A STUDY OF RACIAL AND GENDER CONFLICT IN SELECT TEXTS BY J.M. COETZEE

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled "A Study of Racial and Gender Conflict in Select Texts by J.M. Coetzee" written by Lalsangliani Ralte for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies has been written under my supervision. She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. UGC Regulations 2016 of Mizoram University. The thesis incorporates the student's bona fide research and no part of it has been submitted for award of any degree in this or any other University or Institute of Learning.

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DECLARATION

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I, Lalsangliani Ralte, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

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This thesis studies the representation of racial and gender conflict in the works of John Maxwell Coetzee. Racial and gender studies constitute a huge corpus of studies in postcolonial literature with varying concepts on race and gender having evolved over time. Postcolonial studies identify a lurking negligence of voices and representations from the periphery in the literary canon, stressing on the need for discourses that represent overlooked experiences and perspectives of groups marginalized on the basis of existing concepts on race and gender. This thesis examines the select texts to explore racial and gender conflict and situate them within the context of South African political and literary history. An in-depth analysis is attempted to render a comprehensive understanding of the political and socio-economic impact of colonialism and apartheid as well as the changes wrought by the abolition of apartheid. Through characters from select narratives, a literary interpretation will be made on how members of different sections of the South African community have been affected and how they have responded to the transition and perceived shift in power. The construction of race and the concept of racism will be explored and will focus on the agents through which such practices have been propagated. A theoretical and literary analysis of the texts will also focus on gender conflict to examine how Coetzee has explored tensions between men and women in a hegemonic state where patriarchal norms are deeply embedded.

John Maxwell Coetzee popularly known as J.M. Coetzee occupies a significant place in South African literature, not just because he is arguably the most decorated literary figure from the country but also because of his complex position as a white writer writing against apartheid through the tumultuous era of apartheid. He continued writing through the political crisis of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, a period during which the government was under extreme pressure to reconsider and reformulate its relationship with the black majority. In several of his works, he addresses concerns appertaining to race and gender particularly in societies inflicted with various forms of colonialism. His personal exposure to apartheid provides him with ample material for his fiction where he continuously treads on the socio-political impact of settler colonialism and internal colonialism which was embodied in the form of apartheid in South Africa. In his texts, he dissects power structures that

characterizes life in South Africa and reflects both the luculent and obscure ways in which relationships between different characters are affected and constrained by colonization and apartheid.

This study examines four texts by Coetzee, namely *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Age of Iron* (1990) and *Disgrace* (1999) as works produced during and after apartheid to detect and highlight their depictions of life in politically troubled South Africa. While all four of the select texts have white protagonists, the lives of these characters are extensively interlaced with those of the black characters in the narratives, making provisions for Coetzee to explore the world of both the white settlers and the native black communities. The physical setting of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is not explicitly mentioned in the text, but the other three texts are set in South Africa as is categorically stated within the narratives. Coetzee makes no attempt to disguise the fact that South Africa was his primary subject as he delves into the complexities of life where one group of people professes to be better and superior than the rest.

Born on February 9, 1940 in Cape Town, South Africa to Afrikaner parents of Dutch descent, Coetzee is a novelist, essayist, literary critic and translator. He relocated to Australia in 2002 and became a naturalized Australian citizen in 2006. Though Coetzee customarily prefers to stay away from the spotlight, he has been presented with numerous awards and honorary degrees in recognition of his literary production. The South African government awarded Coetzee the Order of Mapungubwe (gold class) in 2005 for his "exceptional contribution in the field of literature and for putting South Africa on the world stage" as reported by Frank Chikane, Chancellor of National Orders, at the awards ceremony. Becoming the first person to win the Booker Prize twice, he was awarded the prize in 1983 for *The Life & Times of Michael* K and in 1999 for *Disgrace*. In 2003, Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. According to the Swedish Academy, Coetzee is an artist "who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider". He has also won the reputed South African Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award thrice for *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983). In 1985, he was awarded the Prix

Femina Étranger for the French translation of his novel *The Life & Times of Michael K* translated by Sophie Mayoux. He was awarded the Jerusalem Prize in 1987 and remains the only South African writer to have been accorded by the Jerusalem International Book Forum which places emphasis on themes related to human freedom. He won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (1980) and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (1981) for *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Besides these he also won The Sunday Express Book of the Year (1990) for *Age of Iron*, The Irish Times International Fiction Prize (1995) for *The Master of Petersburg* and two Commonwealth Writers' Prizes for the African region *for Master of St Petersburg* in 1995 and for *Disgrace* in 2000. He received the Lannan Literary Award for Fiction in 1998, an award which according to the Lannan Foundation is "dedicated to cultural freedom, diversity and creativity through projects which support exceptional contemporary artists and writers, as well as inspired Native activists in rural indigenous communities".

Coetzee completed BA (Honors) degrees in English and Mathematics from the University of Cape Town (UTC), South Africa in 1961 during which he also attended imaginative writing classes and published poetry in university magazines (Attwell xi). In 1963, he completed a dissertation on English novelist, poet, critic and editor Ford Madox Ford, earning a master's degree from UTC. He joined a Ph.D. program in linguistics and literature at University of Texas in 1965 and worked on computer-aided stylistic analysis of Samuel Beckett's English prose for his doctorate which was awarded to him in 1969. He taught at UTC until his retirement in 2001 and also at several other institutions in the United States as visiting professor during the course of his career. His works of fiction include *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), *Disgrace* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005), *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016) and *The Death of Jesus* (2019). Besides these widely acclaimed novels, he has also written a number of short fictions which include *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *A House in Spain* (2000), *The African Experience* (2002), *Nobel Lecture in Literature* (2003), *As a Woman*

Grows Older (2004), *He and His Man* (2004), *The Old Woman and the Cats* (2013) and *Three Stories* (2014). He also authored a trilogy of fictionalized autobiographies titled *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997), *Youth: Scenes from Provincial Life II* (2002) and *Summertime* (2009) which were subsequently edited into a single volume as *Scenes from Provincial Life* (2011). His non-fiction books include *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (1992), *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996), *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986 – 1999* (2001), *Inner Workings: Literary Essays, 2000–2005* (2007) and *Late Essays: 2006 – 2017* (2017). A collection of correspondence between Coetzee and American novelist Paul Auster titled *Here and Now: Letters 2008–2011* and *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction, and Psychotherapy* co-authored with Arabella Kurtz were also published in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Besides these, he has authored several other essays, critical writings and translated works.

Coetzee's family history is intricately linked to the history of South Africa. His paternal grandparents were born in rural Cape Colony. Though their first language was Afrikaans, they spoke good English. Coetzee's father who was an attorney and his mother who was a school teacher were also bilingual and were fluent in English (Attwell 12). Coetzee grew up during a time in which white Afrikaners were in the process of shaping apartheid, a system which discriminated against non-white citizens of South Africa. When he was eight years old, the National Party (NP) won the general elections in which South Africans of African or Indian origins were restricted from participating as voters. The National Party also known as Nationalist Party was endorsed "primarily by white Afrikaans speakers, descendants of those defeated by the British in the bitter war of 1899–1902, and campaigned on a new concept of 'apartheid' or 'separateness'" (Wilson 106). Apartheid which is the "policy of separating people by race, with regard to where they lived, where they went to school, where they worked, and where they died" (Clark and Worger 3) was implemented by the National Party government and remained in practice until it was abolished in 1994 with the fall of National Party. Based on white supremacy, apartheid systematically discriminated against non-white

South Africans by mandating segregation of public facilities and social events, and by dictating housing and employment opportunities by race.

Though Boer nationalists demanded that Afrikaner children not learn English, Coetzee's parents encouraged him to learn English enabling him to "write his way out of the zero-sum game posited by Afrikaner history and the monolingual nationalism of Afrikaans" (Janes 108). Regarded as one of the "white writers joining in a general protest against apartheid" (Heywood 20), his ideological opposition of apartheid has been reflected in multiple works of his and is "embedded in multiple imperial/colonial relationships" as an Afrikaner who opposes apartheid thereby opposing "his fellow Afrikaners' victimization of Africans" (Janes 107). But as an Afrikaner, he is also aware that Afrikaner history is "constructed out of victimization by the English and fears of future victimization" according to Regina Janes who writes:

> To the brisk and tidy English invader, Africans and Afrikaners equally modelled dirty idleness, and Afrikaans, as much as Dyirbal or Hottentot, is a threatened minority language. As an Afrikaner, Coetzee was born into a history of the colony in which Africans and Afrikaners asserted equal claims to territory and neither assumed the superior, self-critical, international position of English. (108)

South African literature reflects the complex and divisive political and social history of the country. It may be said to include all the literature written in its eleven national languages namely Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, Tswana, Venda, SiSwati, Tsonga and Ndebele by writers living within and beyond the borders of South Africa. English, however, is the lingua franca and is used across the country as the language of business, politics and the media. Amidst the cultural and linguistic pluralism that existed in the country, indigenous languages were ignored by the education system during the apartheid regime and despite policy reviews on languages, they continued to be excluded from mainstream education. The neglect and subordination of indigenous languages in formal education had a striking effect on South African literature as literature in native languages were crippled to a huge

degree. The role of education in reinforcing power structures is highlighted by Foucault who writes:

> Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. All systems of education are a political way of maintaining or modifying the adequacy of the speeches, with the knowledge and the powers they imply. (373)

The education system has within its reach the authority to subordinate the domain of speech, knowledge and power to the systems in control. Its role, according to Foucault, is, in one way or another, to "domesticate" the individual so that it serves that system. The neglect of indigenous languages in formal education can, in the long run, result in the loss of indigenous knowledge systems and linguistic productivity which promotes the interests of colonial oppressors.

> According to the 2013 Conference on 'Multilingual Education in Africa':
>
> The key challenge is that the inherited formal education systems have remained culturally and linguistically alien to the majority of the populations in Africa; many Africans are not convinced about the usefulness of education, which was designed to satisfy colonial, missionary and postcolonial purposes. The Youth Forum of the 2012 ADEA Triennial consultation process demands 'that African culture, history and languages be placed at the heart of the development of education and training . . . so that skills are acquired in connection with our specific heritage'. Where formal school education targets one language, it is usually the official or international language. People are thus trained for a limited linguistic and sociocultural space, and other relevant linguistic and socio-cultural spaces are neglected. (Qtd in Ramoupi 55)

Beside the implications of colonialism and apartheid on literature in indigenous languages, the political scenario in South Africa affected all writers by means of a censorship system which had the authority to ban works of literature as

deemed necessary. Writers were forced to write under such restraint. South African writers like Ezekiel Mphahlele, Richard Rive, Alex La Guma, Bloke Modisane, Peter Abrahams, Alfred Hutchinson, C.J. Driver, David Lytton and Nadine Gordimer found some of their works failing the scrutiny test and were banned (Atwell 57). It is vital to examine the works of J.M. Coetzee in the light of the existing conditions that confined writers to better understand his position as a white writer writing against apartheid.

South Africa, home to eleven national languages as mentioned earlier has literature produced in myriad languages. In his text *A History of South African Literature: Afrikaans Literature* (2004), Christopher Heywood writes that each of South Africa's four interwoven communities – Khoisan, Nguni–Sotho, Anglo-Afrikaner, and Indian – has "an oral and literary tradition of its own, and each tradition is a strand in a web of literary forms around the world" (vii). Owing to the confusion, violence and conflict in South African national history, South African literature has emerged out of a prolonged tradition of protest and resistance. As a result of the integration of the four interwoven communities, there is a creolized society and an abundance of oral and written literatures with distinctive literary movements around the community divisions (Heywood 1). Heywood surmises that:

> The past three-and-a-half centuries have been a series of rites of passage, marked by violence in each phase, from armed dominance by whites to the achievement of equal esteem and voting power for all South Africans. A prodigious literature reflects that process. Its outlines, and the peculiarities of its texts, have been obscured in the past by segregation into English, Afrikaans, Coloured, and Black. (vii)

Peter Horn in his text titled *At the Margin of One/Many Languages: Essays on South African Literature* (1990) emphasizes:

> Any attempt to say that a South African tradition in literature already exists, be it in the canon of Afrikaans literature, in the English colonial literature, in the printed books in African languages or in the *imbongi* of indigenous orality, overlook that the current state of our literature still mirrors our

> apartheid, our being separated by languages and cultural traditions, reinforced by those laws which inhibited any exchange of ideas across these boundaries. (19)

Putting aside the ideological aspects, South African literature may be said to have emerged in two main phases:

> (a) a white dominance before 1960, accompanied by emerging black self-discovery and literary achievement. The literary movement culminated in the publication of the magazine *Drum* as a vehicle for literary writing (1951-8).
>
> (b) The period after 1960 saw the emergence of blacks as literary leaders after the later 1950s, with white writers joining in a general protest against apartheid. (Heywood 20)

Coetzee calls South African literature a "literature in bondage" as they reveal "feelings of homelessness and yearnings for a nameless liberation" (*Doubling the Point* 98). According to him, South African literature is the kind of literature one would expect to be written from "a prison" as it is

> less than fully human literature, unnaturally preoccupied with power and the tortions of power, unable to move from elementary relations of contestation, dominations, and subjugation to the vast and complex human world that lies beyond them. (*DTP* 98)

On account of the long history of colonization and apartheid in South Africa, South African literature is subject to intense scrutiny. In recent years, there have been debates about the position of South African literature by white writers and their significance in postcolonial studies. The resistance of white governance or white supremacy by white writers is considered irrelevant by some scholars and questions have been raised as to whether white South African writers who gained fame through their writings against apartheid should be categorized under 'settler literatures', and whether such a division between 'white' and 'black' writing in South Africa would facilitate a retrospective form of apartheid within critical practice (Kossew 18). However, critics like Sue Kossew recognizes the necessity for inclusivity to move

beyond the fixed binaries that are characteristic of colonialism and apartheid. In her essay titled “Resistance, Complicity and Post-Colonial Politics”, she posits that employing the “‘either/or’ of the ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary, which simultaneously participates in the ‘inside versus outside’ binary . . . seems to be participating in the very exclusionary practices which the post-colonial seeks to dismantle” (22). Coetzee’s works, in the light of such arguments, may be deemed relevant and canonical in South African literature as his novels:

> address themes and issues pertinent to the (post)colonial and apartheid situations: colonial discourse, the other, racial segregation, censorship, banning and exile, police brutality and torture, South African liberalism and revolutionary activism, the place of women, the relationship of South Africa’s peoples to the land and, not least, the ethico-politics of writing all figure prominently in the oeuvre. (Poyner 1)

Easily one of the most prominent writers from South Africa, Coetzee’s texts are widely read and have been the subject of scrutiny by scholars around the world. Stephen Watson argues that Coetzee’s novels, in spite of their “striking difference”, deal with issues that are prominent in writings from South Africa as they concentrate on the “ambiguities and cruelties, that combination of sadism and masachism that the master-slave relationship invariably entails” (371). In doing so, his narratives have much in common with other novels in South African literature. Tony Morphet, after several years of studying Coetzee’s texts asserts their significance in South African literature and claims that they are "challenging, strange and difficult" and have a "unique mix of lucidity and elusiveness that has been so engaging and frustrating from the beginning" (1). Morphet also contends that:

> The paradox of Coetzee's reputation has confounded readers everywhere, but it has implicated South African readers in particular ways. Few question the judgment that Coetzee is the finest writer of his generation - of many generations. But he is also the writer whose work utters many of the most dubious, if not downright insupporatable "positions" on the way social life in South Africa is, and ought to be, lived. (15)

Coetzee has also been charged of “political quiescence, of producing novels that neither sufficiently address nor affirm the contiguities between the literary domain and historical-economic-political realities” (Macaskill and Colleran 432). In an analysis of Coetzee's novels, Michael Vaughan concludes that the texts do not establish a "real connection with forms of class struggle" and do not provide "basis for a concern with objective social conflicts within industrial society" (136) as the texts privilege "the predicament of a liberal petty bourgeois intelligentsia" (137).

Coetzee himself understands the predicament of being a white male author whose writings reflect the historical and political situations of South Africa. As somebody who rejects hierarchies that place white males in positions of authority, he finds himself “writing without authority” (*DTP* 392). The crisis of his authorial position is mirrored in the voices he chooses to employ in his texts. He regularly adopts narrative strategies that distance him from his work to attain an impersonal voice. By engaging with female narrators in texts like *Age of Iron* and *In the Heart of the Country*, he “combines the twin strategies of projecting the lack of an adequate vantage point as well as lack of authority” (Kharshiing 40) as he draws from dominant patriarchal ideologies that the voice or the word of a woman is limited and lacks authority. According to Jane Poyner:

> As a white South African writer, Coetzee is acutely aware that he speaks from a position of beneficiary of the apartheid regime, palpable in the string of anxious intellectuals that populate his novels. At the same time, he has tacitly positioned himself as marginalized, as a modernist writing against the grain of oppositional writing and, in childhood, as an English speaker of part-Afrikaner stock and a Protestant attending a Catholic high school. (11)

Several of Coetzee’s novels are situated in the socio-political turmoil in South Africa’s history, with racial and gender conflict being recurrent themes directing the course of the lives of Coetzee’s protagonists. This study looks at the relationship between racial differences and conflict as well the relationship between gender and conflict as reflected in his works. For an informed perspective on what race, gender and conflict insinuate, a brief insight is provided on what the terms represent.

Race is a vastly disputed term that has generated debates and controversies resulting in a huge body of literature and theoretical studies. In the past few decades, it has become widely accepted among scholars studying the concept of race that race is a social and ideological construct (Nayar 9) and is based on pseudo-scientific ideas, but racism and conflict spurned on by racial ideas and racial relations cannot be ignored. There remains persistent disadvantage and discrimination based on "socially structured racial inequality" and the power of "racial ideas" (Bulmer and Solomos 3). There is a massive imbalance in power and as well as influence among groups of people that are assessed to comprise of different types of people. It is imperative to acknowledge the role that ideas, values and cultures play in shaping conflict at both individual and collective levels because once a reality is constructed and believed, the consequences become very real. Though studies on human biology and genetics have not been able to come to a concrete conclusion on how human beings can be categorically divided on the basis of criteria such as skin color or body shapes, such ideas were rampant in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. John Stone and Polly Rizova write that these ideas became widespread because of the variant geographical distribution of power and resources which sequentially hints, superficially, at a "causal connection between certain physical characteristics and so-called levels of civilization" (12). This idea proves to be advantageous in the rationalization of the colonialism and imperialism executed by some nations. The concept of race came to be popularized by colonizing powers to justify their exploitation and dominion over the people they conquered. The categorization of people into different races and the social meanings attached to differences among the different races result in discrimination or racism. The word racism has been defined by Tzvetan Todorov in two different ways. The first defines racism as "a matter of behavior, usually a manifestation of hatred or contempt for individuals who have well-defined physical characteristics different from our own" whereas the second defines racism as "a matter of ideology, a doctrine concerning human races" (213).

Gender refers to the socially and culturally construed roles of women and men in society. Gender theorist Judith Butler approaches gender as a social construct

and not as an essential part of one's being. According to her, it is not ontological in itself, but instead comes to exist through actions (34). Gender, however, functions as a marker that is immediately applied to people because of the universality of this cataloguing. Sex-typed bodies, in most cultures, are used to categorize people as men and women. This thesis takes into cognizance the interpretation of gender as male and female as the study attempts to highlight the conflicts that often arise between the two sexes in the select texts. In postcolonial feminist criticism, the construction of gender difference and the representations of women are important points of focus. The oppression of women at the hands of colonialism and patriarchy and the negotiations of the power relations between genders are given due recognition.

The term conflict has been defined in multiple ways across different disciplines. Baron et al. describe conflict as:

> a process in which individuals or groups perceive that others have taken or will soon take actions that are incompatible with their own interests. (478)

They explain that the key elements in conflict encompass:

i) opposing interests between individuals or groups,

ii) recognition of such oppositions,

iii) the belief by each side that the other will act to interfere with these interests, and

iv) actions that produce such interference. (481)

Conflict thus entails the struggle that results from mismatched and incompatible desires, instincts or opposing internal or external demands.

The works of J.M. Coetzee, when contextualized within the history of South Africa encapsulate the manifestations of racial and gender conflict and the consequences on the people of the country. He combines his ethical and political consciousness as he addresses difficult and contentious topics. By presenting an erudite intellectual challenge to colonialism and apartheid, he invites reflections on

power and morality while striving to disclose the experiences and voices of the marginalized.

In the novel *In the Heart of the Country* which is one of Coetzee's earliest publications, the protagonist Magda is a virginal white spinster who lives on a farm with her widowed father and their black servants. The text has 266 numbered paragraphs and is told through the perspective of Magda while her father remains nameless throughout the narrative. In this text, Coetzee experiments with the narrative technique of presenting the story through a series of numbered paragraphs rather than chapters to give the impression of film where readers can focus on what is not there between them. Set in the beginning of the twentieth century in colonial Karoo semi-desert of the South Cape, the narrative exposes the problematic relationship between Magda and her father, as well as the relationship between white settlers and their black servants. Leading a lonely life ignored by her father and scorned and feared by their servants, Magda claims "I live neither alone nor in society" (9) and exposes the lack of intimacy between herself and father:

> To my father I have been an absence all my life. Therefore, instead of being the womanly warmth at the heart of this house I have been a zero, null, a vacuum towards which all collapses inward, a turbulence, muffled, grey, like a chill draft eddying through the corridors, neglected, vengeful. (2,3)

Magda is a compelling postcolonial protagonist through which Coetzee explores the condition of displaced subject who shares a complicated relationship with her colonial history which operated under the mechanisms of patriarchy. Right from the outset, the text informs that Magda's father had brought home a new bride. Magda further discloses that theirs is not a happy family. Magda's birth mother had died in childbirth due to the "relentless sexual demands" of her father who "never forgave her for failing to bear him a son" (2). Insisting that she has a mind "mad enough for parricide and pseudo-matricide" (12), Magda describes in detail her act of killing her father and her step mother with a hatchet. However, as the narrative progresses, the line between reality and imagination becomes distorted as Magda once again narrates an incident in which she fires at her father with a gun while he is

in bed with Anna, the young wife of their servant Hendrik. He eventually succumbs to his injuries, and it falls upon Magda to take care of the farm even though she has had no experience in administrating over the farm and their servants.

