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Homi K. Bhabha's Concept of Ambivalence in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present article is to explore Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, one of Coetzee's most popular works. The main concern of the article is to demonstrate how colonial authority is evidenced in Coetzee's *Disgrace*. After giving a general summary of Bhabha's postcolonial ideas and a brief synopsis of *Disgrace*, the researchers analyse the main character's conduct and relationships with other characters in terms of Bhabha's concept of ambivalence. The article shows that ambivalence destabilises the discourse of colonial authority and discloses the uncertainties and anxieties within colonial powers. It reveals that not only does Coetzee show traces of the coloniser's authority and white supremacy through David's demeanour and his relationship with non-white people, he also emphasises David's anxiety and uncertainty.

Keywords: Discourse of colonial authority, conduct, relationships, white supremacy, ambivalence, anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Homi Bhabha, one of the leading voices in postcolonial studies, focusses mainly on the culture emerging from interaction between the coloniser and the colonised. According to Hernandez (2010), the term ambivalence "underpins Bhabha's critique of colonial discourse" (p. 39). The key concept discussed in the present paper is ambivalence. The paper provides the reader with significant details about ambivalence towards colonial authority and the coloniser's identity crisis. The present research aimed to do a postcolonial reading of J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* using Bhabha's most significant ideas on postcolonialism, including ambivalence. The central questions, therefore, were: Is Bhabha's

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concept of ambivalence traceable in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*? Can the manifestation of colonial authority be evidenced in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*? The researchers did an observation and interpretation of Coetzee's *Disgrace* with regard to Bhabha's perception of ambivalence. This method was chosen as it regards the text as the subject matter of the discussion. This research is the first to focus on Bhabha's notion of ambivalence in Coetzee's *Disgrace*. The paper starts with a review of Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and a summary of *Disgrace* and then examines the major character's conduct, relationships and interaction with others in terms of Bhabha's notion of ambivalence.

The Discussion section contains two main sections. The first section probes the main character's conduct and relationships with other characters in the novel in order to discover elements of colonial power. David's relationship with women and his treatment of dark-skinned people are explored in terms of the concept of white supremacy. The second section attempts to indicate ambivalence towards colonial authority in the novel. David's encounter with the colonised and with country life and his relationship with his daughter, Lucy, are explained with reference to the notion of the unhomely.

DISCUSSION

In this section, first the sense of superiority and white supremacy are examined in David's relationships with non-white people. Then, David's identity crisis and his interaction with other characters are investigated in terms of the notion of ambivalence. Before moving on to the analysis, the researchers review Bhabha's ideas and present a summary of *Disgrace*.

Bhabha's works draw attention to issues of culture and identity. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) wrote about the ambivalent nature of colonial discourse. According to Bhabha (1994), "The objective of 'colonial discourse' is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (p. 70). However, he considers ambivalence as a positive trope for expressing the "necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (p. 112). In this regard, Hernandez (2010) asserted that for Bhabha, colonial discourse is characterised by an inherent contradiction, an ambivalence that occurs in the process of constructing authority through the representation of colonised subjects (p. 43). To shed light on this point, Huddart (2006) wrote that for Bhabha,

> the colonizer rules the colonized due to innate superiority. However . . . there is a simultaneous anxiety built into the operations of colonial knowledge . . . authority recognizes its basis in stereotypes, producing prejudiced and discriminatory structures of governance that work on the basis of forms of stereotyping knowledge . . . but at the same time that anxiety troubles the source of colonial authority. (p. 37)

By stereotype, Bhabha meant that colonial discourse presumes that the culture and identity of both the coloniser and the colonised are always and already fixed as unchangeable. However, Bhabha believed that the encounter between the coloniser and the colonised depicts a hybrid space which "is itself the productive and aesthetic space of a new cultural formation and consists of all the doubts, split selves, and ambivalences that constitute the colonial encounter itself" (Krishna, 2009, p. 95). Bhabha (1994) stated that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (p. 107). Two aspects are exposed in relation to Bhabha's notion of ambivalence: the uncanny and the unhomely. For Bhabha, the unhomely is used interchangeably with the uncanny. In Bhabha's view, "all the hesitations, uncertainties, and ambivalences with which colonial authority and its figures are imbued are characterized in terms of the uncanny" (Huddart, 2006, p. 54). Generally speaking, the authority of colonial discourse is undermined by the menace of ambivalence.

