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白人女性的困境及出路探寻:

《内陆深处》和《耻》的女性主义和后殖民主义解读

White Women's Predicaments and Quest for a Way Out
--An Interpretation of *In the Heart of the Country* and *Disgrace*
from the Perspectives of Feminism and Postcolonialism

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Abstract

In the Heart of the Country and *Disgrace* are novels created by J.M. Coetzee in different periods. The former is mainly about the life of a white spinster Magda on the distant farm in the colonial South Africa while the latter tells about the dilemma of the whites in post-apartheid South Africa. These two novels are rather distinct in historical background, narrative techniques and thematic significance. However, the major white female characters Magda and Lucy in these two novels are both raped by black males in racial hatred. This thesis argues that their suffering illustrates the predicament shared by all white women in South Africa due to their gender and race. White women in the colonial and apartheid systems often found themselves in a position of in-between. On one hand, they were conferred upon privileges inaccessible to the blacks, but on the other hand, they were the Other and the subordinate in relation to white males. Moreover, the racial privilege involves white women in racial hostility and latent danger. Under her father's sovereignty Magda is oppressed. But the black servants view her as her father's accomplice and hold secret hatred against her. Lucy is also regarded as his property by her father who is dominated by a patriarchal ideology. She chooses a farming life to get away from him. But she is then threatened by the black violence resulting from the blacks' dissatisfaction with the redistribution of wealth and land led by the new government. White women are oppressed in the system of hierarchy, but it also offers protection for them. Once their privilege is deprived, white women become powerless in racial conflicts and are easy to be taken as the objects of revenge, and thus fall to be historical scapegoats.

Rape then in the postcolonial context is no longer mere sexual violence. It is politically engaged and becomes a racial war where the female body is the battleground. On one hand, rape is a tool of racial oppression. White males misuse black women to satisfy their sexuality and to devastate black males. Moreover, black

masculinity is constructed by the whites as sexually rapacious and threatening to justify white authority. On the other hand, black males rape white women to take revenge upon the whites, especially white males. Hendrik is humiliated by Magda's father who violates his wife. After her father dies, Hendrik vents his hatred on Magda and rapes her in rage. The unmarried Lucy in post-apartheid South Africa falls to be fair game and finally is raped by three strange black men. Both Magda and Lucy quest for a way out of their predicaments, but they end differently due to the historical, political and personal factors. Magda is trapped in loneliness until her death while Lucy initiates a new relationship with the locals, which indicates a possibility of racial reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Key Words: white women; predicament; rape; scapegoats; quest

摘要

《内陆深处》和《耻》是库切创作于不同时期的两部小说。《内陆深处》主要是关于南非殖民时期一个白人老处女在偏远农场的生活，而《耻》则讲述了种族隔离制度废除后南非白人的生存困境。这两部小说在历史背景、叙事技巧及主题意义方面都存在较大差异，但两部小说中的白人女性玛格达和露西都遭到了充满种族仇恨的黑人男性的强暴。本文认为，她们的遭遇揭示了南非白人女性由于自身的种族和性别共同面临的困境。在殖民及种族隔离时期的南非，白人女性处于一种中间人的位置。一方面，白人女性被赋予种族特权而凌驾于黑人之上。另一方面，相对于白人男性而言，白人女性处于一种他者地位。而且白人女性拥有的种族特权往往将她们置于黑人的敌意和潜在危险中。玛格达在父亲的统治下受到压迫，但黑人仆人仍视她为其父亲的同谋，并对她暗生恨意。露西也被父权制意识浓厚的父亲视为男性的附属品。由于不满新政府领导下的财富和土地的再分配，黑人暴力袭击白人事件愈演愈烈。露西为逃离父亲选择农场生活，却因此置身于这种暴力的威胁中。白人女性在等级制度下受到压迫，却也得到保护。失去特权的白人女性在种族冲突中毫无抵抗之力，常常沦为种族报复的对象，成为历史的替罪羊。

在后殖民语境中强奸不仅仅是一种性暴力，还具有政治意义。强奸成为种族之间的战争，女性的身体成为战场。一方面，强奸是种族压迫的工具。白人男性侵犯黑人女性以满足自身欲望并打击黑人男性。同时，为了使种族压迫合理化，黑人男性被构建成性欲旺盛的危险形象。另一方面，黑人男性为了报复白人，尤其是白人男性而强奸白人女性。亨德里克因为妻子被玛格达的父亲侵犯而受到羞辱。玛格达的父亲死后，他将仇恨发泄到玛格达身上，一怒之下强暴了她。而单身的露西在种族隔离制度废除后的南非沦为黑人男性的猎物，并最终被三个陌生的黑人男子强奸。玛格达和露西都为摆脱自身的困境探寻出路，但在历史、政治及个体因素的影响下出现不同结果。玛格达孤独终老，而露西与当地黑人建立起一种新的关系。这种关系预示了在种族隔离制度废除后的南非实现种族和解的可能性。

