

SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRACY IN FICTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GORDIMER'S JULY'S PEOPLE AND COETZEE'S DISGRACE

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Abstract

Democracy, as the coveted end of the postcolonial struggle of the colonized against the oppressive colonialist, has been targeted in the literature of the newly fledged nation-States. The two Noble laureates, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee, have concentrated their novelistic enterprises on the problem of democracy, its aftermaths, its misrepresentation, and the morbid symptoms of colonization bequeathed to the post-democratic generation. The legacy of apartheid under the guise of democracy is the issue which has received different treatments on the part of these two novelists. The present paper revolves around the dialectical approaches of Gordimer and Coetzee to the plights of the New South Africa. Through the lenses that this comparative study provides, the paper drives at the prerequisite transformative and translative processes through which different socio-racial strata should pass in order to achieve the democratic state.

Key words: Democracy, Coetzee, Gordimer, Hybridity, Third Space

South African democracy is represented critically in the novelistic enterprises of the two Nobel laureates, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee. Although Gordimer and Coetzee belong to the same privileged racial stratum, they approach their shared politico-historical context from different perspectives. Coetzee's stark distinction between rivalry and supplementary fiction best manifests the discrepancies between him and Gordimer. While supplementary fiction draws on history and historical events in order to challenge the context and is thus checkable, rivalry eschews history and weaves its own narrative plot independently; hence, it "evolves its own paradigms and myths . . . going so far as to show up the mythic status of history—in other words, demythologizing history" (Helgesson, 2004, p. 13). Despite their antithetical outlooks, both Gordimer and Coetzee are engaged, in varying proportions, with history and the South African context, since none of them can escape the interstitial space between history and novel. It is in this in-betweenness, unavoidably marked by hybridity, that this paper situates itself in an attempt to pinpoint rapprochement between Coetzee's and Gordimer's novels. While Gordimer's novel apprehends, from the midst of the 1980s interregnum, the

democratic future, Coetzee's *Disgrace* demythologizes the present condition of the post-apartheid State.

Bhabha starts his book, *The Location of Culture* (1994), with the definition of the "beyond" as "neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past . . . but in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation and a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond'" (p. 1). Written back to Defoe's epic narrative of imperialism, *Robinson Crusoe*, *July's People* and *Disgrace* both involve themselves with the ambivalence of the "beyond", in which the sense of disorientation and disturbance mobilizes the sign system of white supremacy in South Africa. Confrontation of the cultural values in the interstices—"the overlap and displacement of domains of differences" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2)—accounts for the violent atmosphere that dominates the two novels. While Gordimer relentlessly strips her white protagonists of their illusory identities to qualify them for the democratic state, Coetzee's novel subjects the characters to the drastic transformative demands of the newly liberated South Africa. The problematizing in-between space where the two racial strata confront the arbitrariness of their codes emerges from dislocation which is common to *July's People* and *Disgrace*. The identity of the displaced protagonists, Maureen and Bam Smale in Gordimer's novel and David Lurie in *Disgrace*, undergoes a translative process. The plight which connects Gordimer's protagonist to Coetzee's over a nearly two-decade period is the crisis and loss of fixed identity. As Dominic Head observes, *July's People* "eschews entirely the depiction of revolution, focusing solely on the issue of identity" (p. 123). Defending Gordimer's narrative against Michael Neill's charge that the novel fails to describe the murderous and chaotic effects of the revolutionary process, Head argues that *July's People* "traces the dissolution of a materially dispossessed white bourgeois family, and . . . in the process, systematically exposes the absence of any sustaining or sustainable values in their lives" (p. 123). This interrogatory process of the Smales' normative codes initiates with the loss of their spatio-temporal identity, the immediate aftermath of their dislocation.

