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Gendering and Spacing the Trauma of Sexual Assault: A Father's Story, A Daughter's Unspeakable in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

Dr. Banu Akcesme
Department of English Language and Literature, Erciyes University, Turkey

Abstract

Space and gender are two important factors that determine the way trauma is received and experienced. The meaning, expression and treatment of trauma should be considered in the light of cultural, historical and social conditions. John Maxwell Coetzee offers a portrayal of the socio-cultural and historical landscape with the ongoing racial conflicts inherited from the apartheid regime in the post-apartheid South Africa in Disgrace. Coetzee's novel Disgrace can be read as an allegory of the suffering, frustration and muddle of Post-Apartheid South Africa where racial, sexual and gender politics intricately work together. The tragic history of South Africa is marked by systematic oppression, violence, exclusion, fragmentation and dispossession. This paper aims to analyze how the experience and symptoms of trauma of sexual assault are determined by the gender of the victim and the place where the offensive contact and trauma are experienced with references to the three characters in Disgrace, the father David Lurie, the daughter Lucy and the female student Melanie.

Keywords: Trauma; Sexual Assault; Space; Gender; Postcolonialism.

1. Introduction

"The concept of trauma has evolved from its original meaning of physical injury to that of psychological disorder and, more recently, to that of cultural phenomenon" (Arva, 2011). The meaning, expression and treatment of trauma are determined by cultural, historical and social conditions. For instance, while the definition of trauma in the Western world refers to industrialization, mass production, urbanization, capitalism and commodification (Kurtz, 2014), the trauma in Africa is defined in terms of colonialism, slavery, oppression, violence, disarticulation, separation, homelessness and uprootedness.

A trauma narrative is one of the preeminent features of African Literature because of "traumatogenic contexts of African literatures" (Kurtz, 2014). African literature reflects a history of a deep cultural trauma. Gikandi (2004) maintains that "Modern African literature was produced in the crucible of colonialism" (379). Thus, "all aspects of contemporary African writing – who creates it, the language of its expression, its favored forms, its predominant themes, its audience, how it is published, indeed all the conditions of its production and consumption – originate in the context of a massive, continent-wide experience of deep social trauma" (Kurtz, 2014). When traumatic history has influenced the whole nation, it leads to cultural trauma: "members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004). Traumatogenic experiences in recent African history are characterized by "the African slave trade", "colonial rule and its pathologies" especially in apartheid South Africa, power struggles between the East and the West in the post-independence era and the effects of globalized capital which brings about problems such as "structural underdevelopment", "massive poverty, ethnic conflict, civil war, misrule, inadequate health care, environmental degradation and political powerlessness" (Kurtz, 2014).

2. Literature Review and Discussion

John Maxwell Coetzee offers a portrayal of the socio-cultural and historical landscape with the ongoing racial conflicts inherited from the apartheid regime in the post-apartheid South Africa in his postcolonial novel *Disgrace* (1999) where racial, sexual and gender politics intrinsically work together. *Disgrace* holds up a mirror to "the real social, historical, and psychic crisis of postapartheid South Africa" (Deepa, 2016). According to Kossew (2003), *Disgrace* is "a complex exploration of the collision between private and public worlds; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation" (155). Kossew adds that in *Disgrace* "bodies are very strongly linked to power, desire, and disgrace" (156). This paper aims to analyze how the experience and symptoms of trauma of sexual assault are determined by the gender of the victim and the place where the offensive contact and trauma are experienced with references to the three characters in *Disgrace*, the father David Lurie, the daughter Lucy and the female student Melanie. National, ethnic and regional dynamics along with cultural consciousness play an important role in the way the white and the black react to each other, influencing their attitudes, perceptions and actions. Thus, to know the socio-historical setting and the cultural background of the apartheid in Africa can provide insights into understanding the socio-cultural forces at work in human relations.

