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*Gendering Violence and Responsibility in Two Novels by J. M. Coetzee and their Filmic Adaptations*

**Abstract** – In the context of persisting yet ambiguous framings of South African life as intrinsically violent in particular for women, this article aims at illuminating the relationship between gendered violence and responsibility in two key works by J. M. Coetzee and their filmic adaptations, which have until recently been the only existing remediations of his oeuvre for the screen. The works in question are Coetzee’s early novel *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), written at the height of the apartheid era and set in the charged colonial space of a farm, and his later success *Disgrace* (1999). The latter famously stirred a national controversy because, in the early stage of the “new South Africa”, it dramatized the violent gang rape of a white woman by three black men, alongside the sexual exploitation of a ‘coloured’ girl by a powerful white professor. Drawing on insights by Aaronette White, Veena Das, and Judith Butler, responding in turn to the works of Frantz Fanon and Hannah Arendt, this article explores the complexities and ambiguities of Coetzee’s take at gendered violence in both its traditional and its innovative instances. If on the one hand his approach seems intended at denouncing the persistent subjugation of women in a (post)colonial, racialized, and classist context, on the other it points to the possibility of a non-violent social practice which implies staying aware of one’s inescapable vulnerability while looking for a non-reciprocal agency in the social relations that make one vulnerable.

**Keywords:** J. M. Coetzee; Judith Butler; gendered violence; vulnerability; responsibility