Set in post-apartheid South Africa, *Disgrace* narrates the story of David Lurie, a white, 52-year-old professor teaching Romantic Poetry at a technical university in Cape Town. He is twice-divorced and has a daughter named Lucy, who prefers to live in the country as a farmer. His position at the university is reduced to a communications professor. David visits a prostitute named Soraya once a week, but their relationship ends when David spots her with her children. He does not feel passion for anything in his life until he notices Melanie Isaacs, a student in his Romantic Poetry course. David sees Melanie in the university campus and invites her over to his house for dinner. He begins an affair with Melanie. Their affair is revealed to the university, when Melanie and his father file a complaint against David with the university. An academic committee is assembled to pass judgement on his actions. Deprived of all benefits, he goes to the country to live with his daughter, Lucy, on her farm in the Eastern Cape.

In the Eastern Cape, Lucy turns to rural life. David begins a new life there, assisting Lucy at the market. Then one day, everything changes. David and Lucy are attacked by three black strangers. The men take Lucy into the house and lock the door behind them. The men gang-rape and impregnate Lucy. When David comes to, he finds himself locked in the lavatory and wonders what has happened to Lucy. During the assault, Petrus (Lucy's assistant) is nowhere to be found. David believes Petrus deliberately left the house unprotected so that it could be robbed. When Petrus invites Lucy and David to his party to celebrate his transfer of land, Lucy encounters one of her attackers, named Pollux. Pollux is Petrus' brother-in-law. Lucy becomes depressed after the attack. David is enraged since the rapists are not arrested and Lucy dreads that they may return. He offers to send her to Holland, where her mother lives. But Lucy is determined to stay in Salem. David returns

to Cape Town. Returning home to his house in Cape Town, he finds it destroyed. Then, he goes back to the Eastern Cape.

This section is concerned with the issue of authority. In order to elucidate further the implications of David's conduct, first a few points about the term 'white supremacy' are presented. Then, David's sexual relationships with non-white women (Soraya and Melanie) are evaluated respectively in terms of the notions of the coloniser's sense of superiority and white supremacy. Finally, David's treatment of black people is examined in terms of the concepts of the stereotype and white supremacy.

Disgrace takes place in modern South Africa, just five years after the end of apartheid. It seems that apartheid still has an important impact on the lives and experiences of South African people. Apartheid was established in 1948, and with it, blacks lost all rights and freedom in the country. According to Mallaby (1992), "the majority of whites . . . know blacks as servants or office colleagues, but rarely as friends" (p. 72). Needless to say, South Africa is a multicultural society. The construct of race is founded on the notion that white people are superior and coloured people, especially black people, are inferior. Such 'inferior' groups are menaced and governed by the superior ones. This construction of white people as superior over coloured people is known as 'white supremacy'. In the words of Fredrickson (1981), "white supremacy refers to the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations" (p. xi). It makes sense, then, that David's demeanour and his sense of superiority are rooted in apartheid beliefs, particularly white supremacy.

David's sense of superiority over others can be seen in his relationship with women. At the outset of the novel, the narrator tells us that David thinks he "solved the problem of sex rather well" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 1) by meeting a black Muslim prostitute named Soraya for 90 minutes a week. During their meetings he speaks to Soraya with "a certain freedom" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 3). As Marais (2006) has noted, David "reduces women to the status of objects with which to gratify his desires . . . he conceives of himself as an individual who is free to realize his every desire even if this means violating the rights of other individuals" (p. 76). Considering Soraya's life outside of Windsor Mansion, David becomes aware that Soraya has left the agency. However, instead of closing the chapter, David pays a detective agency to track her down outside their arranged sexual contract. This may be due to his innate sense of superiority rather than due to love: "In the field of sex his temperament, though intense, has never been passionate" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 2). In this respect, Cooper (2005) claimed that Soraya "ceases to be an essence of feminine desirability, the almost-anonymous guarantor of Lurie's poised, protected world" (p. 24). In his article, Herron (2005) has related David's acts to the animal kingdom. Herron writes: "David is in fact rather fond of describing himself and, more pointedly, his relationships with women, in

terms drawn from the animal kingdom" (p. 476). For instance, from the standpoint of David, his affair with Soraya resembles "the copulation of snakes" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 2).

