



East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences

ejass.eanso.org

Volume 6, Issue 2, 2023

Print ISSN: 2707-4277 | Online ISSN: 2707-4285

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-4285>

EANSO

EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999)

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Article DOI : <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1351>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

03 August 2023

Keywords:

Afrikaner,
Apartheid,
Hegemony,
Inter-Racial,
Postcolonial.

South Africa has an exceptionally rich literary environment, particularly when it comes to the experience of coping with a tragic past. Afrikaners in South Africa had the opportunity to benefit from a privileged family foundation and the best socioeconomic and political outcomes thanks to the apartheid racial segregation system. This change has exposed the whites' illusion that they can exist outside the historical process. Apartheid having been embedded in the consciousness of both the whites and the blacks has made it difficult for the whites to accept the reversal of the status quo within the master-slave matrix. This transformed society is affecting the Afrikaners, so they are struggling to reclaim and sustain a connection with the socio-cultural, economic, and political past. There is a disconnect between the individual and the social-cultural context, which results in agonies experienced by the Afrikaners in the post-apartheid era. The paper employed a postcolonial theory as propagated by Edward Said (1978) and Homi Bhabha (1994). It was also buttressed by New Historicism that grounds socio-political and cultural interconnectedness with the prevailing historical discourses, which gives a deeper insight into human relations. The interplay between history and cultural identity, culture and hegemony, and the resultant interracial divisions that conceal covert misogyny illustrate the reality that history may be recreated from various angles. A qualitative approach based on the library was adopted. The research design used in the study was analytical. By purposive sampling, the text was selected deliberately: *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M Coetzee. The selected text bulks on agonies Afrikaners go through in the post-apartheid era. This study hopes to contribute to existing post-apartheid dialectics on interracial relations.

APA CITATION

Chebet, C. (2023). Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999). *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 24-36. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1351>

CHICAGO CITATION

Chebet, Carolyne. 2023. "Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999)". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 6 (2), 24-36. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1351>.

HARVARD CITATION

Chebet, C. (2023) "Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999)". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(2), pp. 24-36. doi: 10.37284/eajass.6.2.1351.

IEEE CITATION

C., Chebet "Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999)". *EAJASS*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 24-36, Aug. 2023.

MLA CITATION

Chebet, Carolyne. "Racial Bigotry and Afrikaner Agonies: A Post Colonial Reading of John Maxwell Coetzee's Novel, *Disgrace* (1999)". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, no. 2, Aug. 2023, pp. 24-36, doi:10.37284/eajass.6.2.1351.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has had a history based on master-slave relations from the moment Boers occupied the country. One of the most abhorrently racist regimes of the twentieth century was the nation's apartheid system. The white (Afrikaner) minority has oppressed and taken advantage of non-white people, the bulk of whom are black. Since they wielded power, they viewed themselves as masters bent on dehumanising the "others". Initial literature emanating from this region depicted the unfair mistreatment the blacks went through. Alex La Guma details the gory sorry agonies that the blacks who were seen as second-rate citizens were subjected to. Abrahams in *Mine Boy* brings out the racial undertones. This paper's assumption is that South Africa's political transformation has affected the socioeconomic dynamics.

Background Information

With sustained pressure from the international community, it dawned on the white ruling elite in South Africa in the 1980s that apartheid was no longer sustainable. This therefore, saw the crumbling of apartheid. This according to Karlson (2003, p 159), resulted in independence and an elected government in 1994 that gave birth to the rule by the majority and a more inclusive hegemony set in place. Power reverted to the blacks and made them more central and vibrant in the country's mainstream decisions. The reversal of hegemonic power constrained the Afrikaners to a position of powerlessness which in effect showed their precarious situation and scepticism about belonging to a new country.

The historical past symbolically becomes a space of trauma, misogyny, bitterness, and untold suffering to the so-called "others" who now identify themselves as "us" because of power attainment. The blacks are now part of the ruling hegemony. In order to deal with the traumas of a horrifying past in South Africa, writers have access to a rich tapestry of history which is attributed to the literary community. They have unearthed social, cultural, and political discourses which are reflexive of happenings in South Africa's Apartheid, as Myklatun (2018) refers to as a 'signification of historical oppression' (p. 6), a system of racial segregation that capitalizes on race and colour. The bloody final years of the liberation fight took centre stage during the years just before independence in order to overcome and subjugate the evil system. This has defined the direction of the co-existence between the two races. In 1958, the Afrikaner national party took over as the dominant political force. Different races were rigidly segregated in order to limit "less civilise" ethnic groups' access to political participation. In terms of housing, education, employment, and healthcare, Afrikaners had superior access. As opined by Buck (2020), Blacks lacked voting rights and political participation. They had been dispossessed of the sense of humanity in having a say in their leaders. After many years of injustice, other nations started to denounce apartheid. When all citizens of all classes were permitted to cast ballots in the presidential elections in 1994, apartheid came to an end.

