Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature
ISSN: 2732-4605
Global Talent Academy

Deconstruction of Postcolonial Diaspora in *Disgrace*: From Specific Victimization of Humans to Group Portrait of Non-Humans

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Received: 16/03/2024
Accepted: 08/04/2024
Published: 01/05/2024

Volume: 5 Issue: 3

How to cite this paper: Zhu, Z., & Zhang, C. (2024). Deconstruction of Postcolonial Diaspora in *Disgrace*: From Specific Victimization of Humans to Group Portrait of Non-Humans. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature, 5*(3),
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v5i3.270

Abstract

This article reads anew J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* in the deconstructed discourse of diaspora and postcolonialism. It is dissected as a palimpsest of rearranged reappearances of realities in the form of an artful moral journey. Self-exiled refugees, at the core of diaspora, are firstly and generally examined through the specific re-narration of race and gender that centers on Lucy Lurie. Then, about her father David Lurie, there comes the analyzed reconstruction of his dissolution, based on the duplication and adaptation of the debauched historic figure, Lord Byron. The father-daughter plot line is simultaneously accompanied by the conflict of land and the victimization of dogs and provides a platform for displaying the crash of humans and non-humans. The article thusly focalizes the collective affliction of the latter and, invoking the concept of ecocriticism and zoocriticism, penetrates the common phenomena of the former's diaspora in this Anthropocene era.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Re-Narration, Diasporic Refugee, Postcolonialism, Anthropocene

1. Introduction

Concisely austere and abundantly allusive, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) probes into different sorts of disgrace and leads readers to an intricate expedition of morality. David Lurie, a white South African who should have been ashamed for his seduction of his student and the loss of his job as a professor, is thereafter shamed when his daughter, Lucy Lurie, is raped and dispossessed by the blacks. By all means, the major characters are seemingly on the run throughout the fiction. And so are the non-human characters around them, which are positioned in the disgraced Eastern Cape and whose destination is their ending of death. Respectively and collectively, they are, indeed, trapped in the incessant diaspora just as myriad South Africans do in the real life of post-coloniality.

On top of the expressive explication of the postcolonial influence on South Africa, this article opts for new perspectives on the elucidation of the characters' ambivalent struggles. Past research has approached the diaspora of *Disgrace* by putting it within the context of "European expansion", "[t]he histories of conquest and settlement", and even "Coetzee's relocation South Africa to Australia and its influence" (Attwell, 2011, pp. 9-10); but little is known about the specific diasporic features and temperaments of the characters in the fiction. Hence the article aims to dissect pertinent characteristics of both humans and non-humans and closely combine the diaspora with the "pandemic brutalities and its cultural denigration" of postcolonialism, so as to comprehend and delve into Coetzee's allusive motif of deconstruction in turn, and thus take into account the alienated

"nature of the relationship between coloniser and colonized" (Tiffin, 1995, p. 95). In other words, this is a diasporic interpretation of *Disgrace* intimately concerned with the postcolonial context. When it comes to the detailed analysis of this fiction, it is the Luries that unfold the victimization of themselves and the collective torment of the non-humans around them.

Whilst David, unemployed and persecuted, is perversely poised to undertake a self-exiled life, Lucy chooses to live like a refugee in the countryside at the mercy of her neighbor, bereft of identity and sense of belonging. Both of the two are laden with diasporic elements that, despite the similarities to the past of Jews, are no longer restricted to the large-scale migration, but connotes the experiences of specific individuals who "have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign regions" and "believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it" (Safran, 1991, p. 83). The extended definition of diaspora, as is put forward by William Safran, insinuates the predicament of the colonized during the colonization and their subsequent impasse in the postcolonial period as a diasporic refugee. In the words of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), the colonized are expelled from the "central point" of "[t]he perfect disciplinary apparatus" of the society: "a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned" (1995, p. 173). As long as the locals are deprived of the dominance over the social system, collective diaspora takes place. When it comes to the two characters in *Disgrace*, personal diaspora comes into existence, with ineluctable suppression exerted on them, whether they deserve it or not.

Coetzee's focalization of David's and Lucy's disgrace indicates the postcolonial dilemma that South Africans are faced up with, and concurrently hints the deadlock of the country into the bargain, thereby discoursing on the emanation of disgrace in general terms. Fredric Jameson, delving into the Third-World Literature, observed that "the story of private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (1986, p. 69). In *Disgrace*, the writer deconstructs the social issues incurred by the government and rewrites them through the miserable telling of Lucy, an unduplicated character representatively molded by the disgraceful national conditions. Her father, David, also as the factor that determines her tragedy, is Coetzee's reconstruction of the great George Gordon Byron, a romantic and dissolute poet always on the run. Intertwined with the double plots of the two are the continuous conflict of the land and the growth and death of dogs which play the role of victims unexceptionally in the narration. These empathetic non-human elements allude to the harm that humans exert on the ecology, as well as the victimized role that diasporic South Africans play in such an Anthropocene. The deconstruction in *Disgrace* "consists of the undoing of that narrative of interpretation, and in showing how it could be interpreted in a different logical sequence that would be incompatible with the first" (Young, 2000, p. 195). With comparison and contrast, irony and sarcasm, both the microcosm and macrocosm of the postcolonial diasporic South Africa are delineated and displayed in such a national allegory as the outcome of Coetzee's preconceived recombination of crucial incidents in reality.