Evidence of sexual harassment and David's sense of domination over non-whites can also be depicted in his relationship with Melanie. It seems that for David having an affair with the colonised women can be seen as a sign of superiority and an assertion of power. David, connecting the idea of superiority with sexuality, shows his patriarchal views over the subaltern. Therefore, it is not astonishing that when he ends his relationship with Soraya, he goes a step further and has another sexual relationship with his student, Melanie Isaacs: "His sentiments are, he is aware, complacent" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 2). There is no clear indication about Melanie's ethnicity. But Melanie seems to be colored since David defines Melanie's name as "the dark one" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 18), adding a stereotype to his relationship with her. According to Poyner (2009), "this renaming, though unspoken, establishes a historical loop whereby the past is brought to bear on the present by alluding to the obsessive categorisation of race under apartheid" (p. 149). Similarly, Graham (2003) argued that the setting of the private injustice towards Melanie signals injustice done on a larger scale. The unjust treatment of Melanie by David is a reflection of power in relation to sex, but also within the white establishment during the apartheid period. Coetzee demonstrates very obviously that during the disciplinary hearing Farodia Rassol (a member of the university committee) comments on David's refusal to acknowledge the long history of exploitation of which [his treatment of Melanie] is a part. Rassooll's comments seem to point to the sexual abuse of black women throughout history (pp. 437–438).

While inviting Melanie to his house for supper and attempting to persuade her to spend the night with him, David asserts, with a sense of power that "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 16). By this way of thinking, he claims his supremacy over black people, especially black women. However, David nonchalantly attributes his actions to an uncontrollable sexual impulse, which he claims belies mere explanation. The unaccountable rationale for his conduct seems to contain a concerted effort to deny any wrongdoing. Seemingly, the source of his impulse may be his sense of domination. In Cooper's view (2005), David's relationship with Melanie is an attempt to retrieve sexual privilege and to stress the patriarchal procedure of the European culture in which sexual privilege, like David himself seeks and exercises, is embedded (p. 25). Likewise, Tark (2009) claimed that David's "position on the objectified status of women is a direct result of his misogynist and racist South African education, conditioning him to dehumanize women of color into objects of sexual desire and punishment" (p. 206).

Another aspect of David's sense of superiority can be found in his treatment of

dark-skinned people and his attitude toward them. It seems that David compares the racial superiority of whites in South Africa with the treatment of dogs on Lucy's farm. This is depicted in the conversation Lucy has with David about animals when David says that

> as for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from animals. Not higher necessarily, just different. So if we are going to be kind, let it be out of simple generosity, not because we feel guilty or fear retribution. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 74)

Apparently, David here is speaking about white people and their perspective towards black people. To put it in another way, whites treat blacks "like things" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 78). Here, black and coloured people are viewed through the lens of a stereotype. Herron (2005) asserted that, "Animals may mean nothing, may be nothing in the larger world of the novel" (p. 472). When David comes to stay with his daughter after his disgrace, she senses that he wishes she were learning Russian or painting, leading a higher life. Against this she argues that there is no higher life: "this is the only life we have. Which we share with animals" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 74). David agrees that this is the only life there is, but he cannot accept the proposition that humans and animals [blacks] are the same or in any way equal.

David's assertion of white supremacy can also be seen in the stereotypes that come to mind in the midst of the horror of the attack on the farm. Locked in the lavatory, unable to save his daughter, he thinks:

> He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa. He is helpless, an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 95)

As is obvious, David makes reference to African savagery. In the words of Coleman (2009), this image of "darkest Africa signal the limitations-the racialism-of Lurie's outlook" (p. 598). In contrast, Stratton (2002) pointed out that "Coetzee thought that in contemporary culture the figure of the African cannibal would, regardless of the context of its occurrence, be instantly recognized, and hence immediately dismissed, as a racist stereotype, long since outmoded" (p. 93). It seems that here the creation of 'darkest Africa' and 'savages' is suggestive of an attempt on David's part to reassert his superiority over others. One last reference to David's sense of superiority occurs in the final pages of the novel when Petrus intends to take Lucy as a third wife for her protection. Regarding South Africans like Petrus as the other, David

identifies himself with the culture of the Western world by asserting that, "This is not something I want to hear. This is not how we do things. We: he is on the point of saying, We Westerners" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 202). Clarkson's remarks are illuminating in this regard. Clarkson (2014) has argued that 'we' in contemporary South African literature such as Coetzee's *Disgrace* "has the effect of drawing attention to the tenuousness of presumed cultural limits. The use of the first-person plural may register acts of violence perpetrated against those excluded from the 'we'" (p. 166). The suggestion that Petrus will take Lucy as a third wife seems acceptable to Petrus, but it is unreasonable to David since he emphasises the difference between the two cultures.