In the absence of her father, Magda realizes how little she knows about the financial matters of their household and their farm as she had been assigned a subservient role which does not include her handling important aspects such as monetary concerns. She does not even know if her father had left a will. Her inability to pay the servants and her apparent lack of knowledge on running a farm gradually results in a shift of the power structure on the farm. Hendrik becomes more assertive as he demands his wages and subtly threatens Magda. He slaughters a sheep every week as a way of claiming his dues and works as little as possible on the farm. Both Hendrik and Anna start wearing the old clothes of Magda's parents and no longer go about performing their daily duties. It becomes Magda's responsibility to perform the duties that had previously been attended to by the servants. Magda realizes that she is powerless to exercise her role as mistress of the house with Hendrik and Anna teaming up against her. She is aware of her marginality as she wonders:

> What can I do against the two of them? I am so alone, and a woman! I toil up the wooden stairs. This is my fate, I must go through with it. (121)

When Magda sends Hendrik to the post office to withdraw money, he returns unsuccessful and furious that they had remained unpaid for such an extended period of time. In his anger, he assaults Magda and ends up raping her. The rape reveals a thought-provoking characteristic about Magda who wonders if she had finally become a woman after he had completed the act. She muses to herself:

> Am I now a woman? Has this made me into a woman? So many tiny events, acts, movements one after another, muscles pulling bones this way and that, and their upshot is that I can say, I am finally a woman, or, Am I finally a woman? (133)

In her desperation to placate Hendrik who has come to assume a position of authority, Magda assures Hendrik that she will not inform anybody of what had

passed between them as she begs him not to be angry with her. This may be seen as a reflection of how the power structure between mistress and servant had become reversed. Magda even invites Hendrik and Anna to start sleeping in the house and promises them proper beds. The three of them begin to eat their meals together and a new routine is established where Magda washes the dishes while Anna dries them after meals. Hendrik continues to come to Magda's bed at night, and Magda finds herself waiting for him on the nights he does not come. Having lived a life devoid of any kind of affection, Magda yearns for affection from Hendrik and tries to please him in bed, blaming herself when he falls short of her hopes for his attention. She questions her attractiveness and wonders why he refuses to be in bed with her with the bedside candle lighted. She tries to strike conversations with him on the nights he visits her, but he refuses to stay after the sexual act is complete. Meanwhile Magda is also worried that Anna would discover what goes on between them and becomes watchful for any sign that would reveal that Anna is aware. She describes the hostile relationship between them:

> Anna is oppressed by my watching eyes. She is oppressed by my invitations to relax, to sit by my side on the old bench in the shade of the sering-tree. She is oppressed particularly by my talk. (140)

The delicate situation with the three of them takes a dramatic turn when one day, men from the neighbouring areas come to visit them on "men's business". Having kept her father's death a secret, Magda understands that it is only a matter of time before they realize that he had died. Hendrik also grows apprehensive that their white neighbours would find out that the three of them were living together under the same roof as it is him who would have to pay the penalty. He knows that he would be blamed for the master's death as the sexual relationship between his late master and his wife Anna had been a topic of gossip in their area. As a black man, he understands that he is in danger of being punished and even hanged to death as nobody would believe him even if he proclaims his innocence. He furiously tells Magda of his plans to leave the farm the next day, but she pleads with him to discuss the matter reasonably and asks him if he thinks she is too "spineless" to acknowledge that she is the guilty one if they come under scrutiny. She tries to persuade him to see

that she is not “simply one of the whites” and tries to convince him that she is an individual and “not a people” (146). Paying no heed to Magda’s entreaties for him to stay, Hendrik escapes the farm stealthily with Anna in the dark and quiet of the night. Magda soon begins to hear voices speaking to her in Spanish from machines flying in the sky in a regular cycle. The inconsistency in Magda’s narrative is once again brought to the forefront as the text ends with her claiming that she passes her days on the farm with her father, having conversations with him and attending to his needs.

This text embellishes Magda’s struggles as a colonial representative in which she has a dual role as victim and perpetrator of the colonial structure. In her essay “A Bored Spinster with a Locked Diary: The Politics of Hysteria in *In the Heart of the Country*", Chiara Briganti discusses Magda’s character and opines that the “discontinuities of her narrative reflect not only the nature of woman's process of ‘writing the self’, but also, more specifically, her struggle not to give in to aphasia - the destiny that attends the hysterical daughters and to continue to talk, even though it is only a ‘father-tongue’ that is available to her” (41). Briganti further continues that the novel itself is a “process of unlearning” the “paternal language that has crystallized into a series of uncongenial plots, a process that parallels Magda's re-vision of her master narrative” (42).

Hermann Wittenberg also notes that the narrative revolving around Magda’s dysfunctional family is “embroiled in sexual relations across the colour line, culminating in the repeated forced sexual encounters between the narrator/protagonist Magda and the farm foreman” (133). David Attwell writes that “Magda’s is a story of revenge in which she . . . fantasizes murdering her father for taking a new wife and for having sex with his coloured farmhand’s bride” (48). Commenting on the role of Magda’s father in the hopeless predicament of his daughter, Attwell also concludes, “As the family patriarch, he is responsible for creating her miserable life” (48). Magda evidently believes that in the absence of her father, she will be released from her miserable plight and be free to explore forms of intimacy that had been prohibited with the servants on the farm but their relationships continue to be demarcated and limited by the colonial past. Jane Poyner recognizes the alienation and marginalization of Magda and observes that she

> resists writing as a means of outwitting the patriarchy and literary history that entrap her but finally succumbs because it is only through writing that she can re-enter society and break free from the fetters of her alienation. (2)

Coeztee's text *Waiting for the Barbarians* first published in Great Britain in 1980 by Secker and Warburg came out four years after the Soweto Uprising and is believed to have been influenced by the movement. The uprising began in Soweto on June 16, 1976 and spread countrywide changing the socio-political landscape in South Africa. The events that triggered the uprising can be traced back to policies of the apartheid government. When the language of Afrikaans alongside English was made compulsory as a medium of instruction in schools in 1974, black students mobilized themselves to march in protest. More than fifteen thousand school children in the South-West Townships of South Africa turned up. The policy presented problems for black students and teachers as Afrikaans was not a language commonly spoken by them. The protest was initially peaceful but it turned violent when the police eventually opened fire on the students. At least 176 students were reported dead the week after the riot. In the weeks that followed, students protested in 160 black townships throughout the country. Ultimately, 14,000 students went into exile joining a resistance movement called "Umkhontho we Sizwe" (Spear of the Nation) against the South African government.

The 1970s also saw the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement which was an ideological movement propagated by anti-apartheid thinkers and activists in reaction to apartheid. This movement demanded the psychological and physical liberation of black people from the widespread tyranny faced by them socially, politically and economically. The anti-apartheid activist Steven Biko was a prominent leader in this movement and his death is alluded to in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Arrested by the South African government in 1977, he died within eighteen days of being detained. An officer in charge of Biko's arrest claimed that Mr. Biko hit his head against a wall during a scuffle but it was later revealed that Biko had suffered monstrously harsh torture. The government's fear of an Other that it both oppresses and depicts as an existential threat as a way to assert and justify its own control is demonstrated in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

In this text Coetzee traverses both the violence and terror inherent in a colonial system from the perspective of an idealistic Magistrate who is deeply conflicted about the system. The text is presented in the first-person narrative, from the point of view of the Magistrate who is charge of running affairs in the settlement. The Magistrate remains unnamed throughout the novel. The novel centers on racial strife, gender conflict and power struggles in an isolated fictional colonial town controlled by a totalitarian power called the Empire. The colonial Empire and the native population are not explicitly identified, but it can be deduced that the novel was written to reflect the political situation of South Africa. The native people are referred to as barbarians in this text. This text makes for an absorbing study on postcolonialism as the hegemonic discourses that deforms the resoluteness of both the oppressed and the oppressors are definitively exposed. The narrative opens with the arrival of Colonel Joll, a high-ranking officer of the Empire, at the garrison occupied by colonial representatives to investigate rumors of an impending barbarian uprising. While the Magistrate gives him a tour, the two debate the efficacy of torture to elicit truthful confession. The Magistrate is skeptical of its effectiveness but Colonel Joll is a determined advocate of torture. When a barbarian family consisting of a young boy and his uncle are caught on their way into the town, Colonel Joll tortures them with the intention of making them confess and refuses to believe their claims that they only wished to consult a doctor for the young boy's sore on his forearm. The grandfather dies during the process of questioning. The Magistrate, an unwilling accomplice who had objected to torturing them, articulates his desires to disassociate himself from the violent nature of the Empire he serves. Despite his attempts to distance himself from Colonel Joll and his men, it becomes increasingly more difficult as Colonel Joll imprisons and tortures more barbarians. When Colonel Joll eventually transfers to a new garrison, the Magistrate guiltily helps the surviving prisoners recuperate. One day, the Magistrate comes across a blind beggar girl and brings her to his quarters where he bathes her and realizes that she had been tortured. He is torn between his desire to help her overcome her predicament and his desire to sleep with her, but the girl resists his attempts at intimacy. Instead, she cleans and cooks for him. Meanwhile, the barbarians inside the town drink and create trouble but the Magistrate blames the Empire for being a negative influence and not the

barbarians. He also continues to struggle with his complex relationship with the girl as he tries to make her open up about her past without much success.

He finally decides that she belongs with her own people and they travel south in the wilderness so she could be reunited with her people, taking with them four soldiers under his command. On the trip, the girl opens up and a sexual relationship begins between them. Along the way, the group sees a band of barbarians ahead of them and the girl decides to join them. As the Magistrate and his soldiers return to the garrison, they meet a group of hostile soldiers who escorts them inside. An official of the Empire accuses the Magistrate of conspiring with the barbarians and imprisons him. After a few days of misery and introspection, the Magistrate escapes from his cell, but he realizes he would not survive and returns to his cell. He later tries to stop the torture of some barbarians and is himself tortured horribly.

The Magistrate is then brought before Colonel Joll, who apprises him that he is no longer accepted to work for the Empire because of his liaisons with the barbarians. When the Magistrate refuses to provide information about his interactions with the barbarians, he is tortured again. Eventually, the Magistrate is released, surviving in spite of his injuries only because of the kindness of a few remaining friends. After the release of the Magistrate, rumors begin to spread that all the soldiers sent on the mission to subdue the invading barbarians had been defeated. Hearing that the barbarians had set up an encampment only a few miles away, the townspeople begin to barricade themselves in the town fearing attacks from the barbarians. The remaining soldiers too depart from the garrison. The Magistrate decides to stay on and takes up residence in his old apartment which had been raided in his absence. He once again takes charge of the town, helping people plant root vegetables to survive the winter. Colonel Joll arrives at the garrison again for a fresh supply of food and horses but he does not find food and horses and is driven out by the Magistrate and the locals. The Magistrate then learns that the army had been defeated by the barbarians without any violence. The barbarians had simply stolen all the army's horses, leaving the soldiers to die in the wilderness filling the Magistrate with shame for what the Empire had done to the country and its people.

Through the character of the Magistrate, Coetzee uses this novel to challenge and explore the terrorizations of colonialism. The Magistrate had once considered himself a representative of Western civilized justice, but the events that take place in the narrative drastically alter his perspective. He comes to the conclusion that the justice system he once championed not only dehumanizes the natives who are tortured and degraded but also dehumanizes the soldiers who exploit the unequal application of justice as they pillage, rape and murder without any discernable sign of guilt. The Empire's attempts to instigate conflicts without reasonable provocations from the barbarians may be seen as a scheme to create enemies out of the barbarians in order to justify prolonged control over them.

In "Torture and the Novel: J. M. Coetzee's '*Waiting for the Barbarians*'" Susan Van Zanten Gallagher and J. M. Coetzee point out that the political state of affairs in South Africa is indeed Coetzee's primary subject as Coetzee

> does not ignore the obscene acts performed by his government under the guise of national security, yet neither does he produce representational depictions of these acts. Instead, he insists on his own authority, tentative as it might be, and imagines death on his own terms. He does not identify the particular atrocities performed by the South Africa security police . . . but nonetheless the maiming of the Barbarian woman and the Magistrate's own ill-treatment ineluctably point to the treatment of political prisoners in South Africa. In suggesting universal truths about torture and oppression, Coetzee also obliquely condemns his own country. (6)

They also insist that through this text, Coetzee "demonstrates that the final impact of the dark chamber upon people of conscience is paradoxical: they realize the need to write and proclaim the truth about this kind of oppression, but they also realize their own inability to do so completely and effectively" (9).

Age of Iron was first published in Great Britain by Martin Secker & Warburg in 1990. The story is set in apartheid South Africa and is narrated in the form of a letter from Mrs. Curren, the main character, to her daughter who is married and living in the United States of America. Mrs. Curren, a retired classics professor lives

in Cape Town. The narrative begins with Mrs. Curren finding out from her doctor that she has cancer which is advanced in stage and that she is likely to die soon. Upon arriving home from the hospital, she sees a homeless man camped out near her house. She admonishes him and he leaves, but comes back again soon after. Stirred by his miserable state, she gives him food and offers him work but he seems to be offended by her offer as he spits her way. Soon after, she spots the man staring at the TV through her window and despite her annoyance, she turns up the volume for him. Later that night, she has a sudden painful attack as she leaves her home to go shopping, and the man helps her. Gradually, they form a bond as the man whose name she finds out is Vercueil, spends most of his time near her house. She learns to place her trust on him and even requests him to send a parcel to her daughter after her death as she has nobody else she could trust with the task.

In the meantime, Florence, Mrs. Curren's housekeeper, returns after a trip with her children - her son Bheki and her daughters, Hope and Beauty. Mrs. Curren is at first hesitant about having Bheki around but Florence explains that he has nowhere else to go because all the schools in Guguletu, the black township where they live, had been shut down. Bheki's friend named John starts hanging out at Mrs. Curren's house as well. She sees him as a troublemaker and becomes even more convinced of it when he starts provoking Vercueil. The two of them end up fighting after which Vercueil disappears for a while. Meanwhile, some police officers had started camping out in a car by Mrs. Curren's house. Suspecting that they are there to watch Bheki and his friend, she tells them that she has no qualms about the boys hanging around and that they are no trouble. Vercueil too brings a lady friend to her home and they begin drinking. Fully intoxicated, they pass out in Mrs. Curren's living room. From being completely on her own, Mrs. Curren now has her house swarming with people she barely knows. This starts to bother Mrs. Curren as she begins to feel like they are preying on her and her property before she even dies.

Soon after, Bheki and John go for a bike ride down the street and the police who had been watching them pull up beside the boys forcing them to collide with the opening door of a plumbing truck. John sustains severe injuries on his head and Mrs. Curren rushes to his side pinching his wound shut while they wait for help. She starts

to come to the realization that the police might not be the respectable people she thought they were and comes to believe they are the perpetuators of the hate that filled their society. An ambulance arrives and takes John to a nearby hospital. The accident causes a lot of tension between Mrs. Curren and Florence as Mrs. Curren wants to make sure that the police answer for what they had done, while Florence does not want to take the issue any further as she fears more consequences. Mrs. Curren calls the hospital to check on John but learns that there is no record of him there so Florence, Mrs. Curren, Bheki, and Vercueil begin searching for him. John is eventually found in a hospital among dying elderly people. Vercueil and Mrs. Curren go in to talk to him bringing him some fruit. She notices that he seems to hate her, and she could not help but think that she also hates him. When Mrs. Curren and Vercueil arrive back home, she asks Vercueil if he wants to sleep on the couch and thinks about how pleasant it would be if he lives with her. She realizes that she had started becoming dependent on the person who was once a big inconvenience and annoyance to her.

One night, Mrs. Curren gets a phone call in the middle of the night from a woman asking for Florence. It appeared that Bheki had fallen into some kind of trouble. Vercueil refuses to get up and help, so Mrs. Curren ends up driving Florence, Hope and Beauty over to Guguletu. There, Mrs. Curren is introduced to Mr. Thabane, Florence's cousin, who gets into the car with them. He tells them that the place they are to drive to is a dangerous area. Upon reaching the place, they find the area in chaos and disorder with burning buildings and screaming people everywhere. After a while, Mrs. Curren decides that she wants to go home. As Mr. Thabane, Mrs. Curren and a young boy who had come with Mr. Thabane drive on, they find Florence who had managed to locate Bheki. Mr. Thabane goes to investigate the scene and finds out that Bheki and four others had been murdered with their bodies laid out against a wall for everyone to see. Mrs. Curren sees a police officer and asks him if he knows about all the horrible things going on but he simply shrugs her off. Mrs. Curren drives home alone, convinced that she will never be warm again. John too comes back to Mrs. Curren’s home wounded but he does

not divulge what had happened to him. Soon after his return, he is killed by the police without any plausible explanation.

Age of Iron is set in the late 1980s, a time during which racial conflicts were heightened in South Africa. In 1986, the nationalist apartheid regime had declared a state emergency as a reaction to the "vigorous resistance to the apartheid regime in every city and nearly every Homeland in the country" (Thompson 229). In the light of existing socio-political milieu, it makes sense that Coetzee wishes to explore the renewed intensity with which the black communities were resisting the all-white government as well as the repressive measures taken by the government to suppress the uprisings. Mrs. Curren, a white retired professor of classics with moderately liberal political leanings finds herself in the midst of it all, leading her to examine her own stance and her morality. Repulsed by the treatment of the black underclass by the government and her own complicity, she finds herself exploring notions of justice:

> If justice reigns at all, we will find ourselves barred at the first threshold of the underworld. White as grubs in our swaddling bands, we will be dispatched to join those infant souls whose eternal whining Aeneas mistook for weeping. (92)

Through her character, Coetzee directly addresses "one of the governing concerns of J.M. Coetzee's oeuvre: how does the white South African subject, and by extension the white South African writer, respond to the crimes of apartheid in which he or she is biopolitically implicated" (Walsh 168). A feminist reading of the text also exposes the marginality of Mrs. Curren who is powerless to help the black subjects she had taken under her wing. Though a white woman, she is rendered voiceless by her being a woman. Several passages in the text reveals her marginality and voicelessness as she herself declares that her words are the “words of a woman, therefore negligible” (79). She bitterly questions:

> What am I entitled to do but sit in a corner with my mouth shut? I have no voice; I lost it long ago; perhaps I have never had one. I have no voice, and that is that. (164)

Though she realizes that there is nothing she can do, she does not want to die in her state of "ugliness" or complicity, and admits that the first step for her to take is to love the "unlovable". Coetzee's understanding of his own ambiguous position as a white man writing against apartheid is revealed through the character of Mrs. Curren. Coetzee's white protagonist writers typically "agonize over the ways in which the authority authorship engenders will always compromise their ethico-political conviction because authorship, for Coetzee, is always already imbued with power, mastery and colonization" (Poyner 2).

Set in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* was first published in Great Britain in 1999 by Martin Secker & Warburg in 1999. Unlike the other texts chosen for this study which were written during apartheid era, *Disgrace* was written after apartheid had come to an end. The novel traces the story of a fifty-two-year-old professor David Lurie. Twice divorced, he has a daughter named Lucy. In the opening lines of the text, it is revealed that the protagonist regularly visits a sex worker named Soraya who, as the narrative progresses, ultimately refuses to offer her services to him. He hires a detective to procure information about her and telephones her, much to her disapproval and dismay. She assertively informs him that she no longer wishes to maintain contact. He then dates a married woman who had recently been appointed as secretary in the department he teaches at. After sleeping with her, he avoids her as he realizes that she could not offer what he is looking for. He then seduces one of the students in his class and things take a turn for the worse when she files a complaint against him for sexual harassment. He refuses to defend himself when Melanie's statement was read out to him by the committee convened to act on the issue. Despite repeated attempts by his colleagues to let him off as lightly as possible, he stubbornly refuses to apologize sincerely and he tells the committee:

> I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorcee at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros . . . I took advantage of my position vis-à-vis Ms Isaacs. It was wrong, and I regret . . . I plead guilty. That is as far as I am prepared to go. (52-55)

Though he pleads guilty, his refusal to provide a suitable statement and offer formal apologies for his behavior leads to his suspension from his job as a teacher after which he himself permanently resigns. He goes to live on his daughter's farm in Eastern Cape where he learns the countryside way of life by helping Lucy with her farming chores. Shortly after becoming acquainted with Lucy's routines and her friends, both father and daughter are attacked at their home by three black young men who forced their way into the farmhouse under the pretext of needing to use Lucy's phone. Armed with firearms, the three men rape Lucy and also attempt to kill David. Lucy gets impregnated by one of the rapists, but she refuses to terminate the pregnancy, going against the advice of her father. Meanwhile David suspects Petrus, Lucy's former farm-hand of being an accomplice in the attack as he sees one of the attackers in a celebratory party hosted by Petrus who had recently become a landowner with the acquisition of land. Concerned about her safety, he tries to convince her to leave the country but she objects. Meanwhile, Petrus proposes marriage to Lucy, and David realizes that Lucy would eventually end up marrying Petrus giving up ownership of her land in exchange for her protection and the right to remain in her house.

This text may be read as a reflection of the shift in social order in post-apartheid South Africa. The status of black Africans was slowly rising as is evident through the character of Petrus who goes from being a farm-hand to a land owner. White people and their privileged position were constantly being challenged in post-apartheid South Africa. Melanie's vehement refusal to report being raped to the police and her decision to keep the baby conceived out of the rape may be seen as an act of penance on her part as she asserts that her attackers most likely see themselves as "debt collectors, tax collectors" and also her understanding that consequential actions will not be taken by the police. David also comes to the conclusion that his daughter thinks she has to compensate for the past atrocities on the blacks all by herself by submitting herself to them. This presents a bleak picture of a new South Africa where the end of apartheid does not necessarily usher in a new era of peace and harmony among the different communities.

When the novel first appeared in 1999, it was received by many as a dark critique of post-apartheid South Africa. Many critics found “appalling” the “seeming justification of rapes of white women by predatory African males as an inevitable consequence of the years of domination of the blacks by an oppressive white regime” (Raval 146). Meanwhile, “many blacks” were “appalled, on the other hand, by what they saw as the re-energizing of the stereotypes about African males so prevalent during the history of colonialism” (Raval 146). The ruling African National Congress party also condemned Coetzee for his depiction of violence perpetrated by black characters, claiming that it invites the promotion of racial hatred.

