Chapter II

Violence in situations of Power-Reversal in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Study of Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* and J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*

Power-reversal in post-*apartheid* South Africa brought its own violence. Gordimer’s *July’s People* represents an imagined post-*apartheid* future whereas Coetzee’s *Disgrace* focuses on the realities of a post-*apartheid* South Africa. Both the novels focus on the reversal of power so far as the blacks and the whites are concerned in South Africa.

Frantz Fanon’s remarks are significant with respect to the relationship between the colonizer and colonized:

> The look that the native turns on the settler’s town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession - all manner of possession: to sit at the settler’s table, to sleep in the settler’s bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive ‘They want to take our place’. It is true, for there is no native who does not dream of setting himself up in the settler’s place. (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 30)

The black man, in Fanon’s view, simply wishes to “go bed with a white woman.” The desire, says Fanon, marks a “wish to be white. A lust for revenge, in any case” (*BSWM* 66). The white man fears the rape of the white woman by black man as the black man fears the rape of the black woman by the white man. It is between this fear and anxiety that the relationship between the white man (colonizer) and the black man (colonized) exists.

Colonial violence also takes the form of sexual violence. Rape becomes an all important trope in defining the colonial encounter and the relationship between
the colonizer and the colonized. The white man seeks to assert his superiority by targeting violence at the black woman and the black man seeks to overcome his inferiority by targeting violence at the white woman thereby visiting the cycle of vengeance.

The colonizer realizes the bare truth that violence leads him towards decolonization, “the native recreates himself, and we, settlers and Europeans, break up” (Fanon, WE 23). Fanon states that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (WE 27). By using violence, decolonization brings about a change in the existing state of affairs in the colonial world. Fanon contends, “Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is obviously, a programme of complete disorder” (WE 27). Decolonization modifies individuals considerably. Fanon reiterates, “the thing which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself” (WE 28). Thus, the impact of the colonial encounter is not just unilateral. It puts the colonizer in jeopardy as much as it does the colonized.

Fanon clearly restates, “decolonization is quite simply the replacing of certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (WE 27). The substitution is total and absolute. Thus decolonization creates a situation where the colonizer becomes the colonized and vice versa. There is a reversal of roles and violence perpetrated by the colonizer is now perpetrated by the colonized on their oppressors. The colonizer finds himself in a frightful situation. But he has to admit that they are only paying for what they have done to the colonized.

In the process of decolonization, violence is handled in a different manner by the colonizer. The colonizer does not think of retaliation but lives in constant fear of the colonized. Thus, it is observed that in the subsequent process of decolonization the colonizer does not retaliate, he remains passive and suffers violence inflicted on him by the colonized. The colonizer realizes that the colonized is taking revenge for what the colonizer has earlier done to the colonized. Fanon posits, “The native who decides to put the programme into
practice and to become its moving force is ready for violence at all times” (WE 29).

The Hegelian dialectics between master and slave relates a situation in which the need for recognition sets one human being against another human being. Recognition refers to the desire of each individual to be accepted as a free being, that is, as a being beyond the mere act of existing. At the initial stage of human history, the demonstration that the human dignity “is not tied up with life” is the only way by which one individual can gain recognition from another individual (Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind 232). The extent of the readiness of the individuals to sacrifice their life is a manifestation of freedom, and the proof that they are indeed beyond mere existence. To use Hegel’s words, “It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not merely immediate form in which it at first makes its appearance, is not its mere absorption in the expanse of life “(233).

