Africa: Rape, Sexism and Masculinity in J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace*' verifies, (postcolonial) feminism could be a viable approach for exploration of the novel from a different angle.

IV. Data Presentation And Analysis

4.1 About the Author

John Maxwell Coetzee (born 9 February 1940) is a South African-born novelist, essayist, linguist and translator. Coetzee has received numerous awards throughout his career. Coetzee was the first writer to be awarded the Booker Prize twice: for *Life & Times of Michael K* in 1983, and for *Disgrace* in 1999. In 2003 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is one of the most critically acclaimed and decorated authors in the English language.

J. M. Coetzee is noted for his novels about the effects of colonization. He explores the implications of oppressive societies on the lives of their inhabitants, often using his native South Africa as a backdrop.

4.1.1 J.M. Coetzee's Works

Coetzee's first novel was *Dusklands* (1974) and he has continued to publish a novel about every three years. They include *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Time of Michael K.* (1983), *Disgrace* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), etc. He has also written autobiographical novels, short fiction, translations from Dutch and Afrikaans, and numerous essays and works of criticism.

As a successful novelist and linguist, Coetzee is sensitive and faithful to the colonial history of his native country. This sensitivity has led Coetzee to talk about the universal struggle between the oppressed and oppressor as a main thematic perspective in his narratives. In postcolonial writing, he justifies the position of the other by revealing the damaged and deformed South African life under apartheid (Diler and Emir, 2015).

4.2 Synopsis of the Novel

The story of the novel follows David Lurie, a middle-aged caucasian professor, who disgraces himself by having an affair with a beautiful but much younger female student. The scandal forces him to take a leave of absence and he uses the opportunity to visit his daughter, Lucy in the rural countryside.

One day a trio of thugs attacks them at her home. Lucy is gang-raped while her father is beaten and set on fire. While they both survive the attack, they must cope with the aftermath of the traumatic experience.

The end of the book finds David returning to Lucy's farm. He works with one of Lucy's friends who operates an animal shelter. When animals are euthanized, David's job is to dispose of them.

4.3 Setting of the Novel

Disgrace was published in 1999, five years after the political cessation of Apartheid, a racial segregation policy in South Africa. One can safely say the novel reflects the realities in the country in the aftermath of the oppressive regime, which made the majority of black South African subservient to the minority white. That is why we see many characters of the novel finding it difficult to get used to the new social order in their country. White characters sticking to the old formula and black characters claiming to quickly exercise their hard earned freedom were all in the same perplexing situation.

4.4 Analysis of Power and Gender Relations in the Novel

Many kinds of power relations can be depicted among the characters in the novel: colonizer- colonized, master-slave, employer-employee, teacher-student, father-daughter, husband-wife, etc.

Power and gender relations in the novel are explained using the relationship between the major characters such as Professor David Lurie, Petrus, Melanie Isaacs, Lucy Lurie and Pollux. The power of institutions and other bodies such as the university, the judiciary, culture will also be taken into consideration.

4.4.1 Power Relations

4.4.1.1 Racial Power

A) The White Afrikaners vs. Black South Africans

Professor Lurie is a white man, in a post-apartheid South Africa, a country which has not completely done away the supposed superiority of the white men over blacks. The longstanding legacy of this system of racial segregation is evident in the actions and perceptions of the aging professor. He is unreserved in expressing his obsolete arrogance towards black people.

Native (black) South Africans like Petrus, are nothing more than destitute servants in his eyes. These black folks, nevertheless, resist and entail that such supremacy and its adjunct arrogance can no longer be tolerated in the new South Africa. In the face of justice seeking tendency of such characters, the perpetrators of racial superiority like Professor Lurie bring the disgrace implied as the theme of the novel on themselves and their forebears (Coetzee 87).

B) Lurie vs. Petrus and his Clan's Men

Lurie, Lucy's father, who is with a typical white colonial mentality regards Petrus as his daughter's servant, over whom she has absolute authority. He even addresses Petrus and his black kinsmen in disrespectful ways. He doesn't either recognize the changing power relationship among citizens in the new post-apartheid South Africa. He wants Petrus to be stationed to his place. Petrus, nevertheless, appears tired of his previous position and is beginning to claim his rightful place. He hints of accumulated grudge in his short conversation with Lurie.