It is critical to understand the social environment in which an Afrikaner lived in South Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. Afrikaners enjoyed a privileged

family background in socio-cultural and political terms. The reality on the ground is that they are white people who claim to be one of the native African ethnic communities. The ambivalent positions they occupied, physically white but geographically and, to an extent, socio-culturally tied together with black Africans, made them aware of their belonging and unbelonging. They are in, and yet they are not in, sliding between being at home and away at the same time; and standing at the periphery of an in-between world, lacking concrete identity and essence in what Buck (2020) refers to as “a position of powerlessness” (p. 20).

This reveals the turbulent history that has caused much discontent in South African fiction of the present and is shown in Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace*. According to Hutcheon (1999), literature attempts to place itself within a historical space and time. This demonstrates how closely literature and history interact and relate to one another through depiction and implication. History selects what events to highlight and what not to. Literature also highlights various historical transformational processes. Literature and the arts, in general, have actively supported the new democratic administration in the new South Africa during the transition period. The black population, which was formerly terrorised, is today a powerful political force in power. Power has changed fundamentally and permanently as a result of the transformation. As a result, the imminent prospect of a bloody revolution in the country was a key factor in the negotiations between the administration and the organisations representing the black majority and the white minority.

White (1978) makes a distinction between a discourse that tells historical events and one that narrativizes them. The first assumes the role of a narrator who describes global events, whereas the second claims that actual events can never be told. It is only possible to tell and portray them. According to Barthes, the narrator’s opinions and ideologies must be expressed through conscious or unconscious choices in narratives, whether they are

real or fictional, in order to be studied from a referential perspective. Historical accounts frequently explain the nation’s sociopolitical complexity and predicament.

This study attempts to show how Coetzee explores the intersection of history and fiction in his literary text. He has occupied himself with critically evaluating the historical space of the dominant as having been oppressed. This has led to his exposition of Afrikaner agonies in the post-apartheid era. His *Shame* joins the political discussions that challenge the determination of racial struggle, the recurrence of fierce wrongdoing, and the personality of the compromise cycle planned to introduce the “new” South Africa as a recuperated rainbow country.

As a white author, Coetzee portrays individual characters trying to struggle with historical happenings in order to reconcile with the current regime. The Afrikaners in apartheid South Africa have been viewed as the oppressors, intent on getting and achieving the best at the expense of the blacks. The continuing socioeconomic divisions that have stratified the two races have been fodder for literary artists. *Disgrace* depicts society at crossroads; the haunting past morals and the alluring post-apartheid promises. This dichotomy epitomises the representation of the black and white identity within the socio-political paradigm shift from apartheid to a transformed society. This transformation affects the Afrikaners a great deal as they struggle to regain and sustain an impossible past. According to Brink (1988), the everlasting tragedy of the Afrikaner is his dual identity as a white African who struggles to accept his own continent and its people. The majority of them want to be here, but they are divided, and the sad thing for the Afrikaner, after more than three centuries, is that he still has not returned because he still feels estranged.

Coetzee imprints the turbulent dynamics of a postcolonial, socio-cultural landscape tainted with violence, racial hatred, and inequality on the pages

of their fiction. In diverse contexts, they construct a range of white identity roles that respond to the societies that shape them because identity is a social construct. These births a disconnect with the society which has bred and nurtured them, allowing them to undergo racial bigotry and mistreatment.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study focuses on the artistic representation of Afrikaner agonies in selected post-apartheid fiction. Of importance are excavating issues of violence, rape, and insecurity as part of South Africa's transitional process. Tenets of postcolonial theory, as propagated by Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said, among others, were used to interrogate Afrikaner agonies after apartheid. Postcolonial theory acted as a guide throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation stages for this study. The qualitative approach of methodology was the one that was most suitable for this study. In order to improve insight and comprehension of the subject matter at hand, the qualitative approach frequently employs a variety of practice sets for data collection, interrogation, analysis, and interpretation of primary texts.