The struggle for recognition turns into a fight for life and death. Those individuals who back down from staking their life accept defeat and become slaves. Because slaves accept to work in exchange for the preservation of their life, their masters are relieved of the necessity of working. In thus placing human tools between them and nature, slave owners fully assert and enjoy their freedom. This is not, however, the end of the story. Through toiling and the subsequent mastery of nature, slaves reappropriate the sense of dignity and freedom. In shaping nature, the toiling consciousness “only becomes aware of its own proper negativity, its existence on its account, as an object, through the fact that it cancels the actual form confronting it” (Hegel 239). By contrast, the master is in a precarious situation. For one reason, the freedom that the master enjoys is recognized by an unfree human being (slave). For another, the choice of a mode of life reduced to the mere consumption of nature accelerates the dependence of the master on the slave, thereby turning the autonomy of the master into “a dependent consciousness” (Hegel 237).
This dialectical reversal is headed for the rehabilitation of the slave as it knocks the master off the pedestal. The reversal opens up a historical process progressively leading to the dissolution of bondage and lordship in favour of the universal recognition of equality and freedom. What Hegel establishes is, then, that violence is a necessary moment in the history of the recognition of the human freedom. This history initiates a contradictory outcome: it asserts freedom through the negation of freedom. However, slavery generates the conditions of its emancipation so that the process moves toward the mutual cancellation of servitude and domination.

In Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* the complicit and interdependent relationship shared by the master and slave expresses itself in repeated instances of individuals seeking to assert their unquestionable power over those who must need fashion their resistance from within the imposed authority. Prospero, Caliban, Ariel, Miranda and the shipwrecked king’s men all strive to attain the position of dominance, and their constructions of legitimacy or righteous victimhood provide the play with its distinct exploration of independence. Significant attention has been paid to the Prospero-Caliban binary in an attempt to reconstruct the latter’s rebellious voice and to situate both in an interdependent relationship. Prospero shares a seemingly omnipotent relationship with all other characters of the play, and it is his desire to obtain sovereignty that drives the primary level of action. The complexity of the bond between the colonial ruler and his “thing of darkness,” (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 275) however, exposes Prospero’s dependence on the very subject he claims to have subjugated. Carefully concealed within the framework of the play is the rather precarious position that Prospero himself occupies. His claim to righteous victimhood appears dubious when one considers the circumstances leading to the usurpation of his dukedom. As he recounts the story to Miranda he directs her attention to his consuming passion for knowledge - “Me, poor man, my library/was dukedom large enough” (*T* 109-110). From Prospero’s own revelation, Antonio is justified in wishing to replace the former in order to effectively manage the affairs of the state which, as Prospero remarks, was already his duty by his brother’s unofficial mandate. To further cement Antonio’s
position, one can draw on the testimony offered by Machiavelli in *The Prince*. The means, according to the early modern political thinker, must be subordinated to the end if by doing so the state’s good is served. Even if one takes into account Machiavelli’s rather questionable reputation in early modern England, Prospero still fails to serve in his appointed role as the duke when he ensconces himself in his pursuit of knowledge and severs his ties with the state and its subjects.

Prospero’s aversion to ruling becomes further problematized in light of his relationship with Caliban. Stranded on the desert island with ample opportunity to pursue his scholastic goals (Prospero tells us in Act 1, Section 2 that Gonzalo, one of his courtiers, provides the castaways with Prospero’s most treasured volumes), Prospero turns his mind to attaining total domination over the few who inhabit the island. At this juncture one is led to wonder whether or not it is Caliban’s existence that provokes Prospero’s desire to rule Milan. Once again Prospero’s own words can be called upon to substantiate this reading. As the play comes to a close, Prospero informs Alonso that following Miranda’s marriage he wishes to “retire me to my Milan, where/Every third thought shall be my grave” (*T* 314-15). The deposed duke gains a moral victory over all who had previously wronged him, yet he expresses no desire to rule his dukedom. It appears as though the lack of Caliban and the enchanted island deprives Prospero of the ability or the need to continue performing the role of the colonial ruler. What Caliban’s presence does, in effect, is to provide the necessary opposition that Prospero needs in order to establish his sense of self as the colonizer.

If one acknowledges that it is indeed Caliban’s presence that forces Prospero to assume the mantle of kingship, then it follows that the former is as instrumental in shaping the latter’s being and sense of self as Prospero is responsible for creating a colonized identity for Caliban. In his work entitled *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, Octavio Mannoni draws attention to this double bind from which both the ruler and the ruled suffer. Each must constantly resist the other as a real and perceived threat but, paradoxically, their identities depend on this mutual antagonism. While Mannoni’s dependency
syndrome (and the subsequent fear of abandonment that the “native” supposedly experiences) has been justifiably challenged by many postcolonial authors and critics, it is worth reiterating his ideas, if only to underscore the complexity of the relationship that exists between Caliban and Prospero. Mannoni postulates:

If we look at the external facts alone, we cannot help realizing that the dependence relationship is reciprocal in nature: if the master has a servant, the servant likewise has a master, and though he [the servant] does not compare himself with him [the master], he nevertheless takes pleasure in the value of the thing he possesses.