He (Lurie) is left with Petrus. 'You look after the dogs,' he says, to break the silence.

'I look after the dogs and I work in the garden. Yes.' Petrus gives a broad smile. 'I am the gardener and the dog-man.' He reflects for a moment. 'The dog-man,' he repeats, savouring the phrase (Coetzee, 28).

Lurie also addresses other blacks, the kinsmen of Petrus, in the same derogatory terms. All sorts of animal metaphors such as jackal, donkey, dog, etc. were used.

C) Lucy vs. Petrus

Lurie's daughter, Lucy, is one of the few white people remaining on the farm in the suburb of Cape Town. In the back of her property lives an African named Petrus who helps around the farm and tends the garden. In relation to Lucy, he is in a subservient position in the beginning. In the novel, this energetic young man is described as 'a paid wage', 'a hired help' who 'sells his labour' in Lucy's terms; though he is nothing more than a slave in David Lurie's eyes due to that old perception of racial inferiority. Though he is portrayed as a person gradually regaining his independence, Petrus was initially shown to be in an inferior position with regard to Lucy and her father Lurie (Coetzee, 50, 73).

It is only later that he becomes defiant to ascertain his personal and property right. As a native man in the post-apartheid South African, he assumes position of power and forwards a marriage proposal to Lucy, which she is compelled to accept for protection (Coetzee 85).

Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game.' (Coetzee, 86)

4.4.1.2 Colonial Power: Lurie Vs Petrus and his Kinsmen

Though Lurie's hatred towards Pollux, the black boy, is initially incited by the rape the boy and his two other friends committed on his daughter, many of his dispositions towards the boy nevertheless emanate from the boy's identity, a black African, a colonial subject. Though that is something gone with the wind, Lurie wants to express his colonial power on the black folks.

Beyond animalistic descriptions such as 'piggish eyes', 'wide, flaring nostrils'; Lurie throws insulting words such as swine, filthy, retarded, savage, etc. towards the boy. These are all typical designations colonizers used to attach to their subjects. While it is evident in the novel that his high learning couldn't prevent him from falling into a moral scandal, he accuses the boy for lacking intelligence and moral integrity.

'He is shift. He is like a jackal sniffing around, looking for mischief. In the old days we had a word for people like him. Deficient. Mentally deficient. Morally deficient. He should be in an institution (Coetzee 88).

4.4.1.3 Patriarchal Power

A) Men vs. Women (in General)

In the novel, women are depicted as weak, submissive objects of sexual gratification on a number of occasions. The dominance and sexual abuse of David Lurie over several women emanates from his patriarchal perception the power he gains therein (Coetzee, 3, 5, 8).

a) Lurie Vs Lucy

David Lurie's patriarchal tendency begins from his real patriarchal disposition towards his daughter. As a father with strong patriarchal disposition, he, wants to guide his grown up daughter. He wants to dictate her what to do including her relationship with her black neighbors on the farm. Though she is submissive to other powers holding her down as a woman (failure to report the rape case), Lucy is assertive enough towards her father in defending her right as a woman (Coetzee, 47-48).

David, I can't run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not anymore. You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions (Coetzee, 84).

b) Lurie – Melanie

Lurie's patriarchal tendency then heads to sexual exploitation of women. He had an affair with Soraya, Melanie, secretary in his department and Ben Shaw not to mention the women he was married to and divorced twice.

When Melanie, one of his students, enquires why she ought to his surrender to his sexual desire, his reason for asking her to do the reckless thing is described in such patriarchal terms:

Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the beauty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it (Coetzee, 8).

c) Petrus – Lucy

The judgment of Petrus is also too patriarchal. For him a woman who is raped by a man and gets pregnant should settle the matter by getting married to her violator. The deep rooted cultural assumption of patriarchy is revealed through the disposition of this character, Petrus (Coetzee, 85).