Chased out of the "master bedrooms" (Gordimer, p. 65), Maureen realizes that "She was in another time, place, consciousness. . . . She was already not what she was" (p. 29). The resulting spatio-temporal confusion does not offer her the pleasure of reading Manzoni's *The Betrothed*, which entails "the false consciousness of being within another time, place and life" (p. 29). Likewise, the course of *Disgrace* brings Lurie to the bitter reality of his being "out of touch, out of date" (Coetzee, p. 13). Aware of his disgraced state and knowing the fact that he is "no longer marketable" (p. 88), he concludes "No country, this, for old men" (p. 190). Accordingly, his opera project, *Byron in Italy*, on the final days of Lord Byron and his beloved in Italy, transforms from a high-flown tragedy into a grotesque farce. Besides, the destabilization of roles and titles—another fulcrum of identity—is the other common aspect of the two novels. Gordimer denudes her characters of their social and familial roles; thereby a progressive state of estrangement cracks between the family members. Referring to the Smales' loss of their status and traditional roles, Bazin opines: "Their marital relationship is destroyed by this breakdown of

their social order . . . without their roles, they seem to have no self or identity" (p. 159). Maureen no longer bears her name; she is not "his wife", nor "their mother" (p. 105). Not knowing "to whom to speak these days, when he spoke to her" (p. 104), Bam reduces Maureen to the indefinite pronoun "her", since "with 'her' there was no undersurface of recognition" (p. 105). Likewise, in the ensuing "explosion of roles" (p. 117), Maureen feels her husband as "some botched imagining of his presence in circumstances outside those the marriage was contracted for" (p. 98). For her, Bam becomes no more than "a heavy blond man" (p. 129), unmanned at the loss of his car and unarmed at the theft of his gun. The chaotic world of the interregnum has not left impervious the dyadic relationship between the mother and her children. When Bam rolls over onto his face and cries out of helplessness before his sons, the children find their mother's expression closed to them; "Even her body—so familiar in the jeans . . . the T-shirt stretched over the flat small breasts that were soft to lie against—they knew . . . that to touch was forbidden them"(p. 145).

The same sense of estrangement that the Smales experience in July's primitive village is manifested on a much larger scale in Coetzee's post-apartheid novel. A divorced man of fifty two, Lurie does not bear any familial responsibility; his only role as a father is challenged in the traumatic gang rape of his daughter, Lucy. Pamela Cooper views the gap between Lucy and her father from the vantage point of gender: "Lucy's only recourse is to withhold the narrative of *her* experience of rape from the men, notably her father, who seek to know and to control its interpretation" (p. 32). Not only is Lurie deprived of his patriarchal role to interpret but he is also bereft of having any authority or influence over Lucy and her plight. As a father, he fails to persuade Lucy to lay charge with police against the rapists. Lucy distances herself from her father by constantly referring to the event as "a purely private matter" (p. 112), in which Lurie has no right to interfere. In this way, like Gordimer, Coetzee undermines all the white roles and titles in the crude zone of racial encounter.

The other rapprochement between Gordimer's supplementary narrative and Coetzee's rivalry fiction is the metamorphosis that occurs to the protagonists both in terms of humanity and sexuality. The liberal Maureen stoops so low to loot the pharmacy attacked by the freedom fighters (p. 38). In July's kraal, she brings herself to drown the little kittens in a bucket of water (p. 89). Similarly, when Bam kills two piglets for the villagers, he comes to a new understanding of himself as a killer (p. 78). What Gordimer anticipates in *July's people* regarding the reversal of roles and titles gets concretized in Coetzee's scandalized university professor. Lurie who is outcast from the society because of sexually harassing his student, a coloured girl, undergoes the same drastic process of dehumanization. He declines from a socially prestigious position to "a dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan*" (p. 146).

