

Narrative as a Symbolic Social Act: Sexual Bribery and the Pragmatics of Resolution in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Kunle Afolayan's *Citation*

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Abstract

This paper explores pragmatic approaches to dealing with issues of sexual harassment within the academy. This is achieved through an analysis of the plot resolutions in two narratives, drawing on Frederic Jameson's framework of the Political Unconscious. Within this context, the paper examines J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Kunle Afolayan's *Citation* as symbolic acts that explore symbolic resolutions of social contradictions. The selected texts enable a reflection on the BBC's October 6, 2019 documentary on sex for grades, and nurture a symbolic dimension to appreciating the complexities and power relations in sexual harassment reporting in the academy. The paper demonstrates that the two narratives engage in a broader dialogue with theoretical concepts to speak to the dynamics of mediated sexual scandals.

Keywords: *Citation*, *Disgrace*, Jameson, resolution, sexual violence.

Introduction

Sex scandals between university lecturers and female students are regular news (Joseph, 2015; Erinoshio et al, 2021; Rostami, 2021; Moussa, 2022). According to Erinoshio et al (2021), "campuses are becoming notoriously unsafe and hostile rather than provide a protected environment where students would acquire knowledge and develop healthy life-long mutual friendships in a respectful atmosphere" (p. 1). Indeed, the everyday experience of the female university student is often burdened with the

frustrations of sexual demands as a means of survival and a coping strategy in structured settings. Fitzgerald and Ormerod (1991) identify five forms of sexual harassment within the university setting: seductive behaviour, sexual assault, sexual coercion, gender harassment, and sexual bribery. Sexual bribery, which is the most common form of sexual harassment, shrouds the offence as a give-and-take context (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1991).

As expected, the airing of the BBC African Eye documentary on Sex for Grades in two West African universities on October 6, 2019, generated several discourses. The media and academic landscapes suddenly experienced a prioritized sensitization of sexual harassment campaigns by way of highlighting institutional commitment to combating the global plague. Ezegwe, Obichili and Addeh (2020), for example, analyzed the Facebook comments on the BBC documentary and claimed that Facebook commentators, through a unanimous positive tone, supported the idea of exposing such crimes due to their devastating and traumatic effects on the victims. Fadipe and Bakenne (2020) also examined the crisis management strategies of Nigerian tertiary institutions and the stakeholder's reactions after the BBC sex-for-grades documentary. They engaged the press release(s) and the stakeholders' opinions on the documentary to conclude that Nigerian tertiary institutions use denial, distrust, diminish, rebuilding and bolstering as crisis response. While these studies are important in how they highlight the public perception of sexual violence, they neglect the complexities of tackling sex scandals, particularly within the academy. The purpose of this paper, drawing on the foregoing, is to examine modes of resolution and the pragmatics of dealing with sexual violence, using Fredrick Jameson's framework of the symbolic function of narrative.

The function of narratives, as the relationship between literature and society shows, is to comment on the world through the parameters of reflection and refraction. In the case of reflection, Aristotle (1951) explains that literature imitates based on the realities of the artiste. In refraction, literature functions beyond being photographic; it summons and comments on the world by providing a symbolic social control mechanism that deals with social contradictions. In that regard, literature makes the artiste a mediator between the world and the text. The present study shows how texts provide avenues to reflect on possible mediation strategies in light of the realities of the BBC documentary. Specifically, the paper demonstrates that Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Afolayan's *Citation* as

narratives engage with a symbolic assessment of sexual violence/harassment in contemporary Africa. It also sheds light on the significance of the resolution of the plot structure in the two narratives and shows the relevance of symbolic resolutions to social contradictions.

Framing the Problem

As narratives, J. M. Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace* (1999), and Kunle Afolayan's film, *Citation* (2020), confront their audience with the need to revisit contemporary approaches which deal with sexual violence. The question that arises is not simply ethical but one that has to do with contextual interpretations of the approaches in dealing with sexual violence. Although Afolayan's *Citation* is yet to gain any scholarly attention, the critical commentary on Coetzee's *Disgrace* is burgeoning. Studies on Coetzee's *Disgrace* have focused on racial and class politics, rape and sexual violence, body politics and Animal life (Sam, 2016; Smith, 2015; Petterson, 2014; Tarka-Fai, 2014; Neimah, 2013; Mardorossian, 2011). Precisely, the literature on Coetzee's treatment of sexual violence (see Opheim, 2016; Anderson, 2007; Attridge, 2004, 2002; Patton, 2003) is tied to racial discourse and therefore does not address the complications in dealing with sexual violence on university campuses in particular. While this is so, this paper argues that, when we engage with the two narratives in tandem, we can appreciate their confluence in terms of how they speak of issues on sexual violence.

