

## THE POLITICS OF COUNTER-FOCALIZATION IN COETZEE'S *DISGRACE*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*As the narrative of J.M. Coetzee's novel Disgrace is presented through the perspective of David Lurie, protagonist cum fixed internal focalizer of the novel, it is David who understands the post-apartheid South Africa and South Africans in his own way. Being the only focalizer of the novel all the characters and events are filtered through his consciousness. Therefore, it is neither the author, Coetzee nor the third person anonymous narrator who is responsible for the negative image created in the novel. The focalizer evaluates himself as a loving father, responsible Professor and a helpful neighbour, whereas the focalizeds-- the South African subaltern people or the victims of apartheid-- are evaluated as untrustworthy, insensible and un-kind people. However, there is the equal possibility for the focalizer to be either reliable as Strether in Henry James's The Ambassadors or unreliable like Maisie in What Maisie Knew. In Coetzee's Disgrace, the images of both the focalizer and the focalizeds remain enigmatic because there is the absence of the authorial or narratorial evaluation on the focalizer's understanding and the sympathetic portrayal of the focalizer. As David, the focalizer is ironically portrayed; Coetzee wants readers to provide counter-focalization to understand the implied meaning in this fiction. It helps readers to approach David critically and express empathy towards the marginalized sections of the society such as the poor, the victims, the blacks, the coloured, women and the lesbians.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Focalization; Focalizer; Focalized; Counter-Focalization; Narratology; Dramatic Irony; Unreliable Narrator; Subaltern*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Disgrace (1999), the Booker Prize winning masterpiece written by the South African Nobel Laureate, J(ohn) M(axwell) Coetzee (recipient of 2003 Nobel Prize for Literature), presents the story through the perspective of Professor David Lurie, the focalizer of the novel. Prof. Lurie, a fifty-two years old white professor of Romantic Poetry at Cape Technical University in Cape Town, South Africa, is not the narrator, but rather he is presented in the third person, as 'he'. This novel is relentless in keeping the 'focalization' confined to David Lurie, the focalizer cum protagonist of the novel. The narrative of the novel is fully presented through his limited focalization though he cannot understand the problems and sufferings of the others like the blacks, the females and the homosexuals-Petrus, Melanie and his own daughter Lucy respectively. However, David is portrayed sympathetically. The presentation of the focalizer is dramatically ironic and the narrative of the novel results into fallibility as the Coetzeean implied narrator does not provide the authentic evaluation of such a fallible perspective.

It is the validity of the liberal white ex-colonizer David Lurie's understanding that Disgrace questions through the invitation to focalize the enigma of the focalizeds like colored Melani(e), black Petrus and 'possibly' lesbian Lucy. The

focalizeds are denied focalization in this novel. As a result, the enigma of the focalizer and the focalizeds remains unsolved. In short, *Disgrace* demands counter-focalization for the understanding of the focalizer and focalizeds' enigmatic condition.

This research is an inquiry into J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace*. The present research will prove how the focalizer's focalization turns to be problematic in this novel and consequently, how counter-focalization is required to understand the enigmatic condition not only of the focalizer but also of the focalizeds. From the beginning David is portrayed ironically. Though he is a Professor by profession, he is presented as an ignorant person who is unable to understand the suffering of the others. This study will specify on focalization technique deployed in *Disgrace* and the requirement as well as the implication of counter-focalization. The focalization confined to an ironically portrayed man, David, is limited because of his ignorance in terms of gender, race and sexuality of victims of apartheid. Before analyzing and exploring such fallible focalization and narrative, it would be better to define focalization in short.

Focalization means viewpoint or perspective, which is to say the point of view from which the story is told. Though discussions of narrative frequently speak of the point of view from which a story is told, this use of point of view confuses two separate questions, according to the French narratologist, Gerard Genette: 'who speaks?' and 'whose vision is presented?'. In other words, "[Genette] distinguishes between focus of narration (who tells the story) and focus of character (who perceives what is told to us in... the story)" (qtd. in M. H. Abrams 232). In *Disgrace* the anonymous third person narrator's focus is on events and understanding as they are perceived and interpreted by the character David Lurie, therefore, it presents the story through David's consciousness but not through the narrator's perspective. David Lurie does not fully understand the complicated situation of South Africa during the transitional period of the 1990s but he is confidently unaware of his own ignorance. The story is, to use a term propounded and developed by Gerard Genette and Mieke Bal, focalized through the perspective of the focalizer, David. His is the centre of consciousness through which events are brought into focus. Thus, the question 'who speaks?' is separate from the question of 'who sees?'

