

## Always, Already: Present Tense in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper is an attempt to bring up some typological aspects of the fictional works with the present tense narratives. By focusing on J.M. Coetzee's novel Disgrace (2000), as an example of this type of narrative, Henri Bergson's notion of time (Duration) is assumed as the temporal framework for the novel. Besides, analysing the inadequacy of Henry James' definition of plot in terms of the present tense narratives, a new type of framework referred as "pattern" is introduced and its relation with Bergson's Duration and Kristeva's intertextuality is highlighted. As a finale to this study, the dovetail joining of the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique and the present tense narrative is accented.*

*Keywords: present tense; Bergson's Duration; pattern; intertextuality; stream of consciousness*

### INTRODUCTION

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
(T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*)

In *Wiring Degree Zero*, Barthes thoroughly approves that past tense is the tense of narrative, a claim which according to Harvey possibly follows Jean-Paul Sartre's observation, since the "narratives in the past tense tend to place events in a neat order of a cause and effect, at too great a remove from the chaos of the present moment" (p.74). Narrating the novel in the present tense, however, the third person narrator of Coetzee's *Disgrace* does not contrive to rescue Professor David Lurie, the focalizer of the novel, who is entangled in the chaos of his "present" life. Married twice, divorced twice, Lurie cannot be safe from "the dangerous exposure of the present tense" which Barthes calls "exploded reality" (qtd. in Harvey 2006, p.74-5). Indeed, *Disgrace* is the history of Lurie's "present reality" which tells the reader how he has raped Melanie Isaacs, his young student from Romanticism course, which leads to his resignation from the university and how he is attacked by a gang who partially brutalized him and raped his daughter, Lucy. Furthermore, the present tense narrative of the novel has a major contribution to the assumed themes of the novel including rape, scapegoat, racial segregation, passion, degradation, initiation and makes them ever-present throughout the entire history of man.

The author of *Disgrace* unlike the majority of his contemporary writers who prefer

“live, then tell,” resorts to “living and telling.” Except for a few incidents, rarely are there any signs of retrospection throughout the novel as if the narrator would like to usher the reader to the Lurie’s topsy-turvy world without projecting himself as the treasurer of the stored information. Tellingly, the settings and the scenes of the novel are depicted simultaneously as the focalizer begins his course of action and the narration takes place on the spot. The capability of the present tense as the proper grammatical tense for portraying Professor Lurie’s life is quite obvious even from the very opening sentence of the novel which is a thorough introduction on the protagonist’s gender, age, marital status, as well as his psychic obsession (the characteristics which are generally referred in the present tense even in non-literary context): “For a man his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (Coetzee 2000, p.1).

The socio-political reason why Coetzee prefers to render his post-apartheid narrative in the present tense may be justified by referring to Fredrick Jameson’s view, though his Marxist intention can be nullified. Jameson believes that our contemporary social system has begun not only to lose its capacity to retain its own past but also to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another striven to preserve (1992 p.179). Distilling his view from the Marxist context, we can conclude that since the history of colonization and apartheid are not those traditions that a person with the South African scheme of thought can be proud of, Coetzee, as one of the mouthpieces of this particular generation, prefers to tell his story in the present. In other words, the perpetual present as the veritable history of the nation becomes the focal point in his scheme of thought.

## TWO PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESENT TENSE

The argument on various aspects of simultaneous narration of the protagonist’s course of action in the present-tense-narrative of *Disgrace* can be channelled to the application of some pragmatic functions of the present tense designated by Rauh (1983). Comparing the grammatical tenses in English and German, she assumes nine functions for the present tense in English: timeless, unrestrictive, instantaneous, iterative (habitual), present perfect, future, historical, directive (stage directions) and sequencing (summaries) which are more than earlier linguists Kruisinga, Jespersen, Zandvoort who had distinguished up to six functions. The significance of Rauh’s pragmatic approach (instead of semantic one) is that it is not limited to the analysis of grammatical tenses to their temporal functions but it is the context which is interpreted (Rauh 1983, p. 274).