The theme of dehumanization finds a fuller analysis in Coetzee's narrative which decodes and recodes Lurie's identity in the intervening space between human beings and animals. The relatively insignificant presence of animals in *July's People* finds a more detailed expression in *Disgrace* to the extent that Lurie's identification with and sympathy towards animals, the two Persian sheep and the abandoned dogs, accords them a crucial role. While Maureen relentlessly drowns the little kittens,

Lurie develops a more sympathetic attitude towards animals, mainly the outcast dogs which share with him the same state of disgrace. Hence, *Disgrace* takes a step further than *July's People* in bringing animals on the scene of human life. The eccentric professor is chased out of human society into the realm of animals in the countryside; animals which are abandoned, dying or dead. Tom Herron observes "Animals may mean nothing, may *be* nothing in the larger world of the novel . . . but it is precisely as a consequence of their lack of power that they come to assume an exemplary, transformative status" (p. 472). The significance of the abandoned dogs in the novel, however, is more than being powerless entities. Rather than powerlessness, they signify nothingness. This state of nothingness is the starting point to which Lucy refers in order to define her predicament: "To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity" (p. 205). Having this interpretation of animals in mind, one can argue that the dehumanized picture of Maureen with which *July's People* ends signifies her state of nothingness from which she ironically attempts to escape. This reading draws a contrast between Maureen and Lucy as two completely different figures, albeit of the same gender.

The course of *Disgrace* takes Lurie to this dog-like state which is the first "transformative status", as Herron has reflected. Referring to Lurie's "becoming animal", Herron quotes Deleuze and Guattari, characterizing Kafka's becoming's animal:

To become animals is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all significations, signifiers and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of non-signifying signs. (qtd. in Herron, 2005, p. 481)

Therefore, Lurie's sympathy and identification with the outcast dogs imply the gradual decodification of the sign system in which he used to define himself and construct his identity. When Herron describes Lurie as "curiously orphaned, with no parents, no siblings, no friends, few relationships of any sort" (p. 482), he is actually speaking of his deterritorialized state, which is "a realm of nonsignification" (p. 482). It is out of dread of facing such a realm that Gordimer's protagonist escapes, unable to bear the insurgent consequences of cultural transformation in July's kraal. Accordingly, while Maureen's fate at the end of the novel remains indeterminate, Lurie's moves towards its reterritorialization phase. Coetzee's novel ends up with the emergence of a new sort of relationship for Lurie. He changes into a visitor:

Will you come in and have some tea?
She [Lucy] makes the offer as if he were a visitor. Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start. (p. 218)

This scene has received ambivalent interpretations. Rita Barnard opines that "visitorship expresses the hope of some new annunciation or intervention—the arrival, perhaps of an unexpected grace" (p. 219). By contrast, Attridge emphasizes the irony that the word "visit" and its cognates bring to the text by this point in the novel. He reads this scene in the light of the previous appearances of the word in the novel. In a footnote, he explains that "the word is repeatedly in connection with the attack (2004, p. 107, 115, 159). . . . Lurie is also described as a "visitor" when he calls on Mr. Isaacs and his family" (p. 179). It should be noted, however, that the ironical tone Attridge detects and accentuates in the word "visit" as well as the affirmative element that Barnard brings out both confirm the mobility of the sign "visit" which occurs in the enunciative process of the new South African culture. In the conflictual and incommensurable event of the rape, the rapists are the unwelcomed visitors who intrude upon Lucy, projecting their angst and anger. Likewise, Lurie's intrusion on Mr. Isaacs and his family is a reluctantly received visitorship. In the final scene, however, there is a change in the connotation of "visit", as there has occurred a change in Lurie and his relationship with Lucy. He approaches her no longer as an intruder to impose his fatherly or patriarchal presence, but as a friendly visitor. In this context, visitation acquires a totally different meaning. Therefore, dismissing the new signification of visitorship in the last scene as irony and reading it in the line of its previous cognates is actually overlooking the metamorphosis that Lurie has experienced by the end of the novel. Missing the point that Lucy offers and Lurie appreciates the "new start" as a visitor, which itself initiates new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, Attridge tentatively locates Coetzee's "solutions" to the problems of his era in "the production of art and the affirmation of human responsibility to animals":