Close reading of Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) was employed to excavate primary data, which underwent analysis and interpretation in a qualitative library-based research approach to achieve the goals specified for this study. The most appropriate research design used was interpretation. Coetzee's text *Disgrace* (1999) was purposefully chosen for textual analysis in order to explore racial bigotry and Afrikaner agonies as a space for interlocution. Textual analyses unearthed discourses therein and analysed the extent to which post-apartheid fiction writers use art to capture post-apartheid discourses and the tension that exists in the racial divide. In this regard, the entire study of the selected text was conducted on the basis of extracting supportive pieces of discourses from close reading, which were considered for analysis. The primary text was read closely and analysed for interpretation using postcolonial theory. The

theoretical framework assisted in examining the selected text and their contexts in both form and content. The theory enhanced objectivity and empirical analysis, which assisted in the interpretation and textual analysis. Relevant secondary readings were used to foreground critical issues raised.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Violence

According to Magona (1999), apartheid had a devastating impact on society. She expressed the rage and animosity that black South Africans have towards how the Afrikaners have treated them, which is why there will be continued bloodshed in the new South Africa. Many people have learnt from South Africa's past that people's anger over inequality frequently manifests itself in protests, riots, and other violent acts, including misogyny. Violence permeates every facet of daily life in South Africa while the nation works toward reconciliation with its past. Additionally, it addresses numerous current issues. One of the most pressing issues is the rising rate of crime. Buck (2020) acknowledges that people in South Africa have grown accustomed to hearing about violent crime because it is rampant. Violence, thus, becomes an attestation of wrestling social and political space which had been infringed by apartheid.

Coetzee's *Disgrace* equally shares the same sentiments on violence, which is relevant in post-apartheid South Africa. Shame fills in as a steady update that the politically-sanctioned racial segregation system's lines of division actually exist. Under the moving power elements, relations among individuals are as yet represented by class, race, variety, and orientation. This echoes Davern and Saunders' (2000) ideas on the same that the blacks and the whites are struggling from their past, especially the whites who are in a dilemma, still living in their past promises. The whites, who are accustomed to ruling over and training their black employees in their houses, are overwhelmed by the

violence they are experiencing. The Afrikaners must adapt to and deal with the new situation's transfer of power.

Returning to the ranch from the market after the day's exercises, Lurie and his little girl Lucy are trapped by three men, and in the finish of a definitive white bad dream, Lucy is physically attacked by the three men, while Lurie is secured in the washroom. He has liquor poured on him and cannot save his little girl. The attack results in the deaths of Lucy's watchdogs and the theft of Laurie's vehicle. What occurs next is a lot more regrettable in light of the fact that, as per Lurie, his dad did not have the fortitude to shield his own kids, which is basically a man's task. This is upheld by the manner in which Lucy and her companion Bev see the occurrence, which verifies the way that he neglected to safeguard his little girl from the assault. At the point when Lurie endeavours to comfort his girl, his endeavours are dismissed, and Lucy accepts that the assault was roused by orientation as opposed to history: "Perhaps for men, detesting the lady makes sex seriously invigorating, you are a man, and you should be aware" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 154). The set of experiences that rehashes the same thing is that the aggressed (slave) has turned into the attacker in what is undoubtedly viewed as the pursued turned tracker. The nation has gone through a power outlook change. Lurie's appearance about the ongoing public status following the assault is additionally accused of negativity:

Such a large number of individuals, barely any things. What is there should go into flow, so everybody can get an opportunity to be content for a day-that is the means by which one highly prioritises life in this country. In its schematic perspective, generally, one could go distraught. There should be a few specialities in the framework for women and what befalls them (Coetzee, 1999, p. 98).

After the assault, Lucy trusts in Lurie, saying: "It was finished with individual scorn. That dazed me more than anything. The rest was normal. Yet, for

what reason did they despise me to such an extent? I had never seen the" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 156) Lucy's refusal to decry the wrongdoing is legitimate by the fragile post-politically-sanctioned racial segregation secondly, she states that: "in one more day, somewhere else what befell me may be held to be a public matter. Yet, here, as of now, it is no" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 112). Lucy tells Lurie to tell the police just what befell him while she recounts her own story (Coetzee, 1999, p. 99). The irony comes out when Lucy does not educate them regarding the wrongdoing; rather, she takes them all through the story she has chosen (Coetzee, 1999, p. 108). Her choice to stay quiet is because of her conviction that what befell her was absolutely a confidential matter (Coetzee, 1999, p. 112).