Though apartheid has legally come to an end, South Africa is still haunted by its legacy. The countryside frequently experiences robbery, rape and vandalism. Many of the colored citizens who had lived lives of oppression and discrimination cannot contain their outrage and violence is often a manifestation of their angst. In *Disgrace* racial tensions are brought to the forefront of the novel when David arrives in Salem. The racial dynamics become strained when Petrus gets implicated in indirectly facilitating a robbery on her land. When he comes back with building supplies to renovate his new house, the relegation of Lucy to a position of disadvantage becomes even more apparent. This is confirmed towards the end of the narrative when Lucy quietly accepts her fate. The incident in which she rushes to defend one of her rapists when David attacks him for spying on her as she is having a bath cements the fact that she has come to accept her fate. She tells her father, “He is here, he won’t disappear in a puff of smoke, he is a fact of life” (208). Lucy’s humble submission into her situation, regretful as it is to her father, is reflective of her acceptance of her fate. She recognizes the consequences of the colonial history in her country, and conceives that the victims are bound to be scarred by the trauma and are susceptible to be vengeful in their relations with their former oppressors. The character of Lucy and her submission may be seen as representative of the process of reconciliation of differences with an attempt to move beyond the fixed binaries that characterize apartheid mentality and colonialism. The portrayal of the gang rape on Lucy may also be seen as a process of decolonization which is often a violent phenomenon.

Coetzee's works, most of which are set in South Africa, are both realistic and allegorical in their portrayal of the period of colonialism and apartheid as well as the transitional period South Africa had to undergo with the abolishment of apartheid. A writer who believes that "all writing is autobiography" (*DTP* 391), his works indicate that he is deeply influenced by his personal background and history with South Africa. Though he refrains from offering explicit solutions to the problems plaguing the South African society, his works mirror his opposition of colonialism and apartheid. The theme of violence is frequent throughout the texts that have been selected for this study. Violence is treated as a phenomenon that is inevitable in colonial/apartheid settings where the colonizer imposes control over the colonized subjects through brute force and also in post-colonial/apartheid settings where the formerly oppressed fight back with violence. He brings to the forefront the intersections between the political past and the present to seemingly emphasize that the past continues to haunt the present.

He also raises issues arising out of the problematic relations between male and female characters within narratives that are products of a culture that perpetuates gender inequality. Many of his female characters are subject to patriarchal oppression in which women are socially and economically marginalized, thereby garnering the interest of feminist scholars. He presents the South African society as a society inflicted with gender conflict where both white and black women suffer at the hands of white and black men. The powerlessness and voicelessness of women who are forced to surrender to their fate is a glaring theme in his works. The majority of his white protagonists, both male and female, also find themselves questioning their values and morality as they become increasingly exposed to injustice while raising issues of complicity. In the essay titled "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee", Stephan Watson maintains that "the actual critique of colonialism" that emerges from Coetzee's texts is hardly conventional as "they do not deliver the usual moral condemnation of greed and hypocrisy, something which is all too familiar in the average colonial novel" (371). He writes that Coetzee's novels

> not only allude to an actual historical reality, but they also give us, in fictional form, the type of psyche, the psychology that this reality dictates. If

colonialism, at its very simplest, equals the conquest and subjugation of a territory by an alien people, then the human relationship that is basic to it likewise one of power and powerlessness: the relationship between master and servant, overlord and slave. It is this aspect of colonialism that receives the most extensive treatment in Coetzee's fiction. (371)

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This chapter examines issues of race and racial conflict portrayed in the select texts by J.M. Coetzee. The theme of racial conflict figures prominently in Coetzee's works. Across the four texts that have been selected for this study, there is constant tension between the white and the black community. The existing racial structure in South Africa provides abundant material for Coetzee to project the challenging condition of the people living in the country. His works may be read as his responses to colonialism and the apartheid regime. In their study of Coetzee's works, Kristjana Gunnars and Abdulrazak Gurnah state that Coetzee explores "important socio-political issues and their psychological impact" in his works where he "reaches for the limits of human endurance" (11). This statement rings true as a study of his texts reveals how engaged he is with the existing socio-political condition of South Africa, particularly with the racial dynamics that is a direct repercussion of colonialism and apartheid. His texts portray the lives of the marginalized and people who find themselves on the periphery of society. However, he does not offer his narratives in the voice of black protagonists; this may be seen as a conscious attempt on his part to signify the complexity of speaking for somebody whose experiences are not his own.

Since the apartheid regime in 1948, South Africa has devoted a lot of energy and resources into the imposition of racial segregation. The country stands out for its racial divisions due to apartheid and European colonization. The long-lasting legacy of racial segregation is still felt today in the country. According to Katy Scott, white South Africans earn almost three times the average wage made by black South Africans suggesting that even decades after the end of apartheid, inequality still remains a reality. The extreme inequality in the society has been a topic of much discussion and has also resulted in an abundance of literature on apartheid from the country.

Colonialism and apartheid had enforced the idea that white settlers are superior, thereby subordinating the black natives in all facets of life. According to Cornel West, colonialism is a condition in which the races that have been dominated lack power to "present themselves to others, and thereby the power to contest the bombardment of negative, degrading stereotypes put forward by white supremacist

ideologies" (17). White supremacist ideologies which assert the supremacy or superiority of white skinned people, often accompanied by ignorance of the suffering of another, is frequently portrayed in Coetzee's novels. By taking on issues such as racism, human pain and suffering, torture, oppression, sexual harassment, ageism and psychological growth, he effectively depicts the failure of colonialism to establish a world in which justice reigns. Abdulrazak Gurnah opines that his works are "firmly rooted in South African realities, in its history and its political complexities and ironies, in the failure of human sympathy that is the consequence of colonialism and apartheid" (13).

Noted French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Levi-Strauss theorizes that the "structure of primitive thinking is binary" (Bertens 55). According to him, the earliest men categorized the world in basic terms that involve "a presence and an absence – light/darkness, man-made/natural, above/below, noise/silence, clothes/naked, sacred/profane, and so on" (Bertens 55). Strauss believes that the most fundamental of such binary oppositions is that "what is man-made and what is part of nature (between culture and nature)," (Bertens 55) and this constitutes what is called culture. As a result of this perceived binary opposition, the human mind classifies things through binary opposition or the contrasts between two opposite things and culture is always constructed in binary opposites. This perception of the world in binaries is not a thing of the distant past, as is evident in colonial discourses. In the case of South Africa which has undergone a period of colonization and apartheid in which the whites dominated the black, this binary is projected as black and white or colonized and colonizers thereby cultivating racial conflict and racism.

To put it briefly, racism is a form of oppression in which one racial group dominates others. Robin DiAngelo notes that racism "encompasses economic, political, social, and institutional actions and beliefs, which systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between whites and people of color (108)". Charles E. Wilson, Jr. compares racism with "a disease left unchecked" asserting that racism "begins to assume a life of its own,

suppressing the more natural penchant toward harmonious interaction and leaving in its wake the scarred emotional remains of a battle-weary humanity" (XI).

Hrabovský et al. write that scholars writing about racism are often challenged and set back because of the absence of a thorough and critical analysis of the concept of race but they also conclude that the concept of race is not dark, dangerous or negative in itself but it can be perceived as such, in the sense that the term is vague and indistinct. They infer that Nazi crimes in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s have proven that on the basis of the vagueness of the term race which may denote a large number of different things like skin colour, skull shape, origin, inheritance, culture, language, religion, ethnicity and nationality, individuals or groups of people can be mobilized to carry out acts of murders by the millions (39). Today, revolutionary scientists and anthropologists prefer to use the word population instead of race to refer to genetic differences while the term has also been reconceptualized as a cultural category or social construct by several historians, cultural anthropologists and social scientists. The term ethnicity is also preferred by many social scientists to refer to groups of people who self-identify themselves based on their beliefs in matters related to shared culture, ancestry and history.

Besides the etymological, empirical and conceptual dilemma of the term race, existing beliefs about race were also used to justify discrimination, apartheid, slavery and genocide as professed by evolutionary and social scientists especially in the wake of the second world war which happened between 1939 to 1945. Questions challenging the legitimacy of race as a scientific or natural concept gained momentum in the 1960s with the growth of multiple anti-colonial movements in different corners of the globe. The civil rights movement that took place in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America also contributed to the ever-growing challenges on conventional acceptance of the term race. The idea that race itself is a social construct gained impetus as a number of researches supposedly disproved the notion that the types of genetic variations within the human species support the idea of genetically defined races. The act of race-making or Othering often results in discrimination on the basis of race or, to put it simply, racism. Audrey Smedley in

her essay titled “Racism” writes that racism, also referred to as racialism, is “the belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called ‘races’; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioural features; and that some races are innately superior to others”. She further adds that the term is often applied to political, economic or legal institutions and systems to justify discrimination on the basis of race.

The justification of discrimination and Othering on the basis of race is notably portrayed in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the indigenous people whose ancestors had lived on the land for hundreds of years are referred to as barbarians in this text. In anthropological studies, qualities such as “laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality” (Loomba 93) are often attributed to native populations. Coetzee’s text reflects such stereotypes by conscious use of the term barbarians to refer to the natives. Such “representations and modes of perception”, according to John McLeod are “fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonized peoples subservient to colonial rule” (17). In his assertion that the division between the western countries and the rest of the world had become fairly complete in the nineteenth century through the extension of European empires, Robert J.C. Young writes that colonial rule was “legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interest” (2). Such anthropological theories were based on the concept of race as a result of which the relation between the west and the non-west came to be regarded as “whites versus the non-white races” (Young 2). Young continues that white culture is still largely regarded as “the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, literature - in a word, civilization” (3).

This supposition that white culture is superior echoes through Coetzee’s texts where white settlers continuously torment the lives of black natives in their attempt to maintain control over them. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the law enforcing

agents of the Empire are in perpetual fear of an uprising by the barbarians to overthrow the Empire. The Magistrate who is the narrator in the text is the official in charge of running affairs in the tiny frontier settlement in which the story is mostly set. This novel may be read as an allegory of oppressor and the oppressed in which race plays a predominant role. Incidents of racial tension are replete throughout the narrative in which the Magistrate becomes increasingly sympathetic to the barbarians. His sympathy is provoked by the harsh torture of the barbarians on the orders of Colonel Joll from the Civil Guard department. Though the Magistrate explains to Colonel Joll that the barbarians are mostly destitute tribespeople with tiny flocks of their own, Colonel Joll continues to torture all suspects harshly to illicit truth about their role in a potential uprising. To justify the torture of these barbarians, Colonel Joll tells the Magistrate that training and experience has taught him to recognize the tone of truth in a person's voice. In his essay for New York Times Book Review, Coetzee writes that "torture has exerted a dark fascination" on himself and other authors from South Africa. According to him, a writer is faced with two moral dilemmas when writing about torture. First, a writer has to find a middle way between ignoring the obscenities performed by the state, and second, a writer must produce representations of those obscenities (Gallagher and Coetzee 277). In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee makes sure to document the atrocious torture inflicted even on innocent barbarians, but he refuses to minutely describe the process of the torture. For instance, in an incident where a young boy and his uncle are tortured by soldiers, the man dies and the boy is forced to sleep with the dead body. The dead body is inspected by the Magistrate who finds that "the grey beard is caked with blood" while the lips have been "crushed and drawn back" and the teeth have been broken. One of the man's eyes is "rolled back" while the other eye-socket is a "bloody hole" (7).

Under the apartheid regime during which this novel was produced, state inflicted tortures on black South Africans were frequent. Torture and brutality carried out by agents of the state is also explored in *Age of Iron* where young Bheki and his friend John are continuously pursued by the police. Mrs. Curren, the narrator of *Age of Iron* is exposed to the cruelty of apartheid when she finds out that Bheki and John who are living with her were being followed by the police as suspects. Mrs. Curren's

black household help, Florence insists that she has to bring her son Bheki and his friend John with her to Mrs. Curren's home because of trouble in their black settlement Guguletu. She tells Mrs. Curren "In Guguletu there is trouble all the time, and then the police come in and shoot" (53). Coetzee portrays the racial tension in South Africa through the response of Bheki when Mrs. Curren asks him why the police are after him and John. He curtly tells her:

> They are not after me. They are after everybody. I have done nothing. But anybody they see they think should be in school, they try to get them. We do nothing, we just say we are not going to school. Now they are waging this terror against us. They are terrorists. (67)

Bheki further reveals that he refuses to continue school because he sees being educated under the system as a means to make children "fit into the apartheid system" (67). Bheki and John eventually crashes into a truck on their bicycle while being chased by the police. The owner of the truck claims that they were "pushed" by the police vehicle to make them crash. This incident deeply affects Mrs. Curren who becomes exposed to how life actually is for the black Africans. A professor of classics, she reads widely and is knowledgeable about many things but her privilege as a white middle class woman had shielded her from becoming fully aware of the evils of apartheid.

The existence of racial tension is also brought to the forefront in this text when Mrs. Curren visits Guguletu with Florence to look for Bheki. There she meets Florence's brother Mr. Thabane who chides Mrs. Curren for wanting to go home when she sees the trouble that had erupted all over Guguletu. Five young men including Bheki had been killed by the police during a riot. The bleakness of the situation was too depressing for Mrs. Curren who wishes to avoid it but at that moment her privilege was brought to light as she realizes that while she could escape from the place and its problems easily by coming home, there is no escaping for the residents of Guguletu who have no other place to go to. Mr. Thabane poses a question to Mrs Curren and asks her to tell him what "sort of crime" it was that she had witnessed. Mrs. Curren had opposed the system of apartheid all her life, but she

comes to the realization that by being a mere passive spectator, she is complicit in the oppression of people like Bheki and Mr. Thabane who had been exposed to police brutality all their lives. There is no escape for them unless the system of apartheid is overthrown.

For Mrs. Curren, the dead bodies of Bheki and the four other young men are the worst things that she had ever witnessed in her life; she thinks to herself, "my eyes are open and I can never close them again" (103). Life as she knew it was slowing changing. She could no longer be blind to the atrocities that were being committed by the apartheid government. She had never supported the government policies but she had also never fully acknowledged nor realized the full intensity of the 'crimes' being committed by the government. To confirm her fears and suspicions, she asks Mr. Thabane to tell her who had shot at the young men. He tells her:

> If you want to dig the bullets out of their bodies, you are welcome. But I will tell you in advance what you will find. 'Made in South Africa. SABS Approved.' That is what you will find. (103)

Since its publication, *Age of Iron* has been extensively debated for its representation of ethics and complicity. During one of Mrs. Curren's conversations with Vercueil, a homeless man she had taken under her wing, readers are provided an insight to suggest that Mrs. Curren is well aware of what is happening in her country as she confides to him that her only daughter had left South Africa because she has had enough of the place. When Vercueil remarks that Mrs. Curren should call her daughter to tell her that she is dying of cancer and ask her to come back, Mrs. Curren reminds him that theirs is "not a normal country" (74) and that people cannot just come and go as they please. She further tells him that her daughter has no desire to come back to South Africa:

> My daughter will not come back till things have changed here. She has made a vow. She will not come back to South Africa as you and she and I know it. She will certainly not apply to – what can I call them? – those people for permission to come. She will come back when they are hanging by their heels

> from the lamp-posts, she says. She will come back then to throw stones at their bodies and dance in the streets. (74,75)

Mrs. Curren and her absent daughter can be seen as archetypes of all white people who are opposed to apartheid but have not done enough to oppose it. She tells Mr. Thabane that she is not "indifferent to this . . . war" and exclaims "It lives inside me and I live inside it" (103). She also realizes that the pain the "war" had caused her is nothing compared to what people like Florence have to go through. Mrs. Curren cannot help but feel an enormous sense of guilt and shame as a white woman after she becomes exposed to the manner in which black people were being treated in the hands of the white minority:

> My life may as well be waste. We shoot these people as if they are waste, but in the end it is we whose lives are not worth living. (104)

Unable to accept and normalize the sights that she had seen, she feels frustrated and angry at the men who had abused their power. Feeling helpless and ashamed, she expresses her rage against the men who had created such a situation in her country. She reiterates that she wants to accuse them of spoiling her life like a rat or a cockroach spoils food. She wishes to "sell" herself with hopes of redemption but is unsure how to do it as she is overcome by a sense of complicity.

Mrs. Curren's journey into Guguletu may be seen as a journey into her consciousness "enabling her to see, forcing itself upon her" (Geertsema 95). In "We Embrace to Be Embraced: Irony in an *Age of Iron*", Geertsema writes,

> *Age of Iron* is an attempt to speak this unspeakable intrusion of the real, to understand that which refuses to be understood by imbuing it, somehow with significance. Mrs. Curren attempts to come to terms with the cancer in her body, as well as with the canker in the body politic of which she forms part, by inscribing upon and thus signifying that which resists signification and inscription. As such, hers (and thus the novel itself) is an attempt to exorcise by speaking, and thus by representing speech to write an understanding it is a confession of sorts - a white woman in her old age wearily addressing her distress. (95,96)

Though Mrs. Curren has moderately liberal political views and does not support the Afrikaner Nationalist government, she is complicit in their governance as she herself had participated in the government's educational system and thus cannot "avoid both the charge and the awareness of her own complicity with apartheid" (Hoegberg 27). Her experiences with Florence's family and her witnessing of the situation at Guguletu gave her heightened awareness of the persistent poverty and oppression of black people, causing her to re-examine herself as a person. She can no longer avoid the shame of being a white and therefore, privileged woman while there are people living in dire conditions.

According to Hoegberg, Coetzee highlights the "value of direct experience over reading" (30) in *Age of Iron*. Mrs. Curren taught classics literature and read widely but mostly within the boundaries of the European tradition. Besides, the comfort of her middle-class existence limited her knowledge about life in South Africa to her neighbourhood and other areas which were reserved for whites. Though her education made her cynical about the all-white government, she had no actual knowledge of the harsh living conditions of the black people until she visited Guguletu. The death of Bheki and the other young men stayed with her and left her questioning her privilege and role in destroying their lives as she her pointedly expresses:

> Now that child is buried and we walk upon him. Let me tell you, when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them. They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again. Millions of figures of pig-iron floating under the skin of the earth. The age of iron waiting to return. (125)

Mrs. Curren cannot help but admit that racial discrimination which had its roots in South Africa long before her birth, and continues to date with various policies adopted by the government had been inherited by her. She admits:

> A crime was committed long ago. How long ago? I do not know. But longer ago than 1916, certainly. So long ago that I was born into it. It is part of my

> inheritance. It is part of me, I am part of it. Though it was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name . . . I raged at times against the men who did the dirty work - you have seen it, a shameful raging as stupid as what it raged against - but I accepted too that, in a sense, they lived inside me. So that when in my rages I wished them dead, I wished death on myself too. (164)

In the essay, “Not Grace, Then, but at Least the Body: Accounting for the Self in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*", Rachel Ann Walsh surmises that Mrs. Curren's admission that “the crimes of colonization and apartheid have determined her authorial self reflects her slow and shifting realisation that her response to the crimes of apartheid is always delayed and always insufficient” (4).

As Mrs. Curren questions her own existence and role in oppression of the black population, she tries to give meaning to what freedom means, as a white woman who is free to live her life as she wishes. But she realizes that the meaning of freedom and what it entails is evasive as she admits:

> I have no idea what freedom is, Mr Vercueil. I am sure Bheki and his friend had no idea either. Perhaps freedom is always and only what is unimaginable. Nevertheless, we know unfreedom when we see it - don't we? Bheki was not free, and knew it. You are not free, at least not on this earth, nor am I. I was born a slave and I will most certainly die a slave. (164)

Michael Marais in his essay "'Who Clipped the Hollyhocks?': J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and the Politics of Representation" writes that the stark realities of the world which Mrs. Curren encounters in Guguletu question the reality of the white bourgeois world whose presence depends on its absence (4). The dissociation between the actual South Africa and its representation as "a land of smiling neighbours" is exposed by Mrs. Curren's visit to the black township, where she sees for herself a "looming world of rage and violence” (96).

As the narrative nears its end, the character of Mrs. Curren grows as a woman who understands the world around her better. In the beginning of the text, she had wondered why black parents like Florence did not make their children stay in schools

and avoid trouble with the state. She had placed blame on parents for not being able to assert authority on their children who had given up their education to fight against the oppressive policies of the government. She had failed to understand how the state police were traumatizing black South Africans through violent means and tried to blame black parents as being responsible for political struggles in which black people died in large numbers. Eventually, towards her last days, she comes to accept that political struggles are necessary and that it is not enough to be a "good person" to oppose the violent apartheid regime. She exclaims:

> What times these are when to be a good person is not enough! . . . What the times call for is quite different from goodness. The times call for heroism. (165)

Age of Iron appears to subscribe to the theory that the individual is exposed to the dominant ideology which, as a practice of representation, "subjectifies" him/her, that is, it interpellates him/her as a subject in the social formation whose system of relations then proceeds to govern his/her attitudes concerning the real problems within that society and its history (Marais 4). The most positive aspect of Mrs. Curren's post-journey life is the growing intimacy between herself and Vercueil, suggesting that the best hope for the future of South Africa lies in personal and incremental growth, not in myths of global salvation (Hoegberh 40).

An important aspect of postcolonial literature is the study of the marginalization of native cultures in colonial spaces. It is a literature of "resistance, anger, protest, and hope" (Nayar 1). This resistance, anger, protest and hope of the native community is detected in the forbidding novel *In the Heart of the Country* where Coetzee explores the heart of settler colonialism in which the white settlers oppress the black natives. Through the protagonist Magda, he problematizes racial relations and the conflicts that arise out of an unequal relationship between master and slave. Magda is a white woman who lives on a farm with her father and his servants. The narrative set in the Karoo semi-desert of the Western Cape and narrated from the perspective of Magda reveals the relation between the white masters and the black servants through an interior monolgue. She says of herself:

> I create myself in the words that create me, I who living among the downcast have never beheld myself in the equal regard of another's eye, have never held another in the equal regard of mine. (9)

In the beginning of the narrative, Magda points out that she had grown up with the children of the servants as there were no other white children for her to play with. As a child, she spoke like she was one of them, played their stick and stone games, searched for khamma-roots with them on the fields, fed orphaned lambs with milk and watched sheep dipping and pigs being slaughtered. She also listened to stories of their blind grandfather who spoke of bygone days when men lived nomadic lives and migrated from one trail to another according to the season. According to her, she had "drunk in a myth of a past when beast and man and master lived a common life as innocent as the stars in the sky" (8). She understood the complications of racial differences early on in her childhood as she listened to the old black man. As she grew up, she could no longer be dismissed as a mere child who played with the servants and had to learn to distance herself from them. She had to relearn to speak like a white woman and start playing with her own doll houses. In the process, she became alienated from the only people she was familiar with, causing her to admit "I live neither alone nor in society" (9). She further highlights the gap between herself and the servants as she states "I who living among the downcast have never beheld myself in the equal regard of another's eye, have never held another in the equal regard of mine" (9). Magda also calls the masters "giants" and the servants "dwarves" in her internal monologue making it apparent that she has internalized the supposed differences between the masters and servants, creating a binary in which she Others them.