2. Deconstruction of Diasporic Refugee: Re-Narrating Race and Gender in the Apartheid

In the fiction of *Disgrace*, Lucy is the first to be doomed with diaspora, born with the identity as an in-betweener, with two fathers, two families, and two nations of South Africa and Holland. Due to her unagreeable stepfather, she returns to the farm in the Eastern Cape that David bought for her, located in a countryside mostly inhabited by blacks. In such a place that she does not belong to, so tumultuous the diasporic life there can be, that Lucy can only "find it altogether safer to become part of his [Petrus's] establishment"[1] (Coetzee, 2000, p. 203) and live just like a refugee under his shelter. On the contrary to readers' stereotype where blacks' safety tends to depend on whites, Coetzee re-narrates the in-person diaspora experiences of colored South Africans, exchanging their racial identity and highlighting the sexual particularity. The rewriting adds to the astonishment of the plot, where Lucy is raped by three unknown black offenders who have never been prosecuted heretofore. Echoing with South African novels around 1900s that were attached with "the infatuation of older white men with young women of color"[2] (Glenn, 2009, p. 87), the reverse of racial roles in *Disgrace* serves as the subversion of the fact that, given the apartheid in South Africa, white female adults like Lucy are accessible to few black youngsters in practice, let alone being raped by the latter. However, Coetzee consigned Lucy to "[t]he push or tension" that "comes from the surrounding environment-the imperialist power" and "that would otherwise compel you to disappear or to accept some miniature version of yourself" (Said, 1994, p. 334). The justifiably recombined elements of fiction, which constitute the unreasonable societal structure in the real apartheid, bespeak the unspeakable inner fluctuation of the victims in the postcolonial period. In this deconstructed version, Lucy averts the possible disappearance and chooses the disgrace of herself.

As most diasporic refugees do, Lucy becomes one of them inadvertently. And without notice she, as a white female, is sarcastically reduced to the slave rather than the ally of her colored neighbor. Living in a community with other races, exiles like her "are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them"; the certain features of diaspora, namely, reluctance and helplessness, drive her to have something that can be continuously depended upon in such "a discontinuous state of being" (Said, 2003, p. 177). The delineation of Lucy as a weak and poignant white girl vindicates the desired alliance, or the protection and shelter that she seeks for. Among all the unfortunate incidents that have occurred to Lucy, rape is of paramount significance. It incurs the instability and discontinuity of her life and takes her time to temporarily stop and reboot it. Albeit details pertaining to the first and the second rape remain vague and untold, in the repeated contemplation of David, another victim of the assault, the crime scene is described and disclosed by and large:

> It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. Too ashamed, they will say to each other, too ashamed to tell, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit. Is Lucy prepared to concede them that victory? (Coetzee, 2000, p. 110)

In such narration the nature of slavery is evinced. Even though this is David's subject imagination, as father and daughter both of them acquiesce in the specific positions that insinuate power and status. Phrases such as "over the body," "chuckle luxuriously," and "concede them that victory" are enough to hint the abjection and modus vivendi of Lucy, which, pitifully, is the common situation of rape culprits in most cases and turns out to be the outcome of Coetzee's reflection on the opposite of the apartheid policy in South Africa. On the one hand, he turns the spotlight on the inexorable dilemma of refugees by virtue of deconstructing the element of race. On the other, "the deconstructive positing of difference", from longing for coalition to suffering as a slave, "has important political implications because it allows both individuals and groups to claim this necessary contradiction" (Young, 2000, p. 203). Discrepancies recognized, Coetzee leads readers to meditate on the paradoxical conditions of real life and leave them with an unfixable question to solve. With few words, he illuminates the motive of the perpetrators as well his intention of setting the plot, in a hushed conversation:

> 'Slavery. They want you for their slave.'
>
> 'Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation.' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 159)

Again, here comes the deconstruction of the past history of South Africa, thereby making Lucy's misfortune a seemingly deserved one, in the form of the reappearance of the political oppression that whites have exerted on blacks. The truth is that the inversion of races cannot render Lucy's suffering ignorable. Nor can it justify the suffering of other races in the past. The rewriting of history aims at the emanation of the predicament of all diasporic refugees in the postcolonial period, as the belated products of the colonial era.

Innocent and traumatic as Lucy is, she repudiates the prosecution of the rapists all the time. The inscrutability of her behavior can be explained from "postcolonial perspectives" that "emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities'" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 245). Videlicet, Lucy and David's migration to the farm in Eastern Cape marks their entrance into the colony of the locals and naturally endows them with a minority identity. It is the very minority that contributes to Lucy's consistency, who insists that "what happened to me is a purely private matter" and that the rape "is my business, mine alone" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 112), because most challenges put forward by the minority in the society tends to prove in vain. The first rape that happens to Lucy, even vaguer than the second, is probable to have underlain Lucy's preference to the so-called "privacy." So terrible these experiences can be, that Lucy keeps arguing for Petrus and his cousin, admonishing his father crucially, "David, no, don't do it. It's not Petrus' fault" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 133). Such distorted point of view is due to Lucy's unequal and disadvantaged treatment in the town and can be essentially put down to the ambitious conquest of the local colonizers. As Bhabha argues, "[t]he unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (1992, p. 144). In the case of Lucy, the elusively aberrant experience of being raped is impregnated with unhomeliness and hence leads her to the abysmal result of politics. Innocently she has become the victim of the racial segregation. At this point, Coetzee deconstructs the politics together with the fact. His postcolonial perspective literally "attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition"[3] (Bhabha, 2004, p. 248). Instead of directly connecting and unifying the binary opposition, Coetzee contrives to address and restore the conflict by re-narrating a more poignant version than the reality. Notwithstanding the impossibly inverted identity of race, the general image of diasporic refugees is empathetically depicted through an atypical character, Lucy Lurie.