My argument, however, is that one of the novel's striking achievements (which is also one of the reasons for its undeniable rebarbateness) lies in its sharp insistence that neither of these [solutions] constitutes any kind of answer or way out, while at the same time it conveys or produces—in a way that only literature can do—an experience, beyond rationality and measured productivity, of their fundamental value. (2004, p. 177)

As a visitor, Lurie no longer assumes the authoritative position of one who interprets and inflicts a specific sort of signification on the course of events. Translating Barnard's reading from its mystic-religious base, connoted by "annunciation", into a postcolonial lexicon, one can locate Lurie on the Bhabhalian liminal or Third Space; his new state as a visitor opens him and his psycho-racial status up to an unavoidable intervening process of the postcolonial state. Unlike the inflexible Maureen in *July's People*, the disgraced professor yields to the negotiative policy proffered him by the new politico-historical context in South Africa. His new role as a visitor, a mobilized presence, obliterates all the previously held sexist and racist titles and instead accords him the indefinite and mobile position of the self existing side by side and interacting mutually with the Other.

The other rapprochement between Gordimer's and Coetzee's novels is the theme of desexualization. Although sexuality is an important aspect of *July's People*, Gordimer treats it as one of the many dimensions of the whites which gets

destabilized in the interregnum. Folks states that "Both Maureen and Bam are desexualized in a way that reveals the dependence of their sexuality on power" (1998, p. 122). Head is of the view that "the political revolution must also be a sexual one, since the terms of personal interaction will be changed. . . . Maureen . . . clearly associates the destruction of the political hegemony and its manifestations with a metonymical destruction of the site of bourgeois sexuality" (p. 127). Away from the privacy of their bourgeois life and preoccupied with daily survival, the "culture shock"—Head's term (p. 124)—the Smales have undergone had crowded out any desire in them. The only time they make love is in the presence of their children in the one-room mud hut and in "the nightly intimacy of cockroaches, crickets and mice" (p. 80). Moreover, the Smales have lost their physical attractions. Getting bald in his twenties (p. 60), Bam is known by the smell of his sweaty sleep behind him, the sour smell which daily showers and baths had kept away in their suburban life (p. 103). Maureen also loses the delicacy of her fingers with half broken nails; "she was lean and rough-looking—the hair on her calves, that had always been kept shaved smooth, was growing back in an uneven nap after so many years of depilation" (p. 89). In such a state, "The baring of [her] breasts was not an intimacy but a castration of his sexuality and hers" (p. 90).

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee makes sexuality the basic fulcrum of his character's identity to the extent that one can easily claim that metamorphosis is eroticized in Lurie's story. The process of Lurie's desexualization initiates when his regular contacts with the Muslim prostitute, Soraya, break down. Not knowing how to solve his sexual problem, he first thinks of castrating himself as is done to animals (p. 9). However, finding that this heart still "lurches with desire" (p. 20), he decides to seduce other women, the last of whom is his student, Melanie. Expelled from the university after the scandal, he goes to Lucy's smallholding, where he comes to a much clearer view of his ex-centricity. This state of dislocation brings about drastic changes to Lurie's sexuality, which is exemplified in his affair with Bev Shaw, "a dumpy, bustling little woman with black freckles, close-cropped, wiry hair, and no neck" (p. 72). Cooper argues that "By having sex with Bev, in the operating room where she destroys animals, Lurie seals his movement from desire to dissolution" (36). Bev's sturdy and waistless body takes the place of "the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs. . . . This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this" (p. 150). Attridge also regards Lurie's "inconsequential sex" with Bev as the "exhaustion" of this aspect of his life (p. 179). Lurie's state of dissolution, symbolized in his dozing off in Katy's cage—an old abandoned dog—is further enhanced by the loss of his physical attraction during the traumatic rape of his daughter. He is disfigured to "the dunce with the funny ear, the uncut hair, the rumpled collar" (p. 190). Unable to change Lucy's mind who wants to go under the protection of "fatherly Petrus" (p. 162), the black man who was once her watch dog and has now become her neighbor, Lurie finds himself a totally castrated man. It is this state of total emasculation of white patriarchal authority that Gordimer anticipates in *July's People* when Maureen bares her "shallow breasts" (p. 89).