The ‘timelessness’ is one of the significant functions of the present tense and this explains why factual statements, customs and habitual activities are generally articulated by the simple tense in English. However, the contribution of this function to *Disgrace* is more thematic than stylistic. Tellingly, Coetzee’s preference of the present tense narration in *Disgrace* is in accord with dire circumstance in South Africa: the apartheid system is not just over. South Africa is in a transition period in which it is difficult to both break free from the past and, at the same time, find a sense of continuity. If the link with the past is broken, a chaotic condition perhaps would prevail there, since there is no stabilized frame to lead the nation and mould the consciousness of the transiting generation. Therefore, a perpetual present matrix with its timelessness criteria can remove the history of racial segregation from the past and simultaneously pave the way for future. This matrix can be the condition which Lurie’s daughter, Lucy, lives and farms, among various communities of native Africans in the country near Grahamstown, where she does not agree to leave for living with her Dutch mother in Holland or her father in Cape Town even after being raped and robbed.

The ‘instantaneous’ function of the present tense in *Disgrace* enormously contributes to the element of suspense. In fact, owing to the ‘presentness’ of the narrative, the element of suspense devolves into the smaller building blocks of the narrative, at the level of the verb(s) of each sentence. Following the syntagmatic axis, the present-tense verbs of *Disgrace* permeate a kind of unpredictability at the semantic level of the sentences. As a result, the word chains of every sentence culminated in the present tense verb slide to the next sentence for a postponing of this suspension and uncertainty. Consequently the narrative is interwoven with a kind structural suspension. For instance, uncertainty and anxiety about the outcome of actions in the scene where the gang of three native Africans invades his daughter’s residence in the country, loot her house, kill her dogs and rape her, (because of the simultaneous narration of the events accompanied with instantaneous of the present tense) imposes that much immediate suspension on every word that the reader can perceive it as a dramatic work.

Moreover, the instantaneous function of the present tense substantially eradicates the major temporal lapse between the reader and the narrative. In other words, the ‘presentness’ of *Disgrace* obviously influences on converting a passive reader to an active one through the process of constructing ‘story’. Moreover, this function of the present tense increases the cinematographic dimension of the text. For example, in the scene of Lurie’s encounter with his student-cum-mistress Melanie Isaacs, the description of Melanie’s posture and gesture as well as her custom is so instantaneous that a reader thinks that his/her eyes are substituted for the narrator’s:

She smiles back, bobbing her head, her smile sly rather than shy. She is small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese, cheek bones, large, dark eyes. Her outfits are always striking. Today she wears a maroon mini skirt with a mustard-coloured sweater and black tights; the gold baubles on her belt match the gold balls of her earrings. (Coetzee 2000, p.1)

## TWO MAJOR PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF TIME

Apart from the applicability of Rauh’s designation of the functions of the present tense to *Disgrace*, the major issue which deserves attention is that what notion of time supports the fiction whose narrative is projected through present tense. Roughly speaking, there are at least two major but opposite viewpoints on the notion of time. Following Plato’s and later Newton’s view on the notion of time, the first definition normally referred to as “Substantialism with Respect to Time<sup>1</sup>” indicates that “time is like an empty container into which things and events may be placed; but it is a container that exists independently of what (if anything) is placed in it”(Markosian 2002). As Newton in his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* elaborates, “time as something absolute, which would flow consistent without any relation to anykind of external subject” (Theis 2009, p.110).

Considered as a part of the fundamental structure of the universe, a dimension in which events occur in sequence, time with its linear configuration, which is the result of considering a series of homogenous moments, enables the narrator to present the events consequentially. The very image of a “container” for this notion of time associates with the flux of the events which move through it. Indeed, the possibility of time shifts in a narrated story, analepsistically or prolepsistically, is one of the advantages of this notion of time. By “analepsis,” according to Rimmon-Kenan, it means “a narration of a story-event at a point in the text after later events have been told,” and prolepsis is “a narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned” (48). Moreover, the illustration of this conventional definition of time on an axis is possible: a time axis from past towards present

in the direction of eternal future. In sum, the temporal aspects of those literary narratives which are narrated in the past tense are compatible more or less with this time-as-container definition of time.

