

**ANALYSIS OF STYLE AND THEMES IN J.M.COETZEE NOVEL: *DISGRACE***

**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
MASTERS OF ART IN LITERATURE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
LITERATURE.**

**BY**

**JOSEPH WAHOME KAMAU**

**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE**

**December, 2006**

Kamau, Joseph Wanhome  
*Analysis of style  
and themes in J.M*



08/322061

## DECLARATION

This project is my original research and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

~~K. Kamau~~ Date: 10/07/2007

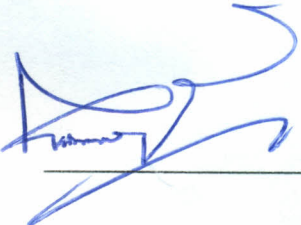
**KAMAU.JOSEPH. WAHOME**

**C50 /6540/2003**

This project has been submitted with our approval as University supervision. <sup>ors</sup>

 Date: 25/07/2007

Dr.Mbugua Wa Mungai

 Date: 11/05/2007

**Dr John Mugubi**

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents:

Mr. Peter Kamau and Mrs. Florence Wanjiku;

My brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews and

Great friends, Susan and Paolo;

Without whose prayers and immense support

I could not have gone this far.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to my supervisors: Dr. Mbugua Wa Mungai and Dr. John Mugubi for their role in shaping and making this project a reality. My sincere thanks go to Professor. Wagachanja, Professor Obura, Dr. Olunya and Dr Kisero for their critical input during the initial stages of developing this project. To my classmates, Anna Kula, your help in shaping my grammar could not go unnoticed, to Kemoli, Barasa and Flora, your friendship and critical minds were really inspiring. I also thank my parents brothers and sisters and all close friends for their moral and financial support. I would also like to remember and thank Mr. Francis Wanjau and Gibson Karuri Posthumously for their inspiration. To *Youth Education Scholarship* Italy, thanks for your financial support, to Paolo Sanna, your friendship and interest in my work really opened up my eyes. To Susan, thanks for your financial help, your moral support and many hours you committed in typing my work. Finally I thank Anthony, Alice, Eunice, Consolata, Mwangi and Wambui for your encouragement

Whereas the input of this project is a culmination of many discussions and dialogues, I remain solely responsible for any shortcoming.

## ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the role J.M. Coetzee plays in addressing the social political and economic concerns of his society. It also establishes Coetzee's opinion as the social, political and economic drama of post apartheid South Africa unfolds..

In order to analyse themes and features of styles in the selected text, we employ two theoretical frameworks. Foucault's perception of power, authority, knowledge and truth within the wider postmodernist theory. In his analysis, Foucault demonstrates how power and authority is exercised in our societies, he also questions the concept of a singular objective truth that is transcendental instead he advocates for multiple and situated knowledge. The theory is appropriate in analysing the experience of South Africa society which for a very long time has been experiencing disharmony that seem to emerge from the knowledge various individuals and communities hold over each other, as a result different attitudes about each other has emerged which in turns inform their social political and economic relationships.

Stylistics theory is important for this study for it help us analyse the language of the text. As new knowledge emerges, language is no longer viewed as an instrument that is used to carry a text message but it is viewed as part of that message. Hence we have used this theory to explore how the selected text utilizes symbolism, allusion, irony and paradox to enhance communication about post apartheid South Africa social, political and economic realities. The study is divided into four main chapters: Chapter one forms the

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introduction, while chapter two evaluates thematic concerns, chapter three analyses features of style whereas chapter four conclude our study.

This is a qualitative library research that involves textual and historical analyses. The study uses purposive sampling method. Data from both primary and secondary texts is analysed to provide historical and textual contexts in which to evaluate Coetzee's concerns and opinions about post apartheid South Africa.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Post Apartheid:** This is a period after apartheid was abolished in South Africa.

Historically it began with all-inclusive elections in April 1994. The largely black Africa national congress under Nelson Mandela won with majority votes. This ushered in a Government of national unity that saw apartheid political structures destroyed. The term does not necessarily refer to the end of apartheid *per se* because vestiges of it are still experienced today.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The essence of the novel as a literary genre is to showcase the narrative construction of tensions in fictional or real (in) human situations and societies. However, novels do not present a simple documentary picture of life. Alongside the fact that novels' reports happenings in society, the other major characteristic of the novel is the careful crafting of a story in terms of structure and form. This preoccupation distinguishes the novel from other genres of literature.

In writing or crafting a story, a literary writer has a wide range of narrative agents from which he chooses. At his disposal, there is the story and the technique to use. Therefore, when a writer chooses certain subject matter, character and technique to use in the text, it is assumed that this is what best suit to articulate his vision or ideological perspectives on multiplicity of concerns. Thus a writer's preference in terms of text content, character and style of writing should not be taken for granted, but should be viewed as part of the great idea that a writer is expressing.

Marjorie Boulton says that: 'A story or essay will achieve an effect on the reader by selection of some aspects of the subject' (Boulton 1954:10). Subsequently, style, character and thematic concerns are conscious and deliberate enterprise that an author uses to achieve certain goals. This means that an artist will select characters and aspects of Style which helps him treat in detail his chosen idea or subject matter.

Another factor which influences an author is the distinctive view he has about human conditions and how they ought to or ought not to be. This is incorporated in the text content, characters and style he chooses to convey his message. Massie (1995) supports the above point when he says: 'Writers are formed by the experiences of their environment as much as their own temperament and native gift of imagination' (Massie 1995: 31). Thus everything in literature is conditioned and premeditated. It is only by allowing a text set its own method of interpretation that one is brought closer to understanding its content and intention.

Language is an aspect of literature that for a very long time has been viewed as an instrument to carry the message of any literary piece, but this perception is changing now. According to pluralists, language performs a number of different functions and that any piece of language is likely to be as a result of choices made on different functional levels. Language is also believed to be intrinsically multifunctional and always carrying political message. Therefore even the simplest utterances conveys this political message. (Bertens 2003:13) says, "Literary texts always have a political dimension in the sense that on closer inspection they can be shown to take a specific status with regards to social issues either through what they say or through what they do not say".

The choice of language in any text is a conscious one. The author will use language to create ideas. In interpreting a text language, a critic would be concerned with the choices available to a writer and the reasons why particular forms and expressions are used in its place of others. Consequently as we interpret literary texts language should be given the seriousness it deserves for it is part of the unfolding story. With this in mind, we explore Coetzee's ideas

on what a novel should be not only for South Africans but also for the literary world. This is done in a background of a ranging debate in South Africa on what its country novel is supposed to be. In so doing we can situate Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) in its right context of interpretation.

Most South African writers believe that apartheid policies were not only making their country uninhabitable to the oppressed non-White citizens, but the violence that emerged out of these policies made it hard for Whites too. In writing about this experience, South African literary writers have adopted various forms of realism in presenting their country's realities artistically. Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Peter Abraham, and Ezekiel Mphahlele are a few outstanding examples. While justifying realist approach in literary texts, Nadine Gordimer asserts that: 'The essence of a writer's role lies in her social responsibility and responsibility is treated primarily as a form of *witness*' and that 'Fiction will ultimately be tested by its accountability to the truth of its society. And to Gordimer, truth is the product of a dynamic interplay between what she calls 'creative self-absorption and conscionable awareness' (Attwell 1990: 11). Thus for Gordimer, South Africa artist is an objective witness who present his or her country's realities with no bias or influence.

Coetzee seems to differ with her on this role of a writer, he sees a South African writer like any other world writer as one who is highly influenced by the social conditions one is living in. In this way, Coetzee seems to say that truth of any situation is highly subjective. Hence to him, writers will only present perspectives of what they view as truth. This marks Coetzee point of departure from most South Africa writers, but he is not alone.

Nkosi (1967) concurs with Coetzee's perspective. He doubts whether it is possible to present any truth artistically without being influenced by the discourse in which one is writing. The implication according to him is, there is a gap between reality on the ground and art and this gap make them not to be the same things. This does not entail a denial that arts borrow from reality.

In line with the above argument, Nkosi dismisses most South African literary writings, which he brands as: 'Journalistic facts parading outrageously as imaginative artistically persuasive works of fiction' (Attwell: 1990). Most South African literary texts seem to have been written by contributors of the *Drum Magazine* of the 1950s (Nkosi 1983). In his survey of South African literature, Nkosi implies the former journalists employs 'journalistic reporting' in their texts without taking into account that the two genres have fundamental differences.

The Journalistic writings assume to report on what is happening on the ground but actually what is reported is what the reporter consider important and the 'unimportant' is not reported. Considering that literary texts are more liberal on their creativity, the gap between them and the reality becomes more complicated hence making what happens on the literary text is viewed differently from the reality itself.

Ndebele (1984) is another South African writer who dismisses those literary texts that employs journalistic reportage. He says:

Journalistic documentation of oppression merely produces an art of anticipated surfaces rather than one of processes, an art that is grounded in social debasement, in

which little transformation in reader consciousness is to be expected since the only reader faculty engaged, is the faculty of recognition. (Atwell 1990)

With the above assertions, the claim that a novel could be used to represent unbiased history is questioned and a debate is ushered in whether, a novel is supposed to be a supplement of history or an independent field from it. The implication of the above statement is the relationship between South African novel and the Country's history is also questioned.

In his *Weekly Mail* book week address of 1987, Coetzee demonstrated how sharply he felt about the prevailing epistemological tensions between the novel and South Africa history.

He said:

In times of intense ideological pressure like the present, when the space in which the novel and history normally coexist like two cows on the same pasture, each minding its own business, the novel is squeezed to almost nothing, the novel, it seems to me, has only two options: supplementary or rivalry (Atwell 1990).

Being a *supplement* to the discourse of history, Coetzee goes on to say, would involve the novel in providing the reader, "with vicarious firsthand experience of living in a certain historical time, embodying contending forces in contending characters and filling our experience with a certain density of observation" (Coetzee's interview 1990).

Coetzee points out the tension under which novel has been working in relation to other social discourses in South Africa. This justifies the reason why he employs allegorical approach to his texts while most of his colleagues preferred realism. In the same context Coetzee tries to strike a balance between reality on the ground and aesthetics. Coetzee prefers to see a symbiotic relationship between history and the novel and not parasitism, where the

novel become the victim of history. Coetzee's point of view is more objective, more liberal and accommodative to other perspectives. The earlier position taken by most critics of Coetzee is narrow and too moralistic.

Another fact that seems to shape Coetzee's texts is the nature of apartheid policies, which were essentially aimed at benefiting Whites, and denying the non-Whites. White writers realised that they are denied any moral authority to comment against apartheid policies and their destructive effects. In line with this, Coetzee in an interview with David Atwell in the year 2001 said:

I am also a representative of the generation in South Africa for whom apartheid was created, the generation that was meant to benefit most from it. What is the correct relationship ought to be between a representative of this failed or failing colonial movement, with this history of oppression behind it, on the one hand, and the part of the world where it sought and failed to establish itself and the people of that part of the world on other hand... (Coetzee speaking: 2001).

This dilemma Coetzee faced as a white writer summarises the dilemma most white writers find themselves not by choice but by a fact that they are part of a race that perpetuated atrocities in South Africa. The fact does not escape their writings.

Coetzee's approach to literary texts could only be understood in this wider perspective of artistic choice, environmental and personal influence. He refuses to see South Africa's apartheid situation in a narrow perspective that is unique to it, but as a wider scheme that had been a project of the European countries to pass their own form of civilization, (grand narratives) through colonialism, late colonialism, and neo-colonialism. This should not be dismissed as a refusal to acknowledge the evil of apartheid policies, but should be seen as an

alternative perspective to the same problem. Thus Coetzee's approach to literary texts adds another perspective in which South Africa reality is viewed.

To argue that Coetzee's texts do not measure up to realism of most South Africa writers would be to miss the real point. The point of argument should be the question, 'what does Coetzee's texts tell us about apartheid and post apartheid South Africa situation?' This study analyses *Disgrace* (1999) from this point of view.

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South Africa's social, political and economic reality is a complex one and it cannot be understood from only one vocal point; it requires multidimensional approaches. In analyzing *Disgrace*, (1999) we have emphasized on the need to view South African reality from these many different vocal points. The study has made it clear that approaching South Africa reality from many perspectives implies seeing the same problems from their many probable causes, this way making it easier for South Africans to look for solutions to post apartheid problems.

As articulated, a text thematic concerns and aspects of style are conscious and deliberate author's choice. the study analysed the selected text thematic concerns and its employment of aspects of style (symbolism, Irony, Paradox and allusion) in order to discern the text and its author's vision on the unfolding social, political and economic drama of the post apartheid South Africa.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to evaluate Coetzee's vision for a post-apartheid South Africa. We evaluate this on the basis that a writer would present his text in a perspective we could use to interpret the reality we live in. The study has therefore attempted to:

- Analyse the thematic concerns of the selected text and its relevance and vision to post apartheid South Africa reality.
- Analyse some aspects of style employed in the text notably symbolism, Irony and Allusion and their effectiveness in communicating the intricate reality of the post apartheid South Africa.
- Establish the relevance and effectiveness of Coetzee's style of writing to South Africa literary world.

## 1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Thematic concerns and aspects of style in any text are a conscious choice an author of fiction makes on the basis that they would best communicate his perception about the reality he is living in. The prevailing social, political and economic environment of an author, always consciously or unconsciously influences his text.

## 1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The present moment is critical to South Africans as they are looking for solutions to their various problems. That a writer is a participant on any unfolding social political and economic drama of his own society makes him an important partaker in searching for solutions to the problems of his own people. Therefore, it is important to evaluate how an author in his

selected texts views his own society. It is also important to determine his perspective as he searches for solutions to various problems of his society.

Coetzee has been hailed as one of South Africa and indeed world proficient writers by various literary awards won by his texts. Nevertheless, an examination on critical works reveals that very little critical work has been done on most of his texts. Indeed, in the available critical works it has been established that Coetzee offers a different perspective on which to view South Africa society from most South African literary writers. Thus, this view needs to be explored in his selected text. *Disgrace* (1999) is one of the most political novels Coetzee wrote after the abolition of apartheid policies. The text is studied here with an aim of evaluating how accurately it portrays post apartheid South Africa realities.

### 1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

Coetzee has written quite a number of novels, memoirs and essays but in this study, we have evaluated *Disgrace* (1999). The text is written after the abolition of apartheid policies; hence unlike the former texts that projected what the author thought would happen after apartheid policies are abolished, *Disgrace* (1999) context is situated in post apartheid South Africa. Consequently, we can use the text to gauge Coetzee perception on post apartheid South Africa reality and at this time and his commitment in looking for the solutions to problems of his society. When we factor this, we are able to project Coetzee's vision about his society. If the study has quoted any other Coetzee text it is only to emphasis the message in *Disgrace*. It has not been possible to compare all that has been written on his texts with what this study found out.

## 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

In recognition of his performance as a master storyteller and a doyen of contemporary fiction, J. M. Coetzee has won various literary prizes. He first won the CNA literary prize in 1977. This victory was to be later followed by his winning of the prestigious Britain Booker prize of literature twice, the first time through his 1983 novel *Life and Times of Michael K.* and in 1999 through *Disgrace*. His *annus mirabilis* though was the year 2003 when he won the highest literary accolade after being awarded the Nobel Prize of Literature. This review critically surveys some of the explicatory and polemical assertions made in relation to the literary oeuvre of Coetzee in order to create a context in which we situate our interpretation of *Disgrace* (1999).