In the introduction to *Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations* (1995), David Corson perceives language as an instrument of power and as a useful tool for the deconstruction of power discourse. Pierre Bourdieu also notes that language is not just an instrument of communication or knowledge, but also an instrument through which power is exercised in the text *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). In the essay "Language and Identity in the Narrative of J. M. Coetzee", Michela Canepari-Labib also emphasizes on the gap between the white

Magda and the black servants through the differences in culture and language, with the gap becoming wider as Magda grew older:

> According to her account, during her infancy and childhood Magda experienced the idyll of the community life of the servants, sharing their culture and absorbing their language. However, she was obligated to take upon herself the cultural code of her father and the corresponding language, thus creating the irreparable schism between the two societies (and languages) she might have been simultaneously (if only passively) born into. Her father's language of authority clashes in a traumatic way with the language of her childhood - that which, being closer to what Magda romantically considers as the real essence of things, remained in her unconscious as a "lost world," the lost paradise to which she tries to regain access - thus provoking the repression of the latter and obliging her to live in what has now become her secondary language, to which she is assigned in terms of culture, class and race. (118)

In their book titled *The Theory of Racial Formation* (2015), Michael Omi and Howard Winant write that race is a "way of making up people" and that the initiative to define groups on the basis of race is a "process fraught with confusion, contradiction, and unintended consequences" (105). However, race continues to be a classification used by individuals and groups to impose boundaries and identities on other individuals or groups of people. Omi and Winant continue that race- making may also be perceived as a process of Othering though the distinguishment of a group of people as an Other is not limited to categorizations based on race alone. The other perceived distinctions may be "gender, class, sexuality, religion, culture, language, nationality, and age" (105). Such distinctions are, according to Omi and Winant, often used to "justify structures of inequality, differential treatment, subordinate status, and in some cases violent conflict and war" (105). They also note that the classification of people as Other and the use of different attributes to classify them is a universal phenomenon and that the necessity of categorizing people often arises:

> As social beings, we must categorize people so as to be able to "navigate" in the world - to discern quickly who may be friend or foe, to position and situate ourselves within prevailing social hierarchies, and to provide clues that guide our social interactions with the individuals and groups we encounter. But while the act of categorizing people and assigning different attributes to such categories may be universal, the categories themselves are subject to enormous variation over historical time and space. The definitions, meanings, and overall coherence of prevailing social categories are always subject to multiple interpretations. No social category rises to the level of being understood as a fixed, objective, social fact. (105)

Magda, fully aware that Hendrik had come from Armoede as a sixteen-year-old boy to look for work claims that he "arrived from nowhere, the child of some father and some mother unknown to me, sent into the world in hard times, with or without a blessing, to earn his bread" (24). By refusing to acknowledge his home town and his past life before he came to live on the farm, she attempts to erase his identity and legitimacy. Though Magda continuously claims to live a life of suffering and oppression herself with a father who "pays no attention to [her] absence" and thus "grew up with the servants' children", she makes statement such as:

> Hendrik is going to open the back door, and while it is true that the essence of servanthood is the servant's intimacy with his master's dirt, and while it is also true that there is a perspective in which corpses are dirt, Hendrik is not only essence but substance, not only servant but stranger. (17)

Though they live together on the farm and meet each other every day, Magda admits that she does not really know Hendrik, which is because they have always maintained distance. Any kind of relationship between whites and non-whites is not encouraged and people are expected to stick to their kind, unless it involves blacks rendering services to white people. To Magda, Hendrik is just a servant who works for them. He is nothing more than "a tall, straight-shouldered brown man with high cheekbones and slanting eyes" (19) who routinely slaughters sheep, chops wood and milks the cows. As mistress and servant, they have their "places" according to an

"old old code". Magda explains that they do not proceed further than the usual greetings, suggesting that decorum has to be maintained.

Magda's lack of familiarity with Hendrik is the result of the binary that had been created to put black servants in their places in the company of white masters. However, this dynamic slowly changes on the farm as racial prejudices are seemingly put away when Magda kills her father for sleeping with Anna and starts to engage more meaningfully with Hendrik and his wife. Magda claims that as they work together around the house in the effort to remove her father's dead body, the labour brings them "together" and that labour is no longer just Hendrik's prerogative. She states "I am his equal though I am the weaker" (101).

In the text, Magda drops hints that her father is trying to get Anna, the young wife of Hendrik to sleep with him. She sees her father give Anna "a brown paper packet' which is full of candies, hearts and diamonds with mottoes on them and on certain days, she even sees him give her a shilling or even a florin. Though it was not permitted by law for people of different races to engage in sexual relationships, her father continually made advances towards the young Anna. This may be seen as a wrongful use of power as master and a white man by Magda's father. By pursuing the wife of his servant, he makes it rather apparent that he does not care about her feelings since she is in no position to resist him. While her husband is sent to the remotest corner of the farm to tend to the sheep on the master's orders, the master visits Anna and forces himself on her who remains "limp in his arms".

After her father's death, Magda asks Hendrik and his wife to sleep in her house every night so that she would not be alone. Though, they have no choice but to obey her, Hendrik is afraid of the consequences and warns her that people from the neighbouring farms will come and see their living arrangements:

> they will see that you are living with the servants in the big house. Then we will be the ones to suffer - not you - she and I! Everyone knows that the old baas was messing around with my wife. So when they say I shot him, who will believe me, who will believe a brown man? They will hang me! Me! . . .

> I'm leaving, I'm leaving tomorrow; I'm getting out of this part of the world, by tomorrow night I want to be far away, I want to be at the Cape!" (145-146)

Hendrik knows fully well that it would be him and his wife who would be punished for living in the home of their mistress even though she is the one who had wished for such an arrangement. He is afraid that people would think it is him who had killed Magda's father and not Magda because people would assume he had killed him out of jealousy for sleeping with his wife. Though he is a victim who had been taken advantage of by his master, he has no misconceptions that in a country like South Africa, his words would not measure up to that of white people who would undeniably favour Magda's father over him. Such incidents make it clear that even the law favours the whites over the blacks and that there is no justice for the black people of South Africa. In this text Coetzee addresses the "emblematic pattern of the irreparably nonhuman interaction between the colonizers and the colonized, between the white farmers in a 'stone country' where their will is law and the brown servants whose only exercise of will can be to run away" (Roberts 22).

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* by J.M. Coetzee also offers insight into how colonizers treat natives once they have overpowered and taken over their lands. Racial conflicts arise out of the notion of white superiority and the idea that black/native people have to be disciplined and directed towards the path of civilization. Racial prejudices play a pivotal role in the oppression of natives. In this text, the Magistrate leads a rather peaceful and comfortable existence but life takes on a different turn when the Empire suddenly declares an 'emergency' and deploys a special force called Third Bureau to take up the task of protecting the settlement from attacks by the natives who belong to the region. Led by Colonel Joll, the Third Bureau move towards the land beyond the frontier in an attempt to capture the barbarians who were supposedly causing trouble. They return to the settlement with a number of them, torturing and even killing some of them. The Magistrate, though himself an instrument of the Empire, is opposed to raiding more of the land that belonged to the natives. He tells Colonel Joll that from his interactions with the natives who lived nomadic lives, he sees no danger of them attacking the Empire. He

speaks on behalf of them before officers of the Empire and informs them that they wish for an end to the spread of settlements on their land.

The natives of the land in this text want to repossess their land, and live the kind of nomadic lives they used to live before the colonizers arrived disrupting their cultures and traditions. Unable to contain himself any further after having lived as a magistrate at the settlement for more than twenty years, the Magistrate questions the colonizers and the settler population who have been treating the natives with contempt and disrespect. The Magistrate asserts that when border relations had been cordial with the natives, they had traded with each other amicably. The Magistrate, however, is always disheartened to see the behaviour of the settlers towards the natives. The natives would be cheated, shouted at and bullied in the markets. If the native women came along with the men for the trading business, they would be insulted and harassed by soldiers of the Empire. If any native gets drunk and lies down in the gutter, he would get kicked heavily by the soldiers or any of the settlers. This happens to the natives because they were held in deep contempt by the others. The Magistrate reiterates how challenging it had been for him to witness such behaviour for so many years:

> It is this contempt for the barbarians, contempt which is shown by the meanest ostler or peasant farmer, that I as magistrate have had to contend with for twenty years. How do you eradicate contempt, especially when that contempt is founded on nothing more substantial than differences in table manners, variations in the structure of the eyelid? (54)

In the text *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998), Anita Loomba states that "the simple binary opposition between colonisers and colonised" is "undercut by the fact that there are enormous cultural and racial differences within each of these categories as well as cross-overs between them" (91) highlighting how it is contradictory to make assumptions or attribute characteristics to a group of people on the basis of race. This statement is echoed in how the Empire classifies the natives as a homogenous people with the same features and characteristics, but the dissimilarities in the way of life of the different groups of native people is

highlighted by Coetzee in the text. For instance, there are the river people, the aboriginal inhabitants who have occupied the land much longer than the nomads who travel from one place to another with their flock. These river people live along the banks of the river in small groups and have nothing to do with the group of people who were supposedly staging an uprising against the Empire. The differences among these people were not recognized and acknowledged by the Empire who decidedly see everyone as a threat to them.

Though the Empire and its agents are adamant to portray the natives as barbaric or savage, the deep sense of community and fraternity that exist among them is reflected on an occasion where a group had been captured by Colonel Joll and his soldiers. When a stale loaf of bread was given to the oldest among the prisoners, he breaks the bread and passes around small lumps of it to the other prisoners. The natives are united among themselves and even extreme hunger does not make them act selfishly. Thus, they exhibit that they are more humane than the soldiers who mercilessly torture and punish their captives even without proof of misdemeanours. The Magistrate even asserts that he sometimes wishes the barbarians would rise up and teach them a lesson so that they would get the respect that they deserve. Coetzee uses the character of the Magistrate to lend voice to the barbarians when he tells officers of the special forces that though the Empire considers that part of the country as part of their dominion, as their outpost, as their settlement and as their market centre, the natives still do not think of that land as belonging to the Empire. To the natives, it does not matter that the Empire had taken ownership of the frontier for more than a hundred years, they are still seen as visitors. The Empire had built irrigation works, planted fields and built proper homes and put a wall around their town but their presence was regarded as transient by the natives. The Magistrate observes:

> There are old folk alive among them who remember their parents telling them about this oasis as it once was: a well-shaded place by the side of the lake with plenty of grazing even in winter. That is how they still talk about it, perhaps how they still see it, as though not one spadeful of earth had been turned or one brick laid on top of another. They do not doubt that one of these

> days we will pack our carts and depart to wherever it was we came from, that our buildings will become homes for mice and lizards, that their beasts will graze on these rich fields we have planted. You smile? Shall I tell you something? Every year the lake-water grows a little more salty. There is a simple explanation - never mind what it is. (54)

The Magistrate explains that the natives are aware of how the lake water becomes saltier every year and are counting on that to drive away the colonizers. They hope that when the water becomes too salty, the settlers would be forced to leave the settlement behind, unable to harvest crops and feed themselves. When Colonel Joll refuses to listen to the Magistrate and proceeds to torture the captured natives in an attempt to provoke information about uprisings against the Empire from them, the Magistrate suspects that the colonel does not really want to find out the 'truth'. Witnessing the behaviour of the soldiers under the orders of Colonel Joll, the Magistrate becomes disgusted by the Empire and its oppressive nature. Colonel Joll confronts him, and mocks him as having the ambition to "to make a name for [yourself] as the One Just Man, the man who is prepared to sacrifice his freedom to his principles" (124). Unable to contain his rage at the knowledge that the Magistrate had chosen to side with the barbarians over the Empire, Colonel Joll lashes out at the Magistrate and accuses him of fraternizing with the enemy. As Colonel Joll subsequently calls the barbarians a "well organized army", the Magistrate responds and tells the colonel that it is he who is the enemy:

> You are the enemy, you have made the war, and you have given them all the martyrs they need - starting not now but a year ago when you committed your first filthy barbarities here! History will bear me out! (125)

In the seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak investigates the manner in which western cultures perceive other cultures as needing their help. In this text, she writes of "white men saving brown women from brown men" to talk about white men abolishing the practice of sati or widow sacrifice in Hindu culture. White men attempt to justify their war against brown men by claiming to save brown women. In this text, Spivak highlights how men, whether

white or brown, remain decision makers. She uses the term subaltern to emphasize on the oppression and marginalization of women whose voices remain unheard even when it comes to the practice of sati. Whether or not they wish to practise sati remains unknown because men make decisions and impose those decisions on them. In a strikingly similar vein, the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* offers the native girl that had been left behind by her people work and a place to live in. He gives her no choice but to accept his offer as he tells her that vagrants are not permitted in the town and that she must have a place to live in. He knows that she had been tortured and raped by soldiers. Though he imagines that he is helping her, he also acknowledges that the distance between himself and the soldiers who had tortured her is "negligible". He feeds her and provides her with shelter and also uses her body. Though she had initially stiffened when he touches her intimately, she becomes more yielding as days pass. He knows that she must return to her people, but he also claims "until the marks on this girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let her go". The girl like the subaltern woman written about by Spivak, is not given the space to voice her wishes and desires. She has to live and act according to the wishes of the Magistrate who eventually decides to take her back to her own people. After the Magistrate undertakes a difficult journey with her and his soldiers amidst the wilderness in search of her people, unlike the widows written about by Spivak, the native girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is eventually accorded the freedom to decide whether she wants to go back to town and live with the Magistrate or continue on her journey to be reunited with her family. Here, Coetzee places the power to decide in her hands and she chooses to be reunited with her family. The Magistrate thinks he could give her a good life with him in the town and save her from being ostracized by her community as a result of the rape she had been subjected to, but he comes to understand that she does not want to be saved from her people.

When the Magistrate becomes subjected to the same kind of torture inflicted on the captured barbarians for having defied the Empire, readers are offered glimpses of what the barbarians had also gone through at the hands of the brutal soldiers of the Empire. After being tortured by soldiers, the Magistrate even wonders if there would

come a time when he would rather die than go on living. Rather like Mrs. Curren who gleans insightful knowledge about the oppression of blacks through her experiences, the Magistrate also experiences first-hand as to what the barbarians go through at the hands of the Empire's special forces. As the narrative progresses, Colonel Joll and his men leave and the Magistrate is once again a free man but his complicity as an instrument of the Empire weighed heavily on him. Seeing the injustice measured out towards the natives, he cannot help but feel a sense of shame and thinks to himself "When some men suffer unjustly . . . it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it" (152). He condemns the Empire for forcing itself and its history on the natives out in the frontier and expresses his desires to detach himself from the Empire:

> I wanted to live outside history. I wanted to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects. I never wished it for the barbarians that they should have the history of Empire laid upon them. How can I believe that that is cause for shame? (169)

As he recalls the events of the year, he is overtaken by a sense of incognizance as he exclaims: "I have lived through an eventful year, yet understand no more of it than a babe in arms. Of all the people of this town I am the one least fitted to write a memorial. Better the blacksmith with his cries of rage and woe" (169). In her essay titled "Barbaric Encounters: Rethinking Barbarism in C.O. Cavafy's and J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", Maria Boletsi writes:

> Barbarism and civilization are opposed and interdependent concepts. In this opposition, the notion of the barbarian operates as the constitute outside of civilization and feeds the superiority of the civilized. In terms of its etymology, the ancient Greek word barbarian is supposed to imitate the incomprehensible mumblings of the language of foreign peoples, sounding like "bar-bar" (or, as we would say today, "bla bla"). As such, it has a double implication: on a first level, it signifies a lack of understanding on the part of the other, since the language of the other is perceived as meaningless sounds. At the same time, it suggests an unwillingness to understand the other's

> language and thus to make the encounter with the other a communicative occasion. Consequently, the term barbarian entails a collective construction of the other in a way that helps define the civilized subject by itself-by specifying its negative limits. In this construction, the other is supposedly invalidated because it can never speak back and question its construction (its language would not be understood). The barbarian thus appears as an abjected outside. (2)

In the text, the representation of the native or the barbarian as the Other or the outsider in his own land is further explicitly emphasized during the torture of the Magistrate. Due to the extreme pain inflicted on him, the Magistrate roars and shouts for which he is mocked by the soldiers who call his screams "barbarian language" and derides the Magistrate as calling out to his barbarian friends. In this text the role of language in assertion and justification of dominion comes to the forefront. Though the Magistrate himself readily admits that he questions the methods used by the Empire and its agents to subdue the natives, he himself uses the term barbarian to refer to the natives. The text makes it clear that the Magistrate understands the negative connotations of the word barbarian as he chides Colonel Joll of committing "filthy barbarities" when he tortures the natives. Yet, the Magistrate continues to call the natives barbarians though he claims to be on their side several times. He also does not refer to the girl he rescued by her name and instead describes her as "that other girl with the blind face". Seth B. Pardick points out that this happens because the Magistrate "finds it impossible to accept the woman as she is" and that "she is incapable of being anything other than 'the Other' or the 'deficient body'" (47) to the Magistrate.

The concept of racial stereotyping which is a significant part of postcolonial studies is heavily explored in Coetzee's texts. The belief that natives are aggressive, violent and bestial comes into play in *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the settlers contend that a little girl had been raped by a barbarian. Though there is no evidence to suggest that it is indeed a barbarian who had committed the act of raping, the little girl's friends claim that they had seen a man running away and that they could identify him as a barbarian because of his "ugliness". The young children make the

assumption that the rapist is a barbarian because they had been taught to Other barbarians and associate them with aggressiveness, violence and bestiality. The racialist perspective of the Western world in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was invented with the Othering of non-white people, which also was supported by some scientists (Mountz 332) as mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Disgrace also offers a commentary on racial relations between the black and white communities of South Africa. Set in post-apartheid South Africa, the text is embroiled in racial tensions which often translate across in the form of violence. In his seminal text *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Franz Fanon writes that the process of decolonization is always a violent phenomenon as it is an attempt to change existing order in the world. He writes:

> Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances. (30)

In *Disgrace*, the process of transition from apartheid regime to democracy is marked with violence as power dynamics change. The text exemplifies the resistance of native people who seek retribution and take matters into their own hands. Lucy is brutally raped on her own farm by three black men while her father is severely wounded from the blows and beatings of the young men who left him to die after setting him on fire. They are also robbed of David's car and other belongings.

Lucy's rape becomes more complex as she refuses to report the rape to the police even after her father repeated asks her to do so. Frustrated at his constant nagging, she eventually tells him why she refuses to lay the charge for rape. She

believes that what had happened to her is a private matter and therefore her business alone. She believes so because, as she pointedly tells her father, they live in South Africa, a country where racially charged disturbances are frequent owing to the long history of colonization and apartheid. She is fully aware of racial tensions that have culminated out of hundreds and hundreds of years of oppression of the blacks by the white minority:

> It was so personal . . . It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was . . . expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them . . . I think they have done it before . . . At least the two older ones have. I think they are rapists first and foremost. Stealing things is just incidental. A side-line. I think they do rape . . . I think I am in their territory. They have marked me. They will come back for me. (157,58)

David offers her an answer and tells her that "[I]t was history speaking through them . . . A history of wrong". Both of them have no miscomprehensions about what the black population had to go through under the all-white government and that the act of raping Lucy has multiple layers to it as "[I]t came down from the ancestors". David urges Lucy to give up her farm and leave to start a new life elsewhere but Lucy is adamant about staying on. Pleading with his daughter to leave, David tells his daughter that staying on would be considered an invitation for the rapists to return, but Lucy tries to make him reconsider his line of thought by posing a question back at him:

> But isn't there another way of looking at it, David? What if . . . what if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves. (158)

In the essay "J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and the South African Pastoral", Rita Barnard and J. M. Coetzee write:

> In Coetzee's new South Africa, the urge to stake one's claim, to own, and to procreate is forcefully present. Hunger and denial are displaced by desire, and desire is figured . . . by way of plallic tropes - arrows, snakes, and the like . . . the novel's new black farmer - eager to shed humble roles of "garderner" and "dog-man" - is in every way a patriarch, a man who in the course of the novel builds himself a new house that "cast[s] a long shadow" and who schemes to ensure that his line will not only survive but dominate. (7)

David suspects that Lucy has decided not to charge the three men for rape because she wants to "make up for the wrongs of the past" and tells her that her way is not the way to do it. He questions her inactivity and declares, "If you fail to stand up for yourself at this moment, you will never be able to hold your head up again. You may as well pack your bags and leave" (133). However, Lucy stands her ground and refuses his advice. David Lurie is further devastated when he finds out that Lucy had been impregnated during the rape and is shocked to learn from her that she is keeping the child as she vehemently asserts to her father, "I have a life of my own . . . and in my life, I am the one who makes the decisions" (198).

David further finds his privileged life dismantling around him when Petrus proposes marriage with Lucy who decides to accept the proposal because it was the safest thing for her to do if she decides to stay on the farm as it is "too dangerous" for a woman to be on her own. Lucy understands that Petrus is not offering her a church wedding but rather is proposing an alliance with her. Lucy would contribute her land, while Petrus would take her in as part of his family, offering her protection. She is fully aware that it is safer to be a part of his establishment and that refusing his proposal would make her "fair game". She tells her father that Petrus is not a big man but is "big enough for someone small" like her. Lucy's only condition is that she keeps her house and he treats her child like his own. She is to become a tenant on his land. That the power dynamics had changed in post-apartheid South Africa truly hit home for both David and Lucy when they realized that regardless of how humiliating it is, they have to accept things as it is, and look towards the future with hope. On her decision to keep the child of her rapist and marry her former farm hand, Lucy acknowledges to her father:

> Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity . . . Yes, like a dog. (205)

Tired of the political turmoil around her and the way her life has turned out, Lucy is adamant to have "peace" around her and she is "prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace" (208). Through *Disgrace*, Coetzee projects black resistance which is an inevitable outcome of centuries of repression.