Although Mannoni consciously wishes to present the trope of dependence as something that is almost wholly a part of the colonized person’s psyche, his argument cannot avoid the curious bind which the colonial situation places on both master and slave - the former requires the presence of the latter in order to validate his or her position of authority. His near total reliance on resistance undermines the discourse of domination to the point where one realizes that not only must the colonized carve out a language of resistance, but the colonizer too needs to resist such dependence.

Power and Resistance are thus found to be intricately bound. Nevertheless, power is always bound up with violence. When power hierarchies are reversed, the one who becomes powerful as a consequence of power-reversal not only replicates but intensifies violence. There is no radical change in the nature of violence, violence seems to continue. There is no real emancipation and there is no real end to violence.

Gandhi was of the view that the replacement of white rulers by brown rulers would be of little consequence to the people if the new set of rulers governed by the same principles, with the same objectives, and with a similar commitment to principles of modern civilization. In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi puts it with characteristic forthrightness, addressing his imaginary interlocutor, “we want
English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan.” As he adds, pointedly, “This is not the Swaraj that I want” (30).

Decolonization may result in power-reversal and role-reversal but reversal in power hierarchies can neither lead to real emancipation nor can it put an end to violence by bringing about any radical change in the nature of violence. True decolonization means decolonizing the mind, becoming truly democratic and non-violent. Non-violence is the only means to negate vengeance. One has to put an end to the cycle of violence.

It is this interdependence that is examined in Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People*. *July’s People* was written in 1981 when *Apartheid* was still a part of everyday life in South Africa. It focuses on a black revolution that takes place at some future date in South Africa. In this futuristic story, Gordimer constructs a horrendous scenario about the effect of a brutal upheaval by the blacks on the everyday life of a liberal white family. The Smales, Bam and Maureen belong to a suburban, upper middle class white family living in South African turmoil, and war forces them to break away from their home town. Revolutionary black armies in Soweto and other areas of South Africa have started a revolt against the government and the white minority through attacking the radio and television stations, and setting their homes on fire. The Smales want to escape from the city. Their black servant July whom they have always treated well and with whom they have a very cordial relationship offers to guide the victim family to his remote village. Having no other alternative, Smales accept July’s offer and swiftly escape in bewilderment to July’s village. They know little of the severe adjustments they would have to make in order to live in July’s rustic village. Their adjustment to the new existence soon threatens their relationship with one another on one hand and their family’s structure on the other. It also explores the truly dreadful fright that these people experience, especially so far as the dethroned Smales are concerned,
in their disempowered state. A conflictual situation arises when Maureen realizes that her position as a master is now threatened in the altered circumstances.

The Smales now have to adjust to the new and uncomfortable situations in July’s rustic community and learn to live like the black people. In the novel Gordimer depicts the new everyday existence of the Smales in a rural black community and compares it to their life back in Johannesburg. The differences between life in the city and life in a rural community is acute. One of the most significant developments in the novel is the manner in which the power struggle between the Smales and their servant July plays itself out.

Nadine Gordimer’s July’s People represents the inversion of the colonial and subsequently the racial power play in South African context whose history till 1990s was a chronicle of racism, violence, bloodshed, slavery, oppression and exploitation of the black natives by the white colonizers. The novel explores how power-reversal has affected the refugee Smales in the village of July and this reversal of power has foreshadowed metaphorically the remaking of history of decolonization in South Africa. The Smales’ displacement to July’s village and their subsequent reliance on him as their protector in the novel’s plot represents a reversal of power that suggests a dialectical collapsing of the Smales’ prior position of dominance and July’s prior position of subordination.