Coetzee literary work has received a wide range of comments; while some critics praise him for his creativity others seem to be incensed by the same. For instance Teresa Dovey (1988) in her studies entitled: *The Novels of J. M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories*, challenges critics who condemn Coetzee's texts as ones demonstrating political evasions and having nothing to offer apartheid South Africa. She blames this on employment of blind strategies especially on the texts parodic, allegorical, and deconstructive tendencies. Though the study does not concern itself with the above strategies, it is quite clear that most of his texts have not been given the attention they deserve. Though this comment was made in relation to the texts written during apartheid period, it also applies to his post apartheid texts.

David Atwell (1990) maintains that Coetzee novels are explorations of the tension between historicity and fictionality. He says that Coetzee's novels are located in the nexus of

history and text; that is, they explore the tension between these (novel and the history) polarities. It is important to explore what this due task entails in his texts, how it affects his writings. Atwell continues that, although Coetzee respects the claims of both reflexivity and historicity, he does not seek a mediating or neutral role in the field of cultural politics. Moreover behind the narrative subjects of each of the novels main character such as Eugene Dawn, Jacobus Coetzee, Magda, the Magistrate, the Medical Officer, Susan Barton, and Elizabeth Curren among other characters, lies an implied narrator who takes stance with and against the play of forces in South African culture.' thus by evaluating the selected text characters we are able to evaluate the texts thematic concerns.

The foregoing view underscores our arguments in the second chapter of the present study. Commenting on Coetzee's literary language Atwell asserts that:

The linguistic-systemic orientation of his novels involves the recognition, rooted in all linguistic inquiry, that language is productive, that 'making sense of life inside a book is different from making sense- of real life-not more difficult or less difficult, just different' (Attwell. 1990.)

Hence with this comment in mind we are able to approach Coetzee's texts more objectively and also to pay kin interest in his language and the way this language create and present Coetzee's perspectives about post apartheid South Africa.

In year 2003 the Nobel Prize of literature committee praised Coetzee for winning the prize. The committee termed his literary work as "One that are characterized by their well-crafted composition and analytical brilliance, containing stories, which often, criticize the cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality of western civilization (Extract from, Nobel Prize 2003). This is a very positive statement but it does not tell us how the texts succeed in

criticizing this cruel rationalism and cosmetic morality in the west. It will be interesting to explore whether this is the case with all his texts by analysing the concerns of *Disgrace*.

Watson has termed Coetzee's texts as ones concerned with textuality. He condemns them as Gordimer who identifies this textuality as a weakness. She also sees textuality as 'little more than an artfully constructed void', the same comment. She terms Coetzee's texts as one that present 'revulsion to all political and revolutionary solutions' (Atwell 1990). For Coetzee, politics and revolutions have their problems too. Politics and revolutions will always end or reinvent what has been there. Overtime another revolution or politics would be introduced and another cycle of changes and counter changes would take place. Hence nothing would essentially change, only the arrangements within a society would be reorganized or given a new guise. To condemn Coetzee's texts as voids and repulsive is to miss the point, for it seems that the two critics fails to recognize the power of the 'word' and the many meanings it can invoke. On the contrary, they want Coetzee's texts to adhere to realist modes, whereas this is exactly what the texts try to avoid.

After the publication of *Disgrace* (1999), *The Sunday Times* wrote, 'This is a harsh story, told in a prose of spare, steely beauty and with an intelligent potency that makes it as exhilarating as it is grim.' It is an account of a man's midlife crisis that turns into a starkly honest and compelling examination of his relationship with his daughter, contemporary South Africa, and, ultimately, human dignity and love. In *Disgrace* (1999), J. M. Coetzee tells us something we all suspect and fear: that political change can do almost nothing to eliminate human misery. What it can do, he suggests, is reorder it a little and half-accidentally introduce

a few new varieties'. The statement concurs with the studies findings. The study has verified the accuracy of this statement, by trying to evaluate social, political and economic structures that sustain exploitation and prevents positive political changes to trickle town to all sectors of life in Post Apartheid South Africa.

### **1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study utilizes two theories, Michel Foucault's theoretical thoughts within the wider context of Postmodernism and Stylistic theory. We understand Postmodernism as both a movement as well as a theory in itself. Postmodernism has been defined as new artistic, cultural, or theoretical perspectives, which renounce Modernity's discourses and practices (Best 1991: 129). Postmodernism is associated with philosophers such as: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Rotry, Lyotard, Toynbee, Foucault and Baudrillard.

Due to the diversity of postmodernism as a theory, the study has applied Foucauldian perspectives in examining the experience of post apartheid South Africans. Foucault developed new perspectives on society, knowledge and power. He articulates that modern forms of power and knowledge serve to create new forms of domination in our societies. Foucault critique modern forms of knowledge, rationality, social institutions and subjectivity that seem natural but in fact are contingent social historical constructs of power and domination. He develops and substantiates the above assertions from various perspectives, which range from, psychiatry, medicine, punishment and criminology. Others include the emergence of a human science, formation of various disciplinary apparatus and the constitution of the subject

In 1984 Foucault said that reality could not be grasped systematically within one philosophical system or from one central vantage point. That no single method, theory or interpretation by itself can grasp the plurality of discourses, institutions and modes of power that constitute modern society. It is within these Foucault assertions we analyse Post apartheid South Africa's reality. The problems of racism, sexism and heterosexism, are not only South Africans problems but seem to have sprang from complex worldwide schemes that this study examines.

Foucault sees the source of these problems to have sprung from need to exercise power and authority. The main thesis of his enquiry is the question how power is exercised in the societies we live in. By analysing how various institutions and systems exercise power, we are able to establish the level of transformation that has taken place in post apartheid South Africa.

He demonstrates that the will to truth and knowledge is indissociable from the will to power. It would be interesting to examine how this fact plays itself within the post apartheid South Africa by focusing ourselves on thematic concerns of *Disgrace* (1999). Foucault also examines marginalized experiences such as human sexuality and how this relates to power and knowledge. We explore how this fact plays itself in within the emerging homosocial and heterosexual relationships in South African society.

Foucault stigmatizes modern rationality, institution and forms of subjectivity as sources or constructs of dominions. The present analysis of *Disgrace* (1999) attempts to show how institution, rationality and subjectivity serve as venues for domination in South African

community. Foucault also sees human experience as heterogeneous, diverse and dynamic. It is through this open view that post apartheid South Africa is analysed. Whereas chapter two of our study would be guided by the above theory, chapter three would be guided by Stylistic theory. The theory is very useful in analysis of some stylistic devices employed in the text such as symbolism, irony, allusion and paradox.

Proponents of stylistics articulate the importance of language in the exegesis of literary works. Stylistics will involve describing how particular piece of writing functions and discussing what words are used and why. Language is not only a tool to pass the text content but also creates it and as a result it could be said that literary language is more conscious of its formation. The use of special devices reinforces the effects of linguistic acts through patterning.

Ngara (1982, 1985), Leech and Short (1981), and Bradford (1997), view stylistic theory to be chiefly concerned with communication in the whole work of art. Leech defines style as 'the linguistic habits of a particular author, those of a genre or literary movement, of a school of writing or some of these.' (Leech 1981:10). They also say that, stylistics facilitates literary explication and often yields substantive description of a text (Leech 1981:35). More over, Short argues that through stylistics, an understanding of the social, political backgrounds supporting the texts is realized (Leech 1981:34).

The stylistic theory is usually text centered. The theory describes the formal features of a text in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; the

theory will also be concerned with the choices available to a writer and reasons why particular forms and expressions are used rather than others.

Ngara (1983) posits the usage of language is important since all other aspects of a story are realized in its use. Commenting on style, Leech and Short (1981) says that, style is the way in which a particular person employs language. Analysis of style in Literature involves describing how a particular piece of writing functions and discussing what words and expressions are used and why. He also advocates for the analysis of both content and form in order to review a text's concern.

Stylistic analysis does not have 'rigid' or 'correct' evaluative strategies, thus allowing as many interpretations as possible from a text. In the analysis of *Disgrace*, the research contextualizes the text to the social political and economic framework. Ngara (1982) supports this strategy and emphasizes on the need to contextualize literary texts to their cultural historical and ideological context. Stylistics enables us to analyse why and how linguistic devices such as, symbolism, Irony, paradox and allusion are used in the *Disgrace* (1999). The theory also helps us determine the appropriateness of the above devices in communicating the social, political and economic concerns of South Africa. The two theoretical frameworks create a foundation in which the objectives of this study are achieved.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is mainly based in libraries. We have made use of the Moi Library in Kenyatta University, the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library at the University of Nairobi and the America Cultural Centre library. *Disgrace* (1999) serves as the primary source of our research

material. Critical works on the text and its author are reviewed to provide materials for the evaluation of the text. Materials on South African social, political and economic questions, literary voices and other relevant writings have been reviewed. Internet research on Coetzee's primary and secondary texts has also been carried out.

The research is divided into four main chapters: Chapter one introduces the research offering a social, political and economic background in which to view *Disgrace* (1999) concerns. This in turn serves as a springboard to analyse the next chapter. Chapter two deals with the thematic concerns of the text, whereas Chapter three examines aspects of Style in the same text. Chapter four forms the conclusion and recommendation of this study.

### **1.9 CONTEXTUALIZING *DISGRACE* (1999): AN INTERPRETATION**

After Nelson Mandela was elected the first President of post apartheid South Africa on 9th May 1994, he urged all South Africans to "heal the wound of the past". While celebrating the election victory of the African National Congress (ANC), he asked all South Africans to work towards reconciliation among races in the country. Quote he:

The time for healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasm that divides us has come. The time to build is upon us... let there be work, bread, water, and salt for all. Today we celebrate not a victory for a party but a victory for all the people of South Africa... South Africans might have differences, but they are people with a common destiny in a rich variety of cultures (Ngeobo 1994:569).

This mandate to bring reconciliation was given to Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa later in 1996. South Africa experienced post apartheid political violence, crime and militant resistance from the conservative wing of the Whites who wanted their own state, autonomy and privileges they had enjoyed during apartheid to remain. The Blacks alike were

demanding for the redistribution of South Africa resources. They also insisted that all those who perpetuated violence during apartheid were to be punished. Desire to revenge and counter revenge for wrongs done create a lot of anxiety. Anarchy was imminent unless solutions to these problems were found.

The seed of Apartheid could be traced back to many centuries in the past. All started as an informal settlement at Cape of Good Hope in 1652 of with Dutch on voyage. Later it changed to formal and permanent stay. The Dutch established a center that was to provide services and supplies for the passing ships. They grew wheat, vegetables and kept livestock that they sold to the ships on voyage. Due to the growing demands for these foods, the prime supplier, Dutch East India Company was forced to import slaves from Asia to work in their farms. Later these slaves became the descendants of the Asian people in South Africa.

The former servicemen in Dutch farms who had been relieved of their duties were given 'free land to supplement the Company's supplies. These people were known as 'free burghers. The 'burghers' started encroaching the Khoikhoi lands. This led to fighting which saw many Khoikhoi murdered, imprisoned and their livestock taken. As a result Khoikhoi population decreases drastically. Later tension started building up between the Boers /Afrikaners who lived in rural South Africa and the Britons who had taken over South Africa.

The war between the two communities saw the death of over two thousands two hundred Britons and one thousand four hundred Boers, eventually British won. In order to maintain the support of the Boers in the country, the British government provided their

farmers, and miners with incentives such as White women were granted right to vote. Afterward English and Afrikaans were introduced as official languages in South Africa. A peculiar thing that one may observe is that the original inhabitants of South Africa were all along ignored in the sharing of their country's wealth, a fact which its effects continues to be felt today.

In 1948, Apartheid policies were established by the White led National Party government. It recognized three distinct groups in South Africa, the Whites, Coloreds, Blacks and later the Asians. Blacks were further divided into ten 'tribes', which were restricted to their own 'homelands' with permission to declare their own independences from the bigger South Africa. This was seen as an open tactic to divide and weaken their communal and class resistance against the white minorities. Race laws restricted not only where one could work but also whom to marry or with whom to associate.

National Party (NP) introduced Apartheid policies, which aimed at segregating South Africans communities through their colour lines, as provide separate and equal development but essentially it was a plot aimed to benefit the white minorities. Apartheid policies were based on a long history of racial segregation and discriminatory laws intended to ensure White supremacy over the non-Whites in South Africa.

Apartheid policy sprung from a misunderstood religious concept, which stipulated that, each race and nation has unique, divinely ordained destiny and cultural contribution to make to the world. As a result, races and nations were to be kept apart to allow each to

develop along its own inherent lines. In the multiracial South Africa all Whites regardless of the country of their origin were put under one group, whereas Non-Whites were put under various groups and 'homelands'. Thus the policies had been backed by 'unquestionable' religious assertions.

Geographical and legal barriers in form of parliamentary Acts were established. For example in 1913 the Native Act was established. The Act was formulated to restrict Blacks' population to 7.3% unproductive area of land, which accounted for around 80% the population of South Africa. Different and unequal social amenities were established under Amenities Acts. In 1927 the "Immorality Act" was enacted and it did forbid any inter racial contacts above other miscegenation. This made sure that physical and emotional space was created to prevent any contact between different races in South Africa. In 1949 the "Mix Marriage Act" was established to prohibit any marriage between Whites and non-Whites. In 1950 the "Immorality Amendment Act" forbade any sexual Acts between Whites and non-Whites. Thus South Africans were conditioned to regard each other with suspicion. Multiracial political organizations were prohibited through the Political Interference Act. All political parties that opposed the government were labeled communist and were banned under 'Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. Further the 'Criminal law Amendment Act of 1953 and the Unlawful Organization Act of 1960 outlawed any civil disobedience and banned all opposition political parties. With the above policies non-Whites had been denied any venue to express their dissatisfaction with the apartheid policies.

In education, Bantu Education Act relegated non-Whites' education care to the native affair ministry. In 1959, an Amendment in University Act denied non-White students rights to

join the prestigious universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand. With all these acts in place, Whites had undue advantage in social, political and economic sectors over their counterparts in South Africa.

These Acts did not go unchallenged. In 1940s, the ANC led resistance against white beer halls and their bus lines. This was a protest against exploitation and ignorance of the Whites. In 1952 ANC and other colored political groups waged non-violent campaigns of boycotts, strikes and marches. A charter on non-racial South Africa was adopted on 26th June 1955 by the ANC, *South Africa Indian Congress* (SAIC), and *South Africa Colored People Organisation* (SACPO). In 1958 a militant wing, *Pan Africanist Congress* (PAC) emerged from the ANC to fight the exploitative White minority.

In the 1970s, non- White students encouraged and motivated by the successes of America's Black Consciousness Movement led by Malcolm X and the Negritude movements in Western Africa that championed for the dignity of black peoples, formed a student Organization to fight for the rights of Non Whites South Africans. Steve Biko led this group. In 1981 the National Party led by then South Africa late president P.W Botha came up with a strategy to weaken non-Whites' resistance by granting the Colored and the Asian seats in the then tricameral parliament. This did not work.

In 1990 things changed for the better, the then president of South Africa De Klerk and leader of (NP) lifted a ban on ANC and Seventeen other political parties that had been banned by his predecessors. He also released the long imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela who had been in jail for 27 years. In 1993 the Whites, the Asians, the Coloured and the Black

African parties agreed to write an interim constitution that was to see South Africa's transition to a democracy. The constitution was based on multiparty election with two-house legislature, provincial assemblies and Bills of Rights.