In the essay "Human Rights, Social Justice, and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", Elizabeth S Anker writes that *Disgrace* enacts "key philosophical and practical challenges to human rights discourse as well as to discrete rights enforcement" (234). She continues that the text "suspends the expectation that the law plays a determinate role in advancing justice and effectuating social restoration" (234). Though these lines have been written in the context of *Disgrace*, the same could be said of the other texts that have been selected for this study. Anker also notes when David Lurie had to sit in front of a disciplinary committee as a result of his sexual liaisons with Melanie Isaacs, his student, J.M. Coetzee draws some kind of parallel with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was set up by the Government of National Unity to help citizens with what happened under apartheid regime. The TRC was based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995 and was a court-like restorative justice body based in Cape Town. The first TRC hearing started in 1996 and was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The role of the commission was to bear witness to, record, and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, as well as offering reparation and rehabilitation to the victims. A register of reconciliation was also established so that ordinary South Africans who wished to express regret for past failures could also express their remorse.

Troy Urquhart highlights some important points of the TRC in his essay titled "Truth, Reconciliation, and the Restoration of the State: Coetzee's '*Waiting for the Barbarians*'":

> The justice that the TRC seeks for South Africa does not attempt to heal the victim at the expense of the perpetrator. Rather, the TRC's goal is to heal the perpetrator alongside the victim, to make the perpetrator a viable part of a new South African society that values both the victim and the perpetrator equally. First, the TRC is charged with creating "as complete a picture as possible" of the atrocities of apartheid by recording both "the perspectives of the victims and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible" for those atrocities. Second, the TRC serves to facilitate the "granting of amnesty" to those who "make full disclosure" of their involvement in human rights violations. Third, the TRC is to restore the "human and civil dignity" of the victims of atrocities "by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts" and "by recommending reparation measures." Finally, the TRC is to construct a narrative of apartheid based on its findings that provides as comprehensive an account as possible" and recommends "measures to prevent the future violations of human rights". (2)

Like many white citizens of South Africa coming forward to own their part in the oppression of the non-white citizens of South Africa before the TRC, many of the white characters in the select texts eventually come to realise their complicity in the oppression of the blacks and find themselves living with guilt and shame. Coetzee's texts may be read as a collision between "private and public; intellect and body; desire and love; and public disgrace or shame and the idea of individual grace or salvation" (Kossew 1).

The image of a pregnant Lucy waiting for the birth of her child of mixed race, and her determination to be "a good mother and a good person" to a child conceived out of a violent rape, her decision to give up her land and to make compromises to find a way to survive in the future may be seen as a symbol of change that Coetzee expects to see in South Africa. Just as Lucy hopes for "love to grow" in her for her future child, Coetzee's texts may be read as his attempt to show the way for a pragmatic approach to a new kind of life in post-apartheid South Africa. His texts provide hope for the future where there is restorative justice through its narrativization of trauma and oppression. The process of revealing racial conflicts in

South Africa through stories that lend voice to the oppressed is significant in the repair of the damage that had been caused by a long history of oppression.

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This chapter attempts to situate several key issues in feminist literary criticism in correspondence with how similar concerns are played out in the select texts. The select texts, albeit written by a male author, are examined for their portrayal of female characters and the treatment of female centric themes. A primary concern of feminism is the portrayal and representation of women in canonical texts which tend to establish gender stereotypes that limit women and their productivity through social construct. Since the inception of feminist criticism in the early nineteenth century, its key and theoretical stance is:

> The inequalities that exist between men and women are not natural but social, not pre-ordained but created by men so that they retain power. (Nayar 83)

Social and cultural structures such as religion, family, education and other forms of knowledge systems authorize the persistent fortification of this discrepancy. These structures continue to operate because women, throughout history, have been convinced of the destiny of their subordination by the very agents that marginalize them. The term marginalization may be described as the treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral. It is a "condition and a process that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society" (Alakhunova et al. 2). Noted feminist bell hooks also notes that "[T]o be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" in the preface of her text *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984).

The terms marginalization and women have been closely linked throughout history. Existing social norms and conventions have been known to restrict women to subaltern spaces in social, political and economic institutions. John McLeod draws an analogy between colonialism and patriarchy which invests power in men and marginalize women through political, material and imaginative systems (173). He states:

> Like colonialism, patriarchy manifests itself in both concrete ways (such as disqualifying women a vote) and at the level of imagination. It asserts certain representational systems which create an order of the world presented to

> individuals as ‘normal’ or ‘true’. Also like colonialism, patriarchy exists in the midst of resistances to its authority. (174)

This chapter studies several female characters in the four texts and investigates their portrayal in the light of existing theories on sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, exoticization, objectification, silencing as well as a few other key concepts. Three of the texts - *In the Heart of the Country, Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Age of Iron,* are narrated by female protagonists while *Disgrace* is narrated by a middle aged man. In an interview with Joanna Scott, Coetzee elaborates on the use of female voices for his narratives as a necessary trajectory to achieve a certain kind of voice: "character is voice, and voice is scene construction" (89) and claims that his characters are null without their voices and that they are coexistent with their voices. Responding to the question of what it means to take on a female voice, he comments:

> [I]s one, as a writer, at every level, sexed? Is there not a level where one is, if not presexual, then anterior to sex? First anterior to sex, then becoming sexed? At that level, or in that transition between levels, does one actually "take on" the voice of another sex? Doesn't one "become" another sex? (91)

The relations between men and women have been examined for depictions of gender tensions in this chapter, and the treatment of the woman’s body as a site of control and struggle is illustrated. The chapter provides a brief glimpse into the socio-political history of South Africa to situate the narratives into an inherently patriarchal setting as it argues that prevalent social norms have contributed to the marginalization of women. Both black and white women characters in the select texts are analysed to look for incidents of marginalization and the manner of marginalization. Coetzee, who is often regarded as a significant post-colonial writer in feminist literature unveils women characters with significant roles and it may be assumed that he employs them to mirror concepts that are at the heart of feminist theories and criticism. His fictions engage with female characters as “a typical solution to several issues he wants to reveal according to his own identity and social

persona" (Salih and Janoory) as the socio-political status of women in South Africa remains a recurrent theme in many of Coetzee's works.

In the essay "The Plight of Women and Children: Advancing South Africa's Less Privileged", Carol Bower writes that South Africa is "deeply conservative and patriarchal" (106) and further stresses:

> the patriarchal nature of South African society has an enormous impact on the lives of women and children in South Africa, contributing significantly to perceptions of the roles and rights of women and children, to high levels of sexual violence, and to the poverty and inequality that characterise their lives. (108)

Lloyd Vogelman and Gillian Eagle also note that:

> [o]ne of the most striking features of South African society is its stratification along class, race and gender lines . . . It seems that women generally bear the brunt of men's need to assert power. In the South African political economy where working-class, and particularly black men, daily experience themselves as oppressed and impotent, their frustration is likely to take expression in domination in another domain, i.e., in dominating women . . . Women are therefore subjected to dual oppression; indirectly they are subjected to men's anger in relation to their race and class oppression, and directly they become the focus of anger due to patriarchal structures. (214,215)

A notable number of existing texts on the condition of women in South Africa suggests that women have been marginalized and not placed on equal footing with their male counterparts. Even their history, struggle for freedom from oppression and gender equality were largely dismissed and were initially not acknowledged as legitimate in South African history. Penelope Hetherington notes that the writings of women's history began rather later in South Africa than in many other industrialized countries (245), partly because of the apartheid regime and the existence of a "dominant culture that is not receptive to the expression of ideas" (247). She states

her observations that developments in the writing of women's history in academia began only in the late 1970s as a result of growing African nationalism (245). The segregation of population on the basis of race also entails that the life experiences of black and white women are distinctly different, and a thorough understanding requires a separate exploration of their histories, adding to hindrances in documentation of the history of women.

Geoffrey E. Schneider, in his essay "The Development of the Manufacturing Sector in South Africa" states that the government of South Africa pursued "an active policy of import substitution to stimulate domestic manufacturing and state investment in key sectors (413)" between 1925 and 1973 which led to the growth of migrant labour system. The migrant labour system impacted the lives of black women as well as it encouraged more of them to participate in the work force both in the industrial towns and at home in the rural areas as their men left for better job opportunities leaving their homes in care of the womenfolk. Such developments gradually brought a change in the roles women were expected to play. Regardless of their subordinate position in the family and in the society, many African women fought to take charge of their lives. Such women formed groups to take on certain social roles and participate in the political movements for Africans but their efforts were usually not recognised as legitimate by their male counterparts. The fate of white women was relatively better, but they too had their share of struggles as they fought for equality. They were only allowed to vote in 1930 after a law was passed in their favour in the all-male, all white parliament. The Women's Enfranchisement Act, 1930 granted white women above the age of 21 the right to vote as well as stand for elections and they exercised their rights for the first time in the 1933 general elections. It must also be noted that this law was passed reluctantly by the male parliamentarians after a twenty-year tireless campaign by feminists who were dedicated to the cause. In 1933, the first female Member of Parliament, Leila Reitz was elected.

Political movements by black women also started cropping up. In 1954, the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) was founded by Lilian Ngoyi and other women. This multi racial anti- apartheid group rallied women to advocate

gender equality and women's rights. On 9 August, 1956, the Women's March was organized to protest the Apartheid Pass laws for black women which had been passed in 1952. About twenty thousand women participated in the march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria where the Prime Minister's office was located. They stood in silence for thirty minutes and presented a petition to the then Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom (Thompson 209). The petition demanded the revocation of the Apartheid Pass laws as they declared how the pass could incriminate and impact black families:

1. That homes will be broken up when women are arrested under pass laws

2. That children will be left uncared for, helpless, and mothers will be torn from their babies for failure to produce a pass

3. That women and young girls will be exposed to humiliation and degradation at the hands of pass searching policemen

4. That women will lose their right to move freely from one place to another. (Women's Petition, 9 August 1956)

Though the march in itself did not succeed in attaining its goals, it was a landmark in the history of women's struggle to fight oppression as it attracted international attention and prompted more women to become active in politics. Julia Wells notes that "[W]hen it was women who resisted, it was because the crisis reached into the inner sanctum of home and family life" (9). There were several attempts to silence and incapacitate the women who actively resisted against laws and systems that oppress and marginalize them. Many women activists lost their lives in the hands of the police while many more were imprisoned but that did not stop the movement of the women. Cherryl Walker opines that the anti-pass protests by women in the 1950s were indicators that they had thrown off the "shackles of the past" (49). The demonstrations that the women launched were, according to her, "probably the most successful and militant of any resistance campaign mounted at that time". She sees them as the "political highpoint of 1956, not only for the women who took part but for the entire Congress Alliance" (51). With the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of democracy in 1994, conditions improved for

women as they are no longer challenged by many of the oppressive laws of the apartheid regime. However, there remain many areas in which the fight for equality and better status in the society has to continue.

A study of Coetzee's texts shows that the theme of sexual harassment is a recurrent concern. Usually there occurs a vast gap in the perception of sexual harassment among men and women, especially as the concept has evolved over time. While men have also been victims of sexual harassment, the majority of victims are women. Sexual harassment may be defined as:

> Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, constitute sexual harassment when: 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. (US EEOC 1980 qtd in Howard 59-60)

Feminist views are that victims of sexual harassment are typically "members of oppressed identity groups" while harassers generally share a characteristic which is their "maleness" and, thus, they act out of "their possession of power" (Patai 60). It is a form of marginalization of women that has its roots in gendered and patriarchal societies. It may be verbal or non-verbal, and can cause psychological problems in the victims, often resulting in mental illnesses such depression, anxiety, fear, sleep problems and post-traumatic stress disorder. Feminist theorists such as Harriet Samuels have argued that sexual harassment should be seen in the context of women's diminished role in the patriarchal society and must be analysed in a similar way to other feminist concerns, such as rape and domestic violence (26). It is characteristic of the gender inequality and the tolerance of hostility against women. Feminists are also of the opinion that "men are heavily socialized to use aggression

against women as an acceptable way to demonstrate power and male dominance" (Henry 272).

In Coetzee's *Disgrace, Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Age of Iron* sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape are recurring themes. They are manifested in multiple ways, with the perpetrators being male and the victims being female protagonists. In the incidents where women are victimized by men across the three narratives, there is a power imbalance wherein the male perpetrators assume a position of control over their victims. In *Disgrace* David regularly visits a middle eastern sex worker named Soraya. She breaks off all contact with him after they run into each other at the market while she was out shopping with her children. Unwilling to accept that she no longer wants to deal with him, he hires a private detective to find out her address and telephones her. She tells him to stop harassing her at her own house and demands that he never calls her again. In the book *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myth of Orient* (1994) Kabbani highlights how women from the East are often produced as a "figure of licentiousness, and Western heterosexual male desire" and were objectified as "exotic creatures who epitomised and promised the assumed excessive sexual delights of the Orient". Coetzee, likewise, demonstrates how western men often perceive eastern women as objects of fantasy, fixating upon their differences, thereby necessarily Othering them in the process through the character of David.

The incident with Soraya does not stop David from pursuing women who do not desire him. He lures a student thirty years younger than him named Melanie Isaacs into sleeping with him in spite of her apparent lack of interest. She rejects his advances initially but he finds out her contact number and address from a confidential filing cabinet at the university where he teaches her. He reaches out to her again and has sex with her though she is "passive throughout" the act. He understands that he has committed a forbidden act and reprimands himself internally but does not stop from continuously going after her. As he continues his affair with her, he realizes that he had lost control over her as a teacher due to her repeated absence in his class but whatever is left of his shame reminds him that he is guilty first even as he thinks:

> She is behaving badly, getting away with too much; she is learning to exploit him further. But if she has got away with much, he has got away with more; if she is behaving badly, he has behaved worse. (28)

Eventually David is exposed when Melanie files a harassment charge against him. Called before an inquiry committee, he admits, “I took advantage of my position vis-à-vis Ms Issacs” (54). David’s act of attempting to exert authority over Soraya and Melanie may be seen as stemming from the "unexamined notions of male power and predatoriness" that is discussed in feminist studies (Patai 59). Catharine A. MacKinnon writes that sexual violation of women is pervasive but almost invisible as it is “contained by internalized and structural forms of power” (1). She believes that it has become institutional as it is linked with “men's control over women's material survival, as in the home or on the job, or over women's learning and educational advancement in school” (1). Coetzee uses the incident between Melanie and David as a vehicle to unveil the lack of gravity with which sexual harassment is often critiqued, further marginalizing women from public spaces as they are left unsafe. Though the university has a standard set of procedures with which perpetrators of sexual harassment can be incriminated, most of David’s male colleagues are sympathetic to his case, blaming his acts of violation as something committed in a moment of fragility:

> We have our weak moments, all of us, we are only human. Your case is not unique. We would like to find a way for you to continue with your career. (52)

The text reveals that his male colleagues are even willing to let him off as lightly as possible. The female members of the inquiry committee, however, staunchly demand that he express contrition for his case to be accepted in mitigation. David apologizes for having exploited his position but refuses to express regret claiming that he was “enriched by the experience”. The light hearted manner in which the situation is treated by David and his male colleagues is symptomatic of the fundamental problems with which sexual harassment is being perceived in societies that accommodate the male experience over the female experience. Sexual harassment may be seen as an expression of male power over the subjugated female and it is

often justified or let off lightly as the power structure is held in place by men who have agency over it. Hannah Arendt writes "[P]ower corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together" (44). Though power in itself is not a structure, the manifestations of power may create power structures that influences individuals. Arendt's postulation on power corresponds with how Coetzee demonstrates that in the case of the sexual harassment perpetrated by David, his male friends attempt to situate power over the female by siding with him.

In feminist theory, rape is approached as a form of control which discloses an unequal society where rape and other manifestations of male violence on women are evidences of reinforcement of the patriarchal system. Karen Rich maintains that rape and violence against women are principal to the control of women and their bodies as advancements of women in public areas is subverting power structures:

> Patriarchy is . . . a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure or through ritual, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. It does not necessarily imply that no woman has power, or all women in a given culture may not have certain powers. (41)

Sexual assault in the form of rape figures prominently in Coetzee's texts with three of his female characters being subject to the violent and oppressive act. Lucy is raped by three black men in *Disgrace,* Magda by her servant Hendrik in *In the Heart of the Country* and an unnamed barbarian woman by soldiers of the colonizing Empire in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The rape committed in these texts are embroiled in power relations in which male characters assume superiority over the female ones by marginalizing them through physical violence. Coetzee's treatment of rape in *Disgrace* is representative of the power dynamics that was slowly being reverted in post-apartheid South Africa. Here Lucy is raped by three black men, one of whom is related to her former farm hand and current co-proprietor of land, Petrus. According

to Lucy, Petrus had become a "man of substance" by Eastern Cape standards, especially after he became a land owner with the assistance of the government through land grants. Petrus' rise in the society is a reminder of how things have changed in the country with power dynamics being toppled in the post-apartheid era where the formerly marginalized communities were slowly being emancipated from different kinds of segregation against them.

In an essay, Oyewumi draws a parallel between colonization and the subjugation of women. She writes that the colonizer differentiated between male and female bodies and acted accordingly (58). In *Disgrace*, the differentiation between a male and female body is explored. Both Lucy and her father David are attacked by three men with David nearly losing his life after he was set on fire. The three intruders however acted differently with David and Lucy. Though David too suffered greatly and could have lost his life if he had not been able to put out the fire, he avoids rape because he is a man. Lucy, on the other hand, is traumatized in every possible way as she is physically violated through the act of rape. The attack on the father and daughter duo is conceived differently by David and Lucy. While David makes up his mind to report the whole incident to the police, Lucy does not want to report the rape and tells her father to report only the theft and attack on him. David implores on her to report the rape but she does not change her mind, and steadfastly chooses to remain silent about the violence committed on her body. David thinks about how the intruders would find out through newspapers and gossip that only the robbery and assault were reported to the police and not the rape:

> It will dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. Too ashamed, they will say to each other, too ashamed to tell, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit. (110)

He wonders if Lucy is ready and willing to give them that sense of victory over her revealing that he does not understand how the incident truly affects her. Lucy eventually finds out that she has been impregnated by one of her rapists and decides to keep the baby. Her decision not to terminate her pregnancy even though her father pleads with her to do so is telling of the difficult choices that were ahead of her. She

is well aware that as a white woman living alone on the farm, she is vulnerable to further attacks.

In times of conflict and political unrest, women turn out to be the worst sufferers, creating a close link between the politics of gender and all forms of oppression. The act of controlling women and their bodies through violent means is a form of marginalization. The marginalization of women can be analysed from the concept of power as put forth by eminent theorists and scholars like Foucault and Gramsci. Foucault understands power in terms of "strategies" which are produced through the concatenation of the power relations that exist throughout society, wherever people interact. Whenever an attempt is made to influence somebody, that is power, according to Foucault. Gramsci looks at power in terms of hegemony in which the dominant class exert control over group of people through moral persuasion and consent. Power is central to feminist theory and the three main ways in which feminist scholars have conceptualized power may be categorized as follows - as a resource to be (re)distributed, as domination, and as empowerment.

Lucy's decision to continue her life as before shocks her father who believes it unsafe to do so. When David implores on her again to lay charges with the police, she tells him that she does not believe the rape is a matter to be contested publicly in a place like South Africa. It is clear that the political transition that South Africa was going through had its consequences that weighed heavily on women like Lucy who turned out to be the biggest victims regardless of whether they are black or white. Coetzee's view on the concept of retributive violence is exposed through the words of Lucy who claims:

> as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not.
> It is my business, and mine alone . . . This place being South Africa. (112)

David finds Petrus' absence from the farm during the attack suspicious but decides not to push the matter further with his daughter. Meanwhile Lucy goes

through a difficult time after the traumatic incident. She mostly keeps to herself and avoids expressing herself, showing no interest in anything around her. She spends her days lying on her bed, staring into space and looking at old magazines. Meanwhile when David tells Petrus of the attack, Petrus replies, "I heard. It is very bad, a very bad thing. But you are all right now (160)." Both David and Lucy are far from being all right both physically and psychologically, but the trauma they had been through is ignored and dismissed and only the fact that they survived is taken into account by Petrus. It is important to remember here that though David and Lucy had been traumatized by their attackers, it was their attackers who had been traumatized by apartheid and its systematic discrimination towards the black people. Their aggressiveness towards the father and daughter is itself a traumatic response to what they had been subjected to. Amy Novak writes:

> The traumatic legacy of colonialism is not only evident in large-scale events of history but also in the daily private lives of citizens. (34)

The observations made by Petrus reflects how people like him who had been subjugated under the apartheid regime do not have the luxury to worry about feelings and emotions as fighting for survival was an everyday job. Petrus asks David if Lucy would go to the market the next day with her produce as she could easily lose her stall if she does not. When David relays the question to Lucy, she tells him of her unwillingness and David understands:

> She would rather hide her face, and he knows why. Because of the disgrace. Because of the shame. That is what their visitors have achieved; that is what they have done to this confident, modern young woman. Like a stain the story is spreading across the district. Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for. (115)

Though Lucy is a white woman and belongs to the privileged community under the apartheid regime, her being a woman placed her in a disadvantaged position thereby marginalizing her. Though the social hierarchy would place a white woman over a black man, she was dominated and silenced by black men who exerted

their power over her. Maria Lopez writes that *Disgrace* "makes a clear opposition between Lucy's way of coping with her rape in the rural context, and the sexual abuse suffered by Melanie in Cape Town, an urban context in which women can more easily turn to institutions and to the law in order to protect themselves" (925).

That rape victims often become silenced especially when they have no faith in the systems that are supposed to protect them is further expounded upon in the text when one day Petrus invites David and Lucy to a party to celebrate the land ownership transfer from Lucy to David. At the party, Lucy sees one of the men who had attacked them while she is dancing and trying to have fun. She asks David to leave with her but unable to contain himself, David approaches the young man who vehemently denied having been one of the intruders. Petrus interjects and claims that the young man knows nothing of the incident, and since Lucy is not willing to confirm and stand by David's accusations, both father and daughter leave the party. When David tries to call the police, Lucy stops him saying that the evening will be destroyed for Petrus who was not to be blamed for the attack much to David's astonishment.

In her essay "Rape and Silence in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", Linda Melkner Moser writes that silence has long surrounded the violence suffered by women and children at the hands of men. She writes of battered spouses' claims to have fallen down stairs and beaten children maintaining that their bruises are their own doing. She further talks about rape victims telling themselves that it was probably their own fault and they she never should have dressed differently (6). Moser continues that as long as a society allows silence to shroud certain types of crimes, that society is, to a certain extent, culpable as cultural response to sexual violence is related to the cultural scripts existent in the society in question (8).