The relation between Lurie and multitude of his women mistresses, Petrus and his two wives (a wife and a friend) and Lucy herself, the three men and Lucy all show the supremacy of the men over women and the supposition of women as mere sexual gratification objects.

4.4.1.4 Professional Power: Teacher-Student

Professor Lurie, as Melanie's teacher, has a position of power bestowed on him by the university which he can use positively or negatively. He, nevertheless, ends using his power to coerce her to fulfillment of his sexual desire.

'You're very lovely,' he says. 'I'm going to invite you to do something reckless.' He touches her again. 'Stay. Spend the night with me' (Coetzee, 8).

As a student under his tutelage, Melanie, was in a subservient position vis-à-vis the professor. She actually yields to his desire and they carry out the 'reckless thing' which eventually turns out to be a crime of sexual assault, which the professor denies to be rape and to give any word of contrition for the wrong doing (Coetzee, 11, 24).

Professor Lurie attempts to regard the charge against him to be due to age gap between him and Melanie. One of the members of the enquiry committee, nevertheless, corrects him and makes it clear that he is accused due to abuse of position of power.

'You have in mind a ban on intimacy across the generations?'

'No, not necessarily. But as teachers we occupy positions of power. Perhaps [we impose] a ban on mixing power relations with sexual relations (Coetzee, 23).

Professor Lurie is described as 'A shark among the helpless little fishies?' to demonstrate his mighty power compared to that of his students (Coetzee, 23).

4.4.1.5 Institutional Power

A) Community vs. University

The community has power over the university i.e. the power to give and revoke authority. The community can terminate the authority it bestowed to it in case the university does not perform per the community standard. In the extract below, Mr. Isaacs, whose daughter faced sexual assault by the patronizing power of one of the university professors, reiterates about the violation of the trust.

We put our children in the hands of you people because we think we can trust you. If we can't trust the university, who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers (Coetzee, 17).

The university could no more be a functional institution in the absence of public trust. The university as a result determines to seek justice for the complaint on the part of the community through its enquiry committee and dismisses the accused professor. This is, hence, a typical instance of execution of institutional power.

B) University vs. Lurie

When professor Lurie uses the professional power vested upon him by the university and gets into a sexual relationship with Melanie, a student under his tutelage, the university exercises its power by dismissing the professor. Mathabane, one of the members of the enquiry committee of the university, declares:

Then we should recommend the severest penalty. That Professor Lurie be dismissed with immediate effect and forfeit all benefits and privileges (Coetzee, 22).

4.4.1.6 Cultural Power: South African Local Languages vs. English

During the colonial era, the English language had dominance over local South African languages. The end of dominance of the English language over local languages is also perfectly depicted in the novel. Petrus, a black South African man, reiterates that he has so many stories to be told but not in English.

But preferably not reduced to English. More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa. Stretches of English code whole sentences long have thickened, lost their articulations, their articulateness, their articulatedness. Like a dinosaur expiring and settling in the mud, the language has stiffened (Coetzee, 50).

4.4.2 Gender Relations

Disgrace depicts the dominance of men over women on a number of instances. The superiority of men is not expressed only in subtle ways but in violent sexual assaults that are rampant in the novel. The sexual

violence directed against women was not limited to the racially suppressed group. Disgrace commendably underlines the vulnerability of both white and black women to men's sexual assault in post-apartheid South Africa.

Lucy and Mrs. Ben Shaw, who are white women, were victim of sexual assault as Soraya and Melanie, black ladies. Though the prominent violator is the white man, David Lurie, black youths have also engaged in the sexual scandal, as a tribute for past injustice.

4.4.3 The Shifting Power Relations in the New South Africa

Disgrace portrays **David Lurie's** reversal of fortune from a dictatorial colonial master to utter humiliation. At the beginning of the novel, despite his moral weakness, David is portrayed as a prestigious professor and celebrity in the world of academia. At the end of the novel, it seems that David lost the power of talking and in a sense the power of imposing his views on others. David's silence conveys his inability to further subjugate the other and eventually acceptance of his disgrace.