This research will focus on 'center of consciousness' or perception of character rather than on 'center of narration.' For Genette, the French narratologist who propounded 'Focalization Theory' in 1972, focalization is the adoption of "perspective in narrative, a viewpoint from which things are seen, understood, assessed... the angle from which things are seen-where seen is interpreted in a broad sense, not only in terms of visual perception" (qtd in Michael Toolan 68). According to Bal, the Dutch narratologist who developed this theory, "Focalization is the relation between the vision and that which is seen or perceived" (*Narratology* 142). The one who experiences is termed as the 'focalizer' and who or the one what the focalizer experiences is called the 'focalized'. 'Focalization' generally falls into two main types: external focalization where the narrator cum focalizer who is not character of the novel focalizes on the external objects or things and internal focalization where phenomena are presented as experienced by a character within the novel. To study the issue chosen in this research, internal focalization will be critically analyzed.

In *Disgrace* David Lurie is presented as the 'only' focalizer from whose perspective the focalizeds like his coloured student Melanie Isaacs, the black neighbour Petrus, his own 'possibly' lesbian daughter Lucy and others are evaluated. Coetzee deploys 'fixed internal focalization' for his focalizer David but with ironic touch. Verbs of experiencing such as 'look', 'see', 'touch', 'smell', 'feel' and 'think' are used for him to distinguish him, the focalizer from others, the focalizeds. In absence of authentic authorial voice from the narrator's side to comment on such problematic limited and

fallible viewpoint, the novel gives the fallible picture of the focalizeds of the novel. "Unreliable narrative can result from limitations of viewpoint," as Jonathan Culler points out, "when we gain a sense that the consciousness through [whom] focalization occurs is unreliable or unwilling to understand the events" (Literary Theory 90). Culler's idea on unreliability is applicable to *Disgrace*.

While going through this novel it is found out that though David is the only focalizer through whose perspective or position events and other characters are introduced and evaluated, he is illiterate in terms of gender, race and sexuality; he cannot understand the suffering of the subaltern people like the blacks, the coloureds, the females and the lesbians. However, he acts confidently despite of being unaware of his own ignorance. Moreover, he goes on justifying his own actions and thoughts and those of others. As a result, his presentation in the novel is dramatically ironic in a sense that his own dialogues are directed against himself; the readers are more aware about his condition than he himself is. As in a drama, the character, David is made to reveal himself without the intervention of the author or the implied narrator's evaluation.

David's focalization gives negative impression about others as the narrative fully depends on his focalization. So, if the readers fully rely on such fallible focalizer's perspective to see the others, they can get totally fallible picture of post-apartheid South Africa. For instance, his coloured student Melani(e) who has been seduced by David will be understood as an inexperienced, revengeful, gullible or credulous and deceptive student; the hardworking black peasant, Petrus will be understood as an untrustworthy, cunning, mentally deficient neighbour; his own 'possibly' lesbian daughter Lucy will be understood as a perverse, obstinate and disobedient daughter and a black boy Pollux will be understood as a savage who requires the 'grace of white man's education'. From David's perspective he seems to be and tries to portray himself as a very learned, kind and sympathetic professor, neighbour and father who seems to be the innocent victim of socio-political change during the transitional period, period of majority black regime.

Such impression which is given on the surface level caused by limited figural focalization cannot be taken at 'face value' as it provides entirely misleading impression on the surface level. But in the deep level, because of Coetzee's ironic treatment of the focalizer, counter-focalization is demanded in the novel. As a result, in reality, David's reading of himself and focalizeds turns to be misreading and misleading. To avoid such danger of misreading counterfocalization is required. If David is evaluated from the focalizeds' perspective or through the focalizeds' eyes, (which is denied in the novel), David as the focalizer and his focalization is fallible in the deep level. If the readers ignore his failure of insight, the novel can be interpreted as a racist novel and its creator as a racist writer. For the proper understanding of the fictional world created in this novel, ironic presentation of the focalizer should not be ignored.

Many critics and reviewers have analyzed this novel from different perspectives like ethical, historicist, existentialist, feminist and linguistic. These approaches--no matter whether they are author oriented or reader oriented or language oriented--have tried to interpret it or invest this novel with meaning. The approach of the present research differs from those previous approaches in a sense that the present research analyzes focalization technique deployed in the novel, its limitations, relation between limited focalization and dramatic irony, requirement and implication of counterfocalization in this novel.