The anticipatory theme of the subversion of white authority is best dramatized in the ending scene of *July's People*, showing the decoded Maureen running towards an unknown helicopter "like a solitary animal at the season when

animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival, the enemy of all that would make claims of responsibility" (p. 160). Speaking of Maureen as "historically entrapped", Clingman asserts that "she is running from old structures and relationships . . . towards her revolutionary destiny. She does not know what that destiny may be, whether it will bring death or life. All she knows is that it is the only authentic future awaiting her" (p. 203). Such an essentially optimistic reading of Maureen's flight and her "authentic future" overlooks the fact that Maureen is in actuality fleeing from her already revolutionized state. Shocked and unable to cope with the new state of affairs, she runs instinctively, not consciously, towards the helicopter, out of helplessness. Because of her inadaptability, Maureen is forced to leave the historical scene, like Mehring, the industrialist owner in *The Conservationist* (1974), who is chased out of his farm at the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1970s. This similarity between Maureen and Mehring reads against Abdul R. Janmohamed's view of Maureen's escape; compares Maureen's escape to Rosa in *Burger's Daughter*: "in both cases withdrawal [from history] leads to a further development of the protagonist's consciousness and to a realization that one cannot escape history. Rosa . . . returns to accept her destiny by going to prison and Maureen's escape from the village is in fact simultaneously a return to the war, and recognition of her own historical fate" (p. 144). However, Rosa's flight is a progressive step bringing her to the consciousness requisite for fighting to gain civil rights for all-whites and blacks. In contrast, the self-centered Maureen is taking flight from the reality in which she should share commodities, symbolized in their car and gun, with the other whom she and her system had denigrated all the while. Therefore, it is from the collaborative nature of the interregnum, entailing a new recoding of identity, roles and titles, that Maureen helplessly runs away. In this light, Richard I. Symer's view of Maureen's flight seems more pertinent. He is of the view that Maureen's escape objectifies "the polar extremes of uncertainty in the mind of the South African white who, unable to see "his place, 'in history' at this stage", exists in a no-man's land between the hope of somehow being lifted out of the river of history and the obsessive fantasy of final peace in its dark, silent depths" (p. 78). The indeterminacy of Maureen's fate at the end of the novel signifies the historically bound vision of Gordimer as a historical witness. As a result, the novel runs short of the recodification process in the ambivalent and interstitial space of the racial contact in July's kraal. It takes nearly two decades till the destiny of the white escapee is narrativized in the literary context of South Africa. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, thereby, emerges from this politico-historical necessity, which shares with *July's People* the underlying theme of violent dispossession and dislocation.

What *July's People* metaphorizes in its breathtaking depiction of the predicament of white authority during the interregnum is just a glimpse of the prospective problematic state of affairs novelized in *Disgrace*. Unlike Gordimer's supplementary narrative that leaves no space for the uncompromising whites, Coetzee's *Disgrace* demythologizes white history by making it yield to the translative process offered by the democratic state. Therefore, while Maureen Smale vacates the historical field, unable to reinstate her position in the revolutionary era, David Lurie is doomed to adapt for the sole survival justifications. In Barnard's