Methodology

The study is qualitative. The texts have been purposefully selected based on their focus on sexual violence on university campuses and their approach to the issue of sexual violence by way of overturning the operations of power and encoding resistance. As an audio-visual (a film), specific scenes in Afolayan's *Citation* have been used to aid a smooth textual analysis. The paper analyzes the plot structure in the two narratives with an interest in how their resolutions hold implications for dealing with sexual violence on university campuses. Specifically, the paper assesses the mediated strategies in dealing with the sex scandals involving Professor David Lurie and Ms. Melanie Isaacs in *Disgrace* and that of Prof. Lucienne ND'yare and Ms. Moremi and Dr. Grillo and Racheal in *Citation*.

Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act: Frederic Jameson and the Idea of the Political Unconscious

To understand the crucial intervention Jameson makes in terms of the function of narratives, we must revisit the arguments of the mimetic school. The mimetic school believes that narratives play an agentic role by cognitively representing realities. In other words, the function of narratives is to imaginatively interpret aesthetic objects and communication (Aristotle et al., 1995; Ricoeur, 1984). In such a presentation, narratives, according to the mimetic school, idealize society by providing alternative realities to social contradictions. Although the core of mimesis has great intellectual value, Jameson's idea tries to link the political function of what narratives do in real situations. The fundamentals of Jameson's idea of the political unconscious are largely located within literature's function of refraction. He claims that "the assertion of a political unconscious proposes that we undertake just such a final analysis and explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artefacts as socially symbolic acts. It projects a rival hermeneutic to those already enumerated; but it does so, as we shall see, not so much by repudiating their findings as by arguing its ultimate philosophical and methodological priority over more specialized interpretive codes whose insights are strategically limited as much by their situational origins as by the narrow or local ways in which they construe or construct their objects of study" (Jameson, 2015, p. 5).

Key to understanding Jameson's framework is the issue of power. He claims that there is a politically hidden background in any text and the hidden modes are expressed through class struggle in a rather complex manner. Therefore, the priority of a narrative is to aesthetically uncover and reconcile conflicts that arise as a result of the power dynamics therein embedded. In that regard, texts/narratives become revolutionary acts, making 'conscious' of those struggles and conflicts that have been rendered 'unconscious in the process of class struggles. And so, the ultimate function of the text/narrative is to propose ideological resolutions to social and cultural dilemmas. In other words, texts/narratives provide alternative social control mechanisms which are in no way superior to what the status quo offers.

The question of power, as Jameson's framework advances, is rooted in the Marxist conception of power relations as manifestations of a specific mode of class domination. In other words, within the Marxist framework, all forms of social power are intricately tied to hierarchical and

ideological structures and are, therefore, key to understanding the operations of unequal power play and its emasculation. Jameson's idea of the political unconscious takes into consideration the question of strategy and appropriate tactics intended to overthrow unequal power relations in specific contexts. Jameson's framework has a Marxist presupposition and this becomes resourceful in terms of how it helps us to evaluate the pragmatics of approaches in dealing with sexual violence. There is a complicated relationship between sexuality and power; which is why a sustained interrogation of the indices of resolution is required for total organizational and sexual freedom. It is important to acknowledge the fact that the point of this complication is that, Marxism is not primarily concerned with issues of sexuality and power. However, crucial to understanding Jameson's framework is the Marxist idea of social contradiction. This is important because it is that which accounts for his ideal of "resolution of social contradiction". Within this context, social contradiction should be read as paradoxes in society which inhibit the rights and freedoms of a group of people, especially in ways that deny them avenues for self-expression.

Scapegoating in an Age of Grace: *Disgrace* and the Quest for Pragmatic Sexual Reforms

The narrative in Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a story about a university professor's unchecked sexual habit. Professor David Lurie is a two-time divorcee and a professor at Cape Town University in South Africa. Despite Lurie's history with women, his sexual urge is unyielding. His regular meeting with Soraya, a prostitute, and the seductive demands he makes on one of the secretaries at his school explain his unbending desire for women. Professor Lurie turns his attention to one of his students, Ms. Melanie Isaacs. Although Melanie eventually gives in to Lurie's inappropriate demands, she is lured into a non-consensual sexual encounter by Prof. Lurie. After that encounter, Melanie's class attendance and performance begin to suffer. Prof. Lurie is subsequently confronted by both Melanie's father and her school boyfriend and Melanie files a sexual harassment complaint against him. Despite the university's efforts to spur Lurie into reflecting on his behaviour, he refuses the option of counselling and public apology and consequently resigns his position at the university.