Critic Judith Chettle writes about the response of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) after the publication of the novel, "Though *Disgrace*, a novel of post-apartheid South Africa, won the Booker Prize, it was harshly criticized by the ruling ANC for its truthful if unpalatable portrayal of current realities. Coetzee has subsequently

immigrated to Australia" (196-97). Here, Chettle studies this novel as if it were a true history book and so does the ANC. Likewise, in an Oral Submission to the South African Human Right Commission (SAHRC) of inquiry into racism in 2000, the ANC used *Disgrace* as a historical witness to the persistence of racism among white South Africans. In it, they claimed, Coetzee reported on the still pervasive idea of the black as a faithless immoral, uneducated, incapacitated primitive child, a version of white racism. Jakes Gerwel, a distinguished professor of literature and Director- General of the president's office under Nelson Mandela, expresses dismay at "the novel's portrayal of the almost barbaric post-colonial claims of black Africans, at its representation of mixed-race characters as whores, seducers, complainers, conceited accusers"(qtd. in MC Donald 325).

Though *Disgrace* is set in a particular place and time-South Africa of 1990s- one should not make a mistake by treating the fiction as a purely social document. *Disgrace* is a novel but not a pure history book. Likewise, pessimistic tone has been found by Michael Kochin, "A novel by J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* is... a book about endings: the end of morality and the end of humanity. [It] presents a world dying without hope" (4-5).

Harald Leusmann insists on negative picture portrayed by Coetzee in *Disgrace* by calling him an enigmatic writer:

[T]he publication of *Disgrace* caused irritation among a number of members of the governing African National Congress and controversial debates in parliament. The picture Coetzee had painted of the post-apartheid state was too dark and negative. In the eyes of the old regime he was an enemy of the state clothed in a poet's robe, while for his black readers he wrote in a style considered to be too white. To this day, he remains an enigma. Who is he?" (61)

For Leusmann also *Disgrace* portrays a negative picture of South African society. He suspects whether Coetzee does so intentionally. Novelist Salman Rushdie has similar view about the dark picture portrayed in *Disgrace*. Rushdie further goes on finding out similarities between Coetzee, the author and David, the character, "[T]he novelist colludes in David's self-justification so that the novel merely becomes [s] a part of the darkness it describes" (qtd. in Kossew 161).

On the other hand, some critics like Graham Pechey, Elleke Boehmer and Gareth Cornwell take David as a sympathetic character. For Pechey, "David is at the new, terrifyingly unmarked temporal frontier of decolonization, living out his life as one of the socially marginalized" (37). Here, Pechey takes David's focalization at a face value and regards the Professor of South Africa as a marginalized person. If Prof. David is taken as a marginalized white, this understanding of the novel is surely misleading. Likewise, Boehmer "advances a stronger claim for the achievement of what she calls a secular atonement on David's part" (qtd. in Attridge 318). She also seems to be taking David's focalization at face value without considering David's self-justifying ironic gesture. In the similar line, critic Gareth Cornwell writes on reliability of Coetzee's authorial narrator, "The narrative situation of *Disgrace* is conventional: an authorial narrator tells a story that is consistently focalized through the consciousness of the protagonist David" (311). Though Cornwell hints at David's role as a focalizer, there is not the presence of the authorial narrator. Rather the narrator narrates through David's perspective.

For those critics who take David as a sympathetic white man, David, the focalizer is the victim of the socio-political change. This impression is produced by David, the focalizer but not by focalizeds. He is responsible for his own downfall which he rejects to take by means of self-justification. Such sympathetic reading of focalizer by taking his judgment at face value is a possible blunder; it is misreading of the novel; it is a surface reading. On the other hand, critic Tony Morphet talks about Coetzee's post-modern stance in writing:

For Coetzee, there is no 'history', there are only 'histories'- endless stories moving in multiple directions and presenting themselves to him as a writer... What Coetzee's work does is to open out, on all sides, the situation of the writer in condition of alienation. Coetzee remains outside of his fiction, they write themselves through him and they take their place in the world on their own terms without support from a reference to their creator. (59)

For Morphet, Coetzee lets his characters reveal themselves dramatically without author's intervention. In the same manner, critic Rob Nixon insists on Coetzee's versatile personality as "a novelist of ideas, a semiotician, a polyglot and a French Structuralist" (2). Moreover, he calls Coetzee as an "anti-apartheid writer" (2).