The relationship of Maureen and Bam Smales with their servant July implies the relationship of dependence, defiance, and deferred communication. The master-slave relationship in the novel translates or maps onto comparable relationships of power. “From Marxist point of view, a culture or race is determined to be ‘powerful’ in terms of money and the material possessions, and a race/culture having less material possessions is exploited by the race/culture having more material possessions” (Ruman 9). Thus, economic distinction creates class division and the inevitable power struggle arises. In this context, the whites are greatly shocked at the adverse situation where they have lost their powerful position as colonizers, and are trying to adjust with this power-reversal.
As a consequence of power-reversal, the former masters and the former servant rethink the structure of their relationship and the Smales confront their most basic assumptions about the way that the blacks and the whites should interact. In this regard, Gordimer employs a paradoxical mingling of ‘continuity’ and ‘change’ in order to introduce the Smales’ unsettling immersion into a foreign class structure. The setting changes: an abrupt transition between “the knock on the door” and “no door” that follows not only foregrounds the correspondence between place and the formation of identity, but also introduces the reversal of power that characterizes the Smales’ new dependence upon July. In other words, whereas the “master bedrooms” of Johannesburg provide a setting in which the Smales exercise authority over July, their displacement to his village suddenly invests July with a degree of power over them and yet July’s broken English, “You like to have some cup of tea” (Gordimer, July’s People 1) underscores the language barriers that somewhat limit his recourse to power. Again, among the many implications of the master-slave dialectic, there is the idea of having reciprocity or mutual dependence between master and slave; rather than a blanket opposition of dominance to subordination. The slave ironically shares in the master’s power, because the master defines himself only in opposition to the slave.

“According to Hegel’s parlance, the ‘thesis’ of the Smales and the ‘antithesis’ of July are merged into a ‘synthesis’ in which both fashions depend upon each other for the formation and legitimization of identity” (Ruman 9). The master-servant relationship and its complicated system of dependency and complicity thus function perhaps as a metonymy for broader power struggles that can’t be ‘displaced’ or mapped onto other contexts - namely the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the white and the black, and the like.

The impact of power-reversal and consequently the material deprivation and difficulty of adjusting to dependency on their former servant July leads to Bam and Maureen’s losing their self-image as independent, gracious, powerful and liberal citizens. First, Bam and Maureen lose a sense of each other as husband and wife; then they lose their sense of personal identity. Bam changes from active and
powerful to passive and defeated. Similarly, Maureen, after several unsuccessful attempts to create a sense of place for herself in the African village, opts for a radical rejection of her current position through her run for the “helicopter” which becomes a symbol of revolution and escape; leaving her family behind and forgetting her responsibilities to them. Besides, regarding displacement of power, Bam feels disoriented and disturbed. But as a practical man he tries to cope with the situation better than others. In contrast, Maureen, the most miserable victim of disorientation, is unable to leave her racial trait that resides inside her. However, feeling alienated and uprooted, both always feel the need to escape from this degrading and inverted status.

Thus, Bam and Maureen react to their situation in extreme ways, some of which are similar and some not. The most radical adjustment in which the couple has the greatest trouble in accepting - is their newfound subservience to July. He has become their host, their saviour, and their keeper. When July realizes the power he now holds, he takes advantage of the situation. Whether it is done innocently or with deliberate intent, it is hard to decipher. Bam and Maureen are extremely frustrated over their loss of superiority and control, and their true racist views are uncovered and made far more obvious than when they were living in the city. Despite the fact that the Smales are the most intellectual people of the black community in which they now live, they remain subservient and have almost no influence on the villagers. It is frightening how useless their education and superior civilization is to them at this point. July uses and abuses his power in different circumstances. It seems that the reversal of power so far as the blacks and the whites are concerned in South Africa emerges for July as a reward of oppression, degradation and subordination of the blacks by the whites during apartheid era.

Several objects are invested with symbolic power in the novel. Gordimer presents Bam’s gun and the bakkie (truck) and its keys as objects that represent power in the novel. At the beginning of the novel the Smales family owns these objects, and as the plot develops, their grasp on these objects of power becomes more tenuous, and July and other blacks assume ownership of the objects. The
transfer of ownership, like the parallel transfer that occurs in Johannesburg, is uncomfortable for the whites involved. It is also symbolic of the tenous nature of this kind of a power, which rests on technological advancement but has created assumptions of an inevitable and external power circuit.