To delve more into deconstruction, Coetzee's rewriting goes beyond the comparison and construction of racial issues and resorts to the discussion of gender, another critical point that determines Lucy's refuge and diaspora. Robert J. C. Young put forward the question about "[h]ow to rewrite history when the very model of history was so much a product of the history that I wanted to rewrite" (2000, p. 189) in the article of "Deconstruction and the Postcolonial". At this point in *Disgrace*, Coetzee does not deploy the same strategy as the one in regard to the race, but chooses to deconstruct the focalization of relevant incidents. After all, "[r]ape scares have also typically been more about regulating black men and white women than about protecting women's rights"[4] (Mardorossian, 2011, p. 75). The gender of Lucy, the specific victim of most misfortunes in Eastern Cape, is an intentionally highlighted point in the fiction, which constitutes the disgraceful *Disgrace*. Similar to Lucy's repetition of her "privacy," her inability to talk about the process of rape is explicated as well. More than once, she keeps telling her father, "I can't talk any more, David, I just can't, … I wish I could explain. But I can't. Because of who you are and who I am, I can't. I'm sorry" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 155). Lucy's impotence in the face of the unbearable rape forms a strong contrast with David's urgent request to settle the issue. Besides his affection for Lucy as her father, he deems the rape as "Lucy's secret" and "his disgrace" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 109). Throughout the rape, the plot is narrated by David. Coetzee's choice of focalization not only elucidates the contradictory mind of a dissolute father, but also repeatedly draws readers' attention to Lucy's steadfast refusal, hence taking readers to the reflection of the victim's subject feelings rather than the general judge of the public. The rewritten focus of females' being raped subverts the social norms and sheds light on the truth. In the preface of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) emphasized that "[i]n the colonies, truth displayed its nakedness; the metropolises preferred it clothed" (2004, xliii). The truth will not be exposed if Coetzee reconstructs the reality and sets the story with a male in the metropolis, where truthfulness tends to be avoided. Neither can the male character illustrate the features of diasporic refugees in the colony, because in the patriarchal and ethnocentric society, only females can demonstrate the attention they deserve, provided that they are endowed with enough rights of discourse, just like Lucy's constant rejection of talking about

the rape. As a consequence, taking all these into account, Coetzee highlights the victim's female gender and delineates the silhouette of diasporic refugees based on that of Lucy: in countless misfortunes of rapes, females deserve their rights in protecting themselves, and so are those in the diaspora and exile, who tend to be entangled in the games of politicians. Both are required to walk out of the shadow of being used and empower themselves to address their own concerns.

About gender, there is something more about diaspora than the female sex. From a more general perspective, Lucy's underscored gender is the deconstruction of the characteristics of diasporic refugees. Warning David of her predicament, Lucy says, "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… Practically speaking, there is only Petrus left" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 204). Undoubtedly and reluctantly, females are born with weaker constitution. It will become even worse when a female individual is brought up without the shelter of male family members. The moment they may call the police to arrest the perpetrator, Lucy reprimands David for his recklessness, which is actually to save herself out of frustration. Lucy and all other diasporic refugees share the commonality of their disadvantaged situation from the very beginning. Poverty and weakness seem to be destined. Like Lucy, an unwitting fruit of an unsuccessful marriage, it is an inevitably pathetic age "to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history"; "it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness" (Said, 1994, p. 332). In this sense, Lucy together with David, alien to the town of Salem and isolated from the Cape Town[5], is the microcosm of myriad exiles in the postcolonial period. Yet "the belatedness of the postcolonial" is conspicuously manifested by anyone none other than Lucy; and the "derivative discourse", namely "the legacy of colonialism", was "left inscribed with the political concepts of the West" (Young, 2000, p. 195). However hard the postcolonial refugees have tried, they are subject to the inscription of colonialism and have to claim the right of discourse that this age has bestowed on them. No matter how independent and sagacious Lucy is, to marry Petrus and depend on him is her only choice. Gender, as an unchangeable element in most cases, is Coetzee's deconstruction of the identical peculiarities of those trapped in the postcolonial diaspora. Lucy herself being a refugee in the town of Salem, neither her nor other exiles are poised to accept the endless adversities that are doomed to take place. Whether in terms of race or gender, Coetzee explicate a palimpsest of deconstruction, re-narrating the reality and the contest and elucidating the disgrace to the fullest.

3. Reconstruction of Dissolute Byron: Always on the Run

In Coetzee's rewriting of race and gender, Lucy's contradiction and torment tend to converge, ending up in his father's guilt. As the only child of David and Evelina, the divorced couple, she is seemingly born to be abandoned and seek for shelter on her own. Worse still, from Lucy's viewpoint, she is paying the penalty for whites' oppression on blacks, David's rape of his student included. All these tragedies, as it seems, are attributed to David, the dissolute David Lurie. Nonetheless, jump out of the plot of Lucy and it can be found that David himself is also on his own diasporic journey. Less ambiguous than that of his daughter, his journey is, to some extent, an enforced exile from Cape Town University College to the unenlightened Eastern Cape, and from the center occupied by whites to the fringe of South African society crowded with blacks, to wit: a converse miniature of black people's scattering away from their established homeland. Meanwhile, his journey overlaps that of George Gordon Byron, another dissolute scholar and poet, who was disappointed at the public indignation directed at him after his legal separation with his wife, Anne Isabella Milbanke. This runaway experience shares apparent commonality with Lurie's acceptance of prosecution and unemployment without demur. More evidently, Lurie is a specialist as well as an admirer of Byron and "has been playing with the idea of a work on Byron" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 4). Deep down into the logical and emotional relationship of these two is the intricate and delicate design by Coetzee, who bespeaks the image of Lurie, a diasporic refugee, based on the experience of Byron, and simultaneously depicts him as a dissipated bookman devoted to the research of Byron. Scilicet, Coetzee reconstructs Byron in the fiction, the result of which is the image of Lurie; and in the fiction Lurie is doing his utmost to analyze the masterpieces and deconstruct Byron, the one who fundamentally endows him with livelihood and adds disgrace to *Disgrace* of Coetzee. With these two always on the run in the diaspora, *Disgrace* as a work of art ends up in a closed-loop system consisting of Coetzee, Byron, and Lurie.