Chris Switzer calls Coetzee's protagonist David a 'flawed' man by comparing David with his protagonist of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Magistrate: "There are no evil monsters in a Coetzee novel; there are only humans who think, feel and act irrationally, sometimes out of confusion, sometimes out of insecurity... The magistrate and David Luire both revoke financial, physical and emotional security in the name of their own principles" (qtd. in Rob Nixon 2)

However, their attempt to secure their dignity is "self- deceptive" as critic Gilbert Yeoh points out (331). As self-deception is one of the features of irony, Coetzee presents both of these heroes with the touch of irony. Self- deception is one of the recurrent themes in his novels. Yeoh further adds:

Coetzee's view of writing as failure in truth telling and a deception dominates and shapes his fiction and is implicit in works like *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*. Failure in truth telling means that Coetzee's narrators are unreliable... [His] ultimate emphasis is not epistemological but ethical unreliability... Ethical unreliability continues to inflect David Lurie's interior monologue in *Disgrace*, which should, therefore, not be accepted at face value but read with suspicion. (334)

For Coetzee, liberal novel is a false narrative white South Africa tells itself to comfort itself. Coetzee's focalizer produces false narrative of identification and empathy with victims of apartheid. Any semblance of moral identification and empathy conveyed by his focalization is a self-deception.

M.D. Alan A. Stone analyses David Lurie's mind psychoanalytically and finds him as a 'self- justifying', 'self-indulgent', 'psychologically naive' Professor:

[He] really doesn't understand why he does anything. He can explain his actions to himself only after the fact. Whenever he is driven to speak in defence of himself, he makes matters worse and furthers his disgrace. Prof. Lurie is something of mystery to himself and finds it hard that he is suffering, depressed or disgraced... who considers himself superior to everyone around him. He is a narcissist. (2248)

For Stone, David is an ironic man who is confidently unaware of his own ignorance. So he is ironically portrayed as the belated disciple of Romanticist like Byron.

Thus, these critics who have charged this novel as a racist novel or who have interpreted it as a pessimistic novel seem to be lured by intentional fallacy, that is, Coetzee's biographical facts like his stance as a white South African Writer. Moreover, they seem to be considering it as a social document as old historicists do. Further, they seem to be unaware of the focalizer's ironic portrayal because they take the focalizer's focalization at 'face value'. By portraying his focalizer ironically, Coetzee opens the room for the canny readers to counter-focalize against the focalization deployed in the novel. Coetzee seems to be very much aware of unconscious prejudice of his white protagonist because such racial and gendered

prejudice cannot be avoided from one's mind in such a very short period in practical life. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak finds the problems on the surface level caused by limited focalization deployed in the novel. Spivak comments on the novel from her Marxist-feminist perspective, "Disgrace is relentless in keeping the focalization confined to David Lurie. Lucy is resolutely denied focalization... Disgrace makes the subaltern speak, but doesn't presume to give voice', either to Lucy or Petrus" (21, 23). So, all the other focalizeds are denied focalization. To make the speech of the focalizeds or subaltern people audible, counter-focalization is required in *Disgrace*. The Subaltern can speak in the world of this novel but they are misrepresented or misunderstood or neglected by a white liberal humanist, David.

The condition of the focalizer and the focalizeds remains enigmatic because of the deployment of the fixed internal focalization for David Lurie and the absence of authorial judgment. On the surface, the narrative of the novel portrays David Lurie as a good man and the victims of apartheid as bad ones. Now the questions arise: Is it the deep or implied message of the author as well? If it is there, is there any rhetorical signal which can provide such implied message?

If we deeply analyze the text, we can notice that in the deep level J.M. Coetzee deploys dramatic irony for his focalizer David Lurie. In other words, Coetzee presents his fixed internal focalizer ironically. In the deep level, he is shown to be unable to understand the sentiment, feeling and suffering of the focalizeds though he is the only focalizer of the novel, and as a result the narrative is presented from his perspective David Lurie, being the professor of Humanities, is expected to provide impartial judgement on the focalizeds of the novel; he is expected to give the true image of himself as the focalizer. But in reality, he is staged as unable to touch either the racial or the gendered other. Though he is the professor of Humanities, he does not have any humanity. He seduces his own student and justifies his own action. He does not understand the focalizeds. Nor he does understand their feelings, sentiment and suffering. As a result, what happens is the opposite of what is expected.

So, one can notice the contrast between David's 'appearance' and 'reality'. In appearance, he seems to be an understanding man but in reality he cannot understand the subaltern people. The real problem does not arise from his inability to understand the focalized because there is not any compulsion that one must fully understand others. It is natural that the academician like David may not understand the life lived by the subaltern people. But the real problem lies on the fact that David, the fixed focalizer becomes confidently unaware of his own ignorance, that is., he becomes blind towards his own blindness. Therefore, he thinks he knows while actually he does not. He commits the crime like seduction of his own student but does not regret as he says, "Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world. To another universe of discourse" (58). He evaluates the subaltern people in such a way as if he knew everything about them. He does not realize his inability to understand them.