Penfold (2012) suggests "post-apartheid literature bears witness to the perpetuation of a fundamentally dystopian society" where space is "constructed in terms of exclusion rather than inclusion" (993). During the

apartheid, people were filled with "a chasm of engineered ignorance, misunderstanding, division, illusion, and hostility" (Ndebele, 1994). After the apartheid, the country has gone through transformations, gaining a new structure which has witnessed new struggles for power, territory and domination. In the newly reconstructed relations, it can be observed a shift from the position of "exploiters to victims. From exploited to perpetrator" (Bandici, 2015).

David Lurie, a university professor at the age of 52 and twice divorced, "both perpetrator and victim" of trauma (Oriaku, 2016), is a Dutch descendent, "the Afrikaner[s], the prominent white Belgian decent ethnic group that dominated South Africa politically, socially, and economically, from the colonial era until the end of apartheid in 1994" (Deepa, 2016). David suffers from the problem of sex. His active sexual desire results from the panic he feels because of his advancing age. He becomes obsessed with the act of sexuality as a strategy of resistance against aging. This is the solution he comes up with to stay young, healthy and fit. He has always too much dependent on women to exist, to survive, and to be man since his childhood:

> His childhood was spent in a family of women. As mother, aunts, sisters fell away, they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, a daughter. The company of women made him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer. […] If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life. Then one day it all ended. Without warning his powers fled. […] If he wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her; often, in one way or another, to buy her. He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores. (*Disgrace* 7)

David's seduction of his student Melanie is not his first socially and culturally unacceptable love affair which Oriaku calls "a transgressive act" (147). He picks an exotic woman, Soraya, a Muslim prostitute whom David describes as "honey-brown body", from the catalog offered by the escort agency. He does not refrain from sleeping with the wives of colleagues, a department secretary at university, several prostitutes and tourists he meets at bars. Soraya and Melanie have left deeper trace on him. As in the case of Soraya, David is old enough to be the father of Melanie as well. When Soraya and Melanie are compared in terms of their personalities and physical appearances, it is obvious that David's choice is not random. He has idealized women who are "rather quiet and docile" (*Disgrace* 1) and "compliant, pliant" (*Disgrace* 5). Like Soraya's thin, small body and dark eyes, Melanie is also "small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, and large, dark eyes" (*Disgrace* 11). David's choice of non-western and non-white women reflects double oppression and double victimization women have been exposed to in the hands of patriarchal and colonial institutions in South Africa.

Moffat suggests that "South Africa's socio-political landscape arguably negotiates with rape culture" (105). Moffat explains that the patrirachal and hetero-normative discourse constitutes rape culture which refers to a culture in which "the act of rape is normative, meaning it is essentially a condoned behaviour" (Rozee 2012, qtd in Moffat (2013)). The rhetoric in South Africa also normalizes and legitimazes rape on a national level and women are forced back in the private sphere by accepting subservience, subordination and submissiveness as the essential qualities of femininity. By means of this discourse, perteprators, mostly men, are excused because men are "naturaly incapable of stowing off their rapacious urges or that they have inherited the right to possess women as they see fit in a patriarchal system of ownership" (Moffat, 2013). On the other hand, rape victims, mostly females, are blamed since "they are objects that exist to be used according to male desire, or, by pointing out that they must have in some way asked for it (Moffat, 2013).

David reduces all women around him to pure physicality and appreciates the feminine beauty when accompanied by docility: "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into this world" (*Disgrace* 26). When David becomes aware of the immaturity of Melanie as a sexual partner, "Her hips are as slim as a twelve-year-old's … A child! … No more than a child!" (*Disgrace* 20), he cannot help questioning his sexual desire which is tainted by a sense of quilt: "What am I doing? Yet his heart lurches with desire" (*Disgrace* 20). David takes the advantage of his position of power and privilege to seduce Melanie although he knows she has no willingness or consent to sexual intercourse. Melanie is too young and immature to deal with David and thus fails to resist his sexual advances. David is aware of the sexual offence he commits: "Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" (*Disgrace* 25). He accepts what he has forced her to do is "a mistake, a huge mistake" and he has no doubt that Melanie is "trying to cleanse herself of it, of him" (*Disgrace* 25) just like a rape victim immediately after the forced sexual relation.