It is apparent that Lucy has been silenced by the men and forced to humbly accept her fate as she defends Petrus and tells her father that calling the police would be wrong. As David thinks about his daughter's future, he knows that she would have to leave the farm in the long run. When Petrus comes to borrow tools and ask for David's assistance in laying the pipes the next day, David asks about the young

man's name and where he could be found so that he could make a report to the police. But Petrus refuses to disclose any information except that the young man was not yet eighteen and could not be sent to jail. When David tells Petrus that Lucy was not safe as long as thugs walked free without paying for their crimes, Petrus responds "Lucy is safe her . . . It is all right. You can leave her, she is safe . . . I will protect her" (139).

Though her father tries to persuade her to leave the countryside, Lucy had made up her mind to stay on at the farm. In a state of emotional unrest, she wonders if her rapists see her as owing something and conceive of themselves as debt collectors. She tries to make sense of what had happened to her personally and understands the gender conflict that happens between men and women:

> Hatred . . . When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me any more. Maybe, for men, hating the woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange - when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, pull all your weight on her - isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood - doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder? (158)

The text situates Lucy's rape in "a delimited context in which it acquires a significance it would not have in a different place" (Lopez 925). T.F. Strode defines the rape as "a proprietary act - it is a taking possession of her body by black males in a particular geographical zone who act as if by a right of ownership" (225) in his text *The Ethics of Exile: Colonialism in the Fiction of Charles Brockden Brown and J.M. Coetzee* (2005). Lucy, however, takes the matter into her hands, and refuses to give up ownership of her body. This may be seen as a subversion of the power dynamics that had been forced on her by her rapists. Though Lucy's silence and her decision to go on with her life may be seen as an act of surrendering, to Lucy, it is an act of defiance. She tells her father, "If I leave the farm now I will leave defeated, and will taste that defeat for the rest of my life" (161).

Another important concern in feminist studies is the concept of objectification which Coetzee has explored in his texts through the characters of David and Lucy's friend Bev Shaw. During the course of his stay with Lucy, Bev had come to be one of the pivotal figures in David's life as he helps her at her clinic for sick animals. One Monday, they engage in physical intimacy without "passion, but without distaste either" (150). Though David had always thought of Bev as unattractive, he does not shy away from sleeping with her when opportunity presented itself. Once they are done with the act, David thinks to himself "after the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs, this is what I have come to" and even struggles to accept that he will have to get used to "even less than this" (150). David's apparent distaste for women who were close to his age and women who no longer have youthful bodies is clearly indicative of how he views women as sexual objects more than anything else. However, his obsession with physical appearances does not stop him from sleeping with Bev as he craves for sexual connection. Though Bev is the one who contacts David and asks him to come to the clinic, it only happened after David made the initial move by touching her lips during a tense moment.

David's treatment of women may be identified as objectification, a notion that is pivotal to feminist theory. Objectification may be described as the action of degrading someone to the status of a mere object and though both men and women can be objectified, it is widely accepted that women are more often the victim of objectification. In 1995, Martha Nussbaum identifies seven features that contribute to the idea in which a person may be objectified:

1. instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;

2. denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self determination;

3. inertness: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;

4. fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;

5. violability: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;

6. ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);

7. denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

In 2009, Rae Langton added three more features to Nussbaum's list:

8. reduction to body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;

9. reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;

10. silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak.

The theme of objectification runs through the texts *In the Heart of the Country* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* as well. The Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* initially rejects a barbarian girl as a lover in his bed because of her physical appearance. A middle-aged man himself, he is trapped by unrealistic standards that have been set for women with regards to their physical appearance. These are ways in which women, especially ones that may not meet such standards, are further marginalized. The Magistrate admits that though he has the girl, willing and ready for him in his bed, he was initially repulsed by the sight of her:

> So I begin to face the truth of what I am trying to do: to obliterate the girl. I realise that if I took a pencil to sketch her face I would not know where to start. Is she truly so featureless? With an effort I concentrate my mind on her. I see a figure in a cap and heavy shapeless coat standing unsteadily, bent forward, straddle-legged, supporting itself on sticks. How ugly, I say to

> myself. My mouth forms the ugly word. I am surprised by it but I do not resist: she is ugly, ugly. (50)

In this text, the Magistrate also talks about a girl that he sometimes visits a girl for sexual gratification. He says that he has known her for a year and that he visits her about twice a week and claims that he has developed a "quiet affection" for her which is, according to him, the "best that can be hoped for between an aging man and a girl of twenty" (23). He also admits that he has thought about asking her to live with him but has refrained from doing so. Rather like David in *Disgrace*, the Magistrate, also an aging man, is seen engaging with women who may be said to be beneath him socially and financially, and thus, women who do not have the luxury of rejecting him.

The objectification of women and its psychological impact on women is also scrutinized through the protagonist Magda. In her text *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), Mary Daly talks of "male approval desirous" which is a tendency to seek validation from being considered attractive and worthy by men. Magda too, as the text, suggests is not free of it. In one of the passages, she tells Anna that she too would like a man but it not possible as she has "never pleased anyone enough" because she has never been pretty. In another long passage, she explores ways in which she might transform herself into a sexually desirable woman. Though she claims that it does not give her pleasure to look into a mirror, she does so and is extremely critical of her appearance:

> The mirror. Inherited from my long-lost mother . . . It gives me no pleasure to pore over reflections of my body . . . how thickly the hair grows between my eyes, and wonder whether my glower, my rodent glower, to mince no words, I have no cause to love this face, might not be cosmetically tempered if I plucked out some of that hair with tweezers, or even all of it in a bunch, like carrots, with a pair of pliers thereby pushing my eyes apart and creating an illusion of grace and even temper. And might I not soften my aspect too if I released my hair from its daytime net and pins . . . And might I not be less ugly if I did something about my teeth, of which I have too many, by sacrificing some to give the others space to grow in, if I am not too old for

> growth? How equably I contemplate pulling out teeth: many things I fear but pain does not seem to be one of them. I would seat myself (I say to myself) in front of the mirror, clench the jaws of the pliers on a condemned tooth, and tug and worry till it came out. Then I would go on to the next one. And having done the teeth and the eyebrows I would go on to the complexion. (27)

Though Magda is the mistress of her household and the farm, she continuously marginalizes herself through her self-criticism. In "Cinderella's Mothers: J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*", Sheila Roberts suggests that Coetzee explores this state with "bleak humour" with the humour arising from Magda's "ironic awareness of her physical shortcomings". Roberts continues to suggest that Coetzee does this with the intention to bring to attention "women's dislike of their own bodies, a dislike that seldom seems to agitate men about theirs". (25) As she minutely examines all her flaws and thinks of ways to make herself more attractive, Magda is obviously not alone in her desire to find validation. In her text *The Beauty Myth* published in 1990, Noami Wolf points out that a thirty-three billion-a-year diet industry, a twenty billion cosmetics industry, a three hundred million cosmetic surgery industry and a seven billion pornography industry have arisen from "the capital made out of unconscious anxieties" (17). Though women have succeeded in fighting against many oppressive legal and material obstacles in their path through the ages, unrealistic beauty standards continue to haunt them.

As depicted earlier in the chapter, marginalization and women are terms that are closely linked because of existing patriarchal norms that continue to see women as less than men. Though, in the context of South Africa, men are also victims of various agencies of oppression, it is the womenfolk who bear the brunt of all kinds of oppression. While black men are themselves also victims of colonialism and apartheid, the patriarchal nature of African societies entails that the black women face double colonization or dual oppression under the black men and the white population. Whether it is Soraya being stalked against her wishes, or Melanie Isaacs being lured into sex by a man who holds power over her, or Anna being lured into sex in exchange for brandy for her husband, or the barbarian girl being kept captive

by the colonizers, it is clear that Coetzee uses these women characters to explore the many ways in which women have been marginalized through history. In his texts, the desire to "penetrate is equated with a position of power and with the desire to exert either spatial, sexual or epistemological mastery, these three dimensions often going together, and often associated with European colonization and Western imperialism" (Lopez 928).

Feminist discourses have explored that in patriarchal set ups, women are often seen as "a means by which the male line of the family can be preserved" (McLeod 178). Magda echoes similar thoughts as she implies that her father desires a son but his wife failed to provide him an heir. Her father wanted a son and was unable to forgive his wife because she could not produce a male heir for him. She died while giving birth to Magda who blames her father for her mother's death. Therefore, the daughter leads a lonely childhood with an absent father to whom she herself has been an absence all her life. She calls herself "a zero, null, a vacuum towards which all collapses inward, a turbulence, muffled, grey, like a chill draft eddying through the corridors, neglected, vengeful" instead of being the "womanly warmth at the heart" of their house (2-3). Magda, however, seems prepared to settle for plainness as long as she finds a man to marry:

> But what a joy it would be to be merely plain, to be a plain placid empty-headed heiress anxious not to be left on the shelf, ready to commit herself body and soul to the first willing fellow to pass by, a pedlar even, or an itinerant teacher of Latin, and breed him six daughters, and bear his blows and curses with Christian fortitude, and live a decent obscure life instead of leaning on an elbow watching myself in the mirror in an atmosphere of gathering gloom and doom, if my bones tell me alright. (28)

Magda believes that with her father out of the way she could form genuine relationships with the servants who are the only people she comes into contact with in her isolated life on the farm. Magda resists against patriarchal culture but she finds herself trapped in it time and again. As both colonizer and colonized, Magda is complicit in creating her condition. She asserts that the land is full of spinsters like

her who are “lost to history, blue as roaches” in their “ancestral homes, keeping a high shine on the copperware and laying in jam” (3). She struggles to find a voice for herself, and a space where she can keep her legacy alive even as she calls herself an “angry spinster in the heart of nowhere”.

Magda’s internal monologue becomes bleak as she pictures herself willingly married to the first available man so that she will not remain a spinster her whole life. The picture gets bleaker as she imagines herself being beaten by her husband when she fails to bear him a son after giving birth to six daughters. She seems to accept that violence is to be expected by a woman if she fails to produce a male heir. Magda’s vision of a marriage is influenced by what she had seen of her parents’ marriage. She is clearly uncomfortable around her father and says that “[W]hen he leaves we women all relax” (40).

Despite her marginality as the only white person on the farm and though she desired respite from her solitude, her position as a white landowner and the power she asserts by virtue of it makes Magda complicit to the oppression of her fellow women. Her ambiguous status as "colonial daughter of the colonies," places her in the space between colonizer and colonized. When she finds her father in bed with Anna, Hendrik’s wife, she blames her though she knew it was her father who had used his powers to coerce Anna to sleep with him:

> What have you been up to here in the house? You slut! You filth! Look what a mess you’ve caused! It’s your fault, all this mess is your fault! But one thing I tell you, you get out today, you and Hendrik, I am finished with you! And stop crying, it’s too late to cry, you should have cried yesterday, it won’t help today! Where are your clothes? Put your clothes on, don’t stand naked in front of me, put your clothes on and get out, I don’t want to see you again! (92)

When Anna pleads with her to protect her from her husband, she realizes that in spite of the resentment, she is “a woman among women” and decides to protect her from her husband. When Hendrik screams “I’ll kill you!” in a fit of anger and begins to punch and kick at his wife rhythmically declaring “If there were a stick to

hand he would be using it" (93), Magda intervenes to protect her. It becomes even more glaring how black women are marginalized by both their white masters and the male figures in their lives. Anna had no choice but to obey the wishes of her master and she still had to pay for the wrath of her husband as well for no fault of hers. Coetzee also treads on the subject of marital rape as Hendrik, in a heated rage forces himself on his wife soon after the incident much against the wishes of his wife.

Magda murders her father in hopes of freedom but marginalizes herself further and fails to dismantle the patriarchal set up on the farm as she soon learns that she is not equipped to take care of a farm. When Hendrik asks her to pay them for their labour, she realizes how utterly helpless she was as her father had never taught her financial matters:

> What do I know about money? Not in all my life have I had to touch a coin larger than a sixpence. Where am I going to lay my hands on money? Where did my father keep it? In a hole in his mattress, soaked in blood, burned by now to ashes? In a tobacco-tin under the floor? Under lock and key in the post office? How am I ever going to get hold of it? Did he make a will? Did he leave it to brothers and sisters and cousins I have never heard of? (116 – 117)

Unable to procure money to pay her workers for their services, she angers Hendrik who rapes her despite her repeated appeal for him to stop. She resigns to the act and accepts it as her fate:

> This is my fate, this is a woman's fate. I cannot do more than I have done . . . It is too late now, things will follow on from a beginning to an end. I must simply endure until finally I am left alone and can begin to rediscover who I am, putting together, in the time of which there is blessedly so much here, the pieces that this unusual afternoon in my life is disarranging. (132)

Hendrik continues to come to her bed at night and she grows to crave his presence even as she wonders if Anna was aware of their tryst. Though she was the mistress and him her servant, she becomes eager to please him and makes an appeal to him to show her some tenderness but Hendrik repeatedly denies her that. He refuses to let

her light a candle and she starts wondering if it is because she has "no beauty to lure him on with". She wonders to herself, "Perhaps that is why he will not allow a candle, perhaps he thinks he will be put off by the sight of me. I do not know what pleases him . . . (138)" As the affair continues, Magda repeatedly tries to develop some sort of friendship so that there could be "a little peace" between them but Hendrik remains firm in his refusal, "I am humiliated; sometimes I think it is my humiliation he wants" (139). In the essay "Can We Be Friends Here? Visitation and Hospitality in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*", Maria Lopez writes that Hendrik's rape of Magda is "symptomatic of the partial reversal of the mistress-servant situation" (936).

It is clear that women, regardless of their colour, are not considered capable of taking care of a farm, or having proper authority of any kind. Fearing that he would be blamed for the master's absence, Hendrik tells Magda that he and Anna will be leaving to start life anew in the Cape. She tries to convince him to stay by reiterating that she would protect them at all costs and gets personal with him as she asks why he could never be pleased by her:

> I am not simply one of the whites, I am I! I am I, not a people. Why have I to pay for other people's sins? You know how I live here on the farm, totally outside human society, almost outside humanity! . . . You know what they call me, the witch of Agterplaas! Why should I side with them against you? I am telling you the truth! What more will I have to do before you will believe I am telling the truth? Can't you see that you and Anna are the only people in the world I am attached to? What more do you want? Must I weep? Must I kneel? Are you waiting for the white woman to kneel to you? Are you waiting for me to become your white slave? Tell me! Speak! Why do you never say anything? Why is it that you take me every night if you hate me? Why won't you even tell me if I do it right? How am I to know? How am I to learn? Who must I ask? Must I ask Anna? Must I really go and ask your own wife how to be a woman? How can I humiliate myself any further? Must the white woman lick your backside before you will give her a single smile? (147)

It is rather clear that Magda is unable to assess situations from beyond her narrow perspective. In spite of her repeated claims for a desire to connect with them, she does not understand the real plight of black people who are continuously subjected to all kinds of cruelty and injustice in the hands of white men. Hendrik, meanwhile, is fully aware that if people come to learn of the master's death, it would not matter that it was Magda who shot him. It would be Hendrik who is blamed and penalized for it because that was how things work under a system that favours one race over the other. When Hendrik and Anna leave, Magda realizes that social relationships have failed her but she also knows that she was not "made to live alone":

> I need people to talk to, brothers and sisters or fathers and mothers, I need a history and a culture, I need hopes and aspirations, I need a moral sense and a teleology before I will be happy, not to mention food and drink. (148,49)

She hears voices that speak to her "out of machines that fly in the sky" (156) and they speak to her in Spanish. She claims to understand what is being communicated to her though she does not speak Spanish. She reasons that she is able to understand because the words are "tied to universal meanings" (157). She attempts to communicate back by writing messages in faux Spanish in white stones arranged in the veld. Throughout the narrative presented by Magda, the line between reality and imagination is blurry as Magda is seen conversing with her father again towards the end of the text. Multiple accounts which conflict with one another are provided by her on the same events, and nothing she says can be trusted. Yet she tries to claim sanity as she herself asserts that she cannot be "deluded" because she thinks "so clearly".

The marginalization of women is further delineated through the Magistrate and the barbarian woman in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The text takes care to inform its readers that the Magistrate feels "pained" when he sees the barbarians being "lazy, immoral, filthy, stupid" because such qualities confirm the "settlers' litany of prejudice". Meanwhile, he also believes that "civilization" can corrupt "barbarian values" and lead to the creation of "dependent people" (41). He claims to be opposed to civilization and conducts his administrative duties accordingly. He

even gets into trouble with Colonel Joll, an officer of the Third Bureau for the help he extended towards prisoners whom he believed were unnecessarily detained and punished. However, with what may be construed to be a confession of his guilt, he makes an acknowledgement: “I say this who now keep a barbarian girl in my bed” (41).

It is imperative to note here that even a man who may be considered morally superior to his fellow colonizers in his actions towards the barbarians behaves questionably with women. The Magistrate comes across a woman who begs near the barracks on her own. Looking at her straight black eyebrows and glossy black hair, he identifies her as a barbarian. Upon enquiry, he finds out that she is one of the barbarians captured and jailed by Colonel Joll but had been left behind by her group upon their release from prison because she had been beaten by the guards who broke her legs and impaired her vision rendering her incapable of lengthy journeys with her people. He gives orders to bring her into his quarters where her offers her work around the house so that she would not have to beg for her living. She rejects his proposal and leaves but he goes looking for her again after a day and finds her. Her brings her back home with him and tells her “[T]his is not what you think it is” (29). He sees that her lips are clenched shut and imagines that she is not ready to listen to him as well. Acutely aware that she would not want to have anything to do with old men, he walks around her, talking about the mandates of the Empire for people who do not have permanent settlements even though he was “sick” of “himself” for doing so. He then affirms to himself that the distance between himself and her torturers was “negligible”. He asks her to show him her feet which were heavily bandaged to see what the prisoners had done to her. As he takes off her boots, she “neither helps nor hinders” him (29).

> I feed her, shelter her, use her body, if that is what I am doing, in this foreign way. There used to be moments when she stiffened at certain intimacies; but now her body yields when I nuzzle my face into her belly or clasp her feet between my thighs. She yields to everything. (32)

The Magistrate, like colonizers do of their colonies, feels a sense of ownership of the girl and he admits to himself, “It has been growing more and more

clear to me that until the marks on this girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her (33)" He repeatedly questions her so that he could have a proper picture of the torture she was subjected to but his queries were not dignified with answers:

> What did they do to you? . . . She shrugs and is silent.
>
> What don't you want to tell me? . . . She shakes her head.
>
> What do you feel towards the men who did this? . . . I am tired of talking. (43, 44)

Though the Magistrate repeatedly fails to unravel the mystery of the girl and what had happened to her, he does not impose his own voice on her. He patiently waits for her to open up enough to share her story without putting pressure on her. Her unwillingness to talk about the matter does not make him imagine and make up stories to fill the gap between what he was aware of. He respects her silence and in turn shows that he is ready to live with differences between them and without fully understanding each other. Maria Boletsi states that the "waiting" of the novel's title could also then refer to the "process of waiting for the other to speak without having to use words that have been chosen for her. Therefore, the girl's silence - and the Magistrates patient waiting for it to end - gives her agency" (80).

However, when he asks her why she was with him, she directly tells him it was because there is "nowhere else to go" for somebody in her situation (43). When he asks if she had been with other men, she tells him that she had no choice but to do as they desire for her survival, "I did not have a choice. That was how it had to be" (58). Though he does not force himself on her, he realizes that she was still as much a prisoner now with him as she was before when other men had her. Accepting her fate, she quickly adapts to life with him and does not complain about discomforts. He wonders at her ability to adapt so smoothly and tells himself that "she submits because of her barbarian upbringing" but he realizes that he does not know anything about barbarian upbringings (60).

As he comes to learn and accept that she would never truly reciprocate his growing attachment of her, he knew he had to take her back to her people where she could perhaps lead a happier life after everything she had been through. During the journey, the Magistrate gets to know the girl better than he ever did during her stay with him. Out in the open and in the company of other men he realizes that she had a cheerful personality and could handle herself brilliantly though she was the only woman in the company of men:

> I am surprised by her fluency, her quickness, her self possession. I even catch myself in a flush of pride: she is not just the old man's slut, she is a witty, attractive young woman! Perhaps if from the beginning I had known how to use this slap- happy joking lingo with her we might have warmed more to each other. But like a fool, instead of giving her a good time I oppressed her with gloom. Truly, the world ought to belong to the singers and dancers! Futile bitterness, idle melancholy, empty regrets! (68)

When the expedition reached its final destination, he gives her the choice to either back with him or be free. She refuses to go back with him and tells him "I do not want to go back to that place" (78). He understands that she had made up her mind to leave and go back to her people. Regina Janes writes that the Magistrate who was "initially complicit with the torturer, becomes once tortured, the only source of order and civil life as the novel ends, entering the suspended life of waiting for the barbarians" (111). The Magistrate is portrayed as a man of conscience and yet, Coetzee takes care to remind readers that he is not much different from other men who see women as objects of pleasure. The Magistrate asks himself, "How can I believe that a bed is anything but a bed, a woman's body anything but a site of joy? (48) as he narrates his sexual conquests of the native women:

> I remember how in the first years of my appointment here I used to roam the obscurer quarters of the town toward dusk, shadowing my face in my cloak; how sometimes a restless wife, leaning over the half-door with the hearthfire gleaming behind her, would answer my gaze without flinching; how I would fall into conversation with young girls promenading in twos and threes, buy

> them sherbet, then perhaps lead one away into the darkness to the old granary and a bed of sacks. If there was anything to be envied in a posting to the frontier, my friends told me, it was the easy morals of the oases, the long scented summer evenings, the complaisant sloe-eyed women . . . Later that promiscuity modulated into more discreet relations with housekeepers and girls lodged sometimes upstairs in my rooms but more often downstairs with the kitchen help, and into liaisons with girls at the inn. (48)

In *Waiting for the Barbarians,* Coetzee also highlights the taboo related to menstruation of women, a natural occurrence that remains an issue many cultures consider taboo. Feminist studies expound that the shame of menstruation is universal and that silence on the topic is a global phenomenon. The silence of those who menstruate has significant effects as it strips them of their power. Coetzee explores this subject which is seldom addressed in literature. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the barbarian girl inconveniently begins to menstruate during the expedition to return her to her people. Coetzee highlights how she has no privacy among the men as they were on a journey. It was particularly difficult for the girl as there are old stories that claim that menstruation brings "bad luck, bad for the crop, bad for the hunt, bad for the horses" (75). The men grew sullen and wanted her away from the horses and their food. Ashamed, she keeps to herself all day and does not join them for the evening meal. When the Magistrate brings her a bowl of beans and dumplings to the tent where she sits, she does not question her exclusion:

> You should not be waiting on me . . . I should not even be in the tent. But there is nowhere else to go. (76)

The men refused to sleep in the same tent with her and chose to sleep outside in the cold. The Magistrate, to appease his soldiers, goes through a purification ceremony with the girl as it was believed that sleeping with a bleeding woman makes a person unclean. The Magistrate describes the ceremony which has to be continued every morning for as long as her menstruation continues:

> with a stick I draw a line in the sand, lead her across it, wash her hands and mine, then lead her back across the line into the camp. (76)

Feminists emphasize on the urgency with which the topic is to be addressed as silence can only result in more discrimination and marginalization of the people who menstruate. In the book *It is Only Blood: Shattering the Taboo of Menstruation* (2018) where she discusses the shame and silence accompanied by the act of menstruation, Anna Dahlqvist writes:

> The shame becomes a part of the self, of one's identity. it clings to both the mind and the body. To suffer from shame. To stand shameful. These are various degrees of revulsion or disgust with oneself, seen through the annihilated eyes of others. (30)

Throughout the history of mankind, menstruating women have been perceived as polluted across many cultures. The blood of a menstruating woman is also often deemed dangerous because of the belief that it has to be expelled from the body as it can cause harm in the woman if retained. It has also been viewed as "a sign of women's inherent sinfulness and subsequent subordination to men" (19) according to Victoria Louise Newton.