The second perspective on the notion of time belongs to Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant and their followers who believe that time has nothing to do with any kind of actually existing dimension. Opposing the idea of time-as-container, they refute the theory that events and objects can move through the ‘tube’ of time. Offering a dense argument on the nature of the time in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant concludes that time is “presupposed in all human experience” and it is in some way “inherent in the nature of the universe apart from consciousness”. For Kant, “time is an ‘a priori’ form of inner sense which structures and makes possible the cognition of objects qua appearances”(Hsieh 2004, p.1). In sum, Kant grant time both ‘empirical identity’ (it necessarily accompanies our experience) and ‘transcendental ideality’ (it is nothing in itself, but is only a condition of our experience) (Protevi 2005, p.579).

### BERGSONIAN DURATION AS THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION OF *DISGRACE*

Nevertheless, it is the Bergsonian notion of time which provides a proper scope for employing the present tense in narrative fiction. Henri Bergson believes that time is neither a real homogeneous medium nor a mental construct (Kantian inner sense). According to his *Matter and Memory*, time possesses what he called “Duration”. To illustrate his notion of time, Duration, which is a cluster of heterogenous moments, Bergson in his *Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, presents three images in which the first one is two spools, one unrolling to represent the continuous flow of ageing as one feels oneself moving toward the end of one’s life-span, the other rolling up to represent the continuous growth of memory which, for Bergson, equals consciousness. For Bergson, in this image no two successive moments are identical, for the one will always contain the memory left by the other. According to him, only a person with no memory might experience two identical moments but, Bergson says, that person’s consciousness would thus be in a constant state of death and rebirth, which he identifies with unconsciousness (1946, p.164-65).

Obsessing with the concept of time, Bergson categorizes it into two fundamentally different kinds: he believes that for science, time is essentially particulate. It consists of an infinite and dense set of instants, and science uses the calculus to study the world as it is at these instants. Change is nothing over and above the world’s being in different states at different instants, and the transition from one state to another is something science can take no account of except by using the calculus in this way. For experience, however, this transition is the very essence of time which he calls Duration. Bergson postulates that we do not live from moment to moment in a linear scientific time, but in a continuous stream of experience (like what in narrative technique is referred as stream of consciousness).

To elaborate the inner experience of ‘real time’ or Duration, Bergson writes *Time and Free Will* to demarcate the significant characteristics of the psychological Duration which are qualitative, heterogeneous and dynamic with no hint of predictability or linear determinism:

even the simplest psychic elements possess a personality and a life of their own, however superficial they may be; they are in a constant state of becoming, and the same feeling, by the mere fact of being repeated, is a new feeling (Bergson 200).

The heterogeneous moments which constitute Bergson’s definition of time signify perpetual presentness of the moments without any trace of past or future. This distinctive

characteristic of Bergson's notion of Duration contributes substantially to the fiction with the present tense narrative and makes the simultaneous narration of event at the moment of occurrence possible. The recontextualization of a present tense narrative fiction like *Disgrace* in the Bergsonian frame of the ever present Duration problematizes the conventional definition of plot (such as Henry James's definition of plot which deals with a chain events causally integrated) which necessitates "pastness" to express the cause/effect chain of actions. Consequently, the question which arises is that how the narrative of *Disgrace* is revealed and accordingly proceeds to its conclusion: the answer is "pattern."