Female presence and beauty always suffice to justify and legitimize male passion and lust. This is how David defends himself when Mr. Isaacs, the father of Melanie, comes up to confront him: "It began without any premeditation on my part. It began as an adventure, one of those sudden little adventures that men of a certain kind have … I think of it as a fire. She struck up a fire in me … It was that kind of flame your daughter kindled in me. Not hot enough to burn me up, but real: real fire" (*Disgrace* 166). David, an admirer of Romantics and especially Lord Byron, even goes further to romanticize the fire that is ignited by Melanie. The discourse which positions Melanie as the subject who ignited the fire and David in whom the fire was ignited as the object acted upon constructs Melanie as a tempter and seducer and David as a victim just like Lord Byron, who, in his famous poem, represents Don Juan not as a womanizer but a naïve man who fails to resist female seduction.

David chooses to turn a blind eye to the effects of his action on the other people. Melanie decides to drop the school and quit her acting career, which will ruin her whole life after the sexual trauma she has experienced. Hopefully, she has received wide support from the public, university friends and family, which help her to recover

the male-inflicted trauma and she resumes her life and studies afterwards. Unlike Lucy, Melanie also reports the sexual abuse to the authorities.

David is accused of violating the university code which deals with victimization or harassment on grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, sexual preference, or physical disability and the victimization or harassment of students by teachers. When the committee demands from him statements of confession and regret, David strictly refuses to do so. He has no feeling of remorse, repentance or "self-abasement" (Oriaku, 2016). David's predatory, trauma-inflicting sexual transgression cannot be explained without a reference to the colonial-era tensions in interracial relations since David is the epitome of oppressive, patriarchal, brutal and detested aparthaid regime in South Africa and David's approach towards Soraya and Melanie reflects the attitude of the colonizer towards the indigenous women. "Rape culture is perpetuated by a Western fetishism of Asian women, which defines Asian women as submissive, exotic, and hyper-feminine" (Wong and Santa (1999), cited in Moffat 101) to justify and naturalize the white man's sexual violence against Asians.

David is requested to resign from his position at university when he refuses to make public confession and acknowledge the wrongness of his action by expressing his regret. Baughman (1967) maintains that "lacking confession, the sinner ceases to be a part of that society, or he is so much at odds with it that his functioning is seriously impaired" (539-540). He lost his teaching position and his social status, which is the price he should pay. After arousing widespread social disturbance and being completely rejected and disgraced by the society, David leaves Cape Town to pay a visit to his daughter Lucy, a white lesbian, who lives in a countryside where she runs a smallholding. Lucy, who is "a frontier farmer of the new breed" while her parents are "city folk, intellectuals", has been living with the indigenous in Salem in the Eastern Cape, which can be accepted as the periphery marked by enslavement, indentured labor and cultural denigration. Lucy and David are automatically seen as oppressors here since they are the descendants of colonial power. Lucie works with a black assistant Petrus who is a "representative of legitimate black society" (Poyner, 2000) and he exemplifies how the black people are looking forward to repossessing their lands to regain their sense of self which has been denigrated as a result of enslavement, exclusion, displacement and oppression. Ashcroft *et al.* (2002), Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain in their book *The Empire Writes Back* that "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being: the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (9). *Disgrace* presents a portrayal of a transitional period in South Africa in which racial groups strive to redesign the power relations to empower their positions in a new social order. The violence directed against Lucy demonstrates the attempt of the Black to reastablish their relation with both the land and the self by dislocating the White and ending their dominance.