关键字：白人女性；困境；强奸；替罪羊；探寻

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Introduction

John Maxwell Coetzee is a celebrated South African novelist, linguist and literary critic. He has achieved great accomplishments by winning South Africa's highest literary honor--Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award--three times and the Booker Prize twice. The Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to him in 2003 makes him the second South African writer to be so honored besides Nadine Gordimer. David Attwell speaks highly of Coetzee's novels and comments that his novels are "a unique combination of intellectual power, stylistic poise, historical vision and ethical penetration" (*South Africa and the Politics of Writing* 1). Not fitting into the dominant social realism of South African writing, Coetzee's fiction is characterized as allegorical writing. His novels, especially the early ones, are often ambiguous about the temporal and geographical backgrounds, and his narrative techniques are deeply influenced by modernism. This often involves his writing in controversy in South Africa because it has been a prevalent idea since the 1960s that the writing in South Africa ought to be engaged in history and politics due to the specific political situation of the country. Those who criticize Coetzee argue that his writing is an irresponsible escape from the historical reality of South Africa. However, being realistic is never the only way for a writer to be responsibly engaged with history. Coetzee's novels are statements of opposition to oppression including, but not limited to, the racial oppression in South Africa and imply a universal significance.

In the Heart of the Country published in 1976 is the second novel of Coetzee and illustrates his unusual narrative techniques. The novel is written in the form of a diary of a white spinster on an isolated farm from the view of first person and the narrative techniques of montage and stream of consciousness are widely applied. There is no explicit illustration of the historical background in the novel, but the airplane and the message written in two languages at the end of the novel imply that the story happens around the late nineteenth century in the colonial South Africa. The female narrator

Magda lives on an isolated farm in the desolate desert with her domineering father and their submissive black servants. The arrival of the beautiful bride Anna of their servant Hendrik breaks the suppressed life on the farm. Magda's father seizes Anna to satisfy his sexual desire. Indignant and jealous about this immoral relationship, Magda kills her father. However, her father's death does not mark the end of the hierarchal system on the farm. What is worse, without the protection of her father, Magda falls to be powerless and is finally raped by Hendrik. When the white neighbors come to look for her father, Hendrik and Anna flee in fear. Thus Magda is left alone on the farm isolated from the outside world and accompanied by the body of her father. The incoherent and sometimes contradictory narrative of Magda makes this novel rather obscure. As a result, the novel did not draw much attention until Coetzee became well-known for his later works.

Contrary to the novel mentioned above, *Disgrace* receives an international acclaim as soon as it was published in 1999. It makes Coetzee the recipient of the Booker Prize for the second time and plays a crucial part in his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2003. The novel is one of Coetzee's few novels of realism and portrays the post-apartheid South Africa in the perspective of its major character David Lurie. The novel can be divided into two parts. The first part is mainly about the life of Lurie in Cape Town. Lurie is a fifty-two-year-old white literary professor and lives alone after a third divorce. He keeps a regular sexual relationship with a prostitute to meet his sexual desire and is satisfied about their relation. After this relationship ends out of his expectation, he seduces one of his students and later is charged with sexual harassment by her. But Lurie refuses to admit that he is guilty to the college committee and therefore is dismissed. The coverage of this affair also brings him disgrace. He then leaves for her daughter Lucy's farm in the Eastern Cape where the second part of the novel occurs. Lucy makes her living by cultivating and selling flowers and vegetables with the help of her black assistant Petrus. Lurie does not appreciate Lucy's mode of life, but they still attempt to spend a friendly time together. One day three black men attack the farm and rape Lucy who is found to be pregnant later. Lurie demands to report the crime to the police, but Lucy insists on

keeping silent about her rape. Moreover, rather than leaving the place as her father suggests, Lucy finally decides to marry Petrus, transfer her land to him and give birth to the child in order to stay. While the novel is well received abroad, it is involved in controversy and severe critique in South Africa as a result of the violent image of the three black rapists presented in the novel. The novel is even criticized as racist. But many critics argue that *Disgrace* is actually a subversion of racist narrative. The controversy caused by the novel directly leads to Coetzee's emigration to Australia.