For both Byron and Lurie, their diaspora in their later life is destined in the corresponding era. Whereas the former was born of an old aristocratic but impoverished family and inherited a large estate at the age of ten, the latter, although his early life is barely mentioned, starts his story in the fiction as a privileged professor whose major is less and less favored in his era. Both adore romanticism but neither benefit from it. With common belief they are reduced to the diasporic victim of the era: Byron suffered from the aristocracy at that time and Lurie is victimized by the modern globalization. In reference to Graham Huggan, "[t]his 'new', self-consciously secular understanding of diaspora… should also be seen in relation to contemporary globalization processes, and to the increasingly accepted view that hypermobility… is the overriding condition of the modern world" (2010, p. 56). Different from Byron, one of the rare noblemen determined to go on a journey of self-exile, everyone in the modern globalization is a one in his or her own diaspora, due to the overwhelming tendency in the process and the advanced mobility. From the very beginning of *Disgrace*, "[o]nce a professor of modern languages, he [Lurie] has been, since Classics and Modern Languages were closed down as part of the great rationalization, adjunct professor of communications" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 3). Prioritizing science in the development of South Africa, the government, just as many other developing countries do, follows the trend of the era and concurrently denies the advantage and subjectivity of millions of citizens including Lurie. This is the

forceful deprivation of Lurie's discourse in the field that he specializes in, compelling him to undertake the mental diaspora and indirectly begetting his headstrong resignation.

Lurie's determination of undertaking the upcoming physical diaspora, together with his calmness of unemployment and his refusal to regret or justify himself in the charge against his rape, is unexpected yet reasonable. The lack of struggle, on the contrary, reflects the very struggle in his own liberation and discourse. In the monologue, he says to himself when conceiving the opera of Byron and Teresa, "Where is he, her Byron? Byron is lost, that is the answer. Byron wanders among the shades" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 182). So does he himself. Loss and wandering are the distinct features of diaspora. When looking for the Byron in the opera, Lurie is looking for the truth of himself. And to reconstruct Byron is exactly to reconstruct himself. Locked and suppressed, "liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements …, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies" (Said, 1994, p. 332). While individuals living in stability have no needs nor power to accomplish liberation, Byron and Lurie, the homeless ones, possess the ruthless bravery and exilic energy to break through the obstacles and arrive at their own emancipation. Lurie's frankness in the face of unemployment is the principal key element of this intellectual mission, and feeling at sea in the diaspora proves commonly plausible, because the way to the salvation can be arduous. In the meantime, "postcolonial studies have also been critical of how globalization discourse employs homogenizing narratives that ignore the history of empire and its ongoing legacies of violence" (Deloughrey, 2015, p. 322). At this point, Coetzee reconstructs and adapts the lifetime of Byron who "left England for good" (Bloom, 2009, p. 5) after his departure in 1816. Despaired and disinclined to accept Lucy's marriage with Petrus, Lurie returns to his house in the Cape Town, only to find it ransacked:

> The bars over one of the back windows have been torn out of the wall and folded back, the windowpanes smashed, leaving enough of a hole for a child or even a small man to climb through. A mat of leaves and sand, blown in by the wind, has caked on the floor… No ordinary burglary. (Coetzee, 2000, p. 176)

By all means, the globalization discourse, just as it did to Lurie when the lecture he taught was closed down, seems to keep its duty to mercilessly sentence anyone who is out of its trend. To readers' surprise, Lurie feels nothing but that "[a]s of today he is a free man, with duties to no one but himself" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 178), and peacefully begins his writing of the opera. Not until he falls into the darkest abyss of the diasporic journey, does he catch the freedom he has long been craving for. Throughout the vicissitudes, Lurie, a mimic reconstructed by Coetzee based on Byron, narrates a strenuous journey and a romantic myth close to Byron's: "a member of the aristocracy, he became a deist and a liberal in politics, who championed liberty and gave his money and finally his life for the cause of Greek independence" (Bloom, 2009, p. 1). Byron did his utmost to eliminate the disgrace at his time and lived his life to the fullest by sacrificing his life. Despite their different eras, it can be seen that his mode and aspiration of life greatly coincides with Lurie's. The masterly reconstruction by Coetzee illuminates the graceful point hidden within the diaspora, where liberation should be the destination.