Higgins & Silver, as cited in Kendal (2006), explain that reading about rape in a literary text is complicated: It often requires that we listen

not only to those who speak (and the circumstances in which they speak) but also to those who do not speak or to those who find an alternative way of speaking. While Higgins & Silver's argument remains crucial, reading about the act of rape in a literary text will be incomplete and truncated if we do not engage with the necessity of resolution. This requirement remains important as it helps avoid an oppressive chain. The world of Coetzee's *Disgrace* provides a basis for this necessity if we grapple with the two rape incidents in the narrative. Melanie Isaacs brings sexual harassment charges against Prof Lurie and Lucy; Lurie's daughter is brutally raped by three Black men and she refuses to make a complaint. The parallel between these two rape cases invokes situations of racial segregation and the challenge of interracial love in post-apartheid South Africa; social contradictions that deny individual and collective freedoms in the world of Coetzee's *Disgrace*. Mardorossian (2011) confirms this assertion when she claims that "an analysis of *Disgrace*'s representation of sexual violence exposes the inextricability of the social categories of gender, class and race insofar as these identities are shown to accrue meanings to one another" (p.72). It is against this background that we settle for an interrogation into the pragmatics of sexual reforms, especially when the novel envisions an alternative society in post-apartheid South Africa. Hence, the quest for a resolution becomes central to Coetzee's exploration of new times and new freedoms.

The affair between Prof. David Lurie and Ms. Melanie Isaacs was a complicated one. Despite the racial undertones that defined their relationship, Prof Lurie's posturing towards their affair is two-faced. He considered Melanie (a) a giveaway, privileged by apartheid; and (b) an object of sexual gratification. This is corroborated by Diehl (2012) who argues that 'Lurie's romantic ideologies are definitive of 'his stubborn and stagnant character throughout the novel' (page). At the Committee's hearing, Prof Lurie implies a certain degree of legitimacy that is ignored in dealing with matters of sexual violence, which is that a man is made for a woman, and a woman is made for a man. Thus, it should be difficult for any man to accept the punishment of living out his masculinity. He admits that "there was something so ignoble in the spectacle I despaired. One can punish a dog; it seems to me, for an offence like chewing a slipper. A dog will accept the justice of that: a beating for chewing. But desire is another story. No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 90).

“Menstruation, childbirth, violation and its aftermath: blood-matters: a woman's burden, women's preserve” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 104). The metaphor of the dog spectacle corroborates Prof Lurie’s argument about issues of racial ownership and the function of Eros. Lurie’s reference to blood matters, essentialized through the natural feminine tropes of menstruation and childbirth, draws attention to the ethical implications of desire and instincts without control. It also places violations within the inevitable categories of womanhood. This is why he finds the committee’s offer of a public apology dishonourable, exaggerated and puritanical, later stating that the committee members “wanted me castrated” (p.66). Diehl (2012) asserts that “Lurie refuses to perform any form of contrition or apology, suggesting that the “rights of desire” supersede his obligations to comply with the university’s recommendations to make a public confession and undergo counselling. Moreover, because Lurie categorizes himself as a “servant of Eros” during the disciplinary hearing (p.52), he is identified in the novel and extant criticism as a kind of Byronic hero who appeals “to an instinctual paradigm of desire” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 89).

Particularly, when the hearing coincides with the “Flux out the Casanovas Campaign”, Lurie interprets the coincidence as a carefully thought-through act of scapegoating. He fumes: “scapegoating worked in practice while it still had religious power behind it. You loaded the sins of the city onto the goat’s back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to read the ritual, including the gods. Then, the gods died and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help. Real actions were demanded instead of symbolism” (Coetzee, 1999, p. 91). Drawing on the Old Testament allusion to atoning for sins, where the sins of the city is lumped unto the goat which are led to the outskirts of the town as a symbolic cleansing of guilt, Prof Lurie sees a return to the practice of scapegoating as old-fashioned, hypocritical, and a sign of disillusionment. This is against the background that the relevance of the advent of the Messianic head, Jesus Christ, presupposes full atonement and an inauguration of a new covenant (new times). Prof Lurie postulates that the dawn of the new covenant, which prioritizes mediation, necessarily survives the value of scapegoating. Subsequently, in dealing with issues of sexual violence in contemporary times, there is a need to adopt rituals that are far less censorious and condemnatory.