Rape/Sexual Exploitation

Professor Lurie, who works at the University of Cape Town, is 52 years old. He has been divorced twice and has not found a new wife since his last marriage ended. Lurie has always had an easy time luring a lady, but as he ages, he gradually loses this ability. Being in charge of everything around him—his profession, his life, and the people in it—has been the foundation upon which Lurie has built his entire world. Derek (2011, p 72) acknowledges that Lurie had a terrific job and started out as a strong, well-respected individual. According to Attridge (2011), it is critical to remember that Lurie is a white male when it comes to positions of authority, particularly in South Africa during the apartheid era. At times, Lurie may attempt to distinguish himself from others by identifying as white, which may be a hangover from the period of time when the country's black residents were subjected to slavery. This study supports the justifications made above.

There was an 'issue' with sex, but it seemed to have been 'solved' (Coetzee, 1999). Lurie is not in close contact with his family and has few acquaintances. He favours younger women when it comes to the opposing sex. However, he is getting old. Lurie pays for female company in exchange for sex. Age has

not been able to keep his advantage of beautiful looks because he has a history of womanising.

With his height, healthy bones, olive skin, and flowing hair, he always had a certain magnetic quality. He could count on the fact that if he stared at a lady in a specific way with a specific intention, she would reciprocate his gaze. He lived in that manner for many years, even decades. His life was anchored by that. Then one day, it all ended. His abilities vanished suddenly (Coetzee, 1999, p. 7). Lurie's interactions with women must be thoroughly examined in order to analyse sexual exploitation. His friendship with Soraya is a good starting point for discussion. The reader is introduced to Soraya, a teenage prostitute who serves Lurie once a week, at the start of the book. It is worth noting how he described her:

He rubs her unblemished, honey-brown body. They have a passionate kiss while he stretches her out. Soraya is tall and thin, with long hair and black liquid eyes. Technically, he is old enough to be her father, but a child can have a father at the age of twelve (Coetzee, 1999, p. 1)

The fact that Lurie exhibits no remorse towards women is one of the recurring themes in his character. He usually justifies using women by citing his desire. For instance, when Lurie first meets Soraya, a prostitute, at the beginning of the story, he uses her to satisfy himself, and he utilises his power to demonstrate his superior position. He makes numerous attempts to alter this female whenever he sees her, including changing the way she appears while engaging in sexual activity. He requested her to wipe off her makeup since he disliked how sticky it was. She followed instructions and never wore it again (Coetzee, 1999, p. 5). Lurie takes advantage of his position to display authority by using Soraya and telling her how she looks. He positions himself in a stature of authority and shows her his domination. She sees herself as his priceless possession, something to be ruled over.

Additionally, Lurie seduces Melanie Isaacs, one of his students, and the entire situation leads to sexual exploitation. As he exerts authority over his followers, this causes him to perceive himself as powerful. He disregards her request to be left alone. Melanie is shown to be sentimental and helpless. This concurs with Tyson's (2006) sentiments that women are usually inscribed as a weakness when it comes to the traditional patriarchal gender sensibilities which elevate men. Most often, men use sexual exploitation to foreground their stature and prowess. When Lurie spots Melanie on the street, things start to go his way. Even though he knows in his heart that Melanie does not want to, he tries to persuade her to spend the night with him:

[Lurie speaking to Melanie]

... stay. Be my guest for the night;

... why?

'Because you ought to'.

'Why ought I to?

'Why? Considering that a woman is not the sole owner of her beauty. It is a portion of the bounty she offers the world. She has an obligation to share it' (Coetzee, 1999, p. 16).

Melanie escapes this time, but it is a sign that Lurie is at the pinnacle of his influence, using his position to take advantage of women. He maintains in touch with Melanie, and occasionally her inadequacy is highlighted. While Lurie remains unresponsive throughout their encounter, acting on instinct and desire without regard for the repercussions, once more revealing his manipulative nature:

[Lurie] Is there a problem? Would you mind telling me? She makes a head motion.

Are you concerned for the both of us?

Maybe" she responds. "No need" I will be careful. Iwon't allow it to escalate.

too much. What is going too far in a scenario like this? Does her too far equal his too far? She is returned by him at his home. He makes love to her as she is on the living room floor,

listening to the sound of raindrops hitting the windows. The rain has ceased when he returns. The girl is curled up beneath him, her eyes closed, her hands resting lazily on her brow (Coetzee, 1999, p. 19).