Be it Byron or Lurie, on the way to the destination they are always on the run, not only chasing the emancipation of the self, but also insinuating their confession and self-examination. The similarity between Byron and Lurie is far more than the identity as the victim of the era. On top of their consistent aspiration to liberation, their dissolution leaves a deep impression on people. Sexuality is at the core of their diaspora identities, which, accordingly, "are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, 2013, p. 402). Emanated in the incessant instability and constant changes, the unavoidable multiplicity keeps rewriting the identities of individuals in their diasporic life; the multiple possibilities thusly provide an ideal platform for deconstruction. For Byron, he is the "beauty's slave" when seeing "the cheeks [of Mary] which sprung from beauty's mould" (1904, p. 13), the brother who fights against "workings of defiance" that stir within him in the "Epistle to Augusta" (1904, p. 90), and the husband who reckons that "woman is made to command and deceive us" and "sues for forgiveness before you [Anne]"[6] (1904, p. 49). Always on a mental diasporic journey replete with transformation and difference, Byron molds himself into various images of multiple identities, with which he immorally satisfies his lust, regardless of ethics and responsibility. This disregardfulness deduces strong criticism, reduces him to a controversial and disgraceful figure, and endows himself with absolute power to transform from a victim of diaspora to a one who concurrently creates it. This prominently resonates with the impasse of South African diasporic refugees, particularly the males that have been discussed in the re-narrated race and gender[7]. When it comes to the construction of Lurie in *Disgrace*, Coetzee takes advantage of the lifetime of the prestigious poet, Byron, reconstructing it and leading readers to a wider platform of empathy by directing Lurie to face the incest and rape straightforwardly. As the doubleganger of Byron[8], Lurie, too, is equipped with relatively high social status as knowledgeable scholars and has a daughter as the regretful fruit of his unfortunate relationship with his ex-wife. Since "[d]econstruction is all about how one can be both the same and different simultaneously, about how one can even be different from oneself" (Young, 2000, p. 202), Coetzee displays the other endings of Byron's life by dint of the image of Lurie. He focuses on Lurie's identity of a professor as well as a father, which respectively makes him a rapist and a culprit of incest, a loser and a sinner of guilt. At this time in the deconstruction, the spotlight falls more on the creators of the postcolonial diaspora than on its victims, with contrast and irony sensed in the lines.

For one thing, Lurie seduces his student, Melanie Isaacs, and their sexual relationship soon develops into incest. Incurred by his dissatisfaction of colleagues and the intellectual degradation in the globalized diaspora, such unconditional release of his inner needs of compensation seems to be ascribed to his pursuit of Romanticism where strong feelings overweigh reason and order. In this sense, Lurie views his sexuality from Byron's viewpoint, putting it that "[n]o animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 90). Self-persuasion like this can be common when the speaker is on the border of morality and immorality. Whilst Byron ignored the dividing line and headstrongly broke the chains of the

secular society, Lurie, directed by Coetzee, has to repeatedly contemplate the wrongdoing of his incestuous relationship with Melanie, to whom "HE MAKES LOVE… one more time, on the bed in his daughter's room" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 29) and "[a]lmost he says, 'Tell Daddy what is wrong'" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 26). The setting of the unwarrantable sexual relationship with a student at his daughter's age delicately enunciates strong overtones and evinces Coetzee's standpoint of Byron's incest. This reconstructed duplicate of Byron's dissolute sexual life concedes the disgrace brought forth by the disobedience of moral disciplines. What's more, the reckless preference to the feelings and expressions of themselves, which is shared by Lurie and Byron, can exceed their pursuit for romantic way of life and be redefined as a "racialized and racist perspective" (Mardorossian, 2011, p. 77). In the diasporic South Africa, privileges of white males like Lurie are the key to their easy defiance of secular limitation and even legitimate rules: constantly he stays with the prostitutes, Soraya and Dawn; without effort he seduces Melanie, simply "quoting Shakespeare's Sonnet 1" and imagines himself as the "bored and lonely typist in Eliot's *The Waste Land*" (Meyers, 2013, p. 336). By this means, Coetzee sublimates Lurie's initial disgrace of sex and incest and explicates the underlying racism that will subsequently entrap him into an abyss of embarrassment and helplessness. Thanks to the deconstruction that "opens up the possibility of multiple and even mobile identities" (Young, 2000, p. 202), a reconstructed Byron in the postcolonial diaspora can be vividly depicted; and by virtue of this technique Coetzee is able to simultaneously combine and dissect the features of two eras: the one of Byron and the other of Lurie. Romanticism and racism are intertwined in such an admixture of reconstruction.

For another, sex and rape are once again spotlighted when Lurie can do nothing about his daughter's being assaulted. This not only indicates the extension of the storyline of Byron's illegitimate children, but exacerbates the unlimited exhibition of lust that Byron used to persist in. On the contrary to Lurie's defense that his relationship with Melanie is "[n]ot rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 25), "[t]o see a poet in exile—as opposed to reading the poetry of exile—is to see exile's antinomies embodied and endured with a unique intensity" (Said, 2003, p. 174), because poets in exile, devoid of privileges, are straying from the literary idealism previously they stuck to and have to deal with the practical matters in everyday life. Antinomies just pop up in mind one after another and bring about disgrace that incessantly perplexes them and keeps them always on the run. In Lurie's colloquy with his daughter after the assault, he becomes indifferent to her explanation, recollecting the terribly grim memories hovering on his heart and sighing, "Oh dear, what can the matter be? Lucy's secret; his disgrace" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 105). The brimming disgrace hits his moral system where he did almost the same matter to a girl of the same age. He used to justify and excuse himself but never can he forgive those with color who violated his daughter. Since this issue, Lurie's racialized view of life has swayed and changed. As a pivotal element in the life of Lurie and Byron, dissolution is dissected and recombined in a postcolonial mode. Representative of Byron, Lurie averts the purposeful confession before the committee and finally confesses his disgrace in the talk with Bev Shaw in the end: "Are you giving him [the dying dog] up?" "Yes, I am giving him up"[9] (Coetzee, 2000, p. 220). He is then bereft of his racialized values of binary opposition and repents of his dissolute sexuality and incest. "He is also, of course, J. M. Coetzee, confessing the truth by making a fiction" (Attridge, 2000, p. 116). As Coetzee manages to portray a postcolonial "Byron" in the diaspora from his perspective, his arrangement of Lurie's firm repudiation of false confession in the beginning, confesses the very disgrace out of the fiction, where "[c]onfession then becomes a tool for the regulated society to imprison individual consciousness" and "liberal sensibility… may be alienated by a 'confession' that does not fit certain normative codes" (Head, 2009, p. 77). Outside the context and beyond the reconstruction of Byron and Lurie, confession is underlined by Coetzee, with its increasing value in the postcolonial diaspora replete with compromising disgrace. On the whole, *Disgrace* is a triple closed-loop system comprised of Byron (the reconstructed), Lurie (the reconstruction), and Coetzee (the reconstructor).