The characters in the novel are continually forced to negotiate new ways of relating to one another, and Gordimer makes the use of the awkward communication between the whites and the blacks that result from a new power-structure and the language barrier between them to illustrate the discomfort of that negotiation. The moment to ask July for the keys is allowed to pass by Maureen. Further, the inversion of power play is evident from July’s assertion of self-power regarding the bakkie:

If they catch you, without a licence. He laughed. Who’s going to catch me? The white policeman is run away when the black soldiers come that time. Sometime they take him, I don’t know .... No one there can ask me, where is my licence. Even my pass, no one can ask any more. It’s finished. (JP 59)

After July laughs, and talks about how he is not capable for vehicular infractions because there is no longer any white system of authority to stop him, the conversation becomes extremely difficult. July does not come right out and tell Bam and Maureen that he can do what he pleases, whatever they might say. July masks his revolt against the Smale’s’ authority by talking around it. He acts as though there is an understanding they have reached together, that he is only acting as if he has taken control of the bakkie, but that in fact still belongs to them.

Thus, the keys symbolize the reversal of the power relationship between the blacks and the whites. It also suggests that the key is just to enter into something and to initiate the new power structure. He makes it clear that he is in possession of the power, or capable of being in possession of something which amounts to the same thing. The keys and the bakkie are July’s if he wants them to be, though he returns them at the end of this exchange. By the time he returns those, Gordimer
makes it seem as though July was lending the bakkie to the Smales for the time being.

Bam had got angry when he first discovered that July had taken the bakkie without his permission. However, he comes to realize the futility of any violent action in his current situation. Deprived of his last and most potent means of male authority, Bam drifts into a maternal role: not a loving one, but a detached one. In his final scene, Bam is wordlessly giving the children food. The silence with what he performs his motherly duty creates a sense of detached resignation, almost as if Bam was mourning for his manhood. Meanwhile, Maureen, renouncing virtually all her motherly responsibilities, has experienced an, “explosion of roles” (JP 117) and being unable to make sense of her life or to adapt to the new existence in the village, she loses her rational faculty. When the helicopter arrives, she is certain only that she is tired, filthy and helpless and in the absence of any meaningful identity, she runs.

The visit to the Chief of July’s community is another significant event in the narrative. July lets Bam drive this time, which is an unusual and rather important change. Bam thinks that the Chief is going to expel him and his family from the black community in which they have found refuge, but decides against telling his wife or family in order to keep them calm. When July introduces Bam to the Chief he says, “Chief, this is the master,” (JP 111) an expression which the Smales absolutely hate. This is another reference to the sudden reversal in power and change in the relationship between the Smales and July that has occurred because of the trip to the Chief of the village. The meeting is in fact over the gun, which is still another possession of the white family signifying power that is soon to be lost by it and gained by the blacks.

A few days later, Bam’s gun is stolen from its hiding place in the hut. Bam is completely caught off guard because he felt that no one in the village knew where it was, which reiterates his ignorance towards the fact that in the village there is no privacy. Maureen becomes angry and leaves her husband in the hut to go and inquire about the theft. She finds July near the bakkie and argues with him
that Daniel, one of July’s friends must have taken it. July claims to know nothing about the gun or Daniel’s whereabouts, but finally backs down and tells Maureen that Daniel left to join the black army a few days earlier. The last of their ‘superior’ possessions has been taken and the Smales are forced into wondering if this feeling of worthlessness and inferiority is something that July, his people, and the entire black race have been experiencing all along.

Maureen, unlike her husband Bam, is unable to control her feelings and emotions in reaction to the situation. By the end of the novel, all authority and power, symbolized by the bakkie and the gun, have been transferred to July’s people. So Bam weeps only in front of his children and, he and Maureen interact, “as divorced people might” (JP 140). Their relationship becomes one composed of indeterminate pronounce, “Her. Not ‘Maureen’. Not ‘His wife’” (JP 105). Maureen goes to July and demands that he return the weapon. This time she approaches him as one conscious of a shared past that can never be reclaimed. She accuses July of stealing rubbish from her home too. All he can manage in response is “You” before slipping into the eloquence of his native tongue.

