

Double Colonization in John Maxwell Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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ABSTRACT: The concept of double colonization is one of the crucial issues for showing the status of people, and especially women, in colonized societies. The marginalization and subaltern are broad categories that characterize individuals, whose voices and actions have been muted, drastically reinterpreted, lost, or consciously swept away. The South African novelist, John Maxwell Coetzee (1940-), depicts the situation of people in South Africa during both apartheid and post-apartheid regimes in which colonized people, particularly women, are colonized by colonizers. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) shows injustice and marginality coming mainly from imperialism and corrupt system of South Africa. In this paper postcolonial theories of Edward Said (1935-2003), Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942) are used to analyze people's condition in countries which experience colonialism and postcolonialism. Women in South Africa are encountered with double colonization and subalternity by both imperial system and male-dominated society. In *Disgrace* the language of dominance should support oppressive people, characters, and especially women, therefore they are considered as Other and inferior in community.

Keywords: Colonized, Marginality, Subaltern, Imperialism, Other.

INTRODUCTION

Subjects, such as double colonization and marginalization, are the most important elements that can be seen in the postcolonial works of John Maxwell Coetzee. Because of his life in an African society Coetzee experienced and saw different problems of people, hence he used most of these elements in his works. Reasons of being double colonized and its consequences which affect the forming of characters and their way of life in the society are discussed in this paper.

Some critics concentrate on the political importance of marginalization. Based on western philosophy there appears the binary opposition of central/marginal characters. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains that the margin is at the service of the center "when the cultural identity thrust upon one because the center wants an identifiable margin claims for marginality assure validation from the center" (Said, 1993).

Disgrace presents the marginalized and double colonized people, especially women, from new points of view. This paper aims to show the oppression of the colonized women in different forms. Women have no value in this kind of society; hence their freedom is restricted and limited in colonial society. Their roles are defined in the world as mothers, wives, slaves, workers, prostitutes, and daughters in the male-dominated family and colonial communities. Coetzee tries to depict and examine the status of the black, particularly in South Africa, by regarding and considering the role of colonizers, the marginalized and subaltern women.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper double colonization in Coetzee's *Disgrace* is discussed and analyzed from postcolonial viewpoint, which is certainly related to the people who are seen as marginalized one and Other by ruling class. Othering is a dialectical process because both the colonizing and colonized other affect each other. The history of the subaltern

classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant classes in *Disgrace* although the history of dominant classes is seen as official history; the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic, since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups. Clearly marginalized citizens and people have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions.

According to critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, and Edward Said, who study different aspects of postcolonial subjects, subaltern, and marginality, this paper focuses on the concepts of double colonization and its related subjects. Furthermore it examines Coetzee's ideas to find some definitions for the concepts of marginality and Other to confirm the hypothesis based on Coetzee's own opinion on the double colonization in postcolonial frameworks.

By regarding all discussions, supposing that double colonization and being in the margin occurred in the societies which experience colonization, the paper aims to examine the subjects such as postcolonialism and marginality, through an analysis of Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace*, and its characters. In other words, double colonization and its consequences that affect the life of *Disgrace*'s characters will be discussed in details.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Anyone familiar with John Maxwell Coetzee's novels knows that they are challenging, difficult and elusive of interpretation. And what is true of the work is true of the author himself too. Coetzee is a very quiet person, who lives in his own private world and has a reputation for being unforthcoming with interviewers. This means that the available details of Coetzee's life are only presented in small amount. Coetzee was born in Cape Town on 9 February 1940. His international prominence with a wider readership beyond academia was secured with the publication of *Disgrace* in 1999, and consolidated his position with the award of the Nobel Prize in 2003. Coetzee shows the reality of South Africa that women, especially the white ones, are raped by the black men. Because of his point of view, the governors did not behave well with him; for this reason he immigrated to Australia in 2002, and started working at the University of Adelaide. The novel, *Disgrace*, is the story of David Lurie, a twice divorced, fifty two-year-old professor of Communications and Romantic Poetry at Cape Technical University. He considers himself happy. But when Lurie persuades one of his students to have a sex with, he sets in a chain of events that will break and destroy his complacency and leave him utterly disgraced. Coetzee's novels are dense and filled with philosophical awareness of the situation of people living with or under oppressive circumstances, but more importantly, his novels explore the way in which a false self, associated with a powerful and corrupt political or social system, must be dismantled and ended.