The feminist concept of silencing through which women are marginalized is also represented through the character of Mrs. Curren who presents the story of her life in the text through letters to her self-exiled daughter who lives in the United States. Mrs. Curren is aware of the ambivalence of her position as she speaks out against apartheid in *Age of Iron*. In the text titled *A Double Colonization: Colonial and PostColonial Women's Writings* (1986), Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford use the term double colonization to refer to ways in which women in colonial lands are oppressed by both colonization and patriarchy (6). John McLeod argues that double colonisation affects "women from both the colonized and colonizing cultures in various ways" (175). The notion that white settler women also get affected by colonization in patriarchal setups is explicitly suggested in Coetzee's texts. In *Age of Iron* Mrs. Curren reveals that she had been blind to how challenging it was to live in South Africa as a non-white person solely because of one's race. Though she had opposed apartheid her whole life, she is only truly exposed to its cruelty when she comes into close contact with the family of her black domestic help

Florence. When she sees for herself the violence and brutality directed towards black people, she denounces the actions of the apartheid regime and ponders if South Africans are to "simply accept" that they must live in a "state of shame":

> These are terrible sights . . . They are to be condemned. But I cannot denounce them in other people's words. I must find my own words, from myself. Otherwise it is not the truth. (99)

Mrs. Curren is "fully aware of the marginality of her own voice" (Kossew 22) which she herself describes as "the words of a woman, therefore negligible; of an old woman, therefore doubly negligible; but above all of a white" (79). Her awareness of her own ambivalent position as a white colonizer sympathizing with the victims of the oppression her race was responsible for makes her feel a sense of "shame" and powerlessness as she poignantly admits to Vercueil, the homeless man she had taken in:

> Yet who am I, who am I to have a voice at all? . . . What am I entitled to do but sit in a corner with my mouth shut? I have no voice; I lost it long ago; perhaps I have never had one. I have no voice, and that is that. The rest should be silence. But with this - whatever it is - this voice that is no voice, I go on. On and on. (164)

Mrs. Curren may be said to be "half-colonized" as she shares "the power and guilt of the colonists" even though she too is "oppressed by white men and patriarchal structures" (Visel 39). She asks "Who am I to have a voice at all?" and then claims "I have no voice" (164). It must be noted here that despite Mrs. Curren's plight as a dying old woman with no influence, her story is being narrated in her own words through her conversations with Vercueil and her letters to her daughter. Coetzee has chosen to tell her story, and that itself may be seen as the privilege a white woman has over a black woman. Though Florence's name is mentioned a number of times within the narrative, nothing is ever presented from the perspective of Florence, not even when her son Bheki is killed by the police. The text informs that Florence had to work as a domestic help for Mrs. Curren since her husband did not earn enough for the family through his job as a butcher. Florence gets to go home occasionally

after seeking permission from Mrs. Curren, rarely spending time with her husband and children. Despite the miserable situation of her life, her story is merely weaved as a sub plot around the main plot which is Mrs. Curren's life. Though Mrs. Curren and Florence are both marginalized and left to the whims of men, there are glaring differences which clearly privileges the white Mrs. Curren over the black Florence. To illustrate this glaring difference, Coetzee makes use of an incident in which Bheki and his friend John were slyly attacked by the police who had been watching them for a few days. Since both the boys sustained injuries, an ambulance was called. Mrs. Curren took care of John until he was driven away in the ambulance while Florence and Bheki had disappeared. When confronted, Florence admits to Mrs. Curren that they disappeared from the scene because they did not want to be "involved with the police" as it could only mean danger for them. Though Mrs. Curren claims that she has "no idea what freedom is" (164), it is apparent that as a white woman she had no idea how oppressed and marginalized black women were. The marginality and predicament of Florence's life is made obvious through the silences and the gaps when it comes to her story. In the essay "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood", Hazel V. Carby observes that "black and Asian women are barely made visible" even in feminist discourses. She claims that there is a "triple oppression of race, gender, and class that have been present since the dawn of imperialist domination" (212).

In "'Women's Words': A Reading of J.M. Coetzee's Women Narrators", Sue Kossew writes that the white women narrators are "represented as ambiguous colonial figures whose voices are compromised by complicity, a complicity from which his own authorship is never excluded". Mrs. Curren, a former professor at a university is empowered as a white woman in a country where white people enjoy dominance and yet she is also disempowered by the mechanisms of patriarchy which overlook her opinions and views. Her acute awareness that the course of her life had been laid out for her without her will is vividly expressed to Vercueil:

> I want to rage against the men who have created these times. I want to accuse them of spoiling my life in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food without even eating it, simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its

bodily functions on it. It is childish, I know, to point fingers and blame others. (117)

In this chapter, it has been highlighted that it is not just black women who fall victims to men. White women, as portrayed most prominently through the characters of Magda and Lucy are also victimized by men, both white and black. Magda's father is representative of the patriarchal system that oppresses women and Magda has to struggle to find herself and her own voice under the dominance of her father. Magda writes her own story through her feminine perspective in her locked diary, where she employs language that accepts historical and cultural definitions of female subjectivity. Kehinde surmises that Magda stands for the standard of Coetzee's radical woman who reverses an apathetic portrayal of women reflecting a Freudian justification for her predicament while shedding light on public dilemma and her personal experience (1). Unable to fit into her role as a submissive daughter who meets all expectations of a woman of her social standing, Magda is alienated from her father as is Lucy who refuses to listen to her father. Lucy, though financially independent and relatively more empowered than Magda also finds that there is no escape from the harsh consequences of the shift in power balance in post-apartheid South Africa in which women are again the first victims. In their own ways, they both attempt to create a space for themselves beyond the confines of the social conventions that restrict them. Through his text *In the Heart of the Country*, Coetzee illustrates how women have been excluded from philosophy, culture and language as Magda states, "I am not a philosopher. Women are not philosophers and I am a woman" (148).

The female characters that have been examined in this chapter all suffer from the consequences of colonization and patriarchy, and are helpless to change their circumstances. They are all marginalized albeit in different ways. Their marginalization is not a situation they can change even if they are white land-owning women or respected former professors. When such women who enjoy certain privileges in the society can themselves do nothing about their station in life, it is even harder for black women to push through the margins and find their voices as a means of expression. It is also detected that many of the male characters use women

as mediums through which they validate and reassert themselves, notably through characters like Lucy and Magda who are subjugated by black men seeking revenge. However, it is not just men who are responsible for the marginalization of women as is evident when Magda reprimands the innocent Anna for sleeping with her father though Anna clearly does not have the power to resist him. Magda's internalization of patriarchy and beauty standards is also responsible for her own marginalization. The treatment of women characters in these texts may be considered in correspondence with the history of the colonized. In "Colonizing Bodies and Minds", Oyeronke Oyewumi writes that the histories of both the colonized and the colonizer have been written from the male point of view and that women are "peripheral" if they appear at all (256). By highlighting Coetzee's narrativization of the various mechanisms through which women have been marginalized, this chapter draws a parallel between the woman subject and the colonized subject, thereby implying that forces of patriarchy pervade through all sections and classes of society.

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Violence is a recurring theme in postcolonial literature and has been theorized and narrativized in multiple ways. This chapter analyses the narrativization of violence in Coetzee's texts and the variations in the representations of violence which are manifest in multiple ways. Several characters in the texts are direct and indirect victims of violence as the narratives depict violence and tyranny from colonizing powers, while some characters are seen to be victims of the violence perpetrated by the colonized in order to de-establish or subvert existing power dynamics. Besides violence accompanied by existing political conflicts, violence associated with long established values entrenched in mechanisms of patriarchy are also represented. Three of the narratives are situated in the complex colonial past of South Africa while one is set in post-apartheid era where racial and gender frictions continue as a legacy of the past. The narratives negotiate the interstices of Coetzee's understanding of the historical, political and social contexts within which violence is located. The process of Western colonization and imperialism is singularly violent. Violence in its different forms has been omnipresent in the history of colonization and occupation of native lands. Native people across different cultures have been intimidated and oppressed by the use of firearms and varying forms of torturous punishments. Though violence cannot be claimed to be the primary focus of colonizing powers, the occupation of another man's land cannot be achieved without violence.

A reading of Coetzee's texts that have been selected for this study exhibits a series of episodes in which characters resort to violence and aggression as a means to achieve their ends. The narratives exemplify an intellectual challenge to colonial violence as well retributive violence during and after the period of transition to a democratic state. This chapter investigates the treatment of violence in the select texts to put into perspective how violence is performed as a tool of oppression and also as a tool of resistance in colonial arenas using postcolonial theoretical framework. The traumatic consequences of violence which may be physical, sexual and psychological in nature are also highlighted.

According to Aisha K. Gill et al.,

> Violence is a key factor in the production, maintenance and legitimization of domination and subordination. People often experience multiple forms of violence that are interrelated, co- constitutive and mutually reinforcing, and that exist at state, institutional and individual levels. (112)

James Gilligan also posits that:

> Violence can be analysed as the destruction of our physical and bodily existence, as well as its symbolic representations in language and other institutions. (103)

Violence, in all in its forms, is a phenomenon that needs to be addressed as it has severe impact on an individual or society as a whole, often resulting in long lasting trauma on the victims as well as the parties responsible for administering the violent act. It does not result in just physical harm but also in psychological harm that often proves to be harder to establish than physical injuries. Violence may be perpetrated by an individual on another at an interpersonal level or at a collective level where a group of people systematically carry out acts of violence over another group. Though violence is a global issue that has always existed in human society, manifestations of violence tend to be most rampant in societies where there is socio-political unrest. Exposure to violence hampers an individual's emotional and psychological growth and often, the victims themselves learn to be aggressive and engage in violent behaviour.

Though literature throughout history is rife with the theme of violence, the emergence of theories on colonial discourses and postcolonial criticism has impeded the focus on violence, particularly in relation to colonialism and anti-colonial struggles. Jean-Paul Sartre writes that colonizers inflict violence on the natives in their colonies not just to assume political control over them but also to dehumanize them. According to him, the colonizers seek to wipe out the traditions and cultures of the natives (13) as they occupy and take possession over their lands. To achieve this, they often had to use force and physical coercion. To justify their acts of violence

and occupation of other peoples' land, the colonial powers rely heavily on representations and modes of perception to colonize the minds of the natives. They attempt to instil in the natives the perception that their indigenous ways are inferior and lower than that of their colonizers who represent the 'natural, true order of life'. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson define colonialism as an operation of discourse that "interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation" (3) accentuating the role of representation in the process of colonization.

In his seminal text *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said looks at how Western colonial powers represent and portray North Africa and Middle Eastern countries, and uses the term Orientalism to describe the West's stereotypical representations of the Orient. He explains how preconceived and prejudiced notions about the Orient were intrinsically flawed as they failed to see the people of the orient as individuals and not a set of people who had the same qualities. According to Said, Orientalism was ultimately "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (43). This culminates in the identification of the East as the Other and as inferior to the West. This projection of the colonized people as the Other allows the West to discern them as people who lack proper values or people who are uncivilized and need to be rescued. This concept of the Other or Othering is also explored in *The Location of Culture* (1994) by Homi K. Bhabha who writes that the colonial discourse aims 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" (70).

Sartre insists that in a colonial state, the only violence is the settler's at first, but the "traumatized" natives who have "seen their fathers being flogged" soon make violence "their own" while throwing it back upon the colonizers (15). According to him:

> by this mad fury, by this bitterness and spleen, by their ever-present desire to kill us, by the permanent tensing of powerful muscles which are afraid to relax, they have become men: men because of the settler, who wants to make

> beasts of burden of them - because of him, and against him. Hatred, blind hatred which is as yet an abstraction, is their only wealth; the Master calls it forth because he seeks to reduce them to animals, but he fails to break it down because his interests stop him halfway . . . there are those among them who assert themselves by throwing themselves barehanded against the guns; these are their heroes. Others make men of themselves by murdering Europeans, and these are shot down; brigands or martyrs, their agony exalts the terrified masses. (15)

In the text *The Wretched of the Earth* where he expounds on the economical and psychological degradation inflicted by imperialism, Frantz Fanon infers that "the youth of a colonized country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire" discover the reality of their situation and transform it into the "pattern of his customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom" (45). He states that the native is

> overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler is off his guard to fly at him. The native's muscles are always tensed. You can't say that he is terrorized, or even apprehensive. He is in fact ready at a moment's notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter. (41)

Fanon further illustrates that the native is an oppressed subject who dreams of becoming the persecutor. In the light of these illustrations and the focus of this chapter being on Coetzee's texts which primarily focus on the South African history of political and social unrest, a cursory glance at certain trends in crime and violence in the country would help situate Coetzee's texts as reproductions of the actual ethos he is exposed to. Multiple statistics and studies on crime and violence show that South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics database based on 2016 and 2017 data, South Africa had the eighth highest murder rate in the world at 35.9 murders per 100,000 citizens, despite the fact much of the crime taking place in the country goes unreported (Riet 10). Crimes related to robbery, physical assault, sexual offences, wildlife and drugs are also rampant throughout the country. The

high level of crime may be attributed to the long history of colonialism by outside forces and internal colonialism in the form of apartheid. Even with the abolition of apartheid, the crime situation in South Africa was, and still is, "exacerbated by a multitude of socio-political changes in the wake of the transition to democracy in 1994" (3) as noted by Johan Burger in his book *Strategic Perspectives on Crime and Policing in South Africa* published in 2006. According to M Hough, the frequency at which violent crimes occur is so serious that it is one of the main threats to national and individual security in the country (202). When the rate of crime and violence in South Africa is taken into consideration, it is not surprising and is perhaps to be expected that Coetzee's texts, usually set in South Africa, are replete with incidences in which violence and crime occur. This chapter examines the depictions of violence in the select texts and attempts to contextualize them within the framework that violence is a natural response and consequence of colonialism, both during and after. This violence is manifest in both colonizer and the colonized subject.

There are several works of literature which postulate that violence promoted by colonial injustice are carried out through colonial structures and institutions. This results in a complex correlation between colonial violence and violent responses to it. Violence is a pivotal instrument in revolutionary acts against a colonial establishment for a colonized subject. Colonial representation of land and its occupants is a form of epistemic violence as it necessarily entails the disturbance and obliteration of local life. The colonial representation of indigenous cultures and traditions as savage or barbaric to suppress the differences of what the colonizers consider as the Other is challenged in literatures that seek to dismantle colonial discourses. In such texts, anti-colonial struggles are re-examined and legitimized in endeavours to justify anti-colonial violence.

Though Coetzee does not divulge the setting of *Waiting for the Barbarians* explicitly, it is evident that Coetzee has colonial states, particularly South Africa in mind when he wrote this text. Set in an unnamed frontier settlement, it is an allegory detailing the relationship between oppressors and oppressed which in the course of its narrative, highlights how violence is often used as a tool of oppression and control by colonizers. Here Coetzee explores both the violence and terror inherent in a

colonial system with the narrative centering around racial strife and power struggles in an isolated fictional colonial village through the perspective of an official of the Empire. The native people are referred to as barbarians in the text. The Empire had declared emergency powers after the circulation of rumours that the barbarians are planning a revolt to overthrow the Empire. The Empire's fear of an Other that it tyrannizes and portrays as an existential threat in its attempt to maintain control in seen in this text.

Right from the outset of the narrative, Colonel Joll, an important officer of the Empire tells the Magistrate of the last great drive he rode in which "thousands of deer, pigs, bears were slain, so many that a mountain of carcasses had to be left to rot" (1) highlighting his blood thirty nature and foreshadowing how the colonial venture is to be riddled with violence in the rest of the narrative. Colonel Joll who had recently arrived at the frontier is symbolic of colonial agents who abuse their authority to subdue natives. This is evident in the manner he treats the barbarians in the texts. For instance, he captures a young boy and his uncle who had travelled a long distance to consult a doctor. Refusing to believe their story, he tortures them to get a confession. He wants them to confess that they were part of a barbarian group that had been conducting stock raids and creating trouble. He resorts to violent tactics to make them confess during the course of which the man dies. Colonel Joll's lack of sympathy is demonstrated further as he tells the boy to sleep with the corpse of his uncle in their cell. The boy eventually confesses that his uncle and other people from their clan had been stealing sheep and horses, and that the men of his clan have been arming themselves to participate in a war on the Empire. The boy's confession, however, remains questionable as he had witnessed the death of his uncle who had refused to confess and instead maintained his innocence. This episode in the narrative is reminiscent of the existing turmoil in the country. In 1977, the year Coetzee began writing this novel, Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement died in police custody. Reports claim that the cause of his death was severe brain injuries sustained from beatings by the police in prison. Coetzee is likely to have drawn inspiration from Steve Biko's death as he collected press clippings on the death and followed it closely (Attwell 89).

There are several more incidents in the narrative in which agents of the colonial Empire torture and punish the natives without justifiable reasons. In his staunch determination to elicit confessions from the barbarians, Colonel Joll goes on a brutal campaign to capture more barbarians. On his first expedition to hunt down barbarian dissenters, he captures a group "fishing people" which included children and women. On his second expedition, he comes back with more prisoners and takes on the task of interrogating all his prisoners including the children. In the text, Colonel Joll represents the repressive colonial establishment as he continues to imprison and torture more and more barbarians even without evidences that they were indeed planning a revolt. Prisoners are treated horrifyingly by Colonel Joll without any signs of sympathy. The text shows that rumours of unrest among the barbarians had reached the ears of the Empire, and the Magistrate shares that Colonel Joll had been sent to the frontier because several travellers had been attacked and plundered and thefts had increased in great scale. Officials of the Empire had also mysteriously disappeared and their bodies were later found buried in shallow graves according to reports. A provincial governor had also been shot at while he was on duty. There had also been a number of conflicts between the barbarians and the border patrols and rumours that the barbarians were arming themselves for the war were also in circulation. However, the Magistrate reiterates that he himself had seen nothing to support such claims noting that once in every generation, there is an "episode of hysteria about the barbarians" admitting that he would believe such rumours only when he himself sees a barbarian army. Strengthening the notion that colonizers tend to propagate claims about the violent nature of natives in their colonies, he exclaims:

> There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. (9)

Despite such existing uneasiness about the barbarians and their supposed sexual hostility against women, it is the barbarian women who suffer at the hands of the colonizers in this text. The blind beggar girl who had been tortured by Colonel

Joll's men who raped her, broke both her legs and impaled her eyesight is an explicit illustration of how mechanisms of both colonialism and patriarchy subjugate women by dispossessing them of both their lands and of their bodily autonomy. Dismissing the notion that it is the barbarians who are violent as had been craftily projected by the Empire, the Magistrate points out that it is the barbarians who have to leave their womenfolk behind in their camps out of fear that they will be harassed by the soldiers.

Echoing Fanon's postulation that for a colonized people, the "most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land" as land will "bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (34), the Magistrate in this text explains that the barbarians are nomads who migrate between the lowlands and the uplands every year and that they would never permit themselves to be bottled up in the mountains. When a young officer arrogantly enquires what it was that the barbarians wanted, the Magistrate passionately explains that they simply want their land back as well as the freedom to take care of their flocks without disturbances from the officials of the Empire. Coetzee seemingly employs the Magistrate as a mouthpiece to condemn occupation of other peoples' land and claiming the occupied land as the colonizers', as he expresses his wish that the barbarians would rise up and teach the Empire a lesson. Empathizing with the barbarians, he states that to them, the colonizers are "visitors, transients" who will one day depart and go back home and that the natives of the land would be able to resume normal lives on the land that had belonged to their forefathers for generations.

In this text, the Magistrate himself is not spared of torture even though he is a member of the colonizing community as his efforts to help the barbarians out of sympathy were seen as acts of treason against the Empire. After one particular event in which he travels on a long journey to return the barbarian girl to her people, he is accused of conspiring with barbarians against the Empire and is imprisoned. During his imprisonment, he witnesses an incident in which twelve barbarians are caught and brought to the prison tied neck to neck with a loop of wire running through the flesh of each man's hands and through holes pierced in each man's cheeks to subdue the prisoners. A crowd gathers to watch the barbarians being ruthlessly tortured. The

Magistrate could not be a mute spectator when the soldiers started passing around their canes encouraging the crowd to flog the prisoners. Raising his voice to Colonel Joll, he shouts “You are depraving these people” (116). The Magistrate too gets a severe beating and suffers heavy injuries for admonishing the Colonel.