The narrator draws attention to Melanie's inferiority to Lurie in the aforementioned quotation. Firstly, by writing "he makes love to her" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 19) rather than "they make love", Melanie is the object in this act, not Lurie, so what she thinks is irrelevant. By explaining how Lurie makes love to her, she makes even more clear how passive she has been throughout. The narrator states, "The girl is lying beneath him" (Coetzee, 1999). At this point, Melanie is not specified by her first name. Melanie becomes simply another female among the others after the act, and Lurie has achieved his goals, and she loses her allure. She murmurs, "I have to go. He makes no attempt to restrain her" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 19). It is indicative of Lurie's behaviour and his method of using women that he would not let Melanie go before the act of sexually abusing her, but once he got what he wanted, he showed no remorse at all for her presence.

Melanie recently experienced intrusion from Lurie when he barged into her flat and essentially coerced her into going to bed:

She is too shocked to fight off the invader who thrusts himself onto her because he gave her no notice. She cries out, "No, not now", but nothing will deter him. She is carried into the bedroom, where he removes her ridiculous slippers. ...not exactly rape, but it was nonetheless wrong, wrong to the core. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 24-25)

In this quotation, Lurie's objectification of women is evident. Lurie has no connection to Melanie. Lurie takes the time to observe Melanie's slippers, despite the fact that the rape would not have sufficiently hurt Melanie. This makes it possible for the reader to question Lurie's peculiar behaviour when he rapes Melanie and then spends time

making patronising remarks about her slippers. This is typical for Lurie when it comes to acquiring power. He always undercuts those he targets, and when they are at their most defenceless, he intervenes to establish his dominance.

On the other hand, Petrus hires three men to rape Lucy, terrorise her, and then mutilate her. Then, in an effort to gain her things and, in a sense, become her master, he proposes to marry her in order to protect her. He transitions from being a servant to becoming a master. Graham (2012) claims that Petrus serves as an example of how women are seen as property, need to be protected, and should therefore be considered a man's property. Sex now becomes a man's strength rather than a woman's weakness:

I believe I am in their domain. I am marked by them. They'll return to get me. David, absolutely nothing shocks me anymore when it pertains to hatred against males and sex. Maybe males find sex more fascinating when they despise women. You should know because you are a man (Coetzee, 1999, p. 158).

Because of the rape, Lucy is pregnant, and she needs protection so she can take care of her unborn child. She is unable to refuse Petrus' invitation; therefore, he knows this. He is forced to marry Lucy, which gives him the opportunity to gain greater power. Regarding Lucy and the way, she was raped, Petrus had no compassion. Lurie is questioned by Petrus immediately following the rape, "Will Lucy visit the market tomorrow?" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 115). This says a lot about Petrus and his ignorance about the rape experience of a woman. He never makes amends for his wrongdoing. At this point, it is clear that women are inferior and that they are being used. In the book, women are never treated fairly, and they continue to sense racial discrimination stalking them.

The characters mentioned above, Melanie and Lucy undergo untold suffering because their bodies are depicted as spaces of exploitation and manipulation.

The hatred that emanates from within makes individuals objectify others. This is true, as manifested through David Lurie and Petrus. Racial bigotry attests to the intolerance that individuals still harbour in South Africa.

Negotiating Afrikaner Agonies

This section examines how major characters negotiate agonies and, in particular, how they come to terms with the new power dispensation. The most renowned author from South Africa is Gordimer, who has produced significant books entirely set in South Africa after apartheid. For instance, his 1999 book *Disgrace*, which focuses primarily on suffering and the various ideas of guilt reparation, justice, and reconciliation, as well as the implications of the transfer of power for both blacks and whites, adds to the ongoing discussion about the transformation taking place in the new South Africa.

The main characters struggle mightily to acknowledge the suffering in post-apartheid South Africa as a part of the ongoing effects of apartheid. Each novel's representation of social and personal suffering undermines the rhetoric and public portrayal of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa and aims to expose the ongoing impacts of the system by using different types of agony. The analysis contextualises the characters' behaviours in a way that makes them appear as results of a history of forceful dominance as well as a symbol of a freshly rebellious post-apartheid South Africa. For characters to survive and fit into the new South Africa, they must devise ways to be accommodated in the country.

Characters Negotiating Agonies

Will people's minds be able to be changed by the truth about the past as it actually occurred? In Coetzee's portrayal of the evolving relationship between the former colonisers and the colonised—the self and the others—this query recurs. Are people's memories of the apartheid era too deeply engrained to allow anything other than a shift in

social roles? As a result, *Disgrace* is a potent historical work in that it examines the colonial and postcolonial while also exploring the possibility of making sense of the past and present for the sake of the future.