Again, the powerlessness of Smales is evident from July’s statement to his people, “They can’t do anything. Nothing to us anymore” (JP 21). Maureen cannot adapt as well as other members of her family with the new environment and starts losing her mind. The Smales are bound to the village by the restrictions of the events surrounding them; for example, the bombings, the riots, and the fires. Likewise, July is also disgusted and bored with Smales towards the end. As he protests against Maureen’s suspicion of his counter-revolutionary people about the missing gun:

I must know who is stealing your things? Same like always. You make too much trouble for me. Here in my home too. Daniel, the Chief, my-mother-my-wife with the house. Trouble, trouble from you. I don’t want it anymore. You see? His hands flung out away from himself. (JP 151)
According to Foucault, “when power is inverted, it greatly affects the psychology of those who exercised or manipulated it before; and on the other hand, those who achieve it newly at the cost of blood are willing to use it as a means of revenge for their lifelong suppression by the former’s part” (qtd. in Ruman 12). The reversal of power is also the exchange of symbols of colonial power such as the truck (bakkie) and the gun. Thus, the novel brings out the fact that power corrupts irrespective of race or creed.

J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999), a post-apartheid novel depicts the complex binary relationships of numerous areas in post-apartheid South African life, including the pairings of white-black, parent-child, city-country, employer-employee relationships, since these undergo massive changes. The novel also looks at how in an unjust method of social stratification these relationships have a profound effect on individual lives. In addition to this, the novel emphasizes a deconstruction of these binaries by distorting common perceptions about them.

The narrative depicts the consequences of the White South African disempowerment. It focuses on power-reversal and its impact. The novel also takes up the issue of gender based violence through the sexual encounter between a white teacher and his non-white student; and the gang rape of a white woman by three black men. There is variegation of violence in the novel. Lurie, a white man takes advantage as a protector, a teacher by seducing one of his students namely Melanie. The novel portrays the violence that the whites visit on blacks, the blacks visit on whites, the powerful visits on the powerless, the man visits on the woman. It also focuses on the characters’ struggle to adjust within this new South Africa and implies that rape is a complex crime that is destroying South African society. Therefore, Derek Attridge states that “for some readers, *Disgrace* is, above all, a forceful portrayal of a disgraceful situation: the continued flourishing of racist and sexist attitudes in post-apartheid South Africa” (317). The incident which appears as consensual sex from Luries’ point of view is seen, not only as abuse of power but an act of violence (rape), as Melanie Isaacs is Lurie’s student, and under his protection. The act is inappropriate as it is a violation of every given position.
Colonialism shows a recurrence of violence and Power-reversal is bound up with violence. The centricity of rape in the narrative is not a random occurrence nor is it meant to provide cheap titillation. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* describes that Rape has been an all important trope in defining the colonial encounter and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Violence has a gendered dimension and it is this gendered dimension of violence that is expressed in rape. One of the foremost ideologues of race relations, Frantz Fanon, describes rape as emblematic of violence that the colonizer visits on the colonized. What Fanon emphasizes is not only the sexual economy of colonialism, but also the potential for violence inherent within this economy. Violence is intrinsic to the colonial condition and Colonial violence often takes the form of sexual violence, as this is in the very nature of their racial interactions.

The intense masculine need to assert superiority over the ‘other’ in *Disgrace* examines this aspect of colonial violence. While Lurie, a white man and a Professor in a university takes sexual and intellectual advantage of one of his non-white students Melanie to seek his superiority; the black men (Petrus and three unnamed rapists) seek to overcome their inferiority by targeting violence at the white woman (Lucy) and revisiting the cycle of vengeance. The white men, are perpetually worried that their women are at the mercy of the blacks (Fanon, *BSWM* 122). The white man fears the rape of the white woman by the black man. According to Fanon, the need of the black man to re-assert his masculinity after decades of abuse, is projected in his “wish to go to bed with a white woman” (*BSWM* 66). As the white man wishes to possess the black woman, likewise the black man wishes for nothing more than sex with the white woman as a revenge for his own emasculation at the hands of the white male master.