#### "PATTERN" AS THE FRAME OF THE PRESENT TENSE NARRATIVE OF *DISGRACE*

"Pattern" conceptualizes a matrix with various unites which consist of a span of time which seizes occurring of a fictional event and narrating of that event simultaneously. "Fictional event" in this definition exclusively indicates a process in which the state of affair changes or transforms from one to another. Following the heterogeneous moments of time in Bergsonian Duration, these unites are not homogenous and they stand by themselves within that given "pattern." As a result, narrative in this sense is not a "flow" in which events can move through since the narration of every event in a given moment is unique, independent and particular. What the reader feels as a sequential chain of events is in fact the association of those units with the assumed "pattern". The retrospection of the characters in these types of the pattern-based narratives is rare. Indeed, the presentness of those units does not allow too much dynamic either through interior monologue or even flashback.

The limitation of the retrospection in simultaneous simple-present-tense narrative affects the application of flashbacks in this kind of fiction. Flashback is originally innovated to interpolate narratives or scenes and to justify or naturalize a memory, a reverie, or a confession by one of the characters. They have represented events that happened before the time at which the work opened. Nevertheless, the ever-present "pattern" of *Disgrace* made of individual heterogeneous moments connotes that there is no bridge in the passage of time for the narrator to get back to the past and enlighten the reader through the flashbacks. Where the past is present, this is only 'flash' and no more 'back'. When 'here' and 'now' matter, there is no need for flashback. Consequently, the references get frozen and become meaningful and plausible within a live current of the events. Getting back from her daughter's farm after that horrific incident of raping and robbery, in chapter nineteen, Lurie drives to Melanie Isaacs's father house in a city called George to show his sincere repentance to Melanie's family. In this scene, shackled in the present tense "pattern", the narrator does not strive to enlighten the reader about Lurie's decision (there is no excuse or justification for Lurie's action), for instance, by referring to the foreshadowing incidents of the initial chapters (e.g. Lurie's agony or sorrowfulness after forcefully making love with his young student). In fact Lurie is there since he has to be in the particular present moment without further explanation.

What can be called as the side effect of the assuming Duration-oriented "pattern" for the present-tense narrative fiction is a certain kind of historylessness. As far as *Disgrace* is concerned, obliterating trace of the past or retrospection, the third-person narrator of *Disgrace* reveals, through focalizing technique, only a piece of trivial information about David's marital life in the opening paragraph of the novel, a short paragraph about his acquaintance with Soraya (the sex worker whom Lurie meets every Thursday in Green Point) and a glimpse of David's bygone childhood and life:

He himself has no son. His childhood was spent in a family of women. As mother, aunts, sisters fell away, they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, a daughter. The

company of women made of him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer. 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 was how he lived; or years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life. (p.7)

As a matter of fact, the “ever present discourse” which emerges from the units of a “pattern” framing a present tense narrative plays the role of cause-and-effect chain in retrospective narratives with past-tense narration. As the causative factor orders and organizes the events in a narrative fiction to achieve a particular effect, “ever present discourse” of those units, in the lack of temporal chronological order, does not let all the incidents and meanings within a narrative are co-presented in a kind of chaotic circumstance. Indeed, the synthesized “ever present discourse” of the units in *Disgrace* prevents the sequential order and the linear admission of meanings from being lost. For instance, in opening chapter of *Disgrace*, firstly Lurie should lose his touch with Soraya and she has to disappear, then Lurie’s passion should become unruly and finally in the second chapter of the novel Melanie Isaacs (Lurie’s young student) coincidentally cuts his way and the later incidents take place. Following the trace of events in these two initial chapters, it can be inferred that the casual relationship is not that much functional and the development of the story is depend on the ever-present coincidental elements.

The area of meaning and the application of the term “pattern” are different not only from James’s definition of plot, but also from Rimmon-Kenan’s implication of “story.” Adapting Genette’s terminology for her argument in her *Narrative fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, Rimmon-Kenan remarks that “‘story’ designates the narrated events, abstracted from their deposition in the text and reconstructed in chronological order, together with the participants in these events,” and “‘text’ is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling”(2002, p.3). Put more simply, according to her observation, in “text”, the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order while the chain of events in “story” has to be chronologically in order.