Double colonization and its related theories

Most of the thought provoking and influential works within postcolonialism have come from debates concerning the representations of gender difference in postcolonial contexts. Most of the postcolonial critics believe that they should remain sensitive to issue of gender difference in their works if postcolonialism is going to challenge male-dominance. Otherwise postcolonialism will, like marginalization, be a male-centered and ultimately patriarchal discourse in which women's voice are marginalized and silenced.

The term postcolonial refers to the condition of people and the country after the imperial rule. The semantic definition includes the national or even aboriginal culture after the departure of the imperial power. The term postcolonial continues to define the culture and literatures of the countries from the moment of colonization to this moment. As the underdogs, the people in colonized countries try to establish their difference from colonizers. There are efforts to look at the colonization and postcolonialism which are defined as a domination of one subject over other by any means, either physical or linguistic or cultural, and to discuss the status of women as subjects of double colonization in colonized countries.

The term coined in the mid-1980s, and usually identified with "Holst Petersen and Rutherford's *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* published in 1985" (Ashcraft et al, 2000). The term refers to the observation that women are subjected to both the colonial domination of empire and the male-domination of patriarchy. In this respect, empire and patriarchy act similarly to each other and both of them have control over female colonial subjects, who are doubly colonized by imperial or patriarchal power. Feminist theory has suggested and proposed that women have been marginalized by patriarchal society and consequently the history and concerns of feminist theory have paralleled developments in postcolonial theory which gives particular importance to the marginalization of the colonial subject.

Marginalization is seen as a deviation from the norm. It has been defined as "the process of falling into a marginal position" (Crane, 2004), where patterns of consumption and use of time differ from the average. Marginalization is also defined in relation to the average and may mean unemployment, poverty, loneliness or cultural marginalization. It has linked with lack of the essential resources which are relating to a normal way of life. In relation to the dominant

normality, different individuals and different groups have different ways of coping. Marginalization in this case means the inability of persons or groups to use various societal power resources, which in turn may lead to different processes of exclusion and marginality.

In the colonized society, the dominant authority once colonizes both men and women of color and then black colonized men colonize the black women once more. Double colonization occurs in South Africa for their different race and gender in female's community. Spivak depicts that "the constitution of the female subject in life is the place of the differed" (Spivak, 1988: 97). The work of decolonization continues within the women's movement to understand the universal dominance that operates with the concept of hegemony.

Postcolonial studies depict and show that women are double colonized by imperialism and patriarchy. The male-dominant voices are heard as the superior and emperor, while the colonized women's voice is never achieved for they are considered as inferior group under the control of white dominant colonizer and black male-dominant state. Women used to belong to inferior group and there is always the voice of male-dominated defined as the good order to reconstruct the black female's identity.

Postcolonial nationalism does not necessarily make less severe this situation, but may difficult to change rather than end the power of patriarchy, so that women's struggle against colonial domination often continues after national independence. Postcolonial feminism continues to analyze the bad situations of gender and double colonization even in post-independent states. However there is considerable disagreement among postcolonial feminists about whether imperialism or patriarchy is the force most urgently in need of gaining power.

Spivak shows the margin as the "silenced center of the circuit marked out of this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribal, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariate" (Spivak, 1988). She, like Coetzee, concentrates on the marginalized person who is not presented, that is the result of western structure and imperial law. She fights and protests against controlling system of the marginalized group and double colonized women. She denies the variety and heterogeneity of those controllers speaking from the margins, and investigates for the "roots applied in essentialist view of identity that avoids diversity and differences, and she is searching for a voice to marginalized women constructed as other" (ibid).