Three Africans, two men and a boy, rape Lucy and they severely beat, tie and set David on fire, shoot Lucy's dogs to death, and steal David's car. Lucy seems to be anticipating such an attack and has taken some precautions like dogs which she believes can provide deterrence and a rifle she buys from the neighbor which attackers used to kill the dogs. David feels completely helpless in spite of the foreign languages he knows in this "darkest Africa". In South Africa, rape is commonly used as a tool in situations of conflict and committed to overcome the victim's resistance by force or fear. In the report *Sexual Violence against Refugees: Guidelines on Prevention and Response* prepared by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees it is indicated that rape is generally motivated "by a desire for power and domination" and "it is often meant to hurt, control and humiliate, violating a person's innermost physical and mental integrity" (qtd. in Oriaku (2016)). Lucy becomes a victim of "post-apartheid South African violence at the hands of black men" (Bandici, 2015). "Black African agency is configured in the act of rape with devastating implications for a nation in which whites have regarded miscegenation with abhorrence and the black man as the natural rapist" (Poyner, 2000). During the period of apartheid, interracial sexual relationship was forbidden to prevent miscegenation and to protect the purity of superior blood of the White Western.

Rape is an act carried out to intimidate women to control and subordinate them. Moffat regards this rape as a "corrective" rape. Lucy is punished for displaying what is regarded as a masculine behaviour like ownership, autonomy and free expression of sexuality. Lucy is faced with scorn and contempt for daring to take the ownership of property and land as a lesbian who is considered to be unowned. In the rhetoric of rape, men claim they are encouraged to rape those who ask for it. This "patriarchal and heteronormative rhetoric" legitimizes the sexual assault by constructing "rape apologism" and "victim-blaming" discourse (Moffat, 2013). "Rape apology is behaviour that excuses rape on the grounds that the victim in some way "asking for it" by dressing or acting in a certain way, because the victim is asleep or intoxicated and therefore cannot say "no" or, because women have an innate ability to know what they really want and therefore men must show them what this is" (Moffat, 2013). These are the women who try to exist in the public space, "walk around like they own the place" (Moffett, 2006). Moffett explains that when women "visibly demonstrate a degree of autonomy or self-worth that men find unacceptable, they are perceived as sufficiently subversive and threatening as to compel men to 'discipline' them through sexual violence. If rape is believed to be deserved, if a woman is simply being 'corrected' or 'taught a lesson', it is not considered to be a criminal activity" (138).

Along with the end of the Apartheid, the perception and treatment of space has been completely changed since it brought freedom of movement in addition to individual freedoms. It was an opportunity for South Africa to turn into a more democratic, more inclusive and liberated country. However, the past has always impinged on the present. "Despite aiming to include all people regardless of race, nationality, gender and sexuality, South Africa's hopes of true equality have proved largely unobtainable. Old hierarchies and segregations remain" (Penfold, 2012). Lucy, as a lesbian and liberated woman of determination, has displayed courage to build a life of complete independence, freedom and privacy on a land far away from civilization. "Leading analysts of rape have pointed to men's failure to

adjust to South Africa's democratic society as a primary cause. Some men resent women for their perceived gains in achieving powerful positions in politics and business" (Penfold, 2012). The recognition of women as equal persons in the public realm has created "a crisis of recognition" in the private space since "Afrikaner nationalism, the dominant ideology of apartheid had long promoted the role models of female domesticity and male patriarchy" (Penfold, 2012). Although this ideology has been destabilized to some extent by the changes in the political structures, "the underlying construction of masculinity" still prevails (Penfold, 2012).

Penfold points out to the fact that "much reported domestic violence involves female victims, with gender-based violence and rape in the home now among the most prevalent crimes in South Africa" (1004). Petrus in *Disgrace* also suggests that Cape Town is "dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry" (*Disgrace* 202). Moffat sees rape as an act which aims at establishing "male ownership of women" and "masculinity of men" (110). Rape functions as a repressive state apparatus employed to impose compulsory heterosexuality on women by regulating not only their sexual orientations but also their social and cultural lives. The rapists in South Africa function as a disciplining and regulating mechanism by exercising power over a female body: "How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for" (*Disgrace* 115).