In the 1994 elections, ANC won with a big margin of 60% followed by NP 20% Inkatha Freedom Party led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi followed with 17%, the other 3% were shared by other parties. A government of national unity enacted the interim constitution by sharing ruling powers in nine provinces and towns with main political parties in their strongholds. In 1999 the second election was held and ANC won again under President Thabo Mbeki.

In 1996 the multiracial, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa was established with an intention to reconcile all South Africans. The guiding theory in formation of the TRC stated that South Africa could heal its wounds by discouraging crimes of the past. The commission had the following mandate, to establish, to investigate apartheid era crime and reconcile the wronged and the wrong doers. They were also to find a compromise of problems of murders, assaults and kidnapping done during apartheid era. The commission was supposed to gather evidence, make decision, regarding amnesty, and determine if any reparation would be granted to victims. The information gathered by the commission showed that Whites as well as non-Whites had committed crime against humanity in South Africa but also even some non-Whites were equally guilt. In order to create an environment that is conducive to all South Africans, the government established affirmative actions to empower

the non-Whites. The action has been termed as 'cronyism' and some have even been called reverse apartheid.

From the foregoing background we realize that whereas South Africa problems seems to have sprung from the context of a political process, it is therefore prudent that the various political mentalities form the core of a study or critique of the political mentalities and themes as portrayed in the country's expressive cultures, of which Literature is a prominent one. On this note, we now embark on an analysis of one of South Africa's foremost prosaic interpreter of the politics of Apartheid and post-Apartheid, J. M. Coetzee, using his award-winning novel *Disgrace* (1999) as the object of critical focus

## CHAPTER TWO

### NARRATING (POST) APARTHEID THEMES IN *DISGRACE* (1999): FROM GRACE TO DISGRACE

#### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter analyses various thematic concerns in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999). We evaluate these concerns through the text characters. In the novel, we view the characters in two main categories. The Whites include all the European characters in the text and the non-Whites who are Blacks, Indians and the Coloured characters. The following questions will enable us to analyze the novel's thematic concerns, their relevance and vision to post-Apartheid South Africa: What do different characters say about the abolition of Apartheid in South Africa? Does their colour, gender or any other social marker affect the way they react to the new political environment? What is the relationship between White characters and non-White characters in the text in this new environment? Where else could we root this racial division apart from politics, what does it entail?

Guided by the above questions, the chapter explores structures, policies, and attitudes at work within a character or group of characters in the text. The questions also help us to examine how the above social structures, policies and attitude necessitate, inhibit, reverse or support the status quo in the recently democratised country. In addition the chapter explores how characters respond to tensions that came with political readjustment in South Africa in 1994. The chapter also explores whether the positive political changes in that country have trickled down into the social and economic structures of the country. This proves the extent to

which apartheid policies have been abolished in South Africa. In turn the chapter explores how far South Africa is from achieving equitability among its own people.

The story of *Disgrace* (1999) is narrated from the point of view of a White character, Professor David Lurie of the Technical University of Cape Town. He is middle aged and divorced twice but in contact with the last wife Rosalind. From the first marriage, Professor Lurie has a daughter by the name Lucy who lives in the Eastern Cape as a farmer. Other White settlers in the novel include Ettinger and Bills who is married to Bev an animal clinic own in Eastern Cape.

Non-White characters include Petrus, who until political policies changed had been Lucy's gardener, Soraya a commercial sex worker and Melanie a student of Professor Lurie. Other characters include Pollux a young rapist and a nephew to Petrus and two unnamed rapists among other minor and group non-White characters. The above introduction ushers us in the discussion of the text thematic concerns.

### **2.1. On Reciprocal Justice and the Death of Man**

Most of the time when a person is wronged, the desire to revenge is very strong. Through out human history, this desire has been there and more so sustained by a set of legal structures. It is important at this juncture to remember the essence of the Hamurabian Laws, the ancient Jewish Torah and some Muslim *Sharia* Laws. The above laws advocate for reciprocal justice – wrong me and in turn I do the same to you as a punishment for your own mistakes.

Reciprocal justice is based on the belief that when you commit the same wrong to the person who committed wrong to you, you will feel relieved. It might be true to some extent, but the question remains: to what extent does revenge repair or undo the wrongs already committed? To what extent can revenge undo the history of wrongs in South Africa? These questions seem to beg for epistemological answers rather than moral ones.

Non-White South Africans had been experiencing exploitation and dehumanization from the Whites for a very long time. It started when the Dutch on their way to India established a provision post for fresh produce on ships on voyage at Cape of Good Hope in the Seventeenth century. Later, they made the natives and the Indians to work on their newly acquired farms as slaves. Much later, the British arrived on the Cape in Nineteenth century. The Dutch viewed them as a threat to their way of life, both economically and culturally.

In 1899, war erupted between the British and the Boers over South Africa vast natural resources. The natives did not feature anywhere in this division. Prejudice about the non-Whites in South Africa had already been laid. The reasons why they were ignored might have originated from the influence of social theories, which erroneously saw Africans as lesser human being in world civilization, to be precise, Social Darwinism. This justified the exclusion of Africans from 'complex' tasks of sharing their own country natural wealth.

Later when the two warring groups settled (the Britons and the Boers), they started working in cahoots on how to exterminate the natives. It seems that this exclusion was racially motivated. Through lethal weapons, the Khoisans were almost exterminated when

thousands were killed. Coetzee has allegorized this fact in his novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980).

In 1948, the exploitation and dehumanization was made legal. It was justified and protected through the apartheid laws. Non-Whites were not human enough to enjoy various human freedoms: freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of expression and other basic human freedoms that all human beings, regardless of their colour are supposed to enjoy. The 'legally' constituted government had taken all these freedoms from the non-Whites. Some individuals (who were 'the state') had given themselves a task of being 'granters,' thus had elevated themselves to a God-like status. Many people died while others were jailed: Nelson Mandela being just one among thousands in the latter category.

The desire to revenge for evils committed against individuals for centuries was quite tempting after apartheid was abolished in 1993. Some individuals within South Africa wanted this revenge through legal or illegal means. In return, the evils that were being committed to individuals also called for reciprocal justice. Therefore, what was to be expected or be experienced was not order and harmony, but the beginning of anomy. This is what *Disgrace* (1999) examines.

In *Disgrace* (1999), South Africa is already legally past apartheid, but things seem not to have changed a lot on the ground. The initially oppressed are receiving government financial help in order to establish themselves, but the desire to overcome their many years of hardships seems to be pushing them to demand them retaliate many years of exploitation. This

could be demonstrated by Petrus's desire to have the entire land of Lucy her White neighbour. He even wants to possess her; to own her same way she previously owned him. This is not just an issue of equitable distribution of wealth; an aspect of greed and revenge is quite evident.

Three black men rape Lucy; this is the climax of the text. Coetzee's feeling about what really ails the post apartheid South Africa can be read from this episode. There is a problem of race where non-Whites are revenging many years of exploitations; there is also a problem of patriarchy where men are exercising their power over women in South Africa. After an attack that targeted him and his daughter, Professor Lurie says the following to himself:

It happens everyday, every hour, and every minute ... in every quarter of the country count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in a car at this moment, speeding away, or in the bottom of a Donga with a bullet in your head. Count yourself lucky too. Above all Lucy (*Disgrace*, 98).

The above quotation shows how serious crimes have escalated in post apartheid South Africa. This situation has turned to anarchy and it seems that nothing is forthcoming from the government one has to save him or herself. It also shows that Whites have now become the prime target of post apartheid crimes. Afterwards Professor Lurie says it has become:

a risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoe, and a packet of cigarette. Not enough to go around, not enough cars, shoes, cigarettes. Too many people, too few things. What there is must go into circulation, so that everyone could have a chance to be happy for a day (*Disgrace*, 98).

The above statement seems to carry in it an ironical tone. What the author seems to say by the above statement is that there is a wrong reason that South Africans are using to justify the problems of post-Apartheid violence. Crimes are committed in pretext that some people are driven to this by lack. Whereas it's true that poverty will push people to commit crimes, there

is an aspect of greed. The other problem springs from the delusion that it is the material wealth that makes us happy. Even though material wealth makes life easier this does not necessarily make one happy because happiness is a heart condition. In addition the way these attacks are conducted shows that attackers are on revenge missions and not in campaigns to bring equitable distribution of resources in South Africa. The author is saying that people have lost focus on what they need from post-Apartheid South Africa. The verdict to this violence could only be seen reciprocal Apartheid or Apartheid-in-reverse.

The problem of sharing South Africa's resources seems not to have been sorted. The Whites still hold the resources and structures that produce wealth in the country. We do not expect the colour problem to be solved without solving the problem of ownership of material wealth in South Africa. If the constitution of South Africa remains a document without implementation the passage of time alone would not solve these problems.

Theories about the superiority of the White race and inferiority of non-White races coupled with stereotypical assertions about the superiority of one and the inferiority of the other seem to have nurtured wrong attitude between races. It seems that suspicious attitudes against one another have been conditioned in Pavlovian terms in their mind. If the real problems are not addressed, the tension between the perceived enemies will remain high. The text condemns racially motivated crimes that are reductive to human nature and seems to have been motivated by capitalistic interests.

From another angle, post-Apartheid crimes seem to be caused by wrong attitudes that have been conditioned over time by a history of oppression and degradation. This is a history that favoured the Whites and demonized the non-Whites all over the world. Whites have been viewed as superior race over other races for a very long time. At the moment this is not the case. all races are viewed as unique and superior in their own ways. Therefore the crimes in South Africa might also be viewed as an attempt by non-Whites to re-assert their humanity but obviously in the wrong way.

Lucy's reluctance to say what happened to her after she was raped is the new dilemma most Whites face in post-Apartheid South Africa. She tells her father: 'David when people ask, would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you... You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me' (*Disgrace*, 99). Lucy seems to say that nobody else could express what another person feels. To her, there are no words another person could use to describe what another feels without reducing this experience. Her rape ordeal is too much to let her father reduce it to a statement. More so Lucy feels that in this highly patriarchal society what will happen to her is only more humiliation for she is a woman in a very volatile country.

Another probable reason for Lucy's silence might be the fact that nobody is willing to listen to her as a woman. She knows that the police are disempowered by the change in legislation. The police force is also highly patriarchal more over the force (police) has been part and parcel of the exploitation of the non Whites as a result they feel cornered by the same changes. Their reluctances to take any drastic action against criminals are a scheme to avoid

provoking any backlash. Under the same circumstances it is hard to arrest any non-White person on any apartheid related crime; a psychological justification already exists to show that the person is venting his anger on his or her former oppressor.

The text condemns rape against women. Many women have been raped in the name of paying for the sins that had been committed by people of their own race. Patriarchal systems have left women vulnerable and susceptible to carnal crimes. The text concludes that no matter the prevailing political circumstances women are human and have a right to be protected like any other human being.

Lucy's decision to keep pregnancy that was conceived through rape is a surprising and also a bold move. This is the starting point for all South Africans. They have to build a new country from a history of exploitation and dehumanization. Lucy had a choice to forgive her rapists and abort but she did not. This introduces another aspect in the story; the sanctity of life no matter how small or vulnerable it is, it is worthy keeping. Finally, it is important to point out that vengeance breeds more vengeance. Just like Lucy, all South Africans have to learn to appreciate the reality of post-Apartheid in South Africa.

### **2.3 The Shifting of Power**

Coetzee in *Disgrace* (1999) also treats the theme of domination. It examines social political and economic structures and systems that make it possible for one person or party to dominate another. It also examines the consequences of one group or individual exercising power and domination over the other. The novel indicate that the nature of any power is osmotic.

meaning that it is usually more concentrated to the people who own or hold structures that this power could be exercised on and decreases as one move further from these structures. The structures would include judiciary, education system, patriarchy and economic systems just to name a few. The osmotic nature of power also shows the instability of power. Illustration from the novel will make this clear.

Professor Lurie is a White man. In South Africa 'White' meant being socially, politically and economically privileged. This seemed to place Professor Lurie in a better position than most non-White South Africans. Professor Lurie had all the material wealth he needed; for instance, he had a good house and a well paying lecturing job. When we encounter him in the text we notice that something is really wrong with him. He appears disoriented and seems to be in the periphery of mainstream society. He cannot control his sexual appetite. Instead, he seems to find pleasure in sexual orgies, which make him forget really what it means to live in South Africa. He had a relationship with a woman by the name Soraya. He later had unconsented sexual relationship with a twenty-year-old student, Melanie Isaac.

Professor Lurie is able to pay Soraya for her services but when she decides to leave him, he cannot do anything to get her back. Here we see Soraya trying to exercise power over her own body. On the other hand Professor Lurie is economically powerful. He hires a detective to trace Soraya where about but when found, she is adamant in renewing her relationship with him. Later, Professor Lurie is able to engage Melanie Isaac in sexual activity using his position as her lecturer. When Melanie reports him to the school administrators,

Professor Lurie is dismissed and has to leave in a state of disgrace. When he goes to his daughter in the Eastern Cape, he realizes that he no longer exercises the same kind of authority he used to over her as a father. He now has to humbly take instructions from his daughter.

Petrus, the black worker in Lucy's farm, seems to be getting powerful day by day. Lucy and her father are aware of this. When Professor Lurie is informed that Petrus is also protecting Pollux, a boy who was in the gang that raped Lucy, he cannot do anything. Paradoxically, he has been disempowered as a White man by the recent changes that took place in his country. The police, from whom he sought help, are also in the same dilemma. Previously, before Apartheid legislation was repealed, they were very powerful to an extent that they could decide who was to live or die. Now that Apartheid has been abolished, they do not have much to do. Their actions will only trigger more hate towards the police force, and thus they opt not to do anything.

Lucy also realizes that she needs Petrus to protect her if she wants to live in her farm. She gives up all that she owns and finally gives herself up to Petrus so that he would protect her from the non-Whites. This could well be articulated by the following:

Go to Petrus... Propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won't contradict him. If he wants me be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, Ditto... as for the land, say I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land (*Disgrace*, 204).

The above illustration reminds us that women in South Africa are still susceptible to political violence. In this context, it is quite clear that these problems are caused by men. It is also quite clear that violence is used to manipulate women to become subjects of men. Lucy has to hide under the 'name' of Petrus for protection against racially motivated attacks. More so she cannot continue owning a piece of Land while a man like Petrus does not have enough. Whereas this problem might seem very political we can't rule out the influence of patriarchy that is entrenched in this society that is enmeshed with racial tension in South Africa.

Lucy's father says: 'How humiliating, such high hopes and to end like this' (*Disgrace*, 205). This might have meant that the abolition of apartheid policy had promised a good future for all the South Africans in spite of their social political or economic standings. This was supposed to be a new beginning for everybody, but that was not to be so, for some have to learn 'to start at the ground level, with nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights [and] no dignity' (*Disgrace*, 205). This is so dehumanizing. Racial tension is as high as it has been but this time unlike before non-Whites are on the offensive.

The above illustrations show how power and authority has shifted or essentially remained the same in South Africa. It also shows what power shift means to some people in the country. To some individuals, it means a time for humiliation, a time to give up what one owns. It also means to be submissive to the powers that exist if life has to go on. To others, this shift of power means liberation. For example for Soraya, power shift means throwing away the tag of 'object' and taking the tag 'human.' To Melanie, it means exercising her freedom as a student without being coerced by any one. For Petrus, it is a moment to acquire

but worldwide. Though Professor Lurie sees this as a problem of history, we need to ask ourselves what personal responsibility one has over himself or herself when offended. Lucy's rejection should not be viewed as cowardice but an attempt to reject abstracting what happens to her. She does not want to give the government the power to decide whether what happens to her is a crime or not, as a human being she has the power to do so.