Lurie wants Lucy to report the crime to the police and bring the culprits to justice but Lucy chooses to remain silent and does not report the crime to the police. Lucy reassures Lurie that she does not need to share the details of the violence she suffered with anyone, as it concerns only her:
Don’t shout at me, David. This is my life. I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to be put on trial like this, not to have to justify myself - not to you, not to anyone else. (Coetzee, Disgrace 133)

The problem is exacerbated by the collapse of the institutions built by the white man. There is also the problem of white guilt represented through Lucy’s reaction to her rape.

Further, Lucy suggests to Lurie that post-apartheid South Africa is a country where a white woman’s rape is to some extent justifiable because of the country’s history of Apartheid:

The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone. This place being what? ‘This place being South Africa.’ (D 112)

Thus the narrative depicts the complexity of rape; despite South Africa’s present situation it is difficult to decide whether rape should be considered a private or public matter. Lurie also warns Lucy of future violence and says, “Slavery. They want you for their slave” (D 159). Lucy disagrees with him and instead claims that it is, “Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation” (D 159).

Lucy reconciles to the humiliating situation by agreeing to marry Petrus and become his wife. Lucy considers her rape as an act of retribution. She compares her rapists to tax collectors, who have come to make her pay her debt. As she says:

What if … what if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it: perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as
debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves. (D 158)

She exchanges her land with Petrus. According to Fanon, through violence, the colonizer has taken away the land, labour as well as the woman of the native (colonized). It is the violence of the human approbation. Retribution is an antithetical ordering of the violent acts committed by the white man on the black woman and the black man on the white woman as depicted in the novel where Lurie, a white man takes sexual advantage, advantage of a power position, position as teacher, as an older man and advantage as protector of one of his non-white students Melanie and in an action of power-reversal, Lucy, a white woman is gang raped by three black men.

As a consequence of Lucy’s brutal rape and her reconciliation to her situation by marrying Petrus and exchanging her land with him, Petrus becomes the prime example of a black man who acquires power and property, and becomes a landowner from a care-taker. Thus, power-reversal results in the loss of Lucy’s status from farm owner to a black man’s wife and as a consequence of power-reversal, Petrus’s status undergoes transformation. Petrus, formerly “the gardener and the dog-man” (D 64) now declares himself as “not any more the dog-man” (D 129). The rape of Lucy by the black men is clearly related to assertion of one’s power. Lucy decides to give birth to the child she is carrying as a result of rape and Lucy’s child can be represented as the symbolic heir of post-apartheid South Africa. The novel draws a parallel between Melanie’s rape by Lurie, and Lucy’s gang rape by three black men. What Coetzee depicts is not the concept of an ‘eye for an eye’ but develops the trope of ‘rape’ to depict the manifestation of power.

Lucy takes a step towards reconciliation by not lodging a complaint against her rapists. She reconciles to the new situation in post-apartheid South Africa and remains silent. She atones for the wrongs of her father, Petrus and three black men who rape her. She sees the rape not as personal but as an act of community. Her father does not acknowledge the responsibility of guilt but she does. She
acknowledges that wrong has been done to her and reconciles to it, as justice is not in prosecuting the criminal but in the recognition of the wrong.

According to Marais, Lucy’s position can be articulated as an attempt to stand outside the struggle of dominance/subservience that generates history. It is obvious; however that history will have none of it, as depicted in the differences between Petrus and Lucy in their respective definitions of their relationship. Lucy over and over again refuses to define her relationship with Petrus in terms that suggest dominance or subservience; Petrus, on the other hand, introduces himself as a humble subordinate “the gardener and the dog-man,” (D 64) and then is shown to work through the novel to invert that status after Lucy reconciles to marry him and exchanges her land with him. Marais argues that Lucy’s passivity, “is precisely an action that resists the terms of this history and thereby refuses to supplement it. Through her passivity, she refuses to perpetuate the cycle of domination and counter-domination out of which colonial history erects itself” (37).