In the previous pages, several examples of David's sense of superiority were put forward. The main concern of this section is to expose the ambivalence of colonial power in Disgrace. First, David's sense of unhomeliness and his encounter with the colonised and with country life are explained in terms of the notion of disorientation. Then, David's identity crisis and his communication and relationship with Lucy are challenged and scrutinised in terms of the notions of the uncanny, anxiety and uncertainty.

David's cultural identity crisis can be traced in his encounter with the colonised and the country life. As mentioned earlier, David loses his job due to his scandalous sexual relations with one of his students, Melanie. Feeling unhomed, he prefers to live with his daughter in the rural landscape in the Eastern Cape. David enters the in-between moment and takes us to the brink of a new space. Attridge (2000) has said that "the mood begins to shift and deepen when David reaches the Eastern Cape, as both he and the reader begin to understand the scale of his gesture of opposition" (p. 103). For instance, the moment he arrives at Lucy's farm in Salem, he does not recognise Lucy; Lucy is barefoot in a flowered dress. He cannot help showing his dislike of country life: "Poor land, poor soil, he thinks. Exhausted. Good only for goats" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 46). He wonders whether Lucy really intends to spend her life here: "He hopes it is only a phase" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 46). On cold winter mornings, Lucy takes David to the market with her. The market is also a place full of dissatisfaction: "The smell of burning meat . . . people rub their hands, stamp their feet, curse" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 71). In contrast to Cape Town, which in David's view is considered to be "a city prodigal of beauty, of beauties" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 12), the Eastern Cape is surrounded by unattractive people such as Bew and Bill Shaw. Lucy suggests that David should engage in charity work in order to help Bev Shaw in the animal refuge. When he visits Bew's animal refuge, David is repulsed by the smell of animals in their house: "cat urine . . . dog mange . . . birds in cages . . . cats everywhere underfoot" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 73). These scenes reflect that David rejects Lucy's country life. It cannot be denied that in part, this is because of the apartheid regime. Although apartheid has legally ended, its ideologies haunt South

Africa. In his book about J. M. Coetzee, Leusmann (2004) wrote that the culture of country life is "mysterious to him [David], even repulsive-but at the same time it evokes desires and lusts, sometimes also feeling of shame with regard to the destructive powers of his own culture" (p. 61). Attridge (2000) has pointed out that there is little to say that David

> intends his stand as a principled challenge to the entire establishment in the name of desire (the novel opens, after all, with his perfectly calculated sexual regimen), nor that he is consciously and deliberately embarking on a complete reinvention of his way of living. In its emotional resonance it seems more like a matter of pique, irritation, and hurt pride taking him willy-nilly down a road whose destination is obscure. (p. 103)

The above statements indicate that David has simultaneously opposing feelings toward country life. David unconsciously starts to find a new space through his relationship with Lucy. As the plot unfolds, we see that David gradually adjusts himself to country life. Yet, one morning everything changes and David's country life is enclosed by threat. David's sense of unhomeliness and hybrid identity intensifies when arriving back in Cape Town after the assault. After the incident, Lucy's situation is aggravated. The rape leaves her feeling morose and she decides to stay at home. Looking after Lucy's farm, he remembers his position in Cape Town: "He wants to be able to sit at his own desk again, sleep in his own bed. But Cape Town is far away, almost another country" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 141). Having been considered "a country recluse" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 120), he arrives back in Cape Town, to a ransacked house. Surprisingly, he is inclined to dream of his time on Lucy's farm. He romanticises "country life in all its idiot simplicity" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 178). For example, there are things he misses – the duck family, for instance: Mother Duck tacking about on the surface of the dam. In another scene, David sees a child herding a stray cow off the road and he thinks that, "The country is coming to the city" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 175). Poyner (2009) stated that David "wavers between disdain and admiration" (p. 157) for country life. It can be understood that David moves and stands between two worlds; in other words, he does not feel at home in either culture and therefore, he does not feel at home in himself. Kossew (2003) said that *Disgrace* "is a complex exploration of the collision between private and public worlds; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation" (p. 155). As is obvious from Kossew's assertion, David is living in an in-between space and gets stuck in between the two worlds of the public and the private. Barnard's remarks in *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* are illuminating in this regard. Barnard (2007) stated that