4. Affliction of Non-Humans: Reappearance and Reflection of Generalized Diasporic Anthropocene

Besides the stable and close connection between the characters and the writer, non-human elements in *Disgrace*, often portrayed in groups, showcase a more magnificent display of the diasporic Anthropocene in a broader sense. The ownership of the land, constantly at the core of Lucy's plot line, has paramount function in the country life and simultaneously tortures the major characters. Symbolic of the animals, dogs in the fiction suggest Lurie's turnaround from a prior and dissolute professor to a simple and sarcastic dog-man; pertaining to the reconstruction of Byron, his "particular fondness for… a young male [dog] with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it"[10] (Coetzee, 2000, p. 215), is an archetypal instance of Coetzee's secret enunciation of his inner thoughts. More generally, deconstructed by Coetzee, they also magnify the victimization of human individuals, outstrip it, and ambivalently explicate the suffering of all the colonized in the postcolonial diaspora, where they can officially claim to be independent individuals but are sarcastically at the mercy of others. Albeit in geographical stillness, dogs and humans are going on a diaspora with their discourse deprived, and death is forced upon them posteriori. On the one hand, Coetzee turns to the afflicted non-human elements in the post-apartheid South Africa from the perspectives of ecocriticism and zoocriticism. Exiles on the diasporic journey, damaging the environment and repressing the animals, are therefore to blame. On the other, by virtue of the dogs, a clearer panorama of the exiles' diaspora is illustrated. The deconstructed view of the postcolonial diaspora delineated by Coetzee juxtaposes these two levels of dogs and humans, and triggers the dual criticism of the diaspora in turn.

Ecocriticism in *Disgrace* comes into existence when Lurie is exiled to the town of Salem in the Eastern cape and there is "his daughter's smallholding …: five hectares of land, most of it arable" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 59). This preliminary introduction, not made by the narrator but by the writer, underscores the significance of land in the remote countryside. Lagging behind in

the development due to the apartheid, rural areas of South Africa severely depend upon agricultural industry and take great advantage of the local ecology. However, no sooner had Lurie finished his greetings with his daughter than Petrus broke in to ask for the spray. Together with the interference of the chemicals comes Lurie's expression of his viewpoint: "A cool winter's day, the sun already dipping over red hills dotted with sparse, bleached grass. Poor land, poor soil, he thinks" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 64). In front of the lifeless scenery and through Lurie's thoughts, Coetzee points out the ecological deterioration and attributes it to those diasporic refugees in the town. The vicious cycle where the mutual harm of humans and land keeps escalating, invites a "nuanced discussion of the place of humanism in postcolonial ecocritical discourse" (Vadde, 2011, p. 573). *Disgrace* serves as Coetzee's response to the dispute. He deconstructs the relationship between the characters and the land by exchanging the positions of the Subject and the Other.

To sort out the exchanges, David Lurie and Lucy Lurie, once again, symbolize different ecological outlooks. In addition to Lurie's previous perspective, at nights he gazes at the town where "across a strip of waste land, from the first rows of shacks, comes a hubbub of voices" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 150). David's transition from the Cape Town to the Eastern Cape underlies his ignorance of land and his standpoint of viewing it as a pathetic outcome of people's exceeding cultivation. Given his egoism and dissolution, especially in the initial part of the fiction, David places himself in the position of the Subject and the land the Other. In comparison, Lucy and her land are bound together, whose life and fate are inseparable from each other. She "contribute[s] the land," in return for the permission to "creep in under his [Petrus's] wing" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 203). Or rather, the land as the most practical commodity can even overweigh herself. It is such an assurance of her safety in the tumultuous Eastern Cape, that their binary positions are opposite to those of David's. As the focalization of *Disgrace*, David renders his prejudiced ideas directly more often than not, and indirectly depicts the reaction and articulation of Lucy. The two intertwined ecological outlooks end up in David's acceptance of Lucy's elusive marriage; and nature as the subject undoubtedly wins, echoing with the core of ecocriticism. As "the secret best friend of ecocriticism", "deconstruction must investigate the sacred cows of ecological criticism, for instance the 'world' that ecocriticism wants to re-enchant" (Morton, 2014, p. 296). Coetzee dissects the crux of postcolonial ecocriticism and nuancedly integrates it into the relationship of father and daughter. Both being diasporic refugees, David's ideologic defeat discloses his failure as a father and heightens the tragedy of her daughter. Exiles like them, void of the control of their life, are meanwhile at the mercy of nature. Re-enchanted and reconstructed, ecocriticism in *Disgrace* effectively elucidates the analysis of the diaspora and unveils the writer's contemplation that humans in exile make things wrong in the ecological system, but they do so without other choices. They associate the land with their life and gradually construct the current dilemma of Anthropocene, in which all human beings are afflicted on their diasporic journey.