In the deep level, David is shown to be suffering from the defects of self justification of his own misdeeds and rationalization of other. Therefore, "the irony does not escape him" (5). His ironic gesture is pointed out by Lucy when he shows his unconscious racial prejudice towards a black boy Pollux: "[David]: Not Mncedisi? Not Nquabayakhe? Nothing unprounceable, just Pollux?/ [Lucy] And David, can we have some relief from that terrible irony of yours? [...] for years you used it against me when I was a child, to mortify me. You can't have forgotten" (200). However, his inability of understanding is ethical one as "he does not act on principle but on impulse and the source of impulse is dark to him. His madness is not of the head, but of heart" (33). However, he is not aware of this fact. Moreover, if we deeply analyze the text, we can notice that his own dialogues are directed against himself and anticipate the actual outcome without his

intention as he tells Lucy: "Lucy, it really is time for you to face up to your choices. Either you stay on in a house full of ugly memories and go on brooding on what happened to you, or put the whole episode behind you and start a new chapter elsewhere" (155). It is not Lucy who has to make the choice as she is determined to go on living where she lives. Rather, it is David who has to choose between the two alternatives and has to start his "new chapter" in Grahams-town after leaving Lucy's house in Eastern Cape. So, he acts unknowingly as if he were a child.

To show his immaturity in the matter of ethical understanding Coetzee makes Ryan, Melanie's lover ask David to "explain [his] childish behaviour" (194). Likewise, Lucy advises him to use "baby oil" for his wound (98). Though he quarrels like a child with the members of the University Committee called for the inquiry on sexual harassment charge against him, his understanding on ethical matter is no better than that of a child. Though he says, "Don't tell me what to do, I am not a child", he is immature in ethical matters as Maisie in Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* (41). When Lucy is gang raped by three rapists, he takes it as the blacks' revenge upon the white. However, Lucy takes it as a personal matter and tells him, "You don't understand what happened to me that day.... You think you understand, but finally you don't because you can't" (157). It shows how David can't understand the suffering of the subaltern people like Lucy because of his unconscious racial and gender prejudice. His ethical ignorance is clear from his seduction of Melanie and his response to it, "I was enriched by the experience... I don't think I will have another chance" (56).

It shows how David acts, thinks and feels confidently without being aware of his own ignorance. Moreover, he justifies his own misdeeds to prove himself good and to protect himself. He justifies his seduction of Melani(e) as "[n]ot rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" (25). His focalization is self-serving, therefore, he cannot understand the pain of Melanie caused by his seduction. Rather, he is concerned only about the portrayal of his positive image. He excuses his violation of Melani(e) as an act motivated by Eros or inspired by Aphrodite, "My case rests on the rights of desire... It was a god who acted through me" (89). It shows how he tries to save himself through his inappropriate self-justification. Though he knows that his seduction of Melanie is against her will, he neither confesses for his mistake 'from his heart' nor accepts the fact that he has really committed a mistake. It is because he cannot distinguish good action from bad action as he says, "I make no confession" (51). Even when his daughter Lucy is gang-raped, he does not know whether rape is ethically good or bad, that is, pleasurable or painful as "he remembers as a child, poring over the word rape in newspaper reports, trying to puzzle out what exactly it meant... In an art book in the library there was a painting called *The Rape of the Sabine Women*" (159-60). To understand exactly what rape is he has to depend upon either the article on rape in the newspaper or the painting on rape. Such person like David, who is ignorant on practical matter, cannot be expected to understand the suffering, pain and feeling of seduced Melanie, raped Lucy, and other subaltern people as he thinks that Lucy has been helped through rape, "Lucy Lurie has been helped with a difficult visit" (150).

David is not only obscure but also deceptive and self-deceptive as his ex-wife, Rosalind points out, "You [are] always a great self-deceiver, David. A great deceiver and a great self-deceiver" (188). However, he deceives himself and others unknowingly, i.e., without intention. He risks financial, physical and academic security in the name of his own obscure and irrational principle as he himself says, "My case rests on the rights of desire" (89). Further, he makes the situation more obscure as he says, "I [am] standing up for a principle... Freedom of speech. Freedom to remain silent" (188).