He finds it fascinating and comprehensible how Lurie descended from his elevation. He is in an unclear situation because of his expulsion from the highly regarded academic world of the arts, his failed personal relationships, and his life does not have the value he has assigned to it. He is compelled out of his personal framework, and as a result, his life oscillates between his previous ideals and the requirement to comprehend the realities of the present. This resonates with how colonialism led to South Africa's downfall and the subsequent resistance on a personal level. The violent attack on the father and daughter on the farm and the illicit relationship with the ensuing humiliating appeal for public penitence were the two most scandalous episodes. These two make an effort to discredit Laurie's fixed and unyielding personality. In a new struggle for supremacy that is reminiscent of prior colonisation processes, it initially appears as though the actors are performing their allotted roles in a political and social setting of conflicting forces. The colonial mindset of that era is very much alive and well in the stories, albeit it wears new masks as the positions change.

The conflict between a colonial worldview and a new idea of freedom is depicted by Coetzee's characterisation of the many characters as unique individuals responding to their respective eras and to one another. When Lurie thinks about his romantic life, he has this mysterious idea that he has forgotten what he wants and confuses satisfaction with a sloth in an effort to hide his sense of failure and loss:

After all, his needs turn out to be fairly minimal. Light and transitory, like a butterfly's emotions, or none but the deepest, the most enguessed, at a place of contentment, similar to the buzz of traffic that prevents city dwellers from falling

asleep, or similar to the silence of the night for rural folk (Coetzee, 1999, p. 5).

Following his seduction of Melanie, Lurie is hauled before a disciplinary tribunal, where they attempt to get him to own his moral wrongdoing. In defiance of the committee's expectations, Lurie dismisses them on the grounds of protecting his personal honour, arguing that there is a distinction between an open admission of remorse and a confession of profound moral weakness. Nevertheless, he defends his actions by pledging allegiance to "the rights of desire" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 89). In order to "gather himself and his forces" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 129). Lurie departs the city for his daughter Lucy's modest rural home. Melanie becomes estranged after being sexually assaulted by Lurie. Melanie avoids her pals and misses school. She spends the night at Laurie's house in search of solace.

In the context of the TRC, the study seeks to espouse how the truth-telling and amnesty impinge upon justice. The majority of people have noted South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) came to the conclusion that the TRC was "born of political compromise" since it showed what was true at the expense of justice (resources, like land, for instance, were not allocated under the new constitution). Mahmoud adds that under the TCR's auspices, "Reconciliation is a code word for a diminished truth" because at least one party in the contract of reconciliation will always be compromised. However, he argues that compromise should always be seen as temporary, allowing for escape from a deadlock. When Lurie says in disgrace, "I was offered a compromise which I would not accept", Lucy tells him that compromise has its uses: David, you should not be so rigid; being rigid is not courageous. Have you had a chance to consider it? (Coetzee, 1999, p. 66)

Faroudia Rassol, a member of the Disciplinary Committee, adds that Lurie is expected to apologise during the disciplinary hearing: "Lurie should make the declaration in his own terms. Then, we will be

able to determine whether it comes from his heart (Coetzee, 1999, p. 54).

The issue of confessional sincerity as it relates to people seeking amnesty is extremely complex and unacceptable politically when applied to the TRC proceedings. The reference to the misplaced religion of the public hearings in the trial scene isolates the problem of sincerity. Lurie is aware that an apology "in the spirit of repentance" is what is required of him, but he feels that this type of apology "belongs to another universe of discourse" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 55-58). His refusal to believe the university's version of events prompts questions about the usefulness of confession in public without providing clear solutions. Lurie is eager to apologise, but he refuses to show his sincerity because it is "beyond the scope of the law".

Lurie is dejected following the assault on the farm:

The organism will eventually rebuild itself, and the spirit inside of it will once again be by itself. However, he is aware that if this were not the case, his joy in living would have been extinguished like a leaf on a stream or a puff ball on a breeze. He can clearly see that he is drifting towards death, and this knowledge fills him with despair as the life blood is leaving his body and despair—a gas—takes its place. Even as the steel hits your throat, you breathe in it, relax your limbs, and lose interest (Coetzee, 1999, p. 107-108).

The main character, Lurie, has a complex personality made up of many paradoxes and struggles to grasp who he is and what is happening to him.

His interactions with animals serve as an example of the transition Lurie goes through. Bev Shaw, Lucy's friend, and the veterinary assistant, plays a crucial role in assisting Lurie in uncovering his own hidden abilities. In his opening statement, he displays his intelligence: "As for animals, by all means, let us be sympathetic, but let us not lose

the viewpoint. If we are going to be kind, let us not be of simple kindness, not because we feel guilty of retaliation. We are of a different order of creation from the animals, not necessarily higher, but different (Coetzee, 1999).