> the notion of the country as refugee, is decisively challenged in the course of

> the novel. The crime that takes place on the farm to which David retreats in disgrace only plunges him further into that abject state. But it is not only the binary pair of country and city that is undermined in the novel: all established oppositions and boundaries seem to be under threat of collapse . . . A crisis of definitions, relationships, and responsibilities thus lies at the heart of Disgrace. (p. 35)

For David, the borders between country and city (two different cultures) are undermined; it is no longer possible to view the city as the site of progress and the country as the site of old simplicities. To put it another way, there is a sense of disorientation and cultural confusion in David's cultural identity.

As noted, all the anxieties and uncertainties are characterised in terms of the concepts of the uncanny and ambivalence. Such anxieties and uncertainties can be detected in David's sense of identity after the attack. After David's arrival on Lucy's farm, David and Lucy are beaten by three black men who kill all the dogs, attack David and gang-rape and impregnate Lucy. This causes a sense of despair, uncertainty and anxiety in David. This is what he has to face in the course of the novel. David's sense of uncanniness is illustrated as follows:

> Aimlessly he roams about the garden. A grey mood is settling on him. It is not just that he does not know what to do with himself. The events of yesterday have shocked him to the depths. The trembling, the weakness are only the first and most superficial signs of that shock. He has a sense that, inside him, a vital organ has been bruised, abused - perhaps even his heart. For the first time he has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future . . . he will be like a flycasing in a spiderweb, brittle to the touch, lighter than rice-chaff, ready to float away. (Coetzee, 1999, p. 107)

The above description is similar to Bhabha's understanding of the notion of the uncanny. As Bhabha (1994) has stated, the borders between home and world becomes confused; uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting (p. 9). The foregoing passage indicates that Coetzee attempts to show the ambivalence of the coloniser's authority or to quote Castle (2007), "the unstable nature of identity" (p. 306). The reason lies in the way the rapists behave. To put it simply, the rapists' acts intensify David's feelings of despair, indifference and anxiety. To put it differently, "The blood of life is leaving his body and despair is taking its place, despair that is like a gas, odourless, tasteless, without nourishment" (Coetzee, 1999, pp. 107–108).

David's cultural identity crisis becomes more obvious through his inability to save his daughter. While he is locked in the lavatory, he understands that his daughter is in the hands of strangers. He must do

something to help his daughter, but he is locked in the lavatory. He batters the door, shouting his daughter's name and suddenly the door is opened by one of the strangers. David entreats the black men to take everything that they need and instead leave his daughter alone. However, the men do not care for it and lock him in the lavatory again. All he can do is ask himself, "is it possible that what the house has to offer will be enough for them? Is it possible they will leave Lucy unharmed too?" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 95). However, the worst of crimes is committed. While David is locked in the lavatory, the men rape Lucy. The men also kill Lucy's dogs.

In the course of the novel, we witness David's doubts in being able to save his daughter from being attacked: "If he had had a gun, would he have saved Lucy? He doubts it" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 100). Like Elizabeth in *Elizabeth Costello*, David has a troubled relationship with his child. David's sense of uncertainty may be a result of lack of communication and anxiety inherent in his relationship with his daughter. Marais (2006) claimed that like Curren in *Age of Iron* and Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg*, David must sympathise not only with Lucy, but also with the culprits. According to him, if David is to complete the task of the imagination that Coetzee assigns him in *Disgrace*, "he must do what Dostoevsky tries to do in *The Master of Petersburg*, that is, attain an uncommitted non-position. It follows that he must sympathize not only with Lucy . . . but also with Pollux and his fellow rapists" (p. 82). Thus, David, who aggressively asserts his superiority to the colonised, is now unhomed, helpless and powerless to communicate with Lucy and protect her and himself. In the words of Marais (2006), Coetzee "introduces his protagonist to realms of experience from which he has previously been excluded" (p. 78).