After the brutal rape of Lucy followed by an attack by the intruders and its aftermath, Lurie starts to work at an animal clinic with Bev Shaw, a neighbour of Lucy. He helps Bev in disposing off the dead bodies of dogs. Lurie, formerly a Professor at Cape Technical University winds up with the position of a dog-man, a worker at an animal clinic in an ironic reversal of Petrus’s position. Lurie’s prestigious position of a Professor is now reduced to the status of “a mad old man sitting among the dogs singing to himself” (D 212). Lurie’s academic ambition to compose a grand opera on Byron entitled “Byron in Italy” (D 4) fails because of his disgraceful dismissal from the university, the dismantlement of his professional career and his refuge with his daughter in the countryside. The aborted opera acts as a metonym for the grand past that Lurie longs for. Lurie complains that during his self-imposed exile in rural South Africa, “he came to gather himself, gather his forces, [but] [t]here he [was] losing himself day by day” (D 121).

In the meantime Lucy returns to his house and finds his house looted, leaving him with nothing, “He wanders through the house taking a census of his losses. His bedroom has been ransacked, the cupboards yawn bare” (D 176). The
disgrace takes almost everything from him - his position as university Professor, his dignity, his identity as an intellectual person, his house, his academic ambition of composing a grand opera on Byron. At the same time; rape by three black men, power-reversal and its aftermath reduce Lucy to a landless farmer from a landowner.

The existences of Lucy and Lurie end up in a disgraceful situation and they agree that their status has reduced to that of a dog:

Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at a 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.’ (D 205)

Here, humiliation is equated with being like a dog.

When power hierarchies are reversed, the one who becomes powerful as a consequence of power-reversal stands in the position where his former master was. Thus, the two novels bring about the fact that there is no radical change in the nature of violence as a consequence of power-reversal. Power-reversal replicates and just intensifies the violence. Gordimer’s *July’s People* and Coetzee’s *Disgrace* analyze the theme of violence in times of power-reversal, to examine the consequences of race relations in post-apartheid South Africa. In *July’s People* while Johannesburg experiences a violent backlash due to black revolt, the countryside remains peaceful. The displacement of the Smales from a violent location to a peaceful one is concomitant with the loss of instruments of power and collapse structures of power. Since these structures are not visible in July’s home, the Smales lose all power. In an ironic twist, July and his people, acquire those accoutrements of power but do not use them. A similar situation can be seen in *Disgrace* where Lucy, living in the countryside refuses to fight with the instruments of white domination and prefers the non-violent surrender of power as atonement of white guilt.
1. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel traces the path that self-conscious follows through desire, a life or death struggle, to finally the master-servant relationship. A very cursory - with the acknowledged risk of being simplistic - reading reveals self-consciousness’s desire to impose itself too strongly on other self consciousness. Hegel posits this desire as one for recognition and theorizes a dramatic struggle to death that takes place between these two entities. He argues that the willingness to give up one’s life is the most effective means of claiming a unique selfhood when confronted with an “other” who also possesses self consciousness (114).

2. The analysis that follows draws its critical perspective from Sunayani Bhattacharya’s “(Re) appropriation: A Reading of *The Tempest*, *Kapalkundala* and *Disgrace*.”

3. Octavio Mannoni’s *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* describes “dependency complex” among native populations. Mannoni argues that this dependency is latent among natives, thus making colonization a relatively painless procedure, beneficial to both parties involved.

4. Hegel argues that master/slave dialectic is a quest for recognition, in which the master receives his identity from the slave, who in turn receives his human identity through the master’s withholding of freedom. A liberating synthesis, Hegel argues, results from a mutual recognition between the master and slave. Dialectic, especially in the sense in which Hegel has used the term is a theory which maintains that something - more especially, human thought - develops in a way characterized by what is called the dialectic triad: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Some idea or theory or movement may be called a thesis. Such a thesis often produces opposition, because, like most things in this world, it will probably be of limited value and will have its weak spots. The opposing idea or movement is called the antithesis, because it is directed against the thesis. The struggle between the thesis and the antithesis goes on until some solution is reached which, in a certain sense, goes beyond both thesis and antithesis by
recognizing their respective values and by trying to preserve the merits and to avoid the limitations of both. This solution is called the synthesis.