On another level we need to establish what responsibility individuals carry when they purport to commit some wrongs on behalf of their own kind, in this context, the black rapists. The rape ordeal has a devastating effect on Lucy, and her father. One feels moral outrage at the violence of the rapists against Lucy who seems not to have a problem with the non-whites. We are almost convinced by professor Lurie's statement to Lucy when she refuses to report the rapist to police. He says:

'Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out?' he asks. 'Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present?'. 'No, you keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions'; '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' (*Disgrace*, 112).

From Lucy's response, we can derive a reading of the Non Whites' responsibility as limited by space and time. In post-Apartheid South Africa the rights and wrongs of acts cannot be divorced from racial relations. However, it is also important for individual responsibility to be taken into account. To which degree is an individual responsible for the wrong s/he commits in South Africa. Thus in this instance what happens to Lucy is, a crime committed by specific men and by extension, men subjugating women through violence. It could also be a subjugation of the White race through violence.

From the same incident, the three rapists kill Lucy's dogs using her guns. This action is symbolic because 'In South Africa dogs are bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man' (*Disgrace*, 110). It is important thus to remember that dogs and a gun are tools that have been used to dominate non-Whites in South Africa. In this instance, Lucy is guilty of possessing 'tools' of racial oppression in South Africa. She is not different from Ettinger who confesses that he is armed and ready to shoot any attacker.

### 2.3 Justice

Coetzee seems to question the concept of justice. He has great doubt on its objectivity, instead he sees it as subjective and emotive only interested in serving sectarian interests within its social settings. Though the norms that govern relations between teachers and students do not allow for sexual contact between members of the two groups, this has happened between Professor Lurie and his student Melanie. He has to pay for transcending the set social boundary. His action cannot also be delineated from race relations in South Africa.

Although he views his relation with Melanie as purely private the university and the wider society sees it is a public matter. Thus he has to 'pay' the non-whites for continuing to dominate them through sex and also to women; he has to pay for subjugating one of their kinds. The complexity of this human drama is well demonstrated by the University committee of inquiry formed to look at the case of Professor Lurie. The committee is Multi-racial chaired by Manas Mathabane from religious studies, Hakim, three other members (Farodia Rassool and Desmond Swarts) and a student representative. This is aimed at giving it a heterogeneous public out look more than any other thing.

Professor Lurie accepts that he is guilty as charged. The committee is surprised by this rather quick response. They want him to say more for his case has acquired 'overtones.' This means that, Professor Lurie's case has acquired a public dimension and in this instance, a political one. The wider society views this as continuation of exploitation of non-Whites by the Whites, thus politics of classism. At the same time Feminists interpret it as patriarchy exploitation and on another level, this might be viewed as an instance where inter racial relationship is being questioned in South Africa. What comes out of this trial is that, the tension between the two main racial divisions is still high and for any genuine relationship between them to occur, the existing tension has to be toned down. The effect of individual action to another individual is not being separated from wider society.

Professor Lurie views his case as something personal. He tells the Committee of inquiry, "Am sure the members of the committee have better things to do with their time than rehash a story over which there is no dispute. I plead guilty to both charges. Pass on judgment and let us get on with our lives" (*Disgrace*, 48). The truth is already in the committee's hands but they don't want the enquiry to end so soon. It has to achieve its public intention. They want to make him a scapegoat for the wrongs Whites committed against non-Whites and the wrongs all wayward men have committed against some women.

He has also to pay for the wrongs of the people of his own class. As an intellectual Professor Lurie refuses to accept to take a bigger punishment than his wrongs deserve. Nevertheless, the committee insists that he has to. Mrs. Rassool tells the Professor: 'this is all

very quixotic, Professor Lurie, but can you afford it? It seems to me we may have to protect you from yourself...' (*Disgrace*, 49). The committee expects him to seek counselling from a counsellor or a priest for his behaviour. This is being elusive of the real problems for it is rather questionable. The committee of inquiry has not established any psychological or moral problem, yet they refer him to specialist.

The real intentions of the committee came out when Dr Rassool comments: 'In a case with overtones like this one, the wider community is entitled to ...know' (*Disgrace*, 52). Swarts continues that the case has received a lot of attention; it has received overtones that are beyond their control from the media. The implication of the above statement is the committee has to come up with a judgment that will impress all those who are now interested in the case who expect to see the wrongs of history of apartheid being atoned through him. Professor Lurie is supposed to write a statement to the public-not to the University, which he had wronged, or Melanie Isaacs, but to the public who initially were not part of the whole saga.

Though Professor Lurie is guilty, he tells the committee something important they have overlooked writing a coerced statement to plead that he is guilty is a different thing from a confession that sincerely comes from the heart, which to him is the true contrition. When he comes face to face with the media, he faces the reality that there is no one who is really interested in truth. They want him to confess and apologize for they have already guilty and condemned in eyes of the public.

The 'overtone' here means Professor Lurie is a representative of a certain group or class of people for whose wrongs he needs to atone. Bluntly put, he needs to be a sacrificial lamb that will carry the sins of the White people's with him to the wilderness of history. But the fact remains: historical facts cannot be washed away so easily by blaming a few people. This is what Professor Lurie is strongly opposed to; he is opposed to a structure that forces individuals to carry burdens that are not theirs. Finally, Professor Lurie is forced to resign from the University. He has at long last been sacrificed for public interest to be satiated.

In a way the text also succeeds in exposing the weakness of a judicial system whose real intentions is only to protect the interest of a people who are in power. There is also a problem with the judicial system as a political creation. It tends to act on what happen to masses and not to individuals. Individual violations become 'isolated cases' within the government eyes. Lucy's rape is taken to be such an isolated case of opportunistic thuggery to allow any serious investigation and the right punishment to be meted to her attackers. This is also a reflection of a greater problem about the structure of any government; it is usually formed in such a way as to cater for the welfare of a 'wider' society and not individuals within this society. Thus mostly any action will be taken to cater for the common good of the society. In Lucy and her father's case it happens that the political tide is shifting from favouring the Whites to non-Whites and as a result they do not expect any justice rather they become targets of ridicule.

Coetzee criticizes judicial systems not only in his own country but also all over the world, which are structured in a way that their main aim is not to reach the truth of the matter

but to serve a sectarian part of the society. He feels that these kinds of judicial systems do more harm to the society than good, for they abstract individuals and embrace 'masses' within the society. This has left all individuals vulnerable to laws that abstract their personalities and also deny them opportunities to find solutions to their own problems. To turn to the police and committees of inquiry sometimes means to run away from the limited responsibility individuals have over their own self in the society. If individuals do not exercise the limited authority they possess, they run the risk of taking themselves into a realm of abstract morality, where individuals surrender responsibility they have over themselves to state which there on determines what is right and wrong for them as a result, determining what is good for individuals. In this way individuals would have surrendered their authority and power they possess over themselves to state.

#### **2.4 A Society in Nervous Conditions**

In *Disgrace* (1999) sex and familial relation seems to have gained new meanings. Familial relationships were initially viewed as organizations in which societies regenerated themselves. Traditionally sexual relationships were only acceptable for procreation and bonding those in marriage. Sex outside marriage was considered wrong and thus evil. In the text, sexual activities seem to acquire new meanings. They are now viewed and used as 'tools' of economic empowerment where women prostitute themselves to get material wealth and entertainment purposes. On the other extreme, sex is being used as a tool of subjugation and subjection of women.

All over the world families are considered to be the smallest social units. These families have been heterosexual; meaning organized around a man and woman but now things are different. The definition of the family in its 'traditional' form seems to be undermined by the emerging forms of familial relationships, one of homosexuals, homosocial and lesbians. *Disgrace* has investigated this emerging issue in great depth.

When the text begins, Professor Lurie lives alone in Cape Town; he seems not to be in any contact with any member of his immediate family. He is having sexual relationship with a prostitute named Soraya. At first Professor Lurie seems to be contented with this relationship. The narrator says: 'It surprised him those ninety minutes a week of a woman's company is enough to make him happy, who used to think he needed a wife, a home, and a marriage' (pg: 5). Prostitution notwithstanding, Soraya becomes Professor Lurie's confidant. This makes Professor Lurie feel extraordinary attached to her for he has established a bond that binds them together.

Economic problems push non-White married women into prostitution. Take for example Soraya reaction; 'in bed Soraya is not effusive. Her temperament is quiet, quiet and docile... She does not approve nudity, prostitution and exhibitionism in her society. She also thinks that those who are involved in this should be punished. Professor Lurie wonders how Soraya is able to reconcile her 'business', which is essentially prostitution, with her opinions about the same act. Here Coetzee seems to point out the destructive effects of moralism in which individuals find themselves. He also seems to point to the destructive effects of apartheid to organized familial relationships in South Africa. Members of families are

'forced' to engage in extramarital affairs due to the prevailing social economic environment hence living double lives.

When Professor Lurie discovers that Soraya is married and has two boys from her marriage, things change. He is greatly hurt, but does not say anything to Soraya when they meet again, but:

The two boys become presences between them, playing quiet as shadows in a corner of the room where their mother and the strange man couple. In Soraya's arms he becomes, fleetingly, their father: foster-father, stepfather, shadow father. Leaving her bed afterwards, he feels their eyes flicker over him covertly, curiously (*Disgrace*, 6).

The above quotation confirms Professor Lurie's worry that Soraya's children remind him of his responsibility to regenerate, the responsibility to take care of his own family, but contrary to all these duties, he seems to carry with him a germ that destroys the family institution. It is quite evident that the social organisation in South Africa is not only detrimental to non-Whites but also to the Whites. Professor Lurie's case is an evidence of a deeply rooted problem at the core of modern society. The modern society seems to re-organize its familial institutions to embrace other emerging forms such as homosexual and lesbian relationships. The fundamental issue that seems to be raised by these new homosexual relationships is whether the world society has a future without the heterosexual relationships that regenerate it.

The importance of family relationship is emphasized when the text demonstrate that Professor Lurie becomes only happy when he tries to go back to his 'family'. Rosalind, his former wife, is the only person in whom he feels confident enough to confide his secrets and

worries. Before Professor Lurie faces the committee of inquiry, he meets her. Though she does not approve Professor Lurie's action of flirting with a young girl, Rosalind gives Professor Lurie an opportunity to explain his feelings about his relationship with Melanie. A Professor Lurie talks freely to Rosalind about this experience that threatens his job-this is rather a unique relation in this highly patriarchal society. For the first time Lurie seems to submit his own fate to a woman, which is a clear indication that there is a shift in power relationship between the two, a pointer to what might be happening in post apartheid South Africa. The episode might also be interpreted as one interrogating the relationship between an individual and his own society. Whereas an individual is a free entity with his own freedom, his existence and survival is linked to the wider society who influences his own survival.

After resigning from the University, Professor Lurie goes to stay with his daughter, Lucy, in Eastern Cape. The stay is very educative to him, he realises that as a father, a man, a White and also as an intellectual his power and authority is questionable. Her daughter orders him around *and she is even in a position to discuss and argue with him about what he had considered taboo topics to be discussed by a father and daughter.* Professor Lurie realises how he has lost value as an intellectual and attractive man, while working in Bev's clinic as dead dogs' undertaker. He has the same realization while taking instructions from Lucy's gardener Petrus.

Three rapists confront Lucy; Professor Lurie wants to help her. He has to prove his fatherhood to Lucy. He is unable and Lucy is raped. To him a father has failed to protect his own child. The guilt has to haunt him for the rest of his life. This episode might signify the

destructive nature of the emerging social and political forces to the family institution in post apartheid South Africa. These forces are beyond the powers of traditional family set up and unless other forces such as government come in to protect individuals within these set ups they will continue to suffer.

When Professor Lurie realizes that Lucy had conceived out of this rape he wants her to abort but she refuses. The dialogue between him and his daughter clarifies this point:

‘Are you alright?’

‘I’m pregnant.’

‘You are what?’

‘I’m pregnant.’ From that day?’

‘From that day’

‘I don’t understand. I thought you took care of it. You and your GP.’

‘No.’

‘What do you mean no? You mean you didn’t take care of it?’

I have taken care. I have taken every reasonable care short of what you are hinting at. But is not having an abortion. That is something I am not prepared to go through with again’ (*Disgrace*, 197-198)

Professor Lurie is surprised by this unexpected news, but he still feels responsible of her daughter’s life. Coetzee seems to say that it is the mother who is supposed to be an ultimate judge over her own body and what [grows] in it. No other person can claim to know what happens when she decides to keep or abort the pregnancy conceived of rape. Individuals will only air opinions and not judgment. Lucy is angry with his father’s for being overprotective to her. She tells him:

‘David, I can’t run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not any more. You behave as everything I do is part of you’re your life. You are the main character. I am a minor character who doesn’t make an appearance until half way through. Well, 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 one who makes the decisions’ (*Disgrace*, 198).

A few fundamental issues come out of this quotation, the relationship between an individual with another individual. The extents to which one can claim to be responsible for the other person's freedom seem to be the issue. Lucy is demanding her freedom as an individual. She owns her body and she wants to take control of what happens to it.

Though one has an attachment to a family s/he comes from, one still retains autonomy over his or her own body. The defeat of Professor Lurie in this instance and his acceptance of his daughter's wish is a loss of this overprotective social structure and the realization that conflicts within our societies could be avoided if individuals are allowed to retain some autonomy over their own self. Lucy declaration also marks a break for women from patriarchal mentality that men could decide what happens inside the women bodies. Hence for Coetzee individual freedom surpasses any social norms.

In another instance, Coetzee raises a fundamental question about the traditional definition of a family. He seems to advocate for a debate about the same sex relationship. Professor Lurie's daughter is involved with another woman by the name Helen. Though we do not meet the two characters relating in the text, through Professor Lurie's imagination we could figure out how it is like for two women to relate as a family: 'The truth is he does not like to think of his daughter in the throes of passion with another woman and a plain one is that, yet would he be any happier if the lover were a man' (*Disgrace*, 86). Through the mind of Professor Lurie, we are made to pose a question whether what happens between Lucy and **Helen could be called a familial relationship. This is not only an emerging question in South**

Africa but also a worldwide phenomenon that has provoked debates in all social circles. Coetzee does not give any personal judgment but leaves the question open for debate.

The redefinition of the family institution might also be as symbol of redefinition of the changing South African society. What South Africa is undergoing is not necessarily what many expect. Changes from apartheid to post-Apartheid policies were meant to make everybody, especially the long oppressed, equal, but it seems the change has not yet achieved this. The fall of the father here might symbolically mean the destruction of the old apartheid ideology of separate development and more so White superiority over the non-Whites who are the majority.

Coetzee's vision about the White South Africans is; it is in the young generation of the Whites that a new South Africa, ready to embrace changes would be born. This could be demonstrated by Lucy's decision to give her piece of land to Petrus a black man, her decision to keep a child whom she has conceived out of rape by black men and her eventual acceptance to submit to Petrus everything she owned including herself. The following quotations summarises this very well:

'... Lucy...are you telling me you are going to have a child?'

'Yes.'