According to Segall (2005), after the rape of Lucy and the attack on himself, symbolic figures emerge in David's dreams, reminding him of the past (p. 42). David meets Lucy's ghost, a "little girl" in a "field of white light," (Coetzee, 1999, p. 103). David "has had a vision: Lucy has spoken to him; her words – 'Come to me, save me!' - still echo in his ears" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 103). For David, the traces of past memories and experiences are present in the mind. There seems to be a feeling of the uncanny that exists within David that confuses borders between the self and the other or the past and the present in his mind. In other words, David lives in an unhomely world.

The crisis of cultural identity can also be observed in Lucy's encounter with country life. Lucy has internalised the cultural values of country life: "The dogs, the gardening, the astrology books, the asexual clothes" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 89). She is, flowered dress, bare feet, living in a house full of the smell of baking, "no longer a child playing at farming but a solid countrywoman, a boervrou" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 60). She makes a living from the kennels, and from selling flowers and garden produce. This shows that the country life leaves Lucy altered in her own unique ways, a modern countrywoman.

In other words, the Eastern Cape, with its rural surroundings and different way of life (her encounter with blacks), plays a pivotal role in shaping Lucy's cultural identity: "She is stubborn, and immersed, too, in the life she has chosen" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 134). David wonders that he and his ex-wife should have produced this young settler. However, the narrator intervenes to comment on David's thought: "perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 61).This history may refer to Achebe's crossroad of culture or mirror Bhabha's notion of hybridity and ambivalence. According to Castle (2007), "Hybridity thus refers to a pluralized identity, open to contingency and change" (p. 313). This in-between moment gives the space for Lucy, as the only white in Salem, to have an ambivalent cultural identity. Lucy's hybrid and ambivalent personality shows that whites can imitate blacks who are considered poor. Lucy's character rejects the assumption that whites are superior to blacks. In Attridge's words (2000), "The distribution of power is no longer underwritten by racial difference, and the result is a new fluidity in human relations, and a sense that the governing terms and conditions can, and must, be written from scratch" (p. 105). Lucy's identity crisis becomes evident when David suggests that Lucy should leave the Eastern Cape and make a new start somewhere else, for instance, Holland. But Lucy insists that she does not want to, in fact cannot live anywhere else: "If that way of life is doomed, what is left for her to love?" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 113). Lucy loves the land and "the old, landliche way of life" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 113). Strictly speaking, she is here because she has adapted to country life.

CONCLUSION

The article has attempted to show that in *Disgrace*, ambivalence disrupts the authority of colonial discourse and discloses the gaps and anxieties that make colonial power vulnerable. The crisis of cultural identity lies at the heart of *Disgrace*. *Disgrace* has been analysed in terms of Bhabha's notion of ambivalence as well as the power relations between the coloniser and the colonised. Coetzee here shows that the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised reproduce as well as transform how they see the world and how they act within it. David attempts to maintain the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser, but simultaneously has an ambivalent potential to alter the very same relationship. The encounter between the coloniser and the colonised creates a space that depicts neither the superiority of the coloniser over the colonised nor the inferiority of the colonised. Although the main character, David, still considers himself to be superior to the colonised, his power and authority have declined in the course of the novel, leaving the white individual in a state of anxiety and uncertainty. Initially, David is in a role of authority, but as the text progresses the ambivalence of his authority becomes obvious. David's relationship with women is founded on colonialism's domination over

others. He tries to show his superiority by putting himself in a situation where he is depicted as the dominant one and black or coloured people as the colonised. Differently put, David tries to prove his superiority by having sexual relationships with non-white women. Though David's conduct seems to be a matter of imposing power on the colonised, *Disgrace* depicts that colonial discourses and authority are "never wholly under the control of the colonizer" (Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 136). The concept of unhomeliness divulge both the processes of change and the feelings of anxiety and despair in David and Lucy's cultural identity. This is similar to Bhabha's understanding of the notion of ambivalence. David feels stuck between the two cultures at times and does not feel at ease on either side. David could be seen as a metaphor for the coloniser's ambivalent sense of authority.

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