Tellingly, there is an unavoidable chronological disorder in narrating of events between “plot” and “story” in James’s definition of the element of fiction as well as in Rimmon-Kenan’s consideration of “story and “text” since the temporal dimension of their speculations follows the Platonic (Newtonic) definition of time. Indeed, the temporal aspects of past-tense (retrospective) narratives can be adapted to scientific notion of the time which is a linear perception: past, present and future. Whereas, “pattern” is compatible with Bergsonian real time or Duration in which time is not a linear phenomenon but a co-existence of heterogeneous moments.

The essential to Bergsonian heterogeneous moments is that Duration detaches events from the whole, “which at every moment puts on a new form and which communicates to them something of its novelty” (Bergson 1911, p.361). According to his *Creative Evolution* every moment brings with it something ‘radically new’ which is opposed to the scientific definition of time which is simply a re-arrangement of the pre-existing. For Bergson time must be creative, “if it isn’t inventive, it isn’t time at all”. In sum, in Bergson’s “real time” each new moment is qualitatively different from the last and possesses: “an effective action and a reality of its own” (qtd. in Mullarkey 1999, p.21). In respect to narrative fiction, the novelty and the creativity embedded in every moment of those heterogeneous moments of Duration, which is the temporal dimension of the said units of the “pattern,” contribute substantially to the element of suspense. In other words, the moments which are the vehicles of those unites in a “pattern” are not

different for the sake of differences, but they increase the unpredictability of the next state of affair.

In the consideration of the concept of time as Bergson's Duration, the traditional time notion is discarded and the classification of grammatical tenses of English language faces challenges. In fact, the matrix created out of Bergson's notion of time will be everlasting present of quite individual designated moments. There is no standpoint on which the past and future can be defined. As a result, all the English tenses are reduced to present tense which indicates a perpetual and continuous course of action. In this regard, Bergson is one of those philosophers of time who are called 'detensers' by virtue of the fact that they deny the processual tenses of pastness, presentness and futurity. McTaggart names them "B-theorists" who reduce the temporality of change to the timeless relations between events of anteriority, posteriority, or simultaneity. In fact, they take an objective view of time as a set of relations based on some supposedly non-temporal physical phenomenon such as the geometry of space, increasing entropy, or causality (Mullarkey 1999, p.24-25).

At the thematic level, if the Bergsonian notion of time as the temporal dimension of *Disgrace* is "detense," Lurie's tingling of desire is "detense" too. There is no change, initiation or recognition in Lurie's moral code of conduct throughout the novel, as if his unquenchable desire stands out of time scope. To show this static aspect of Lurie's personality, Coetzee makes use of the word "leap" in two climatic scenes. The first one is in the chapter three, when Melanie is sobbing miserably in Lurie's arm (after rushing to Lurie's apartment in the previous night and sleeps in his daughter's bed), Lurie, who is lost in his sexual ecstasy, ponders on the rejuvenating effect of his affair with Melanie: "at the moment of expiry that light leaps up one last time like a candle-flame, giving us a glimpse of the invisible"(Coetzee 2000, p.22). The second instance is in chapter nineteen where Lurie meets attends Melanie's family and falls prostrate before Melanie's mother and younger sister Desiree to show his remorse about the past events: "He meets the mother's eyes, then the daughter's, and again the current leaps, the current of desire"(p.173). All the moments of Lurie's life are capable of giving him a "leap" of desire.

### INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE PRESENT TENSE NARRATIVE

Intertextuality which exclusively concerns with the relation between one literary text and other texts, according to Abram's, is used to

signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and allusions, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are "always already" in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born. (1999 p.317)

Popularizing the term intertextuality, Julia Kristeva believes that texts function along two axes: the horizontal axis determines the relationship between the reader and the text whilst the vertical axis contains the complex set of relations of the text to other texts. What coheres these axes is the framework of pre-existing codes that governs and shapes every text and every reading act (Childs & Fowler 2006, p.121). In other words, in Kristeva's formulation, accordingly, any text is in fact an "intertext"—the site of an intersection of numberless other texts, and existing only through its relations to other texts.

