

Deconstruction in j.m. coetzee's disgrace

Philosophy



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Being a post-colonial text, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a multi-layered narrative of deconstruction- from the language, the characters and their values, the setting and the context. Deconstruction is a strategy employed by J. M. Coetzee to present and critique the effects of colonialism within the South African post-apartheid context. After the removal of the apartheid system that has hounded South Africa for the longest time, one would expect a complete turnabout in values, beliefs and practice amongst the people and the community-both rural and urban.

Coetzee subverts this expectation by depicting a post-apartheid life and existence that is still, in the metaphorical sense, imprisoned and clinging to the misery and antiquity of the colonial past. David Lurie, the lead character and the narrator in the literary text is a man who has drunk and gobbled many of life's bitter disappointments- from his unfulfilled teaching days in a university turned technical college to his demotion as a caretaker of terminally ill animals in his daughter's farm.

Coetzee deconstructs David's character by portraying him as a man still shackled from his own vices and values as well as from the old world that boxed and created him instead of a free, happy man in a post-apartheid environ(ment). On another level, David's character undergoes deconstruction by being depicted as a Caucasian South African male in a time and place (post-apartheid) where the whites do hold as much power as they once used to. In terms of language, Coetzee's prose is anti-realist. Truth and meaning in his narrative are not laid bare explicitly; it is covered and laced with undertones, symbols and irony.

The novel also deconstructs “ the romantic pastoral prototype of the farm novel tradition through its portrayal of a lonely and desolate farm, and through the narrator Magda, a lonely spinster suffocated by an environment of intellectual and spiritual drought” (Subverting the pastoral: the transcendence of space and place in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* 2006). Coetzee transforms the farm which often conjures up an image of one that is idyllic and laidback into a setting that is marred with unhappiness and disillusionment.