It is interesting to note that Lurie does not just consider scapegoating as a cliché. He foresees a case of an upturn of power relations where the option of a public apology becomes power delivered to the

people (the recipients/the students). In this case, the offer of a public apology humiliates the dominant group (faculty/male lecturers) by displacing the dignity of the superior self. This conclusion is enacted during Lurie's visit to the Isaacs' where he wishes to "speak his heart" to Melanie's father (p.166). Arguably, Lurie's refusal of a public apology is symbolic of the systemic failures in resolving issues of sexual violence. This systemic failure, as Coetzee appears to suggest, creates an unsafe and nervous climate that may lead to an escalation of hostilities – the 'other' or the victimized develops a desperate craving for an opportunity to deal with its problems, however, feasible.

Mediation and Laying of Traps Juxtaposed: *Citation* and the Mitigation of Hostilities in Cases of Sexual Violence

Citation is a story about a smart and courageous female university student, Moremi, who files a sexual harassment complaint against her course supervisor, Professor Lucien N'Dyare. The narrative opens with a subplot with Dr. Grillo's sexual demand of a female student, Racheal, and how Racheal's quest for retaliation ends tragically. In the main plot, Moremi develops an innocent relationship with Professor N'Dyare after she (Moremi) agrees to teach him how to drive a car with a manual transmission. Their friendship becomes ambiguous with Professor N'Dyare's noticeable intentions and Moremi's romantic involvement with Kovejo, a medical student. Prof. N'Dyare's hatches and cleverly executes his plans to sexually abuse Moremi at a house party - a particularly ugly set of circumstances that the filmmaker lays out in enough detail to leave nothing up for debate. Yet, Moremi's story is greeted with scepticism albeit the testimonies of N'Dyare's sexual harassment record.

In Afolayan's *Citation*, the playwright carefully juxtaposes two forms of plot resolutions. The play opens with a sub-plot with an encounter between Dr Grillo and a female student, Racheal. In their encounter, Dr Grillo asks for a sexual bribe in return for a good pass for the female student. Instead of the female student reporting the incident to the university authorities, she and her cohorts plan a 'befitting' punishment for the male lecturer. Their escapade, which is a clear instance of sex for grades, ends rather tragically. The lecturer is knocked down by a car and dies instantly as he tried to escape from the mob. What is interesting about this incident is the significance of the resolution. Afolayan, like Coetzee, anticipates a looming catastrophe because of the systemic failures in dealing with sexual violence. Drawing attention to the

problematics of othering, particularly concerning systemic power dynamics in the academy and through the re-invocation of the allusion to the Rwandan Genocide, the playwright calls attention to the need to tackle the tensions that are lurking within the other group to avoid a massacre of slayers. It is important to note that Dr. Grillo's tragic end was driven by an age long desire by the other group to grab hold of power in the interest of sexual freedom. This condition is revealing of the power dynamics in the sexual violation of Lurie's daughter, Lucy Lurie.

The brutal violation of Lucy is an extended metaphor of the black race in South Africa to own power – an attempt to undo the subservience of racialized subjects. Laying traps becomes an unsuitable social mechanism since their intention is as much violence as the crime in question. Thus, Afolayan's conceptualization of these failures is best encoded in the context of human rights violations within the framework of a failed state, where state laws are simply unused ornaments in a closet. In sharp contrast to the main plot, Moremi, a female student, brings charges against Prof N'Dyare, a course supervisor, for an attempted rape incident. Though the hearing seemed a fair trial, the incidents leading to Moremi's eventual vindication are shrouded in bouts of complexities. To begin with, it is important to understand the playwright's attempt at clarifying the nature of sexual harassment. In a conversation with her legal representative, Moremi's concern is this:

Moremi: I saw a lot of doubt on their faces today. Especially from my own Dean, Professor Osagie.

Legal Rep.: Should I tell you how I met my husband?