The study of Coetzee has become increasingly popular in the West after the publication of his third novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* in 1980, which brings him both awards and attention. Later on the critical attention extends to his other novels and the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to him in 2003 brings him international recognition. Critics have studied Coetzee in multiple dimensions from different perspectives including narratology, ideology and psychoanalysis. Due to his broad creative vision and variable writing styles, almost all the literary criticism theories have been applied to analyze his novels. Many monographs have appeared since the late 1980s. The representatives are *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* by Teresa Dovey, *Countries of the Mind: the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee* by Dick Penner, *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* by Susan Vanzanten Gallapher and *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* by David Attwell. Most of them study Coetzee's novels in the historical and political contexts of South Africa despite the ambiguous and allegorical writing of his novels. As the second novel of Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* has received much less critical attention in comparison with the other works of Coetzee on account of its obscurity. Because of its narrative techniques featuring modernism and the employment of a female narrator, the novel is mainly studied from the perspectives of narratology and feminism, and more often than not these two perspectives are combined.

Critics have had different understandings of whether Magda is an actual character. Those represented by Vicki Briault-Manus argue that Magda is allegorical and figurative. According to Briault-Manus, Magda "endlessly [opens] up new possibilities of interpretation, and [her] quest for identity is a test of the signifying

power of language” (64). Dick Penner expresses a similar opinion by reading the story of Magda as an allegory of South Africa. Her murder of her father symbolizes the subversion of the old order and the coming of a new one in South Africa.

Yet Susan Vanzanten Gallapher interprets the novel as a feminine story in her book. She traces the Afrikaner cultural discourse which is patriarchal and confines women to domestic roles and reads Magda’s narrative as her revolt against the patriarchal hierarchy. Interested in Coetzee’s construction of unreliable narrators in his novels, David Attwell regards Magda’s narrative as her refusal to be part of the narrative of the traditional pastoral novel in South Africa which will domesticate her.

Many periodical papers devoted to the novel study it from two levels: the level of the story and that of the text. Disagreeing with earlier reviews in the seventies that either ignore the characteristic of the discontinuous narrative of Magda or take it as an illustration of her madness, Josephine Dodd comes to the conclusion that “Magda is the victim of double colonization” (160). She is colonized under the patriarchal domination of her father and Hendrik as a character and textually her narrative is naturalized in ways resulting in her alienation. James Wohlpart focuses on the narrative techniques of the novel and confirms its positive political significance. He believes that while Magda fails to subvert the power of ideology on the level of the story, she succeeds in subverting the power encoded in language on the level of the narrative. Laura Wright shows an interest in Coetzee’s choice of female narrators in some of his novels and analyzes the novel with the other two novels of Coetzee with female narrators. When talking about the instable and unreliable voice of Magda, she notes that among all of Coetzee’s female narrators Magda most represents an attempt of white female voice to take up a position in South Africa by constantly negating its narrative. Doctoral dissertations involved with this novel also focus on its narrative. Joseph T. Koettters in his dissertation concerning the textual production of Coetzee’s novels analyzes the authorship and the essential solitude of Magda in *In the Heat of the Country*. Besides, there are also some journal papers and dissertations paying exploring the master/slave dichotomy in the novel, such as the doctoral dissertation “Masters and Slaves in the First Four Novels of J.M. Coetzee” by Haluska Jan

Charles and the periodical paper “Oppression in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee” by Robert M. Post.

Different from *In the Heart of the Country*, the novel *Disgrace* has received great attention since it came out. Coetzee won the Booker Prize for the second time because of it and it also contributes much to his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Since the novel was published and set in the transitional period of South Africa, many critics have interpreted the novel as a reflection of the political and racial situation of the country. Derek Attridge in his article “Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*” and David Attewell in “Coetzee and Post-apartheid South Africa” both study the novel in the historical and political contexts of South Africa from the perspective of postcolonialism. Maria Lopez not only analyzes the persistent impact of apartheid and colonial racial oppression in post-apartheid South Africa but further affirms a hopeful possibility of creating a new racial bound if the whites adopt the tentative role of guest and negate their positions of power.

The rape in the novel is also a focus of study because this gendered crime is complicated in the postcolonial context. Marais Michael regards that Lurie’s seduction of Melanie and Lucy’s gang rape construct a parallel in the text and are identical. His idea is approved and further developed by many other critics. Lucy Valerie Graham in her representative paper “Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*” points out that the “rape narratives have been deployed for racist ends” (434). She argues that *Disgrace* subverts the rape narrative rather than contributes to it and reads Lucy’s refusal to report the crime of rape as her refusal to play a part in a history of racial oppression.