'A child from one of those men?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'Why?' 'I am a woman, David. Do you think I hate children? Should I choose against the child because of whom its father is?' (*Disgrace*, 198)

In this dialogic encounter, Coetzee is referring to two issues the child who is conceived by the act of angry men emptying historical frustrations into a woman's body. And in another

instance, the rape may refer to the actual cases of rape that had been taking place in South Africa. From Lucy's assertion, she does not speak as a White woman but a woman in South Africa. Thus she is echoing what many young females are undergoing in South Africa and may be pointing to the government's weakness in dealing with this vice. When Professor Lurie attacks Pollux, the boy who raped Lucy and who in this instance of attack was peeping at Lucy in her bathroom, Lucy tells him, "David we can't go on like this. Everything had settled down, everything was peaceful again, until you came back. I must have peace around me. I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace" (*Disgrace*, 208).

It is ironic for Lucy to say that everything was okay; yet we know very well it is this moment she confirms the worse; that she is pregnant. She seems to have been pushed too far by those who raped her, in this instance she seems so powerless and she knows the country environment does not allow for any fair judgment. Lucy goes ahead and sacrifices everything she owns including her own self. She tells her father:

Go back to Petrus...propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won't contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, ditto. But the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land over to him...I will become a tenant on his land (*Disgrace*, 204).

Lucy does not want to leave South Africa; she considers it her home and she is ready to sacrifice anything to remain there. She is humiliated as a human being and has to accept Petrus' offer sacrifice herself and her piece of land. This is the situation most Whites find themselves in the post apartheid era in South Africa. It also exposes government inability to address the problem of redistribution of land in South Africa. Lucy summarises her humiliation: 'Perhaps that is what I must 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' (pg: 204). This might neither be the best position to take nor is it the best position to force one into but that is what post apartheid South Africa has turned into.

## **2.5 Reconciliation and New Beginning**

The inequality between races started over three hundred years ago with the unequal relationship between the Whites and the indigenous black tribes in the Cape of South Africa. (Uhlig, 1986:1) Later parliamentary Acts were put in place from 1948 to legalize the racial inequalities. The essence of apartheid was to deny people freedom of choice on the basis of their race. Through the Population Registration Act, The Group Areas Act, Reservation of Separate Amenities Act and Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act, non-Whites had been denied not only the country material wealth but their human freedom had been regulated by means of legislation.

Later political parties from these communities had been banned and thus the concerned communities' voices had been silenced against airing their dissatisfaction. As a result violence took over any negotiation and after much violence most of those Acts were repealed. This marked the beginning of the fall of Apartheid. Eventually democracy prevailed and a government of national Unity was formed in 1994.

As a South African writer, Coetzee could not fail to give his opinion on the nature of reconciliation needed. In *Disgrace* (1999), Coetzee explores the nature of reconciliation in South Africans political arena. He exposes the gaps in this process where some people have

been made scapegoats. He seems to say that South Africa's race problems are caused by multiplicities of issues which colour is one among many.

Professor Lurie faces the University committee of enquiry for sexual offences and academic insincerity. He accepts his wrongs, but the committee demands written apology to demonstrate his guilt and justify his censure. One committee member Dr Rassool says:

Professor Lurie says he accepts the charges. Yet when we try to pin him down on what it is that he actually accepts, all we get is subtle mockery. To me that suggest that he accepts the charges only in name. In a case with overtones like this one, the wider community is entitled to know ... what it is specifically that Professor Lurie acknowledges and therefore what it is that he is being censured for (*Disgrace*, 50).

The above scenario represents an instant in which reconciliation is being sought. Professor Lurie accepts that he is guilty but the committee is trying to force him say more than it is necessary. The reason why they want to 'pin' him down is to create a background in which to justify his dismissal. The judgment is already passed before the process of enquiry is completed that he is already 'censured' and therefore punished. This is totally fraudulent. Thus the commission is just going through a motion to justify the sentence Professor Lurie has been condemned to by the public. Finding truth on wrongs committed against individuals seems not to be a priority. This is not reconciliation, but a public relations gimmick that does not solve any problem.

In another instance, Professor Lurie goes to his daughter Lucy place. There are a few things he has to reconcile with first if he has to settle there. He has to accept that legally Blacks in South Africa are supposed to enjoy equal rights as their former masters. Thus he has to change his attitude of what he initially thought of them. The master servant mentality has to

go away. The other fact is that South Africa's wealth has to be redistributed. He cannot really reconcile himself to this fact. When he come face to face with all these changes. That is why after they were attacked the only solution he could give Lucy was, she should leave everything and go back to Holland their mother country. Lucy knows running away from South Africa to Holland means running away from the real issues and a refusal to look for solutions to problems at hand; this is being escapist. Coetzee seems to urge white South Africans to look for home grown solutions instead of running away; buying time alone by running away to their mother countries would never solve anything, it will only postpone the problems for another day. It is also quite clear that Whites within South Africa have to decide who they really are, are they Europeans in South Africa or are they White South Africans? In this way they would be able to define where their commitment should be; either in South Africa or their mother countries in Europe.

The decision to stay in this volatile country is not an easy one, but Lucy decides to stay, however not without some sacrifice. Lucy is ready to become a co-proprietor with his former gardener Petrus. Another question remains: what are Whites supposed to do to be part of the new post apartheid Country? Sacrificing their material wealth to non-Whites is not enough, sacrificing their dignity is inhuman, and being shy and regretful about their immoral acts is not enough. They also need to change their old prejudices against non-White races in the world. This would be the beginning of a true reconciliation. Professor Lurie and his daughter Lucy are attacked. How are these attacks supposed to be viewed as revenge missions or criminal attacks? What happens to them is inhuman they need protection.

In other instances Coetzee condemns emotional and non-practical solution to post Apartheid violence. In the novel when Ettinger one of the white characters offered Lucy a gun after she was raped, she declined. She knew it is not possible to protect one forever, without really addressing the causes of these criminal acts.

Before Professor Lurie goes back to Cape Town from Lucy's place he passes through Georges, Melanie Isaacs's home. He wants to apologize to Melanie's parents for having 'misused' her. Though he succeeds in doing it and even having supper with her family, it is a very tricky affair. Isaacs tells Professor Lurie, that he ought to learn a lesson from the university dismissal.

This philosophical utterance seems to point at the author's view on what abolition of Apartheid meant to South Africa. Whites in South Africa might feel vulnerable now because of the many wrongs that were committed due to racial prejudices, but this is important for Whites and non whites to learn a new lesson. It is a moment for them to reflect on their own nature or kind. It also suggests, through self-consent true reconciliation could be reached but, not through force as it was the case with the committee of inquiry. Professor Lurie seems to be genuinely sorry for what he did to Melanie Isaac. He tells her father: 'I am sorry for what I took your daughter through...I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask for your pardon' (*Disgrace*, 171). In turn through Mr. Isaac the author points out what reconciliation means in South Africa. He says, 'the question is not are we sorry? The question is what lesson have we learned? What are we going to do now that we are sorry?' (*Disgrace*,

172). South Africans need to ask themselves the above two questions. This is the true intention and reason for any reconciliation.

## 2.6 Women as victims of “Double Jeopardy”

Men have all along dominated knowledge about women and especially their bodies. Men try to explain women emotional well-being and biological processes. Men’s explanation entirely emerges not from experience, but through hypothesis and theories formulated over time. For example Graham and Oakley (1991) make a comparison between doctors (men) and mothers on the way they view and acquire knowledge about the process of reproduction, “The doctor’s knowledge is abstract, specialist, and expert and derived from medical sciences whereas the mother’s is individualized, intuitive and derived from the sensation of her body.” (Graham and Oakley 1982: 312).

The statement seems to imply that there are some things about women male doctors will never understand. Coetzee seems to disapprove some male dominated theories about women bodies. He sees them as an extension of male domination, this time by purporting to have knowledge about women bodies. A question emerges at this juncture. Does the fact of being a woman make her privileged to understand what she undergoes and hinders males from understanding what she undergoes for being ‘not female’? To answer the question Dant says:

It is not the fact of being a woman that is significant in terms of knowledge and perspectives but the experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society. One of the consequences of patriarchal social relations is to de-emphasize experiences particular to women and to downgrade knowledge based on experience (Dant 1991:175).

From the above statement, men possess women knowledge through manipulation and abstracting reality: by relegating experience to periphery of knowledge, a woman is denied the right to know about her own body. This mandate is given to an outsider who becomes an expert to her person experiences. In this way patriarchy succeed in objectifying, idealizing and owning structures that generate knowledge about women. From the above analysis, Dant concludes that it is important to: 'address the significance of women experiences and their knowledge and perspectives of their experiences' (Dant 1991:176).

What the above quotation implies is that knowledge about women has to be individualized. Coetzee really expatiates this issue at length in *Disgrace* (1999). Take for example the following occasions: after Lucy was raped by three black men his father is thinking about what it means for Lucy not to come up and own that she was raped. He reflects that the rapists would be reading newspapers and listening to gossip, what will come out is only the fact that they are sought for robbery and assault but not rape. They will realize that they have succeeded in silencing a woman by putting her in her place in the society. In this instance Professor Lurie is pointing to the female voice that has been silenced by males. In the same context, Lucy views her rape as a manifestation of how men 'hate' women bodies by objectifying them and making them and as a result dominating them. For Lucy this is not a problem, her problem is why they rape her with a lot of hatred. For her, the act shows the hatred men have over women bodies.

Professor Lurie opens the Pandora's Box when he persists with the same question; why didn't Lucy tell the police she was raped.

'Are you trying to remind me of something?'

'Am I trying to remind you of what?'

'Of what women undergo at the hands of men.' ...

'You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. ...

The reason is that as far as I am concerned what happened to me is purely a private matter in another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter but this place at this time it is not. It is my business, mine alone.'

'This place being what?'

'This place being South Africa.' (*Disgrace*, 111-112)

It is quite clear Lucy feels that rape to her is a private matter she is the only one who can tell from experience what it to be raped. It also means that she does not believe that police or anybody else will take the rape that happened to her seriously. It might not be given the seriousness it deserves; rather it will be treated as one of crimes that happened to her property disregarding the fact that her body had been soiled and her soul pierced by the three rapists. This will also disregard the fact that rape is a symptom of social, political and economic tensions among South Africans, due to multiplicities of factors that tries to manifest themselves in South Africa societies such as patriarchy, many years of conditioned dehumanization, problems of poverty and racial hatred, just to name a few.

Also Lucy has a feeling that South Africans social order does not allow for individuals, particularly women to receive justice they deserve. Patriarchy is very strong which implies that women are not yet free in South Africa and that, the political structures of the government do not allow for individualized justice but one based on 'common good of all the citizens.' This means women in South Africa become double victims one as women in patriarchy and two, as victims of crimes due to the susceptibility they have been put into by the social organization.

When Professor Lurie asked Bev about Lucy's condition after rape, she shakes her head, which to him means: 'Not your business...Menstruation, child birth, violation and aftermath: blood matter; a woman's burden, women preserve. (*Disgrace*, 104). This means that there is something about women that men can't know; they are matters which only knowledge is derived from experience and not hypothesizing or theorizing. They are so intimate and personal.

When Professor Lurie later asks Lucy whether she saw a 'male' doctor she is furious her father assumes that all specialists in women reproduction problems should be men. Professor Lurie says: and is he taking care of all eventualities?' with a crack of anger in her voice Lucy corrects him 'She'... 'She' not he' (*Disgrace*, 105). This means, as a woman Lucy does not believe that knowledge about women's reproduction problems and men should deal with processes but by women, for women doctors have knowledge from experience about women but men relies on hypothesis and discourses. Dant summarises this fact very well, "Women's knowledge about themselves is different from men not because of the biological difference of sex but because their situation and experiences as women gives them a particular perspective on the world" (Dant 1991: 184).

On another occasion, Professor Lurie reflects how the news about Lucy's rape would be received by the wider society. He is furious that nothing serious is going to come out of this; instead a story of 'heroism' would be created around the rapists. A stain that has not been dealt with one that is spreading like a legend: 'how they put her on her place, how they

showed her what a woman was for' (*Disgrace*, 115). For them a woman is a feeble, less human sexual object. Life for them is becoming harder and harder everybody.

*Disgrace* (1999) also portrays continuous suffering of women in heterosexual communities and especially those that are patriarchal. Lucy is a homosexual having a relationship with Helen. Lesbian relationships in modern African societies are considered to be dirty and wrong. By writing about this kind of relationship Coetzee is trying to portray how heterosexual societies continue to subjugate homosocial relations especially women verses women relationships.

At first the promotion of heterosexual relationship, this time not for procreation seems to be so natural but this is now being contested. According to Cox (1987) homosexuality has been relegated to private sphere of the society while heterosexuality relationship is seen as a public matter that needs the attention of everybody. By portraying heterosexuality, as a public matter the patriarchy ends up creating heterosexism. Heterosexism is a form of institutionalized oppression, which depends upon power over relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressor has the power to construct and define the social reality within which the oppressed live through the economic control of resources, institutions such as the media, school, and police and also through language itself. Structurally heterosexism is not different from sexism, classism and racism. All these are built upon power, dominance, oppression and subjection; to benefit some at the expense of others this instance challenging heterosexism sexism. (Cox: 148).

According to Cox (1987), lesbians are seen as loose women because men do not own them; men cannot control them. This means that they will refuse getting married to men and thus they won't be subjected to social role formulated by men thus undermining male supremacist society (Cox: 147). Hence it would be important to question and change the boundaries created as a result of relegating some life experiences to the private realm of the society and by doing so, we would be exposing some structures and systems that seem so genuine yet riddled with prejudices and violations. This does not only apply to South Africa but also to the rest of the world.

## **2.7 Transition**

South Africa is on the crossroads between Apartheid and post-Apartheid era. It is also a country that has not been bypassed by the changes that are taking place all over the world. Take for example the redefinition of knowledge from its traditional forms, new knowledge about races and gender and their relationships between individuals and the state. All this 'knowledge' is changing perspectives about the way individuals view each other and the world they live. This section examines transition in South Africa not just on political level but also on social and economic level. It also explores how this transition is happening and why this is important. To illustrate Political changes have occurred in South Africa, Whites and Non Whites are under a constitution that defines them as equal. Women are aware that men have been subjugating and objectifying them. Also there is new awareness of who and how knowledge is generated in our societies.

*Disgrace* (1999) raises questions of how these new developments have trickled down to structures and institutions in South Africa. In the text, there is a lot of chaos as characters try to find ground on which to embrace these emerging changes. Let us illustrate these points. Professor Lurie had been teaching modern Languages in restructured Cape Technical University. He has been 'forced' to teach only one of his specialized courses in classical poetry and communication skills for which he did not have passion for. Narrative voice describes his detachment and doubt to the contents of Communication Skills 101:

Although he devotes hours of each day to his new discipline, he finds the first premise, as enunciated in the communication 101 handbook, preposterous: 'Human society has created Language in order that we may communicate our thoughts, feelings and intention to each other.' His own opinion, which he does not air, is that origins of speech lie in song, and the origins of song in the need to fill out with sound the overlarge and rather empty human soul (*Disgrace*, 3-4).

Professor Lurie does not air his reservations of the course content neither does he let his own students know what he teaches is not religiously true to him. He thus comes out as an uninterested actor in the field of knowledge who does not cause any debate about the nature of Knowledge. The students are denied one fundamental element that generates knowledge in any society, debate. They are also denied a venue and method to verify knowledge they receive about their own world.