Moremi: {She nods her head in affirmation}

Legal Rep.: After Law School, I was a junior associate in a law firm and he was a senior partner in the same firm. He asked me out three times before I finally agreed to go on a date with him. We've been married for twenty-one years. We have three adorable but seriously troublesome children. My point is, he was my senior at the workplace. Now after a third time, we did not consider it harassment in today's context. There is a thin line between wooing and oppression; especially when one party has power over the other. What we must do is to erase the doubt from the minds of the panel. (Afolayan, 2020, 0:32:57)

The dialogue is crucial for two reasons. (a) A better understanding of contemporary interpretations of what constitutes harassment is needed for the option of an appropriate resolution and to redefine the boundaries of what constitutes ethical conduct within specific organizational setups. (b) Hierarchical relationships are not devoid of oppression; the probability of impropriety as characteristic of any relationship that is marked by unequal power relations cannot and should not be underestimated within the context of sexual violence. These blueprints, as the paper argues, remove ambiguities of guilt and advance the agenda of sexual liberation, particularly within the school context. Although we do not ignore the possibility of victim complicity, especially if we pay attention to the character of Gloria and her desire to belong to the community of power, the core of the dialogue reveals the dual function of power as beneficial and detrimental. They are exemplified through the dichotomy of wooing and oppression respectively. It is important to acknowledge that Moremi's frustration with the doubt that greets her at the closed hearing cannot be disconnected from the hurtful operations of power, an obvious bias suffered by the other in search of self.

The option of mediation, as the dynamics of the closed hearing show, has invaluable benefits juxtaposing other approaches. Particularly drawing on the signification of 'the new covenant' and the suitability of peace talks between war-prone territories, the playwright suggests that the success of mediation rests largely on social cohesion, gender equity, and most importantly, female solidarity.

"Prof. N'Dyare: Hence, society tends to mirror that which it reflects. If we ask any group of people if they are happy with the government that they have [...] if they say No! Chances are that they are living in a society where freedom of speech is enshrined in the constitution. If they say yes! Chances are that they live in a totalitarian society where fear is the order of the day. Now in that scenario, how does an arbitrator mediate in the best interest of the party who brings the grievance to the table? Yes, Kwesi.

[Prof. N'dyare points at Kwesi]

Kwesi: Sir, we don't mediate in the interest of the party that Brought the grievance to the table. We mediate in the interest of all parties concerned.

Prof. N'Dyare: What if both parties inadvertently put one country at a disadvantage?

Kwesi: Well Sir, if anyone had the answer to that brain teaser, there will be peace in the Middle East.

[Entire class laughs. Moremi raises her hand.]

Prof. N'Dyare: Yes, Moremi.

Moremi: Somebody is going to walk away unhappy regardless.

Prof. N'Dyare: What if hostilities are declared based on resolutions"

Moremi: Resolutions that lead to an escalation of hostilities are not resolutions. They are proxy wars fought under the guise of overt political and economic interest.

Prof. N'Dyare: So, do we do away with resolutions altogether?

Moremi: No, Sir. I just wouldn't present a resolution as one if it has no chance of resolving anything. Otherwise, we would have Rwanda all over again where UN peacekeeping forces set aside for up to a million people to be brutally massacred. That is no resolution; that is genocide.

Prof. N'Dyare: All I know is that jollof rice originated from Senegal. (Afolayan, 2020, 0:37:15)

By juxtaposing the two approaches, which are laying traps and/or mediation, the playwright suggests that an amicable resolution is less destructive as Dr. Grillo meets his tragic end and Racheal and her cohorts are eventually expelled. That is, a more appealing resolution is usually committed to restoring human dignity by mitigating the effects of the violation. It is important to recognize that while the intent of the hearing is a strategy of mediation, its complexity rests within a broader understanding of the role of the UN Peace Keeping forces in the Rwandan experience. Although mediation is conceived as a level ground for involving parties in conflicts, choosing it as a means of resolution nurtures an explicit political motivation; the option of mediation is arguably political. Moremi's continued discomfort at the hearing due to the judgmental glances of her male superiors is an attestation of the frustration of victims seeking to bring finality to their sexual threats. The challenge of mediation is another question of power. In her desperation, Moremi cries:

Moremi: I am a brave fool. He is clever. Manipulated credible. They believe him not me. My faculty dean is giving me dirty looks.

Legal Rep.: Come down. The Ajike Advocacy centre is with you all the way.

Moremi: With all due respect, Mum. Ajike is just an organization using my situation to make a name for itself.

Legal Rep.: Moremi, that is uncalled for!

Moremi: I won't be a case study. This is my education. My reputation. My future is on the line right now.

Legal Rep.: We are doing our very best here.

Moremi: But that is not making any difference. No wonder some students take matters into their own hands. Justice isn't blind here. It has a 2020 vision all in favour of the faculty.