David, who seems to be traumatized more than the daughter, forces Lucy to tell the whole story publicly. Although David is ready to situate himself within the space of innocent victimhood as the witness and victim of the violence, Lucy is rejecting this identification. David suffers from self-resentfulness since this act of violence happens just after he is preaching on the nature of male lust and sexual desire which he thinks is an instinct that cannot be controlled, so no one who seeks its gratification should be blamed. Wang and Tang (2013) draws attention to mimicry. David is "mimicked by the blacks, either in the way of rape or by means of the use of the English language and farming skills" (293). What the three natives did to Lucy can be considered the pathology of black skins in white masks as Fanon (2008) discusses in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Literature is full of silenced female characters, and female silence has incited a lot of different interpretations and meanings. Female silence is sometimes idealized as an aesthetic tradition but mostly it has been regarded either as an expression of subordination, subjection, acceptance of disgrace or "an act of revenge, a sign of civil disobedience" or "a display of strength" (Alsop, 2012). Lucy's silence has also been expounded in several ways. Is this silence a post-traumatic symptom or a strategy of resistance and a strange way of asserting subjectivity? Should Lucy's silence be taken as an empowering act or a sign of subordination? Is Lucy a self-consolidating victim who has accepted and internalized her victimization or is she fighting back? Is her silence "an emblem of defeat" (Alsop, 2012) or systematic withholding? Alsop sees Lucie's silence as an "intentional act[s] of female withholding" (85) since she finds herself in states of "disgrace", "ignominy" and "shame". She refuses to tell what has been done to her and she prefers to suffer in silence rather than vindicate herself in public. Similarly, Elleke Boehmer interprets Lucy's "unquestioning acceptance of her suffering" as a proof of victimization (144). Lucy embodies not "only the stereotype of the wronged, muted woman," but also "the abused and to-be-again abused of history. . . the figure of a double silence" (Boehmer, 2006). From Spivak's perspective, Lucy can also be seen as the "historically muted subject of the subaltern woman" (Spivak, 1994). Graham (2005) asserts that Lucy's "refusal to speak about her experience certainly does not empower her and means that her story belongs to her rapists" (265). Attridge (2004), on the other hand, takes it as a "survival strategy of pragmatic accommodation whatever the cost" (111). This is resistant silence.

Voicelesssness is marked by "a significant loss of the characters' ability to express themselves and their trauma" (Bast, 2011). However, Lucy's immediate reaction to the rape should not be interpreted as loss of voice and passivity. Lucy's unwillingness to verbalize the violence cannot be seen as the traumatic silence either. Dalton and Fatzinger (2003) maintain that "For late twentieth-century writers, scholars, and activists, voice achieved through breaking silence has been a prevailing empowerment metaphor for women" (34). Lucie's silence is not vengeful silence but a reactive one. Muteness is what she chooses and prefers since she does not want to be the object of gossip or further investigation. She does not want to be presented and known as the victim since a woman as a victim becomes more vulnerable, which inevitably brings more victimization. What refrains her from articulating this brutal sexual violence is her insight into the possible reception of her account of the gang-rape. Whatever she says, however she explains, her speech will readily be accepted as the speech of guilt. "The burden of guilt" that puts "the pressure on female protagonists to explain is symptomatic of a more deep-seated assumption that they should have to: that they have done something that needs explaining" (Alsop, 2012).

Although David has offered to pay for her to "go overseas […] to Holland" (157), she rejects this. She fights back with her persistent existence. Unlike her father, she has no intention to escape. Her decision to stay and go on living in this threatening countryside is a challenge to male violence and domination. She frustrates both the natives through her decision to stay and the father by giving him no chance to unburden himself by standing by her to fight together to make up for his failure to protect his daughter from this assault. When she asks her father not to report the rape to the police, "David, […] You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me" (99), what she is trying to do is to create her story instead of allowing the male subject to speak on behalf of her and thus becoming a part of his story.

> David: "Why aren't you telling the whole story, Lucy?" Lucy: "I have told the whole story. The whole story is what I have told" (110).

To Alsop, rape is not something narratable to male audience (98). Rape is an act of crime whose representation has historically been characterized by a "rhetoric of elision" (Alsop, 2012). Whitehead maintains that trauma "resists language or representation" since "at the very moment of its reception" it "registers as a non-experience, causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead, 2004). Representation is a key problem since trauma is a

"shattering trope" (Balaev, 2008) that "disarticulates memory, identity and meaning" (Kurtz, 2014). Because trauma brings about "a shattering break or cesura in experience which has belated effects" (LaCapra, 2001), it resists being represented in a narrative form.