What happens with this kind of teaching is students are denied 'tools' to use to interpret their own world. Hence in this society knowledge becomes a preserve of some people who gives what they wish to give and deny what they want to. In this way a society gets divided into two, one that processes knowledge about the world and hence superior and the other the ignorant who automatically becomes inferior and dependent to the former. Thus

in South Africa education system has failed to provide a link between the young and the reality in which they live. The young have also been denied an opportunity to debate about their own realities.

The above quotation also raises a very pertinent question about the nature of 'knowledge' and 'truth.' What is truth and how would one verify its authenticity to all individuals considering that they live in diverse environmental conditions. In extension the truth and knowledge we usually consider to be universal hence applicable to all human being is being questioned. To make it clear the argument does not deny the existence of truth and knowledge but questions the act of abstracting specific social encounters in order to fit in the wider scheme of universal knowledge.

Therefore, the author is telling us something about the nature and complexity of truth and knowledge about South Africa. That South African truth and knowledge during and after the dissolution of apartheid policies is complex than we think. That it could be described in other ways for example the indifference of Professor Lurie could be related to the indifference shown to other explanations of origin of apartheid and its consequences. More so, Professor Lurie seems to point out that some people might be aware of the complexity of what happened in South Africa during apartheid but don't feel motivated to speak out about it. Instead, most South Africans want to echo what is popular or generally accepted as the right version. This does not entail in anyway a denial of any verifiable facts. The refusal by some South Africans to discredit other views about what apartheid means and what post apartheid

policies means today is a great disservice to all South Africans for they are inhibiting a debate to look for solutions to their diverse and complex problems.

From another perspective, Coetzee seems to question South African education system as a source of verification of true knowledge and truth about its political history. He seems to question the preparedness of the South Africa's education system in dealing with the deep parasitic social, political and economic structures of apartheid and post apartheid systems South Africa. The following quotation from the text summarizes the above argument about Professor Lurie:

He has never been much of a teacher; in this transformed and, to his mind, emasculated institution of learning he is more out of place than ever. But then, so are other of his colleagues from the old days, burdened with upbringings inappropriate to the tasks they are set to perform; clerks in a post – religious age (*Disgrace*, 4).

A few terms from the quotation seem to point out the inappropriateness of university education. The term, 'Transformed' means that the education system has changed from the initial apartheid's curricula system; the Whites and the Non Whites had different types of education. Whites' education prepared them to the expansive South Africa economic capitalistic reality, while the non-Whites were denied this experience by their inferior education. Secondly, 'emasculated' means weak, this transformation in the education system did not take care of the needs of all the South Africans in this post apartheid era. The third point is that the academia in South Africa still holds the biased mentality they held during apartheid. The implication being, changing of systems would not do much if those who have been given the responsibility to teach South Africa history do not change their prejudices.

Coetzee insinuates that the academia in South Africa is poor communicators, who are working with poor materials based on apartheid ideology and attitudes and as a result there is no knowledge transformation between them and the young generation. The society remains ignorant and disinterested of what happens around it. As a result, the narrative voice says that the academia has been reduced to “clerks in a post-religious age” which means they are almost becoming irrelevant to their institutions for the ideology they were trained to teach is now irrelevant to their country.

The author is also pointing out that those students who comes out of this system of education, lack any foundation to help them verify individual experiences in their country. Students’ disinterest in romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Byron show a lack of background information in which to interpret and appreciate the beauty of South Africa’s recent transition. Coetzee seems to suggest that, things might be seen superficially to have changed in post Apartheid South Africa, but essentially they have remained the same or inverted. The structures that sustain them have not changed. That is why students look through Professor Lurie when he speaks and forget his name; they are not attached to their teacher in any way.

It could be concluded that there seems to be a major problem in the education system in South Africa, which can only be overcome by change of attitude and the readjustment of different course contents in order to communicate a better method which students and the young generation could use to judge their experiences as South Africans within a global context.

On political stability, the text paints a very disturbing picture. A lot of injustices are taking place. To start with, the political changes seem not to have a strategy of redistributing South Africa's resources to its entire people. Whites still possess the structures that produce wealth. As a result exploitation, chaos and crimes flourish. Take for example Soraya, she is prostituting herself to feed her two boys, there are a lot of crimes that even after Professor Lurie and Lucy were attacked they considered them lucky that they were not dead like most of crime victims. Professor Lurie says:

It happens everyday every hour, every minute...in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not to be a prisoner in the car at the moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too (*Disgrace*, 98).

When he goes back to his Cape Town house he found it vandalized. There is nothing he can do to demand justice; he knows that police would not help. After coming back from Cape Town, one day he finds Pollux the boy who participated in raping Lucy and disgracing him peeping at Lucy in her bathroom. He confronts the boy and as the boy is running away from him he vows that they will continue with their attacks against Whites: 'We will kill you all!' (*Disgrace*, 207). This and other crimes that are taking place in South Africa snuff out of Professor Lurie the pleasure of living: 'like a leaf on a stream, like a puffball on a breeze,' and 'he has begun to float towards his end' (*Disgrace*, 106). What this shows is that post apartheid South Africa is still far from achieving social order between its non White and White communities and many people are now becoming disillusioned.

It is important to note that post apartheid South Africa experience is quite different from many former colonies of Europeans in the world. Whites do not go away to their mother

countries after their dehumanizing policies are defeated they are relegated to the political background of South Africa. Creating an environment that will allow them to coexist with non-Whites is of paramount importance. On economics, affirmative action is needed to boost non-Whites who are economically challenged even now. In education, a new strategy is needed to overcome the 'mis-education' that took place during Apartheid about communities and their histories, whose roots are still strong in post apartheid South Africa. Also there is emerging knowledge about women, individuals, government among other knowledge that need to be updated through active debates by intellectuals in South Africa and the rest of the world. for example the traditional structure of a state is being questioned in the text. The state in its traditional form is formulated in a way that it is supposed to be interested in public lives. The problem comes in when the meaning of 'public' is opposed to 'private,' through social discourses. Public matters are seen important, impersonal and rewarding hence requiring all state instruments and systems, whereas private matters are presented as personal hence less important to the state as a result they are denied the state attention.

Then through social discourses, men are viewed as outgoing, daring, and macho, explorative and home financiers all this make them subjects of public scrutiny while women are viewed as withdrawn, people who like to keep things into their hearts and also good home makers hence their experiences are private. In this way women are made less important than men and whatever happens to them is not of importance and interest to the public. In this way men succeed in making them less important humans and therefore relegate them to the realm of 'things' or men's own subjects.

Coetzee's suggestion is that the line between public and private lives should be destroyed for they all interrelate. To neglect one is to create a disparity. In South Africa the solution lies in the government investing also in the private sphere of its own people and in this context the marginalized. If the post apartheid problems are to be overcome, murders, rape, theft and all manners of wrongs that manifest themselves, as violent acts should be considered symptoms of this skewed organized state.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have analysed how different social, economic and ideological structures held by various institutions, systems and individuals affects Whites and Non Whites, males and the state within South Africa have continued to keep women away from their country's politics in post-Apartheid era. What comes out of our analysis is that solutions to most problems arising from apartheid era have not yet been addressed. They include setting up new economic, political and judicial structures that recognizes the centrality of each individual within South Africa.

Though we have established much about post-Apartheid South Africa by analysing characters in the text we could learn even more about post-Apartheid era in South Africa from the way the text uses its language. Chapter three examines Coetzee's literary techniques namely; Symbolism, irony, paradox and allusion and how they help to communicate about life in post-Apartheid South Africa.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### APPRECIATING THE STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF *DISGRACE* (1999)

#### 3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the thematic concerns of J. M. Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace* (1999). In order to bring out these concerns, the chapter dealt with characters and the role they play in the novel. It is important at this point to make it clear that most of these characters are not 'picked' from reality but they are linguistic constructs; they come to life through attributes that they are given in this text. This is made clear by (Trachtenberg 1985: 142) when he says that literary characters are made of words and the medium in which they exist is linguistic constructs. Thus it is important to analyse the language of the text for it is part of the communicative media of any literary work.

Our discussion in this chapter centers on the way language is used to communicate further the realities of post apartheid South Africa. We will investigate the following major aspects of style symbolism, irony, allusion and paradox. This in turn would help us evaluate how Coetzee manipulates language in *Disgrace* (1999) to create an allegory of post-Apartheid South Africa.

The story *Disgrace* (1999) is narrated from an intrusive narrator's point of view. Other characters thoughts, and emotions are mostly viewed from the narrator's view, sometimes he is omniscient and is able to know and communicate the thoughts of other characters. It happens that the narrator, Professor Lurie, is also the protagonist in this story; thus, he

becomes a central metaphor in the text. He assumes the authors perspectives, attitudes and judgments about post Apartheid South Africa. Professor Lurie's life becomes the life of a country, his experience becomes the experience of a country and the lesson he learns from his experience becomes the lessons a country learns from its past and present.

### **3.1 Symbols and Metaphors of Changing Fortunes**

Edgar (1998) says that a symbol gains meaning when it creates a direct meaningful equation between a specific object scene, character or action and ideas, values, persons or ways of life. Thus a symbol is a substitute for the element being signified (Edgar.1998). Symbolism in the text serves as a window through which we could view at post apartheid South Africa. Coetzee has used contextual symbols in order to expand his ideas beyond the normal connotations of words or statements.

Professor Lurie is a character whose life is waning from a promising past with a well paying career and good life to a desperate character whose importance is becoming irrelevant in the mainstream society. He must pay for his mistakes and those of his race in order to be regenerated again. He is divorced twice. He lacks a circle of friends or colleagues and the only way he fills this gap is by soliciting the services of prostitutes and burying himself into books. His muscular body, which made him attractive to women, is now fragile and no longer attractive. Hence Professor Lurie comes out as a metaphor of the White society which is now being relegated to the margins of South Africa politics. The changes that occur in his life therefore reflect the atmosphere of South Africa, which is being altered socially, politically

and economically. The initial political power of the White regime is captured through the vivid description of Professor Lurie's energetic body:

With his height, his good bones, his olive skin, his flowing hair, he could always count on a degree of magnetism. If he looked at a woman in a certain way, with certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That is how he lived; for many years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life (*Disgrace*, 7).

This is a metaphor of apartheid government. Initially, it was very powerful due to the firm political structures it had established around itself.

To start with, the concept of apartheid emerged from a religious doctrine, which stipulated that God created all races of the world with uniquely and with diversities. It happens that many theories formulated by Whites and advocated by religious and scientific doctrines states that the White race was created or evolved more superior than other races of the world and as a result the race had to "help" God or take their moral obligations to civilize the non-Whites. So as to reach the same levels of civilization as them, a fact demonstrated very clearly by social Darwinism. Faced with the above kind of mentality, non Whites had been conditioned to believe of their inferiority and the superiority of their counter part, as a result Whites were able to exercise a lot of power and authority over a people who had unconsciously were willing to be dominated.

The image of a flirt in the above quotation also romanticizes the way life was for the Whites during the initial stages of Apartheid. They just needed to manipulate the country's constitution to get whatever they wanted. They accumulated all material wealth they needed and lived in the best places they chose. Hence the image of professor Lurie represents

exploitation and manipulation. As time went by different social knowledge especially those that divided human beings in the two broad categories of superior and inferior began to be questioned in South Africa. This knowledge infiltrated non-Whites South Africans social political and economic circles and began to shake those structures that supported apartheid policies. The White government needed to do more to sustain its stay in power; they employed combative tactics such as police brutality, detention without trial and murdering the non-Whites who opposed their policies. This could be illustrated by the following metaphor of a changing Professor Lurie, "Overnight he became a ghost. If he wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her, often, in one-way or another, to buy her. He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity" (*Disgrace*, 7).

The quotation shows a desperate White regime that wants to continue on enjoying the privileges of apartheid policies even after realizing that they are no longer viable in a multi-racial country like South Africa. The usage of phrases such as 'buy her' refers to the White government attempts to scuttle any effort by non-Whites to fight back. A good example would be the 1982 white government attempts to sideline blacks by leaving them out of a tricameral government and including the Coloured and the Asians. In some quarters Blacks had also been compromised to work as informers and collaborators with this White government this helped them remain in power for a longer time.

Professor Lurie had promiscuous relationships: 'He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on waterfronts or at the club Italia; he slept with whores' (p: 7). This could further illustrates desperate attempt by the apartheid government to

remain relevant in a world that is realizing that race, gender and class biases no longer hold and it is a demonstration of how selfish individual breaks social morality for selfish gains.

Professor Lurie has sexual relationships with Soraya and Melanie both of whom are non-White. Soraya and Melanie seem to have been forced into these relationships by forces beyond their own control. This paternalistic relationship symbolises the situation in which non-Whites found themselves in apartheid South Africa. The Whites had amassed a lot of wealth; they owned and directed the use of South Africa's resources, institutions and structures that creates wealth. Their position of control made it easier for them to manipulate the non-Whites. Soraya prostituted herself in order to sustain her family while Melanie was forced into this extraordinary relationship by manipulation and fear of professor Lurie's authority as a lecturer. To the Whites, this relationship means that they do not need any legal or moral commitments to their own subjects. This is illustrated clearly by what Professor Lurie thought of his relationship with Soraya: 'It surprised him those ninety minutes a week of a woman's company is enough to make him happy, who used to think he needed a wife, a home, a marriage?' (*Disgrace*, 5)

The Apartheid government did not need any formal commitment to be answerable to the non-Whites in running their daily affairs. Life was good for Whites without being responsible for the education of the non-White population. The break up between Soraya and Professor Lurie symbolises a break up in relationship, a realization from non whites in South Africa that their relationship with the whites was parasitic and very dehumanizing.

Before Professor Lurie and Soraya part, the former realizes that the latter had children. This does not go well with Professor Lurie even if he had been suspecting it from the beginning. The encounter with Soraya and her children disturbs him so much: 'their eyes flicker over him covertly, curiously' *Disgrace*, 6). This episode symbolises the fact that the White regime is realizing that what its policies stand for, is immoral, but still it does not stop them. The 'gaze' of these two boys, symbolises the social sufferings experienced by the non-Whites that were quit evident which in turn made Whites uncomfortable but not enough to make them realise what they were doing was absolutely wrong.

Professor Lurie meets Melanie Isaacs, one of his students, on her way home. The girl looks too young for him. However he doesn't spare her; he uses her sexually to satisfy his male ego. Unlike the first relationship where Soraya receives some pay for her services, Melanie receives only favours that were aimed at sustaining her to this relationship such as free lunch. This relationship between Professor Lurie and Melanie could symbolically be compared to the paternalistic relationship the Apartheid state had with its non-White subjects in South Africa. The state as a father, is supposed to provide for its citizens just as Professor Lurie ought to educate Melanie with knowledge that will help her live in South Africa. Instead, we see a state that is turning against its own innocent subjects, devouring them mercilessly. However non-whites like Melanie fights back, by demonstrations, strikes and boycotts.

The committee of inquiry in Professor Lurie's case faces challenges from the word goes. The public, through the media wants Professor Lurie to be crucified on behalf of Whites

and intellectuals who are involved in relationships that are not approved by social mores. This is absurd, for the public has not been part and parcel of this case. Its' interest in the case prejudices the outcome of the commission. Professor Lurie accepts that he has wronged Melanie but does not yield to the demands of the commission, to give a public apology. The above dilemma could be compared exactly to what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) faced in post-Apartheid South Africa. The atrocities of the apartheid government were quite evident. People were jailed, shot dead, murdered, families were broken by separating spouses, and also physical, emotional and even psychological barriers were created between people of different racial groups by exposing them to different social political and economic environments.