Though the “instantaneous “ function of the present tense elaborated at length earlier signifies the contribution of the present tense native to the horizontal axis of Kristeva’s definition of intertextuality (which demonstrates text/reader entanglement), the present tense share more with vertical axis (which exclusively deals with the relation between one text with other texts). Indeed, the present tense narrative presented in the “pattern” within the Bergsonian Duration adds a dimension to the interconnection between two literary texts which the past tense narrative is not that much capable.

In fact, recontextualization of other literary characters (overtly or covertly) in a present tense narrative such as *Disgrace* ushers the narrative toward the personification of that literary character. For instance, Coetzee draws an analogy between the story of humiliation and “fall” of Lurie and the fallen angel Lucifer. The presence of Lucifer is not allusive and Lurie talks about him as well as comments on his psyche while he teaches Romantic poetry:

The angel [Lucifer] hurled out of heaven. Of how angels live we know little, but we can assume they do not require oxygen. At home Lucifer, the dark angel, does not need to breathe. All of a sudden he finds himself cast out into this strange ‘breathing world’ of ours. ‘Erring’: a being who chooses his own path, who lives dangerously, even creating danger for himself.(p.32)

Nevertheless, when he is forced to resign from his professorship due to disclosure of his illicit relationship with Melanie, except for himself, all those who knew him consider him as a fallen angel.

As another example, the vertical axis of intertextuality points to another literary character: Lord Byron’s Don Juan. Indeed, Coetzee through his present tense narrative of *Disgrace* depict Lurie an avatar of Lord Byron because of numerous love affairs, and self-imposed exile. Interestingly, David is teaching Romantic Period Poetry and composing a book on Lord Byron. Moreover, making love with Melanie Isaacs on his daughter’s bed could be symbolically an incestuous affair which Lord Byron himself was once charged of due to his affair with half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

#### DISGRACE AS A STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS FICTION

Another interesting issue in employing the present-tense “pattern” in *Disgrace* is the representation of consciousness. Stylistically, *Disgrace* is matchless and unique among Coetzee’s novels because even though it is written by a third person narrator, David Lurie is the focalizer of the novel: his consciousness is the centre of the attention. Considering Brian McHale’s six categories of representation of a character’s consciousness consisting of summery, indirect content paraphrases, indirect discourse, semi-mimetic indirect discourse, free indirect discourse, direct discourse and free direct discourse, we may describe *Disgrace* as in the mode of “free indirect discourse”(Herman 2005, p. 92-4). Coetzee’s decision to use this technique gives his audience access not only to Lurie’s spoken words but also to his unspoken thoughts. So the reader becomes intimately familiar with Lurie’s desires, passions, and discourse.

The free indirect discourse as a technique of thought representation consists of two rather indistinctive voices which simultaneously are heard by the reader. The first one is the voice of the narrator which is the dominant voice and the second one is the voice of the non-verbal thought of the focalizer. The accession to the original thought process of Lurie and his inner life is possibly only through the narrator, except those



direct quotation which Lurie's himself articulates.

By dovetailing Bergson's notion of time into its present tense 'pattern' of the third person omniscient narration in *Disgrace*, Coetzee makes the best use of the narrative technique of stream of consciousness. As Humphrey puts it, there are four categories of stream-of-consciousness narrative technique in fiction: direct interior monologue, indirect interior monologue, omniscient description and soliloquy (1954, p.23). As a result, the conventional omniscient narration is also a kind of stream-of-consciousness narration and its only difference from the other kinds is its content. The scope of consciousness depicted through those four categories is just from above the level of oblivion to the thoroughly conscious level: from the pre-speech level to the speech level though the very name of stream-of-consciousness narrative brings into our mind exclusively pre-speech level what Joyce attains in *Ulysses* through direct and indirect interior monologue.