He observes a shift in his behaviour following the attack and subsequent experiences of remorse and anguish, albeit “he does not understand what is happening to him” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 75)

After helping Bev, he is pitting dogs at the animal clinic on his way home. He has actually stopped at the side of the road to rest. His hands are trembling as he cannot stop the tears from streaming down his face (Coetzee, 1999, p. 143). At this point, Lurie is humiliated, able to understand animals as helpless victims of want (the colonial mind), and in his own condition of total and utter disgrace. He is also, at this point, able to recognise and emotionally connect with the grace in the world around him. This transformation from a self-centred conqueror to a state of understanding that suffering is a condition of man and a developing capacity to sympathise with the victim is best illustrated by Laurie’s relationship with women. In connection to the colonial past and the “new” South Africa, Lucy stands for a middle ground. Given that she was raised by white, middle-class parents, Lucy has consciously chosen to reject urbanity and the values of “her own kin” in favour of a rural lifestyle populated by a diverse range of people. When asked why she has changed so much, Lurie responds, “But perhaps it was not they who produced her; perhaps history had the larger share” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 61). Her lack of enthusiasm for monetary and commercial success disappoints the father, but as he matures, he starts to appreciate her decisions.

Despite Lucy’s willingness to make sacrifices, the fear of a virtual ethnic purge is evident in her purportedly impartial assessment of her position and that of other white farmers in her neighbour:

Objectively, I am the only woman. My brothers do not exist. I have a father, but he lives far

away and is helpless in this situation. Who can I go to for protection or favours? Towards Ettinger? Given that there is only Petrus remaining and that he is big enough for someone small like me, it is just a matter of time before Ettinger is discovered with a gunshot in his back (Coetzee, 1999, p. 204).

It is important to note that, out of exasperation, Lucy is compelled to make Petrus a tenant on her fields so long as the home remains hers.

Lucy represents the fears of a total white sacrifice of all privilege and feeling of rights, a renunciation that may literally imply impoverishment, despite the fact that she is aware of her modesty before history. She cannot both renounce a piece of property and still legally remain pre-eminent within it. In pointing this out to Lucy, Lurie—who is totally averse to the attainment of grace through self-crucifixion and the application of religious discourse to the secular-ironically, indicates too that the whites’ search for redemption through a legalistic approach is equally doomed.

The legal discourse would also be inappropriate to plead the case of white South Africans: they would be stripped bare. Struck by her fragility, Lurie is aware that history has completely taken from her even the privilege to negotiate. “Why should Petrus even try to bargain? She cannot endure; if you leave her alone, she will eventually fall like rotten fruit. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 204). The study admits that the racial Other in history is rewriting it, and the former historiographer understands why he should be afraid. Lucy proclaims white renunciation of all privileges and rights an indispensable condition for absolution and grace, and as a way of evading reality, Lurie uses recollections of the recent past to criticise a racially offensive present. If Lucy recognises her unfriendly black neighbours as a fact of life that Won’t vanish in a cloud of smoke” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 28). For this case, Lurie recommends torture and mental asylum as the proper response to this presumed moral deficiency and savagery. Thus, if Lucy’s will to self-denial

makes her adjustable, Lurie's self-esteem constitutes an impairment.

Lurie, who is still firmly enmeshed in colonial notions of "The Dark Continent" and steadfast in his belief in his own racial supremacy, considers black political ascendancy in South Africa as the resurgence of disorder. However, he is not the only one who feels frightened or even repulsed by an innate sense of the necessity of sacrifice and purification as a necessary precondition of life in the new South Africa. Discovering his house burgled, his response is cynicism.

Not your typical burglary. A raiding group entered, cleared the area, and left hauled away with bags, boxes, and luggage. Another episode in the massive redistribution programme, booty and war reparations (Coetzee, 1999, p. 176).

Lurie laments repeatedly that Lucy's reaction to history is self-mutilation:

"Are you seeking to find some sort of personal salvation? Do you believe that suffering in the present will atone for your past crime" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 112)?

According to the study, Lurie can use time-tested paradigms from the past to keep his African neighbour—who has evolved from a traditional kaffir and dogman to a future son-in-law—in his place. Although Lurie sees in Lucy and Teresa a quality of selflessness that allows for negotiation with history, his agonising reflection on a past that was not written on his terms leaves him in dismay: *"What type of child can be sown and give life to? A seed of chaos and anger was sown into a lady with the intention of contaminating her like dog urine.* (Coetzee, 1999, p. 199).