The tricky part on Professor Lurie trial comes when he is asked to confess to the public. He refuses. Symbolically, Coetzee seems to be asking an existential question: how much does it help to moralize and publicize personal crimes? He wonders whether it would be possible to achieve a true contrition from the accused in an environment which one is already condemned before he is heard.

Professor Lurie's refusal to say that he is sorry after admitting his wrongdoing is not arrogance as it superficially appears; the refusal should be viewed as an attempt to reject a process of inquiry that is flawed. It is also a demonstration of a need to have an environment that is conducive to collect evidence against the accused person which in turn creates a level ground for the accused and the accuser to reconcile and not settling personal, political or racial scores

When Professor Lurie is questioned about the composition of this committee of inquiry he states that his objection is a philosophical one. This means he does not have any problem with the committee *per se* his only problem is that the committee assumes it might be able to reach a consensus on his case because of its multiracial composition. To Professor Lurie what matters is whether the committee exercises enough moral authority to judge him. He also feels it might not be possible for the committee to judge his conduct considering that they are influenced by different conditions, for example the chair of the committee of inquiry is black, and from religious department this means some racial and religious prejudices will definitely influence the outcomes of the case.

We could not rule out the influence of feminist mentality and generational gap between the accused and the accuser among other influences in the outcome of this inquiry. Thus to Professor Lurie, justice might be elusive in this case. Relationships between lecturers and their students are rampant in his university but Professor Lurie does not believe that the social environment in the university would allow for any fair trial. Put in other words, there are people who want to see some people being punished, this way their conscience would settle because something is happening on the ground. This is alluded to by the insistence that Professor Lurie case has social 'overtones'. The term 'overtones' is used to mean that this is not just a trial for Professor Lurie, but he is being tried on behalf of some people of whom he is part. Without conclusive information on his conduct, Professor Lurie is dismissed from the university.

Eventually, Professor Lurie goes to Melanie Isaac's home and apologizes to her family for having abused her sexually. He is not forced by any one to do it. He does not go to the media or public to say that he is sorry; he goes to Melanie's family. Here the text seems to symbolically suggest that blanket apologies and confessions might not bring the reconciliation that every South African needs. Rather, only when individuals apologize to their victims and confess their unfairness can real forgiveness and reconciliation be achieved. The illustration from the text makes this clear, Melanie's father tells Professor Lurie, "the question is not are we sorry? The question is what lesson have we learned? The question is what are we going to do now that we are sorry? The question is what does God want from you, besides being sorry? Have you any ideas, Mr. Lurie?" (*Disgrace*, 172)

Symbolically, the illustration implies that saying sorry is not enough. More needs to be done in this new political arrangement. Another issue that is the controversial argument widely held by some religious people that our lives and our destiny are already designated by God hence we are passive to what happens to our selves. Whereas God influences us in whatever we do, he has given us the ability and freedom to alter what happens to ourselves. We are protagonists over our own lives and what happens to it. It is important to note at this juncture that it is the same religious mentality that saw the introduction of Apartheid in South Africa. The text clearly point to us what needs to be done in South Africa after true confession is achieved; there is need to change the racist and xenophobic attitudes that has been inculcated in the minds of all South Africans over time.

Even after Melanie's father accepts Professor Lurie's apology, he tells him that he is not ready to renegotiate the university punishment for what had happened. This means that forgiveness does not necessarily mean absence of punishment. Professor Lurie's punishment has to hold to atone for the sins he committed. This symbolises punishment that befalls the perpetrators of apartheid; they deserve it.

While still on Lucy's farm, Petrus buys two sheep that he later slaughters for his guests during a ceremony to usher in a new wife. Professor Lurie does not like the fact that these animals are tied in a place they don't have enough to feed on. He wants to help them. In the process he thinks about the sheep, as animals that lack rights over their own lives. Animals are born for some people to use. He sees them as creatures under their masters. Therefore, others already determine the sheep's fate. Symbolically, this episode could be interpreted as one questioning some theological and biological theories brought forward to justify why majority non-Whites had to suffer in hands of Whites in South Africa.

'Pay back time' mentality in post-Apartheid South Africa could also be in this category. This could symbolically signify the lives of Blacks' people in South Africa. The lives of non-White people were so much devalued during apartheid. The non-whites did not have any freedom, and their lives were almost owned by the Whites, who determined where and with whom they were supposed to live.

Lucy is expectant from rape by three black men; she will give birth to a mixed race child. When her father Professor Lurie asks her whether she loves the baby in the womb she

says 'No. How could. I? But I will. Love wills grow- one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother David. A good mother and a good person (*Disgrace*, 216). Symbolically this is the future South Africa. It is conceived out of struggle, crimes, and humiliations. It is born out of 'many negative things but the desires of most of its people are to live in it harmoniously.

In the text, there are a lot of animal characters. The dogs, in Lucy's farm, sick dogs, cats and goats in Bev's Clinic and the two sheep waiting to be feasted on by guests in house. All these animals seem helpless in front of their masters. Their lives seem to depend solely on the decision of their owners. Take the case of animals in Bev's clinic: Bev determines when they are going to die through poisonous injection. These animals are symbolic of the vulnerable people in South Africa and in this context, the non-Whites. Like animals, the non-Whites have been surviving on the mercy of the white government for a very long time. For example most of the parliamentary acts enacted during apartheid era gave Whites power and authority over their non-Whites colleagues. The acts made sure that the White races did not intermingle with other races and in this way Parliamentally Acts were able to maintain a master servant relationship. Thus in the text, the death of Lucy's dogs is symbolically a death of this master-servant relationship enjoyed by Whites in South Africa and now they have become vulnerable like anybody else. Though this situation might seem to have put all races at par it is not the best. South Africa needs a solution to its problems not racial competitions.

On another level, Coetzee uses verbal collage to show complexity and diversity of life experiences. Verbal collage could be equalled to visual artistic collage. It involves cutting and

pasting. The author has 'cut and paste' experiences from all over the world in the text. From what you would call high life to low life. This is how human life is, influenced by everything around it.

In the text there are names of famous people such as Descartes, a famous philosopher who tried to formulate a method of understanding human knowledge by the use of science and mathematics, Joseph a famous Jews figure who saved his community from hunger, Byron and Wordsworth, two Romantic period poets who idealized the beauty of life in their writings, Cicero a famous Roman writer and orator, Van Gogh, a realist painter who tried to capture the human essence and emotions among other individuals in the text. All these personalities provoke different experiences ranging from philosophy, literature, poetry, painting and politics just to give a few examples; all these figures are a reflection of how human beings have created discourses to advance ways and methods of understanding our lives, which seems to be complicated by so many experiences around us. Trachtenberg said:

Seen mimetically such verbal collage "imitates" the rhythms and discontinuities of the experimental world. Seen none mimetically, verbal collage offers a means to accomplish aesthetic objectives by routes other than the extension of theme, the patterning of symbol, and the fulfilment of plot. (Trachtenberg 1985: 144).

Hence by using verbal collage the text achieves its duo purpose: one, the text is able to reflect on the reality South Africa live in and how various experiences and people from all over the world influence and enrich one another and two, literary aesthetics is achieved by creating various verbal patterns in a text which provokes different experiences in the mind. In this way the beauty and the ugliness of life is 'pasted' in our mind. As seen from the above

explanations, through symbolism *Disgrace* (1999) has become a venue in which post apartheid politics in South Africa are played.

### 3.2 Allusions of Blame, Justification and Reconciliation.

Allusion has been defined as a passing reference to a person, place or event beyond the obvious subject matter of a literary work. In addition, it is a reference within a text to another text. Allusion would involve adaptation and assimilation of unacknowledged brief quotation from other works. For allusion to be realized it requires critic or reader competence and ready access to certain facts and common places; when we lack such access, the allusion misfires and it is reduced to materials for expository comment (Nash: 1985).

In *Disgrace* (1999), allusion has been used for various reasons, for example, during the process of Professor Lurie trial by a university committee of enquiry, he considers himself as a scapegoat. This is an allusion from the bible. It is a Jewish tradition whereby, when the Jews realised that they had sinned against God, they selected a goat, which they symbolically 'gave' all their sins. The goat was then driven away in the desert carrying with it all the people's sins leaving them clean. That is what Professor Lurie considers himself; he is being sacrificed to carry away some wrongs committed by other people. This is very unfair to him for he only needs to pay for his own mistakes. The only way to accept this rather unfair trial is to compare him to this 'scapegoat'. The allusion also serves to critique South Africa justice systems, which seem to overshadow the freedom of an individual. What the author seems to point out is the fact that individual in South Africa are made to suffer for the mistakes they have not committed and the only way to overcome this is each individual should be made to 'pay' for his or her own mistakes.

The novel points at the risk involved in blanket condemnations of individuals. Without ascertaining really what atrocities individuals committed during apartheid, punishing them would be an exercise in futility. This illustration stresses on theme of true reconciliation. Also, it warns against unfair trials influenced by social pressures. One is supposed to pay for his or her mistakes.

The text also seems to echo some complains members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa rose during their inquiry. When the president of South Africa started issuing amnesty to apartheid perpetrators, the members of the Commission were against indiscriminate amnesty that the government extended to the people accused of committing atrocities during apartheid without them apologising to the actual people they had offended. The members requested parliament to give an allowance so that individuals who had been wronged could still lodge complains against their victimisers for, individuals should take responsibilities over their own mistakes.

Another allusion comes from the bible. Professor Lurie goes to Melanie's father and asks for forgiveness for having used her sexually without her consent. As an act of true reconciliation, Professor Lurie is invited for a meal: 'come anyway. Break bread with us' (*Disgrace*, 167). Breaking bread is essentially a Mediterranean tradition, which is mostly embraced by the Jewish community where they share a piece of bread to show their togetherness as one people. In Christian traditions it is a symbol of equality and communion. To South Africans this is an allusion of a perfect reconciliation.

When Professor Lurie comes for supper, he carries with him a bottle of wine as an offering 'I brought an offering' (*Disgrace*, 168). He says this to Melanie's father. Offerings of gifts are anthropologically found in all social transactions. In this context we could associate Professor Lurie 'offerings' with the Jewish traditions of offering material wealth to God as a sign of saying, 'we are sorry that we have sinned against you'. Professor Lurie is saying the same to Melanie's father and he is asking for forgiveness. This is an allusion of reconciliation in post apartheid South Africa. The sharing of bread and wine should be viewed in this text as one that is aimed at showing the direction all South Africans should take. They should be involved in genuine reconciliation and in this time not for any political reason but because it is good for them all.

Towards the end of the text professor Lurie meets his former wife Rosalind who tells him that his personality has degenerated so much and that there is no one who is willing to associate with him even, 'people who aren't good enough to tie Professor Lurie's shoelaces make jokes about him' (*Disgrace*, 189). This is an allusion from the bible in the New Testament about a comment John the Baptist makes about the glamorousness of Jesus Christ who was to come after him. Christ is too holy and too important to be compared to any mortal human being. Professor Lurie's racial and academic status puts him in such an enviable position but due to disgrace he undergoes after having carnal knowledge of his student, this position no longer exists. He is now an object of ridicule. Thus the above allusion refers to disgrace those members of the Apartheid government found themselves post-Apartheid South Africa.

The text also describes the last moment of a dying dog. Professor Lurie sympathise with it for nobody seems to care; he gives this dog all the sympathy he can. He is even reluctant to let it be killed by Bev when its time comes but finally gives it up. This experience is captured in the following lines as the narrator describes the last moment Professor Lurie shares with this dog: 'Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery...yes I gave him up' (*Disgrace*, 219). This symbolically becomes the lamb for peace offering. By sympathising with the dog, vicariously, he empathises with the non-Whites who are not loved in his society.

Lucy urges his father to make peace, to become a good person, even if bad things have happened to them (*Disgrace*, 216). Professor Lurie uses words such as 'Dark times,' to refer to the chaotic moments in South Africa. 'Bad things' are allusions of criminal activities that take place after Apartheid policies are abolished. They are also allusions of a chaotic post-Apartheid South Africa.

Other allusions include one of the romantic poets such as Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Byron who is an English poet who lived between 1788 and 1824. Byron succeeded in creating a character called Byronic Hero- a solitary figure who is misunderstood by his fellow human being. This is professor Lurie's a metaphor of post apartheid South Africa. Wordsworth is a romantic poet from England who believed in the power and validity of human emotions in understanding reality. The poem *prelude* tells about the poet's life experiences and how his had shaped it past experience –it aims at questioning all South Africans of what lesson whether they have learned from their past. By invoking Wordsworth

the text invokes romanticism believes such as the supremacy of each individual and experience in shaping ones life. This calls for individuals to ask the question whether their country policies allows for these fundamental experience for its citizens.

### **3.3 Irony of expectation**

Irony has been defined by Peek (1983) as double significance, which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of views. Professor Lurie's life is full of irony. As a lecturer, he has become a victim of changes that are taking place in the country and more so in his faculty. He is forced to teach a unit that he is not trained in. He does not believe in what he teaches nor does he make any effort to rectify or necessitate dialogue on contentious issues such as the source of language, a question raised in Communication 101.

During lessons, Professor Lurie does not make any effort to make his students active in class; for him everything becomes a motion, which he has to undergo, and also a moment to fulfil an obligation to the state and parents of his students. In this kind of relationship, there is no education; hence there is no learning of new knowledge. The biggest risk in is, in South Africa a whole generation of young people is being messed up by inappropriate education. This calls for the reformulation of the education policies in South Africa to fit the needs of its people. At the moment is a need to cater for racial harmony, poverty, discrimination and reconciliation among other major problems.

The committee of enquiry on Professor Lurie's conduct turns into a university public relations tool. Instead of looking for motives that prompted the parasitic relationship between

Professor Lurie and his student Melanie, they demand that he offers an apology not to victim or the university, but to the public which all along has not been part of this saga. Professor Lurie is dismissed. This is condemnation before one is proven guilty and hence an irony of justice denied to most people in South Africa.

Lucy cannot report Pollux to police even when she recognises him as one of those men who raped her. She knows very well that Police cannot do anything having been part of the oppressive apartheid government and are now victims of changes. The second reason is that she does not want to report Pollux to police for she knows that once he is arrested there would be unnecessary long trials that will cost her valuable time and also humiliate her. For Professor Lurie, in South Africa as the rest of the world Courts of law are no longer interested in their prime duty of giving a fair ground for justice to be achieved but they have been reduced to venues of rhetoric, who argues his or her case better becomes the winner. In other level, courts of justice have been reduced to political tool that will always be leaning on the government in power side in delivering their verdicts.

In Lucy's farm, and Bev's clinic, Professor Lurie starts playing a supportive role. His education does not matter anymore. He has to take instructions even from Lucy's 'former' Shamba boy, Petrus. This is an irony of a master becoming a servant and a servant becoming a master. This is a clear indication of ironies of life. Professor Lurie's final humiliation comes when he takes over the tasks of burying the dogs that Bev kills. It is a job he was never expected to do. It seems Professor Lurie's life has been reduced to the lowest level. His voice and actions become a reaction to what is happening around him. He loses his individuality;

things now happen to him, he does not cause them to happen. This summarises his ultimate fall. This ironic twist signifies the changing of fortunes for all those who were the beneficiaries of the apartheid policies in the post apartheid government.