Professor Lurie loses his career at Cape University due to sexual scandal and becomes an assistant in animal welfare clinic under Bev Shaw.

A dog-man, Petrus once called himself. Well, now he [Lurie] has become a dogman: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a harijan.

But there are other people to do these things - the animal welfare thing, the social rehabilitation thing, even the Byron thing. He saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it. That is what he is becoming: stupid, daft, wrongheaded (Coetzee, 62).

Petrus, Lucy's assistant, becoming independent and a land owner who could lead his own decent life. Even he becomes someone who could give protection to Lucy in the post-apartheid South Africa. **Lucy**, the land lady, on the other hand, gradually loses her property and becomes an ordinary woman who does not reject marriage proposal from her black neighbors. She accepts the burden of history and repays ancestral debt as she puts it. **Melanie**, moves on from an abused student to a celebrated black actor making fun of and creating laughter of the injustices of the past era in her dramatic performance. The imposed prestige of the **English language** giving way to the indigenous South African languages is also depicted in *Disgrace*.

V. Discussion

Coetzee's *Disgrace* gives unrelenting treatment to the post-apartheid chaos in South Africa, a country that was under transition to the extent the author is being accused of perpetrating past stereotypes about the nation and the natives of that land. As Mardorossain notes, post-apartheid violence in South Africa is not represented merely as a racial issue in the novel but the fact that other axes of power such as patriarchy is operating is given ample treatment (2011). Above anything else Coetzee seems paying due attention to sexual abuse of women, the failure of the judiciary to protect them, and the patriarchal base of most of the assault. As Chitwan (2014) verifies, both of the incidents involving the violation of women explicitly illustrate the working of gender politics as a corollary of racial politics. The central character, Lurie, for example, has hegemonic views when he comes to gender relations.

One of the feminist concerns of *Disgrace* is uncovering the objectification and commoditization of women as sexual tools. Saraya, Melanie and Lucy are all exposed to sexual assault from men who are driven by colonial and its annexed patriarchal inclinations. As it is revealed in the sentiments of Lucy, the blacks are merely repaying what was done to them during Apartheid era. 'The gang of three. Three fathers in one. Rapists rather than robbers, Lucy called them - rapists cum taxgatherers roaming the area, attacking women, indulging their violent pleasures' (Coetzee, 84).

As the novel was published few years after the end of Apartheid, apartheid era power hierarchies still linger in the novel with the hope of persistence. As Min and Xiaoyan (2012) illustrate, in *Disgrace*, sense of white superiority, including that of white race and white culture, is fully illustrated in the protagonist's ideas, words and acts.

VI. CONCLUSION

The white Afrikaners, like David Lurie, are depicted in the novel sticking to the historical power relation of the Apartheid era and bringing disgrace on themselves and their descendants in the new South Africa.

Black South Africans, on the other hand, are depicted claiming their rightful position of equality in terms of personal right and property ownership. Unlike the whites, these victims of the apartheid regime are depicted

regaining their lost dignity and land tenure. This can be typically depicted in the life of Petrus. Petrus, who used to be Lucy's assistant on the farm and garden is depicted gradually regaining self-respect and land ownership.

In terms of gender relationship, Coetzee points out that women of both races still suffer sexual assault in the new South Africa. While the white victim, Lucy is portrayed as paying debt of previous injustice and refusing any legal claim against her violators, Melanie, the black girl, gets justice served on her behalf. Professor Lurie, who seduced her towards fulfilment of his sexual desire going against her will and his own professional ethics, gets dismissed from his career.

Disgrace depicts dozens of other women who are victims of sexual assault. Except Melanie none of them nevertheless claimed justice for what is done to them. Either the strong patriarchal tradition or the disfunctionality of the legal system in their post-Apartheid South Africa prohibited them from reportage of the case. In addition to the inherited legacy of colonialism, patriarchy, which is deeply embedded in the culture of South Africa, is definitely depicted hushing up the women.

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