words, "A crisis of definitions, relationship and responsibilities lies at the heart of *Disgrace*" (2003, p. 206). The necessity of adjustment and metamorphosis is the theme that Gordimer's penetrating psycho-historical testimony implies in its critical approach to Maureen's flight. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, on the other hand, is a full novelization of this transformative urge. Accordingly, what distinguishes *July's People* from *Disgrace* is the different reactions of the protagonists to the inevitable ambivalent space which leaves no code or rigid sign system impervious. The white liberal Maureen is chased out doubly: once out of her suburban dominance and the other time out of the black kraal. Her failure to reconcile with the new situation may be taken as the limitation of Gordimer's historical insight which decodes white supremacy but fails to recode white position due to the indeterminate atmosphere of the 1980s. Coetzee's rivalry novel, however, recounts the painstaking ups and downs the whites, having no escapade, have passed through in the following two decades. Envisaged as such, *Disgrace* can be read as the continuation of Gordimer's narrative. This continuity hints at both limitation and unavoidability of history in a writer's work regardless of his/her stand to the discourse of history. David Lurie can be Maureen's descendent who is forced to stay and recode his identity, albeit not in the city centre, but in a countryside. This process of recodification manifests the way codes get problematized in the interstitial space not only between the two races, but also between two temporal phases of the past and the present, as Attridge has detailed, as well as between the two genders, an attempt undertaken by Pamela Cooper:

Lurie's mobilized codes of identity are reflected in his new role as the grandfather of a racially hybrid offspring, Lucy's child. The dissolution of his previous codes and their replacement by new ones is best symbolized in the last scene where he ponders on Lucy's future: "from within her will have issued another existence. . . . So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten" (p. 217). Lucy's hybrid child resembles her to the ambivalent figure of July in Gordimer's novel. What enhances this resemblance is the fact that both Lucy's offspring and July have emerged out of oppression: Lucy's fetus is the incarnation of the resurfaced anger of the oppressed blacks; July is the outcome of racial discrimination. This shared root historicizes Coetzee's rival novel: "It was history speaking through them [the rapists]. . . . A history of wrong. . . . It came down from the ancestors" (p. 156). One of the ancestors of the rapists can be Gordimer's July, the ex-servant, who upon gaining gradual authority starts maneuvering his newly achieved domination over the helpless Smales. To his wife, he states self-assuredly, "If I say go, they must go. If I say they can stay . . . so they stay" (p. 83). In the new situation, he dares to delegitimize Maureen's liberalism, calling himself her "boy". The liberal Maureen realizes her deep-rooted racism behind her efforts to train July to drop the 'master' for the ubiquitously respectful 'sir'" (p. 52). As an emerging master, July appropriates Bam's car, prohibits Maureen from mingling with his wife and mother and, as the last deathblow, dismisses her and her demands by berating her in his native language. When Maureen accuses July of imagining himself "a *big man*, important" who wants to drive around like "a gangster" (p.153), she is actually predicting the violence-ridden atmosphere which would prevail in the new South

Africa as the result of the oppressed seeking the fulfillment of their long-held dreams of power. Hence, both in his ambivalence and anger July presages the black rapists in Coetzee's rivalry novel. This semblance is further enhanced when in the two novels it is the blacks who steal the white's car; July appropriates Bam's car; similarly, the black rapists steal Lurie's vehicle.

The other black figure in Coetzee's novel is the newly empowered Petrus whose gradual development of authority reminds us of July. Starting as Lucy's dogman, he evolves into the gardener, the farmer, and later on the owner of his own establishment as well as Lucy's. Unlike July who is still hesitant about his passbook, needing "someone—he didn't yet know who—to tell him": burn it, let it swell in the river" (p. 137), Petrus "does what needs to be done" (p. 116). Lurie is no more in the position of ordering Petrus: "Petrus is no longer, strictly speaking, hired help. . . . Petrus is a neighbour who . . . sells his labour under contract . . . and that contract makes no provision for dismissal on grounds of suspicion" (p. 116-117). As a consequence, Petrus can be July's descendent who develops his dominance in the new South Africa. The fact that Petrus might have a part in Lucy's rape in an attempt to force her to contribute her land accentuates his semblance to July, who is, in Paul Rich's terms, "a mediator between the two different cultures. . . . He too is an operator, a 'survivor' who has learned the urban rules of operating and manipulating situations to maximum personal advantage" (p. 379). July prohibits Maureen from mingling with his mother and wife, fearing that Maureen might disclose his affair with the town servant, Ellen. Besides, July's identity as Martha's husband defined in terms of the money he sends home unveils his utilitarian urge in saving his white masters; therefore, the Smales' problematic condition has brought July's identity to a crisis as well. The other corresponding point between July and Petrus is the former's appropriation of the Samels' car under the excuse of supplying them with food; Petrus similarly appropriates Lucy's smallholding in return for her security in the area.