Ecological system as the background, the Anthropocene is reflected more by the dogs than the land. During the assault of Lucy's house, her dogs are massacred as well. After the perpetrators' two shots, "blood and brains splatter the cage"; "[o]ne dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 95). The cruel action begets strong zoocriticism. As always, the dogs in *Disgrace* are purposefully trapped in the roles of victims, which breaches their identities as "our fellow brethren in pain, disease, death, suffering and famine—our slaves in the most laborious works, our companions in our amusements" (Darwin, 2009, p. 6). Videlicet, the perpetrators' inhuman violence against dogs, humans' closest friends, implies the colonizers' oppression on the colonized. In the post-colonial diaspora, their tyrannical behavior in the past leaves behind unerasable marks. Even if the marks are relatively milder and fainter than before, that is enough to render the pertinent individuals mentally homeless and drive them to start an unwanted diasporic journey. In the later part of the fiction, Lurie concludes "what I must learn to accept":

> '…To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.'
>
> 'Like a dog.'
>
> 'Yes, like a dog.' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 205)

The simile here illuminates the impotence of dogs in South Africa, in unison with that of diasporic refugees. Coetzee contrives to make the diasporic Anthropocene reappear on the groups of dogs. The loss of dignity, as a crucial point of the similarity between humans and dogs, points to another one with paradox: dogs in the fiction seldom wander; they fortunately have places to stay in, whether it is Lucy's kennel or Bev's clinic. And so are the citizens in the town. No tramps ever appear in *Disgrace*. Nevertheless, both Bhabha and Said have argued that "[t]o be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 141) and that "the universal truth of exile is not that one has lost that love or home, but that inherent in each is an unexpected, unwelcome loss" (Said, 1994, p. 336). The ownership of a shelter is not all of postcolonial diaspora. Anyone and anything can go on a diasporic journey, whether he, she, or it lives in a mansion, a villa, a condo, a cottage, or a cage. Even if the current Anthropocene, Animal Conservation Society included, provides abundant possibilities for humans and other creatures, it is rather hard for an exile to fully adapt to the surroundings, however familiar they may be. The unwanted sense of feeling at sea can come to them at any time and from time to time they are reminded of their own diaspora. In South Africa the situation is escalated with the apartheid. Born in a contrary community and shuttling from it to another, citizens like the Luries have to bear repeated strikes of loss even after their purposeful accommodation in the local areas.

But, where does the diasporic loss originate? Coetzee deconstructs the origination and reconstructs it in Lurie's transformation of attending to the dogs. Instead of his initial disgust for these unabandoned or injured animals, by and by "he is prepared to take care of them once they are unable, utterly unable, to take care of themselves" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 146). Without artificial interference these creatures are bound to die in most cases. Lurie as a savior, in spite of his refusal to recognize

this title, offers them the choice of living on. This non-human agency "immediately invites the allegation of anthropomorphism, potentially imputing to non-humans a capacity for choice, decision-making and conscious planning" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 191). This zoocriticism point of view is literally a transition in contrast that dates back to the very beginning. Before Lurie comes to the town of Salem, few choices and little agency exist in his life. He is forced to accept the cancel of the Classics and Modern Languages major; he does his utmost to seduce Melanie; he offers himself no choice and sticks to being punished for his guilt. Bringing forth good and evil, the lack of choice is not perceived by himself until the violence of his daughter. As has been analyzed in the Re-Narrated Race and Gender, Lucy's consistent repudiation of prosecuting the culprits denotes a specific kind of imploration of choices in the postcolonial apartheid discourse. Self-persuasion of Lurie is then commonly seen in the subsequent context of the fiction, the result of which is clear when he acquiesces in Lucy's marriage with Petrus and, on the other hand, bestows the agency of choices on the dogs.

Unlimited choices pave the way to freedom and in the meantime incurs multiple possibilities, resonating with Lurie's and Byron's multiple identities. For most individuals, the explosive varieties of possibilities will lead to the loss of themselves, whether temporarily or permanently. The Anthropocene turns out to be the outcome that has catered to as many needs of humans as possible; and the all-pervasive diasporic complex becomes its side product. On a priori grounds, the contradiction intensifies in South Africa. The apartheid policy makes it far more difficult to satisfy the requirements of different peoples. In accordance with Bhabha, "[i]t is an intimacy [of creating a better and more united world] that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed" (1992, p. 148). Back to the discussion of dogs, the endowment of agency out of intimate kindness, entraps Lurie in the binary divisions, because no deeds can perfectly save the dogs from their diaspora. Confused by his betrayal that "[f]rom Monday onward the dogs released from life within the walls of the clinic will be tossed into the fire unmarked, unmourned", "he does not want to think about them [the dogs]" (Coetzee, 2000, p. 178). And all this leads to his eventual sublimation:

> 'Come,' he says, bends, opens his arms. The dog wags its crippled rear, sniffs his face, licks his cheeks, his lips, his ears.
>
> He does nothing to stop it. 'Come.'
>
> Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery… 'Are you giving him up?'
>
> 'Yes, I am giving him up.' (Coetzee, 2000, p. 220)

This is not to say non-human agency tends to be meaningless. Since death is the destined fate of this specific young dog, the one which Lurie favors most, he calmly faces the pessimistic ending and eventually gives up the previous selfhood, just as he does in the Reconstruction of Dissolute Byron, accepting the ineluctable diaspora of the dog, of his daughter, and of himself. The open ending achieves the meeting and integration of the deconstruction and the deconstructed, demonstrating the unfixable nature of the affliction in the Anthropocene. Everyone goes on his or her own diaspora in this age; South Africans, in particular, suffers from a more intensive self-exiled journey in the postcolonial apartheid.