Like the colonized nations dominated by the colonizer countries, the women were dominated over by men over centuries too. But the status of women in the countries which were colonized was even more complicated. The women belonging to the colonized countries cannot have a standing for the entire community they represent, because they can never be isolated in their experience, either as a woman or as a member of a colonized community.

It is very difficult to study and analyze women's writing without a basic study of feminist movements and the history of feminism. This is an area of study, which centered on women and concentrated its focus on finding out more about women and women writers. They talk and insist on the fact that both men and women are very different. Feminist theorists suggest that the work of a creative writer does get affected by the gender of the writer.

Another theory that is explained in this paper is 'Other' that is one of the postcolonial subjects, and it is neither separated nor is very different from double colonization. Other is important in defining the identity of the subject. Other describes the process of justifying the domination of individuals or groups in the periphery to facilitate subordination. The creation of the 'Other' is done by highlighting their weakness, thus judge less seriously the moral responsibility of the stronger self to educate, convert, or civilize depending on the identity of the other. Other is a term, advocated by Edward Said, which refers to the act of emphasizing the perceived weaknesses of marginalized groups as a way of stressing the strength of those in positions of power.

Generally, the 'Other' is anyone who is separated from one's self. The existence of Others is crucial in defining what is normal and in locating one's own place in the world. The colonized subject is characterized as 'Other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture. The concept of otherness is also essential to the comprehending of a person, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to another as part of a process of reaction that is not necessarily related to condemnation. Othering is imperative to national identities, where practices of admittance can form boundaries and national character. Othering helps distinguish between homes and away, the uncertain or certain. It often involves the dehumanization of groups, which further justifies attempts to civilize and exploit these inferior others.

The idea of the Other was first philosophically conceived by Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). In postcolonial theory, it can refer to the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse or even in patriarchal societies, which are identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps crucially, it becomes the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ego.

Other can be compared to the imperial and postcolonial discourse, in two ways: "first, it provides the term that the colonized subjects gain a sense of his or her identity as 'Other', dependent"; and second, "it becomes the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world" (Ashcraft et al., 2000). In

colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonized is continually located in the gaze of the imperial Other. Subjects may be interpellated by the ideology of the maternal and nurturing function of the colonizing power.

In many societies, women, like the colonized subjects, have been come down to the position of Other. They are colonized by various forms of patriarchal domination. Postcolonial discourses show that the marginalized and double colonized encountering the dominant and postcolonial criticism are concerned with destroying the structures of domination, substituting, for example, female traditions for a male-dominated rule and standard.

Double Colonization of *Disgrace's* Characters

Native and subaltern people, and especially women, were doubly or triply marginalized in South Africa. Since they were introduced as disadvantaged on the ground of gender, race, social class, cast sexuality and regional status. There are some examples of subaltern and marginalized women in *Disgrace*; Lucy who loses her land and freedom, Bev Shaw as dog keeper with low status in society, Melanie who is abused, and also Soraya who unwillingly works as prostitute.

Lack of communication is almost an inseparable part in the characters. Besides David's uncommunicativeness, Melanie's silence is obvious and emblematic. The reader never understands Melanie, since David quickly appropriates her discourse with his own thoughts: "Sex was undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" (*Disgrace*, 25). The objectified girls are silent while he talks with too much pride of a "strange love [...] from the quiver of Aphrodite" and of "the flame-god"; Petrus is impenetrable that "talking to Petrus is like punching a bag filled with sand" (*Disgrace*, 25, 166, 153). Even Lucy cuts communication with her father, and it is shown when her father tries to embrace her after the attack:

'You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me,' she repeats.

'You're making a mistake,' he says in a voice that is fast descending to a croak.

'No I'm not,' she says.

'My child, my child!' he says, holding out his arms to her. When she does not come, he puts aside his blanket, stands up, and takes her in his arms. In his embrace she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing. (*Disgrace*, 99).