Lucy's agreement to marry Petrus can be viewed as the kind of destiny into which Gordimer's escapee, Maureen, would have been forced, had the helicopter not landed there. Here there is a discrepancy between Maureen and Lucy. Maureen is pushed into the countryside following the precarious atmosphere of the city; Lucy, however, has deliberately chosen the peasantry lifestyle. This is the point upon which Lurie reflects: "Curious that he and her mother, cityfolk, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share" (p. 61). Accordingly, Maureen can be Lucy's frustrated great grandmother who had found no relief in the salvinic arrival of the helicopter. Maureen's daughter, Gina, who adopts a black friend in July's kraal and tries to learn their language is the Africanized prototype who reincarnates in the character of Lucy in *Disgrace*.

Another rapprochement between Gordimer's and Coetzee's novels is the hypocrisy and impotence of white liberalism. Just as Maureen's liberalism is challenged and delegitimated in July's kraal, Lurie's hidden racism resurfaces in the gang rape. Therefore Quayam's observation regarding the liberal Smales can also be applied to Coetzee's character:

Although apparently willing to be egalitarian and fair-minded in their interaction with blacks, and establish personal relationship with them, the liberals are not prepared to relinquish their privileged status in society, urbanized life style, and middle class values or sympathize with the black consciousness . . . therefore all their promises and gestures, whether political or personal, are counterfeit and sham. (1995, p. 45)

In July's village, Maureen comes to a better understanding about her relationship not only with July but also with her black lady servant when she was a child. She realizes that the relationship she used to define as friendship was not more than that of master-slave, frozen in the "photograph of the white schoolgirl and the black woman with the girl's school case on her head" (p. 33). She understands that July's being correct was always her idea of him as a servant, not as another entity having equal human and civil rights. She finds out that "the special consideration she had shown for his dignity as a man, while he was by definition a servant, would become his humiliation itself" (p. 98). In July's kraal, Maureen realizes that she has had no role in his life: "But for himself—to be intelligent, honest, dignified for *her* was nothing; his measure as a man was taken elsewhere and by others. She was not his mother, his wife, his sister, his friend, his people" (p. 152). The same sense of racism re-emerges in Lurie when he catches Pollux, one of the three rapists, peeping at Lucy in the bathroom. Beating and calling him Swine! he blurts out "Phrases that all his life he has avoided . . . : *Teach him a lesson, Show him his place*" (p. 206). It is with the same racist surprise and reluctance that he conveys Petrus's proposal for marriage to Lucy.

The last important corresponding point between *July's People* and *Disgrace* is the linguistic defamiliarization which Maureen and Lurie both face in the countryside. Displacing the white escapees in July's village, Gordimer defamiliarizes her characters linguistically. As dispossessed whites who have taken shelter among black people, the Smales find themselves emasculated in communication with their human surrounding. The only way through which they may survive was that is July, whose English is a hybrid one learned in kitchens, mines and factories. Their linguistic estrangement makes them more dependent on the ex-servant. For Maureen, the only way to survive is lost when in their last confrontation July scolds her in his native language. Outraged with anger, July's English proves inefficient and insufficient to express his feelings and thoughts, therefore, he shifts to his native tongue which marginalizes Maureen linguistically. Finding herself totally helpless and dependent on July, Maureen decides to escape when she loses her only support.