5. Conclusion

By dissecting and categorizing all sorts of deconstruction, this article probes into the postcolonial diaspora in *Disgrace*, mostly from the angles of the characters, and takes into account the intricate setting of non-human elements as well. In this sense, Coetzee redefines the disgrace of South Africa through the impossibly inverted race and the intentionally highlighted gender of Lucy Lurie, the unemployment in the modern globalization, the rape and incest of Lord Byron and David Lurie, and the land and the dogs that empathize with both ecocriticism and zoocriticism. All these spotlight the impasse of diasporic refugees, yet adversely attribute its roots to those exiles in the meantime. "According to what Jacques Derrida called deconstruction, texts (including life forms) talk about their fundamental undecidability—an irreducible dark side" (Morton, 2014, p. 294). Demonstrating a tantalizingly grim scenery of the diasporic journey, the text of *Disgrace*, as the ingenious deconstruction of the apartheid in South Africa, of the dissipated figure of classic literature, and even of the entire Anthropocene, is by and by dispossessing readers of their authority of judging the right and wrong in the fiction. The specific cycle deconstructed by Coetzee and combined with race, gender, familial relationship, moral discipline and general affliction of all, has been a one that no one can walk out of. Each and every action and decision in the process ought to be respectable and pitiful, since "no intensity of self-examination… can ever be enough to include this radical otherness of colonial life, colonial suffering, and exploitation" (Jameson, 2001, p. 51). The feeling of otherness only escalates, when an exile compels another to start his or her diaspora, just as David Lurie does to Melanie Isaacs; and self-examination cannot be more to withdraw the otherness, with which Lurie resonates as well, especially in the face of his daughter's rape.

From specific victimization of humans such as the Luries to the group portrait of non-humans in the ecological system, Coetzee emanates a chain reaction of postcolonial tragedies in the apartheid and delves into the ultimately contradictory temperament of diasporic refugees, which connotes "our own ability to think beyond ourselves, to include within the orbit of our imaginations as well as our material existences" (Fudge, 2002, p. 22). In this Anthropocene where diaspora has been commonly generalized, this habitual nature, though essentially guaranteeing their survival, also imprisons them in the endless diaspora. Lucy's inclusion of all the conditions in the town of Salem and her steadfast marriage to Petrus showcase the irreducible dark side of simply living on. On top of the paradox that the writer constructs, "[t]here is then not just the negative advantage of refuge in the emigre's eccentricity; there is also the positive benefit of challenging the system, describing it in language unavailable to those it has already subdued" (Said, 1994, p. 333). However unendurable and unfixable it is, the point

of Coetzee's deconstruction surpasses the explication of miseries and reaches the climax through the narration of the global diaspora in the discourse of South Africa. Then, Lurie's constant struggle till the very end of the fiction, deserves admiring and respecting. While placing all the incidents into a lane with dead ends to elucidate the strange loop of postcolonial diaspora, Coetzee puts the characters in the incessantly in-between positions of grace and disgrace. By breaking down the palimpsest of superposition and recombination of *Disgrace* in the framework of diaspora, the article opens up a new approach to decode the ambivalence pivotal to the enunciation of this national allegory and offers a standpoint to discern the generalized disgraceful realities.

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Endnotes

[1] Lucy has been under Petrus's protection ever since she settled down. He is an ambitiously astute black male with two wives, also as the uncle of Pollux, one of the sexual offenders who rape Lucy.

[2] In 1949, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages was passed as a solution to this concern, and was repealed on 19 June, 1985. From this perspective, Coetzee rewrote the history and underlay the ironic keynote of the fiction.

[3] When it comes to South Africa and *Disgrace*, the "Third World" and "First World" that Bhabha mentions correspondingly refer to the black and white communities in the racial segregation of the nation.

[4] In Mardorossian's article, he also critiques the preposterous motif of people's charging against rapes, saying, "rapes of white women by black men similarly garner a disproportional amount of media attention, even though nine out of the ten women who are raped in the country are black" (2011, p. 75).

[5] The former, a small place in the countryside where Lucy settles down, is far less prosperous than the latter, which is the second largest city in South Africa and crowned as the capital city.
[6] In 1803 and 1804, Byron first fell in love with his cousin Mary Chaworth and then his half-sister Augusta. In 1814, Byron proposed to Annabella (Anne Isabella Milbanke) and married her, despite his continuous affair with Augusta.
[7] Petrus and his cousin Pollux, as black males in the countryside of South Africa, definitely suffer from the discrimination. Yet they simultaneously oppress Lucy. On the undesired journey of diaspora, they are forcing others to undertake a self-exiled life even worse than theirs.
[8] Byron and Augusta had a baby girl, Elizabeth Medora, who was born On April 15, 1814 and never saw her birth father. On December 19, 1815, Byron's wife, Annabella, gave birth to their first child, Augusta Ada Byron. Neither did she see Lord Byron again, after Lady Byron's departure. The unsuccessful marriage, accompanied by the birth of children, shares commonality with that of Lurie. Or rather, Lurie's story is based on the plot of Byron's lifetime.
[9] In the end of the fiction, Lurie decides not to save the dying dog and lets Bev Shaw performs euthanasia. For all the time, the animal plays the role of victims in the country life of Lurie. In many aspects they are similar to the exiled poets like Lurie, powerless, vulnerable, and always on the run. When giving up the dog, Lurie is also bidding a farewell to the previous self.
[10] Born with a deformity and just like the dog, Byron suffered from permanent lameness throughout his lifetime.