The voicelessness of the colonized and the deep chasm between the blacks and whites are recurrent theme in Coetzee's works. The spatial scheme of *Disgrace* comprises shifts from Cape Town to the countryside and back. The protected life that David enjoyed changes metonymically into a rural area with unknown dangers. To avoid city and college life, David goes to his daughter's farm. When he is set on fire, his car stolen and his daughter raped, he realizes the dystopic vision of modern, post-apartheid South Africa. The attack provokes David to a stream of consciousness discourse:

It happens every day, every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at this moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy.

A risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings pity and terror are irrelevant. That is how one must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. (*Disgrace*, 98)

David's self-conviction that he will not change is defeated by his learning to love: "He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer had difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (*Disgrace*, 219). In fact there is a restoration of responsibility and selflessness towards Lucy. It seems that this grounding in responsibility is Coetzee's formula in the post-apartheid period.

According to Said, the Orient is different from European (colonizer) in different ways:

The Oriental is irrational, depraved, childlike, different, thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature and normal. But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, [...] principals of internal coherence. Yet what gives the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledge manipulation by which the Orient was identified by the West. Thus the two features of cultural relationship I have been discussing come together. Knowledge of the orient because generated out of strength in a sense creates the orient and his world.

It can be seen in *Disgrace* where Lurie treats Melanie as something such as a child, who is in the inferior rank as stated in the novel:

She is wearing a slick yellow raincoat; in the car she lowers the hood. Her face is flushed; he is aware of the rise and fall of her chest. She licks away a drop of rain from her upper lip. A child! He thinks: No more than a child! What am I doing? Yet his heart lurches with desire. (*Disgrace*, 20)

It is depicted in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the colonizer creates some sense of alienation in identity of the black man who is defined as inferior having no culture, no civilization, and no historical past. Fanon argues that the man of color wants to be a man: "nothing but a man. Some identified me with ancestors of mine who had been enslaved or lynched" (Fanon, 1952). He shows the identity of the Negroes shaped by the colonizer like savages, illiterates and the blackness disturbs the black man in colonialism: "In America, Negroes are segregated. In South America, Negroes whipped in the streets, and Negro strikers are cut down by machine-guns. In West Africa, the Negro is an animal" (ibid), and it is shown in *Disgrace* when Mr. Isaacs, Melanie's father, talks with David Lurie: 'I wonder, Mr. Isaacs, whether I am the right person to speak to Melanie.' 'You are, Professor, you are! As I say, Melanie has such respect for you.' Respect? You are out of date, Mr. Isaacs. Your daughter lost respect for me weeks ago, and with good reason. That is what he ought to say. (*Disgrace*, 37)

Spivak shows female subaltern as the subject to economic, cultural, and political marginalization more than male obstacle. Women are excluded from social, cultural, and political activities, and exploited in the male-centered state due to gender role in male-dominant society. They are imposed to be double colonized and separated from social activities, since they are rejected. In this novel Lucy is the best example of an individual who is losing her lands and authority, and only works for her bosses and rapists.

CONCLUSION

One of the main themes in Coetzee's *Disgrace* is marginalization in South Africa. All of the women characters in the novel are marginalized once. Melanie was marginalized once by David Lurie and the system of university, and again went under the control of her boy friend and was abused by him for the second time and became double colonized this time. Lucy as another woman in this novel once raped by the Petrus' people and then again because of losing her lands and giving them to Petrus, became double colonized by both male-dominated society and imperial system.

Terror of colonial paranoia is one of the main points in this novel. Unnamed victims and unknown enemies represent fearing the indigenous population who threatens security. Violence exerted upon the barbarians is always justified. The terror of fear imposes limitations on the lives of the settlers, reducing them to basic survival. And people are too busy to assure their own safety, and unable to engage in with what would make them more human.

Coetzee tries to show all the people's and especially women's condition in South Africa in *Disgrace*. South Africa is affected by patriarchal and imperial system; therefore, Coetzee attempts to indicate not only these but also women who are considered as Other. Marginalization and double colonization are the most important themes shown in *Disgrace*.

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