For Lucy, rape is "a purely private matter" (*Disgrace* 112) and unlike David, she knows South Africa antropologically well enough not to seek legal protection since she does not trust the capacity of the judicial system to punish the crime and to establish a social order based on equality and justice. Cock (2005) maintains that "increasing numbers of citizens have lost confidence in the capacity of the state to protect them [because of] the widespread perception that the post-apartheid police force is not only unable to maintain order but is itself a source of criminal violence" (798). For this simple reason, rapes go largely unreported in South Africa. David wrongly assumes that there exists a universal law that functions independenly of politics and historical dynamics in South Africa. However, the practices of colonialism and apartheid determine how women have been treated in South Africa rather than David's liberal understanding of the law.

Eastern Cape is a patriarchal society where male-centeredness and domination can strongly be felt. Female speech in this land certainly goes unheard since the male ear remains deaf against the female voice. As Cixous (1976) explains in "The Laugh of the Medusa":

> Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away—that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak—even just open her mouth—in public. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine. (880-1)

Lucy knows that even if this act of raping is made publicly known or reported to the authority, it will not arouse public disturbance in this part of the country. What she will get in Cape Town is indifference and more pressure. It will go nowhere, but deepen her shame and she will be further victimized. She will have to be faced with victim blaming attitudes, stigmatizing, marginalization and court processes. Her existence in Cape Town will be called into question and she will be declared as unwanted. She will have to repeat the story of what has been done to her several times and in return no sympathy will be offered to her; on the contrary, she will be held responsible for this act of violence because it is she who has been persisting in living as a free lesbian on this land which is quite far away from the urban life and populated by the natives although she knows that it is quite dangerous to live in this menacing world as a lonely woman. Thus, she is not coerced into silence, this is not deprivation nor self-imposed subordination. Silence is her protection and her survival strategy.

Although sexual assault and rape-inflicted trauma has always been a common and serious problem in South Africa, there are not active support systems and post-rape care services in South Africa. Thus, survivors of rape are observed to experience emotional difficulties like internal stigma, distress, frustration, anxiety, anger and blame/self-blame. However, Lucy wants to construct her subjectivity as a survivor, not as a rape victim. She refuses to accept kindness from others, she does not seek to receive psychological, emotional and medical support or care for her mental and physical health mostly because rape always creates vulnerabilities for victims both in the immediate and late post-rape period. The rape victim may show a response to the traumatic event "in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance" of symptoms (Caruth, 1995). Some disruptions have been also observed in Lucy's daily functioning such as insomnia, emotional numbing, difficulty of focusing on daily work tasks, visual flashbacks, not leaving home, avoidance of close relations, and loss of trust. However, Lucy is more interested in developing coping and trauma-healing strategies by ignoring the destructive effects of her traumatic experience and its symptoms. She does not want to seem traumatized and depressed. Thus, not telling about the sexual violence is her self-protective strategy. Lucy's silence and her decision to give up on her land and her marriage to Petrus have been criticized by many critics; however, what Lucy is trying to do is to establish "a place of safety" by accepting what she has lost and by seeking "new connections and relationships":

> Models of trauma healing suggest that breaking free from the effects of trauma involves three elements: (1) establishing a place of safety and groundedness, however provisional, for those caught up in trauma, (2) the acknowledgement by trauma victims of their losses, along with an understanding of the causes of their trauma, and (3) the forging of new connections and relationships that can ultimately result in a transformed sense of purpose, meaning and identity. (Kurtz, 2014).