(Afolayan, 2020, 1:50:15)

Moremi feels trapped in a complex web of power play with the trouble of having to endure name-calling, alienation, social stigma and the psychological trauma of the public gaze. Her condition substantiates the rationale for laying traps as an emergency mechanism. The playwright suggests that the options available to the victims of sexual violence are usually restrained, especially when power is deployed in ways that favour the dominant group. In other words, within any structural coalition of power, there is the probability that access to justice may be controlled either based on gender or minority grounds or both, and there is the need to remove all vagueness of resolution. The priority of social justice, gender equity, and most importantly, female solidarity is required for sexual freedom in contemporary Africa.

The Prerequisites

Envisioning the possibility of both individual and collective sexual freedom, the narratives reiterate the significance of social justice as a means of mobilizing collective resistance to the issues of sexual bribery and violation. *ABC'S of Social Justice: A Glossary of Working Language for Socially Conscious Conversation*, published by Lewis and Clark College in 2014, presents social justice as "the practice of allyship and coalition work to promote equality, equity, respect and the assurance of rights within and between communities and social group" (p. 8). By drawing attention to the unsuitability of laying traps and scapegoating as earlier alluded to,

Coetzee and Afolayan advocate democratic systems that would allow for equitable treatment and fairness in terms of undoing prejudices of discrimination within the organizational set-up. In other words, the emphasis on social justice is important because of institutional power dynamics. Therefore, any attempt at ensuring the physical and psychological safety of members of the community requires that all people (the powerful and the less powerful; the lecturer and the student; male and female; black and White) be entitled to the same fundamental rights and freedoms. This will secure the protection of the everyday life of the victim. While the narrative in Coetzee's *Disgrace* stresses the need for sexual campaigns to sanitize the segregated front among social groups in South Africa, Afolayan's narrative suggests that the nature of systemic inequality, particularly within the university context, requires a 'we-for-she' approach –sisterhood solidarity that will break the cycle of male dominance in matters of sexual violence.

The Ajike Advocacy agency is significant in terms of its symbolic relevance to sisterhood solidarity in engineering sexual freedom. It is important to notice how Afolayan debunks the stereotypical claim of women against women by creating parallel female character traits using Gloria and the trope of the twins as points of reference. The playwright enforces and emphasizes this idea of solidarity through the trope of the twins. Feminist perspectives on emancipation and power continue to reinforce the role of the female as a cardinal. In Moremi's trying moments, we recognize the operations of women solidarity as a prominent organizing principle. While Gloria's decision is an unmindful one that surrenders to the prevailing assumptions and ideas hindering the universal vision of women's emancipation, the willingness of the female twins to 'stand shoulder to shoulder with you in the struggle against victimization' explicitly breaks the ideological seal of women as actors of their doom to emphasizing the emergence of the new women in a new patriarchy. Afolayan narrative appears to affirm the fact that female sovereignty is linked to group emancipation.

While the foregoing remains crucial in sexual liberation agenda, the narratives appear to affirm the fact that violence against women is backed by imbalanced gender relationships. That is, a continued bias in gendered conversations may decrease the possibility of guaranteeing the value of social cohesion and ensuring access to social justice. Hence, we find, in Afolayan and Coetzee's narratives, a call for gender equity – fair distribution of responsibility and rewards – to bring about changes that

are needed for women to realize their full human rights. Although the BBC documentary on sex-for-grades revealed gross misconduct on the part of those implicated, the ethics of the adopted journalistic approach is unable to ensure adequate proof, which makes it difficult to map a correlation between journalistic impact and appropriate resolutions, taking into account the complex dynamics of culture and social hierarchies. The 53-minute sex documentary may not be too far away from a fast-forwarded plot with a little network of sources and burdened with the problematics of data handling. Thus, a more solution-oriented journalistic approach would have sufficed for its objectives.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the BBC documentary on sex-for-grades, the purpose of this paper was to evaluate the significance of the plot resolutions in Coetzee and Afolayan's narratives to comment on the pragmatic ways of dealing with cases of sexual violence within the university context. The paper relied on Jameson's framework of the Political Unconscious, which posits that texts formulate symbolic resolutions to imaginary or real social and cultural contradictions. Thus, the engagement with the two narratives has shown that a pragmatic review of the approaches in dealing with sexual violence in the university context is required to avert the escalation of hostilities within the in-groups. The paper has also demonstrated that the resolution of the plot structure in the two narratives has implications for dealing with sexual violence. It has established that the possibility of emancipation within the context of the struggle against victimization can be located within the ambits of structural re-organization, agency and positive gender relations.

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