Though he says that it is an "ungovernable impulse" which led him to have sexual intercourse with his own student Melanie, he believes that the coloured girl Melanie and the blacks are taking revenge over him and treating him

unfairly for being the white professor during the post-apartheid period (52). Likewise, he thinks that his daughter Lucy was gang-raped by the three rapists as the historical revenge of blacks upon the whites, David is unnecessarily and inappropriately obsessed by history and historical fact called apartheid being the white male of South Africa during apartheid period, therefore, his justification of his own actions and rationalization or understanding of subaltern people are coloured by his unconscious hypocrisy and racial prejudice. David's belief that treatment of him is unfair is the product of his unconscious hypocrisy because the members of the University Committee try their best to defend him as one of the members of the University Committee points out: "I get the impression, listening to you, David, that you believe you are being treated unfairly. That is quite mistaken. We on this committee see ourselves as trying to work out a compromise which will allow you to keep your job" (54).

In reality, it is David himself who is responsible for his own downfall, that is, he is dismissed from the university and falls in disgrace. But he does not accept this fact and justifies his actions, beliefs and thoughts which are coloured by his unconscious hypocrisy and racism. He understands that his private disgrace is the part of public disgrace as he says, "I am trying to accept disgrace as my state of being, and live in disgrace without term" (172). Moreover, he thinks that his disgrace is the product of public disgrace of his country. But in reality, it is he himself who invites his own disgrace or shame through his own weaknesses-inability to control his sexual desire, self-centred justification and unconscious racial gender hypocrisy. So, he misunderstands himself and the subaltern people. Likewise, he considers himself to be so perfect that he does not want to improve himself as he tells Lucy, "I don't want to become a better person. I am not prepared to be reformed I want to go on being myself" (77). Though in the beginning he pretends that he has moral standard, later he acts so irrationally and inappropriately that actually he does not have such ethical knowledge as he thinks, "There was a time when he thought he might become friend with Petrus. Now he detests him" (152). He hates Petrus, Lucy's helpful neighbour for being black; he cannot marry Melanie and wants to prolong his sexual relation with her for being coloured, he imposes patriarchal discourse upon Lucy for being his daughter (but not a son) and takes Pollux as a savage for being a black boy (but not a white boy). However, he tries to get sympathy from the reader by means of rationalization and self-justification as he calls himself "a figure from the margin of history" (167). Now, the question arises: If a white professor considers himself to be a marginalized person, then are the poor peasants, upper class people on the basis of South African context? The other related question may arise: Is David really marginalized or marginalized only in his thought? The professor of South Africa cannot be called a marginalized person.

It is because he takes political change, that is, transformation of South Africa from apartheid policy to democratic system of 1990s as master slave reversal. In reality, he is neither "treated like an outsider" (141) nor is marginalized, but rather he misreads and misunderstands the facts and, as a result he gives unreliable images of himself as a focalizer and the subaltern people by means of self-justification and rationalization. Therefore, we can say that David is an unreliable focalizer and the narrative which is entirely focalized or coloured by his ignorance and unreliability should not be taken at face value. However, the enigma of the focalizeds still remains enigmatic. The enigma of the focalizeds can get resolved only when we notice the focalizer's ironic gesture and provide counterfocalization against the focalizer's self centred focalization.

As irony is a rhetorical signal to active reader in deep level, reader know more about the ironically represented character like David than he himself does. As the deployment of irony is the deliberate intention of the author, we should consider the gap between the author or narrator and the character. In such situation implied meaning of the author is quite opposite from literal or surface meaning. When the character like David is ironically portrayed, surface meaning produced

by the fixed internal focalizer cannot be taken at face value. Therefore, fiction like *Disgrace* demands counter-focalization to get implied or alternative meaning. Otherwise, the readers are doomed to make wrong reading of the text.

Now the question arises: why does Coetzee present his protagonist-focalizer, David ironically? The answer is that Coetzee portrays his only focalizer David ironically to show post-apartheid old generation whites like David's perception of post-apartheid South Africa- the blacks, the coloureds, the young generation whites- and their relation with each other. Coetzee presents David in such a way that David saws off the branch he is sitting on. So, Coetzee lets his protagonist David reveal himself dramatically as an actor on the stage without interruption of the narrator by making him the focalizer. As David misreads the focalizeds and is unreliable, he has to be presented ironically. By presenting him as a focalizer, Coetzee tries to show the subjective nature of truth. So David's truth may not be true to others or readers when David's truth is post-apartheid old generation whites' truth; as it is neither readers' nor focalizeds' truth, so readers should counter David's truth to get the real truth of the focalizeds of South Africa during the transitional period. In short, because of the dramatically ironic presentation of the focalizer, narrative based on his self-centred focalization cannot be taken at face value. In a text in which a fixed internal focalizer is presented ironically as in Coetzee's *Disgrace* counter-focalization is required because such focalizer's understanding is doomed to be fallible.