This is the result of Laurie's profound disgust with South Africa's recent past, which is coupled with his agonised awareness of his impending death. Old age is a treat to the fulfilment of sensuality, and grand fatherhood in and of itself is a dread since it signifies the defeat of time: Whom can he hope to

entice into bed with a grandfather—a grandfather—besides a lovely girl? (Coetzee, 1999, p. 217). Lurie's drive towards sensuality is an anxious assertion of life's worth.

Imprisoned as he is in egoism, Lucy's pregnancy can elicit from Lurie only insinuations of mortality, arguing that Lucy hopefully lasts a long time. She will, hopefully, carry on with her routine activities among the flower beds when he passes away. In contrast to Lurie, Lucy symbolises another way of engaging with history. She is victimised as a woman by both the black males and her tyrannical white father. Because she is a lesbian, the three black guys rape her, which bites Lucy much more than if she had been a virgin. Despite having been the victim of rape, Lucy finds it fascinating that her attackers saw her as a target for retaliation.

In her confession to Lurie following the assault, Lucy expresses her intense resentment, saying: "It was done with such particular loathing. That surprised me more than anything else. The remainder was predicted. But why did they despise me so much? I've never even looked at them" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 156). In response to the rape, Lucy made the decision to keep quiet because she considered what had happened to her to be a "purely private matter" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 112). When Lucy sternly orders Lurie to just tell the police what happened to him and promises to tell the police her own tale, it becomes clear that she means what she says. She does not tell them about the attack/rape; instead, she takes through the story she has selected.

According to Graham (2012), Lucy's decision to keep quiet is similar to Laurie's own stance during the Disciplinary Hearing when he declined to admit his sexual harassment case involving Melanie, one of his students. He has lost sight of the importance of Lucy's decision to keep the rape case private. Instead, he believes that the three culprits, including Petrus—whom Lurie is positive was their accomplice on the precise day the murder occurred—should be reported.

The effects on Lucy after experiencing rape alienate her. She cannot go back to work. Lurie visits the market because she is unable to get back to her social life. Along with locking herself in her bedroom, she stays away from her father and friends. Due to their inability to speak with her father, Lucy and Lurie turn to letter writing. Lucy and Melanie are both “Other”. Rape, a crime that is shown in various ways, separates them from everyone else. Additionally, Lurie is certain that Lucy’s choice is influenced by history:

Lucy, Lucy, please, I beg you! You want to make amends for past wrongs, but this is not the way to go about it. You will never again be able to hold your head high if you do not speak out for yourself right now. You might as well pack your things and go (Coetzee, 1999, p. 265).

Despite Lurie’s advice, Lucy is adamant and sticks to her silence. According to the study’s conclusion, Lucy is empowered by remaining silent since she owns her tale, not her assailants. Huggan and Watson (1996) contend that resistance to imperialist language can be achieved by the other through silence. Graham continues by stating that keeping silent can be a strategy for maintaining control. This study shares Graham’s sentiments showing how Lucy still remains in control of her land, though not directly because of her silence.

According to Horrel (2002), Lucy’s body has evolved into a battlefield where the attackers have inscribed the guilt of history. She accepts her situation and acknowledges that her body has been marked while ruminating:

What if ... what if that is the price for staying on? Maybe that is how they see it as well. They believe I owe them something. They consider themselves to be debt-comers. Why should she be let to reside here for free? Perhaps they tell themselves that. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 268).

Lucy resigns to her fate and decides to take life as it comes. Through sexual assault, Lucy uses her body

to pay off centuries’ worth of debts on behalf of white colonisers. The fact that South African whites participated in a brazen and well-thought-out crime against Africa in a variety of ways, whether actively or passively, will prevent them from renunciations that designation for a very long time.

CONCLUSION

In order to survive, people negotiate a variety of agonies, all of which have one thing in common: they alter reality or even take it over and make it into their own reality. Anguish (violence and sexual abuse) has long been a feature of African communities and colonial history in general. It has frequently been employed as a nonpartisan tool. The struggle for emancipation in South Africa’s past served as justification for suffering. Non-violent, passive resistance marked the beginning of the struggle against dominance. This history includes agonies (violence and sexual exploitation). These distorted realities are part of existence in South Africa and, as such, are reflected in how the characters try to negotiate agonies in the selected literary texts. For the characters to survive in the new dispensation, they try to struggle with the historical happenings.

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