The same linguistic defamiliarization occurs to Lurie when he is locked up in Lucy's bathroom during the rape. "He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa" (p. 95) Barnard aptly informs of the multiglossic context of the Eastern Cape, where Lucy's farm in the novel is located (p. 210). In this context, Lurie is disabled linguistically. Thinking about Petrus's story, Lurie realizes 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. Pressed into the mould of English, Petrus's story would come out arthritic, by gone" (p. 117). Reflecting on this paragraph which portrays the gradual demise of the colonial's linguistic and cultural authority, Barnard observes: "The modulation from articulations to articulateness to articulatedness introduces a range of connotations crucial to the novel's themes, such as expression, adaptability, connection and relatedness" (p. 214). Put in another register, Lurie's linguistic castration signifies the arbitrariness and inadequacy of his cultural codes and formulas. Coetzee dramatizes this lack by putting the speech of the orator in Petrus's party in a guise of obscurity for Lurie who cannot comprehend any word. Barnard views "the untranslated oration" as a hint that "cultural work . . . is yet to be done" (p. 216). This cultural work demands the mobilization of linguistic codes which have been used as a means to oppress and silence the other. This mobility is the enunciative base of culture which is always set on a translative track in a democratic State. Maureen's inability to recode herself linguistically puts her on flight; but Lurie is impelled to face and accept the insufficiency of his communicative powers and thereby to yield to a drastic and unavoidable adaptation.

Unlike Maureen whose displacement detaches her completely from the world of arts and is thus discouraged from reading the book she has brought with herself, Lurie soaks himself more and more in his opera project on the last years of Byron. With Lurie's gradual descent into disgrace and abandonment, the high flown tragic opera turns into a grotesque farce. In his wrecked house in Cape Town, he pitches the work long after Byron's death and shows his beloved, Teresa, in her middle ages as "a dumpy little widow" (p. 181). He deprives Teresa of her aristocratic beauty: "With her heavy bust, her stocky trunk, her abbreviated legs, she looks more like a peasant, a *contadina* than an aristocrat" (p. 181). He replaces the rich and profound sound of the piano with the ridiculous Plunk-Plink-Plonk of a little seven-stringed banjo he had bought for Lucy when she was a child (p. 184). Hence, his serious tragic opera turns out to be a comic enterprise which is made further grotesque by entering a dog on the amorous scene. This drastic transformation concretizes the way Lurie, aware of his predicament in South Africa, is influenced by his context as a displaced figure.

Gordimer's novel ends up with the white escapee who sacrificing others for her survival; Maureen runs towards the unknown helicopter. If there are whites in the helicopter, she brings destruction on the blacks who have sheltered her and her family; and if the helicopter holds freedom fighters, she has brought death on herself as well as her family. Coetzee's rivalry narrative, however, depicts the need to sacrifice the self for the sake of others. Accordingly, *Disgrace* ends with Lurie giving up to death his beloved dog in Bev Shaw's clinic.

Despite the discrepancies between Gordimer's critical concern with the major politico-historical events of the 1980s and Coetzee's treatment of a marginalized and scandalized figure in the new South Africa, *July's People* and *Disgrace* can be read as complementary visions of democracy in the new South Africa. The corresponding points between Gordimer's supplementary novel and Coetzee's rivalry narrative show the thematic continuation between the two novels. These comparisons, on the one hand, hint at the depth as well as limitation of Gordimer's historical insight as a testifier of her context; on the other hand, they

drive at the historical base of Coetzee's enterprise. Besides, the common theme of dislocation of the whites and its transformative aftermaths writes back to Defoe's imperialistic Robinson Crusoe, hence a stylistic rapprochement between the two writers. Reading *July's People* and *Disgrace* in this perspective shows South African democracy as a problematic, violence-stricken State predicted by Gordimer and metaphorized by Coetzee. The reflection of history in *July's People* and the way Coetzee refracts it in *Disgrace* both embody the necessity of a retranslation and re-evaluation of black as well as white codes, if the society is to reach a state of stability, cherishing a national unity. The inevitable translative process is concretized in Maureen's desperate flight from the historical scene as well as in Lurie's adoption of a sacrificial and non-imposing policy in his relationships with the other race.

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