To include *Disgrace* as a stream-of-consciousness fiction, the adumbration of consciousness is necessary. One of the salient features of consciousness is that it is never static, but in a state of motion. According to Humphrey, the flow of consciousness is found on levels nearing the state of unconsciousness; however, at the pre-speech levels, near the surface, most of the stream of consciousness fiction is subject to check and interference in the flow from the outer world (p.42). In this light, *Disgrace* can be assorted within the stream-of-consciousness category though it is far from Joyce's pre-speech-level technique. In fact, the narrator of *Disgrace* does not let the outer world which interferes with the focalizer's consciousness go under the logical and grammatical control.

Another important characteristic of the movement of consciousness is its ability to move freely in time—its tendency to find its own time sense. The premise is that before psychic processes are rationally controlled for purposes of communication, consciousness does not follow a calendric continuity. Everything that enters consciousness is there at the "present moment." Furthermore, the event of this "moment" no matter how much clock time it occupies, maybe infinitely extended by being broken up into its parts, or may be highly compressed into a flash of recognition. In the case of *Disgrace*, this free flow of consciousness in time is revealed through the dominant present tense: The only tense that makes it possible for the narrator to express what comes into the mind of characters. However, as the narrative is intended to be the stream of consciousness of David Lurie, the narrator just sticks to the moment-to-moment exposure of his consciousness.

Residing more in abstract concepts than concrete experience, Lurie is a perpetually thinking character with linguistic obsession. Throughout the novel, David pays lots of attention to the words and structures which he himself or other characters use even in their daily conversations. David lingers over connotation, etymology, or context and meticulously scrutinizes them. As a result, we may conclude that *Disgrace*'s narrative style grows out of Lurie's studies in literature and language. It is his linguistic perception that leaks into the third-person narration. And it affirms Humphrey's consideration of this sort of narration as a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique.

One of the socio-cultural phenomena in the modern period which led to the dominance of stream-of-consciousness as the most acceptable narrative technique among the great Modernist novelists was the absolute devastation of external relationship and the collapse of pre-modern system of values due to the First World War. Accordingly, to prevent the reader from misunderstanding, the novelists such as Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner preferred the internal relationship and communication to the external one. Considering the atmosphere where Lurie lives, it is quite similar to the solitude and alienation of the modern man who prefers internal communication.

In the narrative of *Disgrace*, David Lurie is portrayed as being in multiple self-exile and suffering alienation. Lurie's language is just one symptom of his detachment from the

South African society. In the country where the majority of the people speak Xhosa, Lurie's opera and philosophy does not matter. Yet his displacement began even before his exile in Salem, when Lurie, whose academic speciality is Romantic poetry, is reduced to a Communications professor who is allowed one elective course per semester on literature. Moreover, with two divorces behind him, he is undoubtedly emotionally alienated; at the age of fifty-two, he has not been able to sustain an intimate relationship. The relationships in the novel display his failure to attain intimacy: Soraya is a prostitute, Bev Shaw (who runs a pet clinic resides near Lurie's daughter's farm) is a one-night stand, and Melanie is simply an average student with whom he does not even share the same passion for art and literature. Lurie's relationship with his daughter is his last chance to end his loneliness and exile. Yet as violence enters their world, Coetzee leaves us to question whether even this relationship could be salvageable.

## CONCLUSION

The simultaneity between the occurrence of fictional events and their narration in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, which is grammatically narrated in the present tense, introduces some noteworthy aspects to this type of narrating in general. Instead of the Platonic or Kantian definitions of time, Bergsonian notion of time called "Duration" sounds more appropriate for the temporal dimension of the "pattern" which is assumed as the frame of the present-tense fictional narrative. The heterogeneous moments (which are constituted Duration) are innovative and play a major role in the units constructed the "pattern" of the narrative. Moreover, perceiving the distinctive aspect of the intertextual elements in the matrix of the present tense narrative, the reader can discern the applicability stream-of-consciousness narrative technique for portraying the inner world of David Lurie in *Disgrace*.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This notion of time is also known as "Platonism with Respect to Time" or "Absolutism with Respect to Time."

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