Post-apartheid South Africa has been faced with a lot of thorny problems, conflicts and tension concerning the sharing of the space. Since the land is the main issue and conflict in the colonial discourse, Lucy has decided to give her farm over to African ownership and control on the condition that she retains the control of the house to protect her personal freedom and security. The shift of power from Apartheid to the new South Africa is marked by a shift of ownership. In order to recover from the traumatic feeling as quickly as possible Lucy is ready to sacrifice everything to bring peace back to her state of mind, land and psyche: "David, we can't go on like this. Everything had settled down, everything was peaceful again until you came back. I must have peace around me. I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace" (208)

Lucy accepted to make herself a wife to Petrus who will take over the farm in exchange of his protection although Petrus has already two wives but the law allows the polygynous marriages. What is worse, David believes that it is Petrus who planned the attack to drive Lucy away from the land. Petrus' uninformed absence on the day of the gang rape and the discovered relation of the Pollux, the youngest of the rapists, with Petrus increase the suspicion around Petrus' involvement in this attack. However, this does not stop Lucy from seeking the protection of Petrus at the farm because of her vulnerability. "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" (*Disgrace* 203). When she refuses to leave the land, she knows that she can stay only on the condition that she has to give up on her property along with her social and economic privileges: "Take a moment to consider my situation objectively…. I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here. To whom can I turn for protection, for patronage? … Practically speaking, there is only Petrus left. … at least I know Petrus. I have no illusions about him" (*Disgrace* 203–204). Lucy's decision is interpreted as an act of "compromising and finding accommodation in the new reconfigured South Africa" (Oriaku, 2016) where dispossessed Africans are impatient to get back what has been stolen away from them including the land.

The sexual assault Lucie is exposed to cannot be interpreted merely in terms of male violence and female victimization. Lucy knows indigenous people and can understand their feelings born out of the historical conditions better than her father: "I think they are rapists first and foremost. Stealing things is just incidental. A side-line. I think they do rape" and "They have marked me. They will come back for me" (*Disgrace* 158). Sexual violence and racist violence are closely interrelated, bringing to the surface the dark face of African history. This rape is motivated by racial hatred, vengefulness and anger inflicted by the colonial history, which highlights the fact that space and place play a determining role in the practice and expression of violence. Oriaku defines the act of rape as "the post-rape seed of the multiracial entity birthed by the post-apartheid arrangement" (145). The rapists are not after sexual pleasure but this act of violence is a part of a socio-political struggle. The Black have long been ignored, racially segregated and deprived of access to human rights and social facilities. The burden of the colonial past plays an important role in the prevalence of the evil and violence in the post-apartheid Africa. "*Disgrace* is a confrontation with history. White South Africa is disgraced and punished for its guilt" (Bandici, 2015). Lucy observed that the men raped her "with such personal hatred" that it seems as if "It was history speaking through them […] A history of wrong. […] It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (*Disgrace* 156). Kruger (2009) maintains that South African cities still "bear witness to the condition of geopathology … [t]he problem of place – and place as problem" (243). Cape Town is important in the sense that it is the first city where Black residents were separated from other citizens on the basis of racial segregation and by 1985 it had turned into "the most segregated major city in South Africa" (Saff, 1998).

> The institutionalized policies of separation and apartheid resulted in the systematic discrimination and exclusion of the black people in all facets of economic, political and social life […] racial oppression and exclusion were not the only evils. […] Amongst others, the ideology of patriarchy, and its concomitant paternalistic practices wreaked havoc on women and others, resulting in considerable effects of vulnerabilities, both for women and those who did not conform to the script of white masculinity as was ascribed to them. (Deepa, 2016)

In *Disgrace* violence, oppression and war seem to continue despite the settlement between the White and the Black in the post-apartheid era since the painful memory of colonial, racial and political oppression still persists.

The way Lucy interprets the sexual assault is closely related to the space where the act of rape takes place with its specific historical conditions. She intentionally refrains from individualizing or personalizing the violence inflicted on her and she takes it as a consequence of a group trauma of African people. Thus, what Lucy seeks is not personal and individual recovery nor vengeance nor justice but possibilities for social reconciliation and collective healing from historical traumas as a whole nation. In *Disgrace* Coetzee (2010) emphasized "the necessity of reconciliation and co-habitation of the White and Black South African population" (Deepa, 2016). It is not her body or individuality aimed at as a target of attack but she accepts this raping as the penance white people are expected to pay collectively: "what if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, are tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves" (*Disgrace* 158). Both Lucy and David are forced to "accept humiliation and brutalization as part of the historical guilt of [his] ancestors […] Their personal history is stained with the colonial guilt of apartheid" (Neimneh, 2014).

