

THE POLITICS OF COUNTER-FOCALIZATION IN COETZEE'S DISGRACE

Badri Prasad Acharya

Lecturer, Central Department of English, TU, Kirtipur, Nepal

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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*