When Professor Lurie and his daughter Lucy are attacked, Lucy is reluctant to report the incident to the police. Her father reports it. It is not because he expects any action from the police, but because he wants the Insurance Company to compensate him for the stolen car. The irony is that although Professor Lurie reports the case to police, due to prevailing political environment, police cannot prosecute criminals. Thus in South Africa police power and authority seems to have been reduced by political changes. So unless some restructuring are done within their departments, South Africa police would continue to 'rubberstamp' incidences of losses so that their various insurance companies would pay people and not play their prime role of maintain law and order.

In another instance when the suspected rapists cum thieves are arrested, they are hastily released on bail even before Professor Lurie and Lucy were called to identify them in a parade. Thus, we are made to question even the initial motives of their arrest. The police force seems to be just carrying on their duties with no intentions of maintaining law and order. They are also cautious of provoking the wrath of Non-white South Africans whom they have victimised for a very long time. Later, when Professor Lurie visits his house in Cape and finds it vandalised, he does not even think of reporting the crime to police. He does not expect any help from them. Thus, it is very ironic that the institution that is expected to protect the people seems to have been affected by the wave of change in South Africa. Who would the citizens

of South Africa turn to for protection and justice, if the police seem to be incapacitated by these changes? This remains a rhetorical question.

Professor Lurie is involved in so many sexual relationships. He enjoys Sex with Soraya, then with Melanie Isaacs and Bev Shaw. We are also told that Professor Lurie has been soliciting sexual favors from brothels and had sex with a subordinate staff member in his department. Symbolically, for Professor Lurie sex has become 'opium' he uses in order to escape from the daily realities of a changing South Africa. Changes in South Africa were aimed at bringing equality among all people; ironically these political changes have left so many people vulnerable to the same harsh realities of the past. Hence while superficially some changes have occurred most things are essentially the way they were during apartheid era. The only verifiable change is that of politicians.

Professor Lurie is a father figure to Melanie and Soraya but he is having sexual relationship with them. The irony comes out from our expectation that ordinarily a father is supposed to protect his daughter from any exploitation. However in this context, it is the father who is exploiting his daughter. Symbolically, this is an irony of a government that turns against its own people. During apartheid in South Africa, the White government had divided its own people into three distinct groups, the Whites, Asians and the Blacks. Whites were given power and authority over other races by Parliamentary acts. This created a great disparity between the Whites and non-Whites in social, political and economic organization of all races in that country. The effects of this division are still felt today as the country tries to

readjust itself. Hence this irony serves as a condemnation of all those social organizations that aims at reducing the nature of an individual.

### **3.4 Paradox of Changing Fortunes**

Paradox has been defined by Edgar (1998) as an apparently absurd or contradictory conclusion that follows from one or more compelling statements or premises. A paradox would be used in literary work to show the absurdity of life and its complexity. Paradox aims at counteracting the mentality that life is simple as a matter of cause and effect or action reaction-mentality.

In *Disgrace* (1999), the paradoxical nature of South Africa political changes are illustrated through the text characters. The abolition of Apartheid was essentially aimed at bringing all the races at par. The changes were also aimed at giving individuals dignity they deserve as members of the human race. More so, abolition of Apartheid was a counter action to a structure that had created divisions among South Africans. What comes out of constitutional changes essentially is not different from the former situation, for example, though the blacks in South Africa are now part of the government; their lives have essentially remained the same. It seems that most of those who are benefiting from the changes are only the one in government or close to it.

In terms of racial relationships the tension between races in South Africa is still high a fact illustrated in the text by the relationship between whites and non white characters. The redistribution of South Africa wealth is also taking place slower than expected and this seem

to provoke unwarranted actions such as the one carried out by Petrus in order to obtain Lucy's farm. The Whites still processes or influences most of those structures and systems that produces wealth in this country. Thus we can conclude that in South Africa the changes that have occurred have essentially made things remain the same or even worse.

Other episodes of a paradox of changes that remain the same in South Africa could be illustrated by the following episodes in the text. In Bev's Clinic animals are brought supposedly to get a second opportunity in life, but in this clinic, most of them find the poisonous needle that ends their life. This might represent the paradoxes of life in South Africa, things might not be what they seem to be, apartheid policies might have been abolished and an all inclusive government formed, but essentially nothing has changed only now non Whites are suffering under the government they have elected.

It is paradoxical that the personality of Professor Lurie seems to sink lower in every action or reaction that he involves himself in, but it is after suffering the final humiliation of being stripped of all the dignity of his education by playing a supportive role to the uneducated people like Bev and Petrus he starts regaining his humanity. The experiences make him reflect on what it means to live in South Africa. Using professor Lurie's words, having sexual relationship with Bev at her clinic makes him realize how far he has fallen from the state of grace where he had young and beautiful girls to relate with, to a situation where he has to be contended with the old and unattractive women like Bev Shaw. All these experiences serve to remind us that all our experiences no matter how ugly they are, should be

moments of rediscovering ourselves and this is what apartheid is supposed to be to all South Africans; a moment to learn from past mistakes.

### 3.5 Conclusion

With these ironic twists, symbols, irony, allusions and paradoxes, the text succeeds in bringing out the dilemma, which post-Apartheid South Africa finds itself. On one side political changes have occurred. This means that fortunes for some communities changed for the better. However, for others it means readjusting themselves to the minor role they have been relegated into by these changes. The changes do not necessarily mean that positive things have happened; they are just political changes, which might not have trickled down to other social structures in South Africa. What Coetzee implies is, South Africa need to restructure its social and economic structures and systems for the positive political advances made so far to be beneficial to all.

Thus *Disgrace* (1999) becomes an allegory of the present South Africa, which finds itself dangerously, entwined with its immediate past. Professor Lurie's life experiences during this post apartheid era become a 'cross road,' where the dramatic conflict between apartheid and post apartheid era plays itself.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine the social, political and economic situation in post-Apartheid South Africa. It aimed at exploring structures and systems that are inhibiting all South Africans to reap maximum benefits from the abolition of Apartheid policies. In order to achieve the above goals, the study examined different structures and systems in post-Apartheid South Africa where powers, authority and dominion are still entrenched. The study also examined South Africans' expectations and what hinders them from achieving these expectations as they were stipulated in 1993 all-inclusive constitution. The study also examined J.M. Coetzee's perception of post-Apartheid realities in South Africa.

The study is divided into four main chapters. Chapter one laid foundation to this study. The background of the study explored the literary environment in which the text in question is written. South African writers seem to be divided on the question of the relationship between literary texts and the prevailing social, political and economic realities. While Gordimer saw it as a direct political tool that work hand in hand with other political tools such as political journals and social groupings, Coetzee, Nkosi and Ndebele see them as aesthetic tools whose power to comment on unfolding realities lies in their texts creative language or symbolic value.

The objectives of the study aimed at examining, thematic and stylistic concerns of Coetzee's important political novel, *Disgrace* (1999) with the aim of synthesizing the two in

order to come up with Coetzee's vision on post-Apartheid South Africa. The end of the study proves the two hypotheses. To begin with the study has established that the text's thematic concerns and features of styles aims at communicating Coetzee's perceptions about post apartheid South Africa. As a White living in South Africa he has been denied moral authority to comment on wrongs perpetuated by the Whites, so he has to come up with a way, which would allow him to condemn these wrongs in an authoritative manner. Thus he approaches South Africa's problems from humanistic and linguistic perspectives.

It is clear that in *Disgrace* (1999), Coetzee is not only writing as a White who feels threatened by the post apartheid political changes, but also as a humanist who values the dignity of every individual regardless of his or her shortcoming in social expectations. What comes out of the study is Coetzee's recognition and respect of individual freedom. Through his two major White characters who are the 'victims' of new political government, Lucy and Lurie, Coetzee is quite clear that justice belongs to everybody regardless of any social labelling. One is human and you need your own dignity too.

Professor Lurie comes out as the antihero of the text. He is a character who is surrounded by misfortunes. He is divorced, inefficient in his work, exploits the vulnerable like Melanie and Soraya, but at the end of the day we sympathize with him due to wrongs done to him (denied a fair trial, attacked by criminals and falling from a university Professor to a dog undertaker).

Through first person narration and the present tense in which the text is written, we come to empathize with Professor Lurie; he keeps on reminding us that he is aware that his life is degenerating to nothingness. He also reminds us through quick insights of his mind that he is very aware that what he does is quite wrong and what is done to him is quite unfair and some time inhuman.

Section two of chapter one offers us background information on the history of Apartheid in South Africa with snap shots of important historical happening that is shaping the post-Apartheid South Africa. What comes out is the fact that the 'carnivorous' relationship between Whites and non-white South Africans has a long history. In post-Apartheid South Africa, things are not quite different; some problems such as exploitation xenophobic attitudes and religious rigidity of apartheid are not yet over. It seems reverse Apartheid threatens to cause full-blown chaos once again.

Chapter two exposes the drama that is taking place in South Africa. The subtitle "On Reciprocal Justice and the Death of humanity" explores the way White characters are pushed from the nerve of a three rapists through Pollux seem to justify their crimes as vengeance against Whites for the many years of servitude and exploitation. This is a symptom of an emerging bigger problem of nihilistic mentality among South Africans. Nihilism does not consider it evil to do wrong. The author seems to point out that a genuine dialogue is required for the present South Africa to progress. The disgrace that professor Lurie undergoes is symbolic of the disgrace that awaits all those who have participated in exploiting South Africans socially, politically and economically. Another finding is that the social political and

economic structures in South Africa have not changed so much from the way they were during apartheid eras, only for those who are in positions of power. Essentially what has changed is the 'colour' and 'faces' of the people holding political power, the economy is still dominated by Whites and thus for the common people, life is as difficult as it was before.

Women have not been spared in the politics of power struggle; they have become 'double' victims. Male dominance through various structures and institutions such as the state, medicine, media, and economy has been used to exploit them sexually and also politically. Women have been reduced to instruments through which political scores are being settled in South Africa. What comes out at the end is the fact that lives of White women is almost at equal risk of that of Non –White women's in South Africa due to patriarchy.

In the section "Reciprocal Justice", the text seems to expose the emotions that threaten any fair trials in post-Apartheid South Africa. The committee of inquiry seems not to have a desire to administer justice; the Media and the public in passing out their judgment easily influence them. We could conclude that a South Africa judicial system is still highly influenced by popular opinions than tangible evidences against atrocities individuals committed against each other. It is also quite clear that the police seem incapacitated by post apartheid crimes.

The subtitle "A society in nervous conditions" evaluates the risk South Africans will find themselves in, if they do not deal with Apartheid and post apartheid crimes; time alone is not going to solve these problems, actions have to be undertaken. The desire to live

harmoniously between whites and non-whites is there, but emotions and suspicions are still high among them. This is due to many years of exploitation. Unless these issues are thoroughly dealt with, passage of time alone won't solve them but complicate them further.

“Reconciliation and New Beginning” shows the efforts made by Whites and non-Whites characters to reconciliation. White characters have realized that things have changed and they no longer possess the same kind of influences as before, this comes out through the relationship between Lurie and Petrus. The subtitle has also pointed the direction South Africans need to take in order to nurture a new beginning. The cycle of wrong counter wrong where individuals want to revenge for wrongs done to them has to be stopped. Also Coetzee seems to say that forgiveness has to take center stage for nobody will ever undo the evils committed previously. This is not to an act of asking people to forget the evils of apartheid, but to caution them against dwelling so much on the past and forgetting that the present is here and need to be dealt with too. The subtitle also makes it clear that forgiveness might be accompanied by punishment for true reconciliation to take place. For example, even though Melanie's family forgives professor Lurie, he has to pay for his own wrongs. Isaac's family can't mediate for Professor Lurie to be reinstated by the university. They only set him free as a human being by forgiving him.

Chapter three starts by pointing out the importance of studying in detail the language of any literary text. The introduction makes it clear that language is part of the story and not just an instrument through which the story is told. The chapter also examined the way the story is presented in the text. Through this, we realise that, *Disgrace* (1999) uses the third

person intrusive narrator who comments on the events and characters in the story. The intrusive narrator has a neutral tone; the narrator makes us to see all aspects of each situation by giving us insights to Professor Lurie's thoughts. Other characters are viewed through Professor Lurie's perspective. The narrator points out what Professor Lurie does and what happens to him. By doing this, the narrator provides us with a moral interpretation of actions in the texts and characters. The present tense shapes the structure and the form of the text *Disgrace* (1999).

The chapter explores the following stylistic devices: symbolism, irony, allusion and paradox. It is through ironic twists that the study questions the highly contested mentality held by most people that post-Apartheid South Africa has changed for the better. The unfairness of the University committee of inquiry, Lucy's rape, vandalism of professor Lurie's house are some happenings in the text that point out that things are essentially not different from the way they were before. The irony in the text becomes the opportunity in which the text and the critic interact.

Symbolism in the text is also very important. The actions of the characters in *Disgrace* (1999) become relevant only when we compare them to real actions that take place in South Africa. Hence, symbolism serves the duo purpose of integrating history and story in this text. The irony in the text has helped to present the ambiguity and complexity of life in South Africa. From the ironies evaluated, we conclude that life in South Africa is not has not changed for the better as expected by most people. It is also quit evident that political changes in South Africa have not brought positive changes as expected.

The paradoxes in the text serve as the occasion to show the complexity and absurdity of social, political and economic interactions in South Africa. Paradoxical nature of happenings in the text seem to negate rationalism that life in South Africa could not be reduced to a one dimension mentality, that the problem in South Africa is only an issue of racial misunderstanding. It Show us that still there are other dimensions such as women being exploited, criminal activities taking place, greed or epistemological and existential problems.

The allusions in the story have served to dismiss any rationalization of evils and wrongs by pointing to the complexity of any literary text, which borrows from its reality. Allusion also serves as a 'creator' of verbal collage, which is a reality in post modernist texts. That the knowledge is being redefined, that South Africa's post-Apartheid problems could only be solved if it is seen within the wider problem of racial relationship, gender relationship, state verses the individual relationship.

The relevance of Coetzee's writings in South Africa has been established. Coetzee's point of view on South African literature offers an alternative perspective from which to view the unfolding drama in post apartheid South Africa. The text calls for the recognition of evils committed during apartheid and discourages any vengeance. Instead, it calls for a new beginning for all South Africans. Coetzee says something about the moral choices made by most South Africans; he condemns those choices made for selfish gains and cautions against being moralistic about what people do not like for Individual moral health depends on ones ability to recognize and acknowledge the selfhood of the other person. According to the analysis of the text, apartheid was only abolished politically, but still there are many un-

abolished, structures and attitudes amongst communities in post apartheid South Africa that need to be changed or altered for them to live harmoniously.

#### 4.5 Recommendations

Coetzee is credited with having written more than eight novels. Below are some concerns, which constitute recommendations for more and diverse studies on Coetzee and his texts.

- (i) It has been claimed that Coetzee writes not from an African tradition but from western traditions. Thus for research, one may need to analyse how this fact affect his texts.
- (ii) It would be interesting to ascertain whether Coetzee perception of violence in South Africa has changed with a change in political policies in South Africa in 1994. This could be done through a comparative study of the literary works he wrote before 1994 and after 1994 which include *Waiting for the Barbarian* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K*, (1983) and *Disgrace* (1999)
- (iii) Another probable interesting area to explore in Coetzee's novels would be; his treatment of male-female relationships.

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