The sexuality of Lurie in the novel is also a major concern of the critics. Pamela Cooper examines the sexuality of Lurie in the novel in the context of the traditional Western literary works and myths and interprets it as the trope of the historical changes in post-apartheid South Africa. Kimberly Wedeven Segall studies the novel from the viewpoint of bildungsroman. He points out that Lurie’s traumatic experiences produce in him “a shift from narcissism to a nascent awareness of others” (41). While the novel features characteristics of realism, Susan Smit-Marais and

Marita Wenzel in their article demonstrate that *Disgrace* is a postcolonial and postmodern novel and subvert the traditional pastoral farm novel by portraying the farm as “a contested space inscribed with a history of violence and dispossession” (26). Besides, different from most critics, Lianne Barnard studies the novel from the perspective of feminism and interprets Lucy’s rape as an illustration of how sexual violence is applied by males to dominate women.

The domestic study of Coetzee started rather late and at first was mainly confined to his novel *Disgrace*. After Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2003, domestic critics and scholars gradually pay more attention to his other novels. But the novel *In the Heart of the Country* was always ignored. Fortunately, in recent years with a deeper and more comprehensive study of Coetzee, this lost pearl has been noticed by more scholars and critics.

As early as in 2003, Ren Yiming in a journal paper mentions that the novel is a subversion of the traditional pastoral novel in South Africa, but he does not extend his analysis in further details. Guo Xiujuan in her paper about the narrative techniques of Coetzee’s novels gives a brief introduction to the application of montage and the characteristic of repetitive writing in Magda’s narrative. Huang Hui and Lan Shouting also notice the narrative features of Coetzee’s novels. When talking about *In the Heart of the Country*, they focus on the inauthentic characteristic of Magda’s monologue and interpret her insanity as a channel to release her depression and isolation and a satire on her oppressor. There are also some reviews analyzing this novel in an exclusive and detailed way. Gao Wenhui analyzes the novel in the historical context of South Africa and reads Magda as a woman warrior in the desert who fights against the patriarchal oppression with her body writing. Wang Min reads the novel from a different perspective. By analyzing the transformation of the characterization of Magda and her father, she points out the distortion of humanity in the colonial system. There are four master theses studying this novel in recent years and most of them analyze the novel from the perspective of feminism.

The domestic study of *Disgrace* is more mature and it actually initiates the domestic academic concern about Coetzee. Since it is the first novel of Coetzee that is

studied by Chinese scholars, the early study is introductory and often involved with presentations of Coetzee's family background and life experience. The relative valuable paper in this stage was written by Zhang Chong and Guo Zhengfeng. They focus on the interpersonal relationships in the novel and illustrate how the major characters pay for their transgression of ethics, race and politics. This paper is rather inspiring for later studies. Different from the other novels of Coetzee, *Disgrace* is mainly realistic, and therefore most critics and scholars are concerned about the thematic meanings of the novel and analyze it with different theoretical approaches.

As the novel is set in post-apartheid South Africa, many critics interpret it in the historical and political context of the country from the perspective of postcolonialism. The racial relationship, the dilemma of whites and the possibility of racial reconciliation in the postcolonial context are their major concerns. Shi Yunlong in his book *The Multiple Dimensions of the Other in J.M. Coetzee's Novels* illustrates the racial relationship in the post-apartheid era and how the whites fall to be the subverted Other in *Disgrace*. Gao Wenhui pays attention to the historical guilt and individual responsibility and explores the possibility of racial reconciliation with an analysis of Lucy's choice. Cai Shengqin illustrates the two implied metaphors in the novel. He interprets that the image of Byron reflects Coetzee's experience as an imperial diaspora writer and that the suffering of the dogs implies the living circumstances of the whites in post-apartheid South Africa.

Some critics notice the universal significance of the novel and illustrate it from the perspectives of postmodernism and humanism. Cai Yun in the article "On the Existential Plight as Expressed in Coetzee's *Disgrace*" holds that the intensified racial situation of South Africa in the transitional period actually exposes the existential dilemma confronted by human beings in modern times and reveals Coetzee's concern for mankind. Wu Na takes note of Coetzee's concern about animal rights in his novels and interprets the novel from the perspective of ethics. By analyzing Lurie's attitudes towards the dogs, she believes that Coetzee provides a possibility of transcendence for individuals with the help of animals. Besides, Zhu Feng analyzes the novel from dual perspectives of postcolonialism and ecocriticism and studies the ecological

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