Coetzee creates a gap between the author and focalizer by presenting the focalizer ironically and inviting readers to counter David's focalization which is based on his unreliable understanding or misunderstanding. In other words, Coetzee provides a rhetorical signal to canny readers by treating the fixed internal focalizer David with ironic touch. This is the rhetorical signal to the active reader to counter-focalize, that is, to provide alternative narrative from the perspective of the focalizeds as the reader's commentary for the understanding of the enigma of the focalized. In other words, *Disgrace* demands counterfocalization for the understanding of the focalized's enigma.

Coetzee shows the blind spots and wants the readers to find out such blind spots and give their views as he does in *Disgrace*. Often in Coetzee's fiction the racially or socially privileged characters, like the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and David Lurie in *Disgrace*, can gain virtually no understanding of the inner world of other who has been excluded from such privilege. Therefore, Coetzee creates an ironic gap between the author and narrator or focalizer by making an ethically unreliable person as the first-person narrator as in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and the fixed internal focalizer in *Disgrace*.

As David Lurie is an ethically unreliable focalizer, ethical unreliability inflects Davids' focalization, therefore, such focalization should not be accepted at face value, but rather it should be read with suspicion. In *Disgrace*, David's focalization is deceptive and self-serving. Therefore, Coetzee wants the readers to counter such unreliable focalization. He has the assumption that suffering of the focalizeds should be considered while providing counter-focalization. Counter-focalization should be provided through the perspective of the focalizeds or subaltern people, as the novel does nothing to counter David's focalization but invites the readers to counter his focalization by presenting the focalizer ironically. Readers are expected to fill up the gaps left out in the text. For instance, rape of Lucy remains off stage; the experience of Melanie after her seduction by David is also not provided through the mouth of Melanie. In other words, experience of the violated bodies--bodies of Melanie and Lucy-- are hidden from the readers. Since the stories of the subaltern people like Melanie, Lucy, Petrus, Pollux are elided, the responsibility for such imagining is left to the readers.

*Disgrace* explores troubling tensions between generations, sexes, races and classes going on in South Africa during the 1990s. It is about the difficult birth of the new nation. It is precisely the unreliable perception of the white ex-colonizer's

understanding that Disgrace questions through the invitation to focalize the enigma of the subaltern people. If readers, like David, ignore the enigma of the subaltern people, the novel being fully focalized by David can be made to say every racist thing.

When Lucy knows the fact that he has not only racial prejudice but also gender prejudice, she counters David's patriarchy as she shocks David, "Hatred ... when it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me anymore. Maybe, for men, hating the women makes sex more exciting. You are a man you ought to know" (158). It shows how Lucy resists David's patriarchal domination. Moreover, she protests against David's gender illiteracy as she says, "I know I am not being clear. I wish I could explain. But I cannot. Because of who you are and who I am, I cannot" (155). Thus, Lucy distances herself from her father, David. So, she tells David, "You don't know what happened" (134). David understands Lucy's determination to live an independent life as her obstinacy. It is David's misunderstanding.

When Lucy, a lesbian girl in David's view, decides to carry the child of rape to term and agrees to marry Petrus, who is not the biological father of her child for her protection, she seems to be acknowledging the power of African rather than Western tradition and law. She rejects her father's advice for abortion and leaving South Africa because of her "Mother Nature" and dignity (216). In her opinion, it is not the child's fault to be born as a mixed race child of Lucy but that of rapists' who cannot be known by a single colour. It is not so serious issue whether Lucy is 'lesbian' or not but it is Lucy's determination to start from originary nothing-a scary beginning-and to give birth to the child of rape which has to be saluted. She wants to spend an independent life without the interference of her egoistic and dominating father.

Further, she protests against her father's logo-centrism and patriarchal hegemony as she tells David:

I cannot face... your eruptions. David, I can't run my life according to whether or not you like what I do... You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are a main character, I am a minor character who does not make an appearance until halfway through. Well, to contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. (198)

It shows that Lucy is misunderstood by David as Lucy says, "I am not the person you know" (161). The future of South Africa lies upon the practical minded white woman Lucy including blacks and coloured who think beyond race and gender. Lucy has very close relation with the blacks and coloureds and speaks "Xhosa" (129). She neither evaluates people on the basis of their colour of skin nor on the basis of gender nor on the basis of sexuality. She insists on equality as the new generation white South African.