> "How humiliating," he says finally. "Such high hopes, and to end like this."
>
> "Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start a ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity." (*Disgrace* 205)

When traumatic history has influenced the whole nation or a community, it leads to cultural trauma: "members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004). For Morris, a high rate of crime in South Africa has also discouraged "the formation of a sense of community [and] fostered a general mistrust of fellow residents" (Morris, 1999). Xenophobia is perceived as contributing to the current crime epidemic. African history and collective history is impinging on the present time and in this sexual violence against Lucy, what is dismembered is brought to the memory of the present.

The rape of the daughter leads David to the recognition of his own depravity and hypocrisy, which helps him to transform from a man of hubris into a man of humility who can feel sympathy for the others by giving up acting as an aggressor, possessor and dominator. His sexual affair with Bev whom he finds quite ugly brings humility to him in a real sense.

> The decline in his life is also evident in the turn his sex life has taken; he goes from sleeping with a woman of his choice in a well-appointed hotel room to sleeping on the floor of the animal clinic with the nondescript Bev Shaw, and this at her behest. He also moves from the city (civilization)

to the countryside, loses his car, at some point his car and house are vandalized, and he is disfigured by the rapists. (Oriaku, 2016)

David tries to cure the pain and trauma inflicted by the attackers by helping the dogs in the clinic. This has a therapeutic influence on him since he happens to associate the pain and sufferings of dogs with those of human. As Attridge (2000) states, the sense of disgrace he is filled with somehow obliges him to perform altruistic deeds through which he is seeking redemption and grace.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, in South Africa, David, Petrus and the rapists illustrate the pervasive violence on the basis of gender and race, and they function as the mouthpiece for the "rhetoric that normalizes rape on a national level" (Moffat, 2013). Coetzee has challenged the Eurocentric trauma narrative which completely excludes and ignores the traumatic experiences of the Non-Western by giving voice to the trauma experienced by Melania while representing the trauma of Lucy, a white western woman, as unspeakable and unrepresentable. Coetzee does not only subvert the Eurocentric nature of the trauma narrative but its patriarchal nature has also been called into question. Coetzee attacks the development of male-oriented rhetoric that legitimizes rape and rape culture which perpetuates sexual violence, ownership of the female body, compulsory heterosexuality, and hierarchically constructed binary genders.

Coetzee deconstructs this existing rhetoric of rape in which victims end up with "self-blame and self-regulation" (Moffat, 2013). Unlike the expectations, Melanie and Lucy, the female survivors of sexual assault, do not suffer from disgrace but it is David, a representative of colonial white man, who is filled with shame and ignominy, which urges him to perform altruistic deeds as penance to gain redemption. Lucy and Melanie, by adapting different coping and survival strategies according to their place of living and their gender, exert their power and individuality. While Western Cape where Melanie lives is a densely populated, urban and industrialized area, Eastern Cape where Lucy lives is a traditional home of agricultural local people in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, *Disgrace* illustrates that the way the trauma is lived and expressed cannot be explained only by gender. The space also plays a determining role in the symptoms and experience of the trauma since space bears ideological, historical, sociopolitical and cultural implications along with the collective unconscious.

Many critics see the promise of hope in the end of the novel. Petrus and Melanie offer a slight hope that something is coming up in the postcolonial world of South Africa (Marais, 2003). However, this hope is rendered possible through the victimization of women. It is Lucy who is impregnated by one of her rapists, it is Lucy again who loses her land, independence, privacy and freedom. The compromise and reconciliation between the white and the black is brought to South Africa at the expense of a woman who is positioned as the scapegoat to be sacrificed for the sins of the past.

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