Though David thinks that "Petrus has a story to tell [and] [h]e would not mind hearing Petrus's story one day" (117), he rejects to hear Petrus's side of the story. It is because of David's racial prejudice and hypocrisy. David charges Petrus as a liar, plotter and blackmailer. Therefore, narrative based on David's understanding gives the impression that Petrus and Pollux cannot be trusted because David thinks that Petrus and Pollux are "mentally deficient and morally deficient" (208). It shows David's neo-orientalism as he thinks blacks are mentally deficient. Moreover, David thinks that Petrus is the grand schemer, mastermind or plotter of Lucy's rape. But in reality, Petrus does not know about Lucy's rape because of his absence during her rape. If Petrus were present at that time, he would certainly save her. Bev Shaw, Lucy's friend, tells David about the relation between Lucy and Petrus and Petrus's help for Lucy, "You underestimate Petrus... Without Petrus Lucy would not be where she is now. I am not saying she owes him everything, but she owes him a lot... He is a good chap. You can depend on him" (140). It shows that Petrus is a trustworthy peasant. But it is David who is untrustworthy.

When Petrus proposes marriage to Lucy for her protection, David expresses his westernized view as he says, "This is not how we do things" (202). The ethnocentric focalization distances David from the subaltern South African, "We: he is on the point of saying, we westerners" (202). It shows that David does not have patriotism. But in reality, because of David's racial and gender illiteracy, he understands Petrus's relation with Lucy as deceptive and blackmailing. Moreover, he evaluates the subaltern people on the basis of his ethnocentric ideas. However, Petrus is ready to marry Lucy not as a plot but for Lucy's protection as Petrus says, "I will marry Lucy... It is dangerous. A woman must be marry" (202). Even Lucy accepts his marriage proposal as she says, "Petrus is serious... I am without protection... I have no illusions about him" (204). She further takes Pollux as "a fact of life" (208).

It shows the greatness of Petrus who is ready to marry Lucy even after knowing the fact that she is gang-raped. The future of South Africa can be determined by such white woman like Lucy and black man like Petrus including coloured Melanie who do not evaluate others in terms of race, gender and sexuality. They are open-minded unlike narrow-minded David. So, the implied meaning in Coetzee's *Disgrace* is that for the betterment of South Africa, subaltern people like Lucy, Petrus and Melanie should try their best for racial reconciliation. They should be united but not divided. They should try to understand each other unlike David does. On the other hand, the racist old generation whites like David and Ettinger are burden of the nation, such racists have no future. They may feed on racist ideas upon their children. But the new generation whites should be careful and reject such racist ideas as Lucy does. However, David has still the nostalgia for apartheid and thinks that, Pollux, "a savage" (206) should be taken to the white men's "institution" for education (208). He represents racist old generation white South African who is self-centred; his ultimate principles are self-indulgent. He is depressed and disgraced because of his own hubris and has the lack of self-knowledge. As a result, he gives false image of himself. It is not the subaltern South Africans who are bad, but rather it is David who is "bad and dangerous to know" as Lucy says (77). Moreover, he misunderstands the subaltern people and provides fallible images of subaltern people. Therefore, *Disgrace* demands counter-focalization for the understanding of the focalizer and focalizeds' condition.

To sum up, Coetzee's *Disgrace* demands counter-focalization for the understanding of the focalizer and the focalizeds' enigma. Until and unless readers provide counter-focalization for this novel, the enigma of the focalizer and focalizeds remains enigmatic. Readers should provide counter-focalization against David's unreliable focalization through the perspective of the focalizeds. Only then readers understand that it is David who confidently misunderstands post-apartheid South Africa and relation among the subaltern people. In reality, as the focalizer's perception of the focalizeds and himself tells us something about the focalizer himself, it is racist David who is ignorant of his own ignorance; he is haunted by the fear caused by his share in ex-crime called apartheid and his seduction of his own student; his focalization is self-serving. He is responsible for his own downfall and falls in disgrace because of his hubris.

As South African victims of apartheid, though they still face the 'legacy of apartheid', they have got favourable atmosphere to show their potentiality because of decolonization and the introduction of democratic system. Though democracy is not everything in itself and is not a magical stick, it provides appropriate atmosphere for the citizens like Petrus, Lucy, Melanie, Bev Shaw and others. As they have close relation with each other, they understand each other, and have determination and patience, they can try for racial and gender reconciliation and develop their nation. However, as the citizens of a newly independent nation they have to struggle hard and prove themselves. It is Lucy who chooses South Africa as her settlement in spite of her racist father's refusal. Likewise, a student like Melanie protests against rape and

seduction strongly. It is a positive sign that a white woman Lucy is not only going to get married with a black man Petrus but also is determined to give birth to a mixed race child.

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