Colonel Joll summons the Magistrate to his office after this incident and informs him that he is relieved of his duties. When the Magistrate refuses to divulge information to Colonel Joll about his interactions with the barbarians, he is tortured again. Eventually, the Magistrate is released in a frail condition, barely alive. The Magistrate then learns that the army of the Empire had been defeated by the barbarians without any violence through a soldier who recounted their experience:

> We froze in the mountains! We starved in the desert! Why did no one tell us it would be like that? We were not beaten - they led us out into the desert and then they vanished! . . . They picked off the stragglers, they cut out horses loose in the night, they would not stand up to us! (161)

Though the Empire and its agents continually try to depict the barbarians as savage and violent in the text, the closing lines of the narrative show the barbarians engaging in non-violent acts to defeat the army. Meanwhile, there is ample evidence in the text to suggest the inhumane nature of the colonial agents who perpetually employ the use of violence to achieve their ends. Fanon explains that violence against the colonized

> does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours. Sheer physical fatigue will stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are levelled at the peasant; civilians come to take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to till the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. (13)

Through the character of the Magistrate is explored the journey of a man initially indifferent to the suffering of the natives rebelling against the colonial system, abandoned by his countrymen and determined to protect those he once considered barbarians. Coetzee uses this novel to challenge and explore notions of justice. In the essay "The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*" Michael Valdez Moses highlights Coetzee's commitment towards bringing moral dilemmas to light:

> Coetzee dramatizes the moral dilemmas and political paradoxes of all imperial enterprises, steadfastly refusing to specify either the geographic or historical setting of his novel. Unmistakable analogies exist between the unnamed Empire of his novel and contemporary South Africa, and yet no simple correlations are possible . . . Coetzee's reluctance to supply the precise historical coordinates of his story stems not merely from political discretion or postmodern literary proclivities, but more deeply from his commitment to explore disturbing questions that cannot be answered by the outcome of current political developments in South Africa. His fiction offers meditation on the question of whether all civilizations are not necessarily founded upon some arbitrary distinction between the civilized and the barbarian, a historical distinction that seems to require an element of force and compulsion, an act of discrimination that has no moral basis. (116)

Postcolonial theorists suggest that colonial violence begins as soon as the conquest and policing of foreign space and territory commences as previously elaborated. Since conquests are often justified by the assertion that the invaded land is empty and needs to be tamed for human settlement, the history of colonization cannot be separated from the history of European imperialism. John Noyes explains how the concept of empty space is a useful ideology to justify expansionism:

> [I]t enhances the romantic longing which seeks to transpose primary narcissism onto a landscape in which, for the sake of phantasy, it cannot afford to encounter a human being who is radically other, and it expresses a real inability of the European eye to look at the world and see anything other

> than European space - a space which is by definition empty where it is not inhabited by Europeans. (196)

One of the soldiers of the Empire calls the native land "dead country" further illustrating how the idea of land as empty, or waste, or in the case of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, dead is often applied to rationalize colonial invasion. This concept of non-European spaces as empty reverberates throughout the text *In the Heart of the Country* as well. Coetzee's description of colonial land in *In the Heart of the Country* by means of the internal monologue of the white settler Magda as "heart of nowhere" illustrates the colonial perception of indigenous land as empty spaces that need to be discovered and tamed. The process of occupation of foreign lands is preceded by the impulse to represent the indigenous population as lesser beings or in the words of Coetzee, barbarians. It is necessary for the invaders to establish such representations to rationalize their actions. Since this representation overpowers the perceived differences in the Other, the representation itself becomes a form of violence. By redefining the invaded territory as empty or as a waste land, the colonial power rationalizes the brutal act of dispossessing people of their land. This enterprise is effected through "cold blooded militarism of discipline, torture and pain" (Behdad 203) thereby rousing the natives into violent revolts.

The concept of the native land as empty space is challenged in *Waiting for the Barbarians* as the narrative portrays that remnants of a former civilization are to be found in the land. Rather than being an empty space as often represented by colonial invaders, "ruins of houses that date back to times long before the western provinces were annexed" (15) are found on the native lands. Several artifacts and wooden slips on which characters of an unknown script have been painted are discovered in the ruins during excavations. The colonial depiction of native lands as untamed is subverted with these discoveries that demonstrate that the land has a long history of occupation and ownership. To the barbarians, though currently dispossessed of their land, their native soils tell their histories, myths and memories of precolonial times. They remain hopeful that they will have their land and the freedom to "move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to" (54). Though the settlers think of the land as theirs, the barbarians wait for the day in

which they will eventually leave. The Magistrate alludes to this as he utters "[T]here are old folks among them who remember their parents telling them about this oasis as it once was" (55). To the natives, the land has significance that no colonizer would ever be able to understand.

In colonies, the native land is usually transformed by the establishment of buildings and homes around which walls and enclosures are constructed to keep natives away. This is seen in *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the settlers build outposts in strategic locations to keep themselves safe and to keep an eye on the barbarians. But for the colonial settlers, the land is still foreign as the landscape and terrains are not spaces they are familiar with. In that way, the land itself becomes an important ally for the natives. This is demonstrated in the text when the indigenous people defeat soldiers of the Empire by leading them out into the desert where they show their mastery over the land. Familiar with the terrain, they are able to steal horses from the soldiers and so that the soldiers would be left to fend for themselves in unknown territory. Disparaged by their limitations, the colonial army admits defeat. The barbarians also kill some soldiers to convey the message that they do not accept the exploitation of the land. The revolutionary or redemptive violence that Fanon advocates as the unavoidable response to colonial oppression is encapsulated through such incidents.

In the novel *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda demonstrates her tendency for violence through a succession of her internal monologues. Calling herself "vengeful" and an "angry spinster", she constantly imagines herself resorting to violence and even murder, to fill the void in her life. Leading a lonely and neglected life without anybody to shower her with love and affection, she claims to have a "mind mad enough for parricide and pseudo-matricide" (12) directing her anger towards her father and his new bride. Magda also reveals that her mother had died while giving birth and she blames her father for the death as he had continuously pressured her into birthing him a son to become his heir. The narrative exposes her violent temperament and vibrantly details her act of committing murder with a hatchet. She goes to her father's bedroom where he was in bed with his new wife. Approaching them, she strikes at her father's throat with her weapon and seemingly

tries to justify her act with the thought "[A]ll kinds of people have done this before me, wives, sons, lovers, heirs, rivals. I am not alone" (13). She then goes on to deliver a blow on the head of his new wife killing her instantly. As she realizes what she had just done, she understands that she must remain calm and "keep a cool head" while she figures out what to do with the bodies. She also realizes that she is entering a new phase in her life and must be prepared for that:

> For no longer need I fret about how to fill my days. I have broken a commandment, and the guilty cannot be bored. I have two full grown bodies to get rid of besides many other traces of my violence. I have a face to compose, a story to invent, and all before dawn when Hendrik comes for the milking-pail! (13,14)

As the narrative progresses to divulge that Magda's narrative cannot be trusted as she constantly offers multiple accounts of the same events, it becomes apparent that she had not killed her father and his new bride with an axe. It is further disclosed that her father had not even taken a new bride, but had been making sexual advances towards Anna, wife of their black farmhand Hendrik. After it is established that her father is still alive, Magda once again recounts an incident in which she shoots at her father with a gun out of anger. The imaginary murder that she constantly dreams of symbolizes her rebellion against her father as well as the colonial history represented by him. In this text Magda is a displaced subject who resorts to violence as she knows no other way to resist her fate and escape her wretched life. Her desire to avenge the death of her mother by killing her father, who she believes is the reason for her death is also reflected. Unhappy with how her life had turned out and dissatisfied with the lack of authenticity in her relationship with her father, she turns to the servants but is unable to form a proper bond with them. Her failure to have any kind of meaningful relationship with the servants further enrages her as she realizes that as long as she is her father's daughter, she will be alienated from the servants. Her father represents a colonial power while the servants represent a colonized people with whom she could never form equal and reciprocal attachments. As she ventures to do away with the hierarchy that exists on the farm, she believes that her

father's presence was an obstacle. Magda is powerless to confront her father, but that does not stop her from fantasizing about a better life even if it requires violence.

Coetzee depicts violence in Magda's case as resulting from her desire to create a new reality. Ultimately, the text reveals that she has not killed her father or anyone else in the text but violence is presented as a form of escape from an undesired reality. Magda, though a member of the colonizing race, is powerless and is one of those oppressed by the mechanisms of the power structures that she desperately wishes to break free from. Having witnessed violence committed by the colonizers against the colonized, she internalizes violence as a necessary means to achieve desired outcomes. She may be seen as the symbolic daughter of colonialism for whom there is no way out. She inhabits an ambivalent position, both as colonizer and as a victim of colonization. In this text, violence takes on a different form in the hands of Hendrik, a servant on the farm who finds out that his wife had been sleeping with their master. Though fully aware that his wife is powerless to resist the master, he beats up his wife and forcibly has sex with her. As a black man subjected to oppression by white men, Hendrik fully understands the predicament of his wife for whom it would not have been possible to reject the forceful advances of her master but as he is not in a position to confront the guilty master, he takes out his anger and frustration on his wife. Fanon had pointed out that the colonized man "will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people" (40) and it can be assumed that this happens because of their state of perpetual tension after being confronted with "the colonial order of things". Hendrik also took to assaulting Magda and rapes her in her own house when she could not pay him for his work.

In his work *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (1992), Vron Ware concludes that "real or imagined violence towards white women became a symbol of the most dangerous form of insubordination" (176). Though frustrated with his situation, and the inefficient management of the farm, Hendrik does not have the means to change his situation as a black man in a country where the white minority holds power. As a mere servant, he is not in a position to manage the farm according to his wishes even though Madga has proven herself incapable. As a white

woman, she still holds the reigns in spite of her inefficiency. Hendrik is thus compelled to act on his "dreams" of "muscular prowess", "of action" and "aggression" as Fanon has suggested is what the native is forced to learn (40).

Age of Iron also centres on violence which disrupts the lives of the characters in the narrative. As Mrs. Curren witnesses "the eruptions of violence that occur during South Africa's 1985-1989, she attempts . . . to account for herself and offer a response to a historical juncture that demands violent justice" (Walsh 168). Through the narrative, readers get to understand that Mrs. Curren abhors the situation in her country but is also ready to acknowledge that she had become accustomed to its way as she asks "Is this how I feel toward South Africa: not loving it but habituated to its bad smell? (70)" Calling South Africa a "bad-tempered old hound snoozing in the doorway, taking its time to die", she readily admits "we who marry South Africa become South Africans: ugly, sullen, torpid, the only sign of life in us a quick flash of fangs when we are crossed" (70). Coetzee uses the characters of Mrs. Curren and her daughter to unveil that there are white South Africans who do not support the apartheid regime and are appalled by it. Mrs. Curren refuses to let her daughter know that she is dying because of her daughter's aversion towards returning to the country. She exclaims at the very outset of the narrative that her daughter had vowed to come back only if the apartheid regime is disrupted. Mrs. Curren questions the competence of the people in power as she asserts that the politicians are bullies who had grown up and were promoted to rule the land. Though people such as Mrs. Curren and her daughter are opposed to the apartheid regime for their own reasons, their realities are starkly different from those of the black citizens.

In this text, Coetzee explores both the violence inflicted by oppressors as well as the oppressed. Mrs. Curren is exposed to violence through the experiences of her black domestic help Florence. Despite her employer's hesitancy, Florence feels compelled to bring her children with her to Mrs. Curren's home for their safety as the situation at their home in Guguletu was "very bad". Florence fears that her children, especially her fifteen-year-old son Bheki would get into trouble with the law if she leaves them behind. Mrs. Curren finds out that all the schools in the townships of Guguletu, Langa and Nyanga which were primarily settlements of the black

community had been closed since the previous week and that the children had nothing to do. The text goes on to reveal that troubles had started in the schools since the previous year and matters had escalated to the point where children burnt down the schools. The fact that the government chose to keep the troubles brewing up a secret is also revealed in the text which mentions that the radio, the newspapers and the television had not reported news of trouble in the schools. Rather than addressing the situation at hand and revealing to the world what was really going on the country, the South African government preferred to project the children as being happily educated in their schools. The death of six black young men at the hands of police officers also makes Mrs. Curren come to the realization that the police might not be the respectable people she always thought they were. Though the police consider themselves acting on behalf of the state, young black men such as Bheki see them as "terrorists" who are "waging war", and Mrs. Curren herself begins to see them as tyrannical state agents.

Mrs. Curren's experiences in the black township Guguletu where she witnesses a riot caused by the black residents in their attempts to bring attention to their resistance against the government is a remarkable episode in the narrative. There she sees hundreds of people who had gathered before small houses that were on fire. She sees a group of men trying to put out the fire and save the furniture that could still be salvaged but after a while she comes to learn that those men were actually incendiaries trying to destroy the houses and not otherwise. The incident is a manifestation of the decades of anger and frustration that had burdened the residents, and that they chose to adopt violent and criminal acts to further their cause is significant as it clearly depicts that they do not have faith in peaceful means to achieve their desires for justice. For Mrs. Curren, her journey into Guguletu is a journey "into her consciousness, enabling her to see, forcing itself upon her" (Geertsema 95). Several days after this incident, she reminds John of who really holds the power to warn him of the dangers of resistances:

> Understand: this is not a game like football, where after you fall down you get up and go on playing. The men you are playing against don't say to each other, 'That one is just a child, let us shoot a child's bullet at him, a play

> bullet.' They don't think of you as a child at all. They think of you as the enemy and they hate you quite as much as you hate them. They will have no qualms about shooting you: on the contrary, they will smile with pleasure when you fall and make another notch on their gunstocks. (144)

Despite her warnings, Mrs. Curren finds out that John is up to something when she accidentally sees him hiding something as she walked past. She telephones Mr. Thabane and asks him to send somebody to fetch John fearing that he would resort to violence in the name of "comradeship" which she detests with all her "heart and soul" but Mr. Thabane forcefully declares that she does not understand what comradeship is, echoing Fanon's proclamation that "the native's violence unifies the people". According to Mr. Thabane:

> When you are body and soul in the struggle as these young people are, when you are prepared to lay down your lives for each other without question, then a bond grows up that is stronger than any bond you will know again. That is comradeship. I see it every day with my own eyes. My generation has nothing that can compare. That is why we must stand back for them, for the youth. We stand back but we stand behind them. That is what you cannot understand, because you are too far away. (149-150)

When police officers turn up at her home and kill John in spite of her attempts to stop them, Mrs. Curren realizes that death was a price that had to be paid for black people in their fight for justice. Her exposure to violence and racism makes Mrs. Curren realize that she has been living a privileged life as a white woman and that she has been living a life largely sheltered from the consequences of colonialism and apartheid. Though she had never been a supporter of apartheid, she had only opposed the system ideologically and had never actually done much to fight against the injustice wrought by the systematic enforcement of discrimination. Her life would have been entirely different had she been born black. She would not have had the opportunities she does as a white woman. Her gradual awareness of the harsh reality of the socio-political scenario makes her realize how blind she had been to critical issues on race and the abuse of power by the state.

Through *Age of Iron,* Coetzee presents the difficult life led by the black citizens of South Africa during a time when anti-apartheid sentiments were on the rise. The systemic oppression of the non-whites is reflected in the way Bheki, John and other black characters were treated by the police who resort to excessive and unnecessary violence while dealing with black characters. They spy on Bheki and John, waiting for the opportunity for action. Though expected to be protectors of the law and harmony, they initiate violence readily and even resort to murder of defenseless young men. Having witnesses such inequalities and atrocities, Mrs. Curren had to "simultaneously confront her own mortality and the unfamiliar world of South Africa's black underclass in a more direct and personal way than she has had to before" (Hoegberg 28). It is worthy to note that according to the Internal Security Amendment Act 79 of 1976, police authorities have the power "to arrest any person without a warrant or without charge if they think their actions will lead to 'the termination, combatting or prevention of public disturbance, disorder, riot, or public violence at any place' within South Africa (Pasha and Rusk 74).

Fanon claims that the "majority of natives wants the settler's farm" since there is no question of competing with the settler, they want "his place" (47). For the "starving peasant", there is "no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength" (47). Fanon further asserts that the "exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost" (48). Fanon's line of thought here reverberates throughout the text of Coetzee's text *Disgrace* set in post-apartheid South Africa. Focusing primarily on the experiences of David Lurie, a man "struggling to find meaning for himself in his own and the nation's new fallen state" (Tarc 200) and his daughter Lucy, incidences of violence are recounted in the text. In the narrative, both father and daughter are attacked at their home by two men and a boy who had forced their way into the farmhouse under the pretext of needing to use Lucy's phone for an emergency. Taking hold of Lucy's gun, one of the men shoots at Lucy's dogs, killing all four of them. They then poured methylated spirit over all David and set him on fire, leaving him to burn to his death. He somehow manages to douse the fire, and upon finding his daughter, realizes that she had been raped. As he

ponders over the attack, he acknowledges that it is not uncommon and that such crimes are frequent in the country:

> It happens every day, every hour, every minute, he tells himself, in every quarter of the country . . . A risk to own anything: a car, a pair of shoes, a packet of cigarettes. 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 can have a chance to be happy for a day. That is the theory; hold to the theory and to the comforts of theory. Not human evil, just a vast circulatory system, to whose workings pity and terror are irrelevant. That is how one must see life in this country: in its schematic aspect. Otherwise one could go mad. (98)

The text also reveals the lack of faith in law enforcing agents of the state as their neighbour Ettinger advises David to get himself a pistol opining that the best thing to do is "to save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, not anymore" (100). In the narrative where both David and Lucy are attacked by three black men, Lucy's refusal to report being raped may be seen as an act of penance on her part as she asserts that her attackers most likely see themselves as "debt collectors, tax collectors". David also comes to the conclusion that his daughter thinks she has to compensate for the past atrocities and violence on the blacks all by herself even allowing them to take revenge. This presents a bleak picture of new South Africa where the end of apartheid does not result in the end of violence. Though apartheid has legally come to an end, South Africa is still haunted by its legacy. The countryside frequently experiences robbery, rape and vandalism. Many of the coloured citizens who had lived lives of oppression and discrimination cannot contain their outrage and violence is often a manifestation of their angst.

Alice Brittan writes that Coetzee's characters inhabit worlds that have "prohibited them from learning to imagine one another, especially across the divides of race and gender" (482). Petrus and Lucy's rapists are no doubt products of a system that has dehumanized them for so long that when opportunity presented itself, they acted in a manner which suited them. David sees rape as a consequence of racial

difference while Lucy realizes that as a woman living alone, she is an easy target for men who would want to subjugate her economically and politically. David does not realize his own position as a sexual predator who tries to justify his actions as is apparent in the following lines where he tries to seduce Melanie:

> Stay. Spend the night with me . . . Because 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. (16)

David himself believes that Lucy's insistence on not reporting the rape to the police is due to her "wish to humble" herself "before history". He believes that she thinks she has to compensate for the past atrocities on the blacks all by herself and that they are allowed to seek justice as they had been denied justice for centuries. Lucy, by submitting to her place in South Africa's traumatic colonial past, seeks "the possibility of a shared, negotiated community and future with others afflicted by South Africa's history of mass violence" (Tarc 195). In "Rape and the Foundation of Nations in J. M. Coetzee's "Disgrace"", Malvern Van Wyk Smith writes:

> despite the apparently realistic handling of the rape sequence in *Disgrace*, Coetzee is not writing up a case history of a national scrouge such as our newspapers can provide on a daily basis, but is making pertinent to our time and place a mythos of agonized renewal that is as old as Western civilization itself and for which sexual violence is often the vehicle. (20)

In the text *Ending Gender-Based Violence: Justice and Community in South Africa* (2020), Hannah E. Britton writes that "gender-based violence in South Africa is a key example of political forces that have attempted to normalize multiple interlocking systems of oppression and structural violence" and that "[P]eople of all races, classes, and ethnic groups experience high levels of gender-based violence" (14).

Coetzee represents colonial violence emphasizing on torture as an instrument to suppress revolutionary ideologies but it can be construed that he does not approve of violence as acts of violence in his texts fail to yield positive changes. By

highlighting the moral depravity of the perpetrators of violence and its consequences on the people who are subjected to torture, his narratives denounce violence as a means to achieve an end. Through the portrayal of the ethical growth and maturity of characters that have developed in course of the narratives, he explores the prominent theme of complicity. In the texts, people like Mrs. Curren and the Magistrate begin to accept their complicity as they come to believe that they have not done enough to stop or prevent violence and are left to cope with their shame and guilt. His personal exposure to apartheid in which systematic violence against black people is a huge component is inarguably a driving force in his representations of colonial violence in which the victims are dehumanized and stripped of their dignity. The disarming depictions of aggression and brutality in characters such as Colonel Joll denote the possible lack of moral consciousness on the part of colonizers when it comes to their interactions with the colonized. Coetzee's illustration of the violence of white people in the texts may also be seen as his subversion of existing colonial discourses that tend to attribute violence on natives, thereby seeming to suggest that all people are susceptible to violent behaviour in times of conflict, regardless of their race if their sense of ethics is distorted. By giving his attention to characters such as the Magistrate and Mrs. Curren who reject violence as a vehicle of control and admit their shame and guilt in their roles as colonizing agents, he marginalizes characters who continue to resort to violent means to achieve their goals by refusing them a proper platform to portray their voices and perspectives.

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This study has elaborated on the multiple ways in which racial and gender conflict in its varied forms have been explored by J.M. Coetzee. A study of the select texts by J.M. Coetzee shows him navigating the complex themes through his characters who differ vastly in terms of their race, age and social standing. In the novels, the protagonists experience conflicts resulting out of their racial and gender differences. Violence, a recurring theme in the narratives which are set in colonial spaces is presented in its varied forms of manifestations. The experiences of women and men who are subjected to violence are explored. The marginalization of women under societies in which patriarchal norms are strictly embedded is also focused upon.

A white man living in South Africa during and after apartheid, Coetzee's personal experiences differ immensely from those of the black citizens and even from those of white women but he attempts to portray voices and experiences of subjects who despite their differences belong to one common nation. He ventures to create voices that chronicle the socio-political reality of a society that had been burdened by colonization and apartheid. David Attwell writes that Coetzee is "in search of his subject: the voice especially, embedded in a distinctive genre and a distinctive history" (xx). Despite his position of relative entitlement, he is one of the white writers joining in a general dissent against apartheid as suggested by Christopher Heywood (20). The experience and perspective of the white community which does not support the apartheid regime is largely reflected in numerous works of his. Through his narratives, readers are presented a bleak and horrifying picture of South Africa where inequality and injustice are rampant. The extreme poverty and adversities that are being confronted by the black community are predominant themes in his works. Maria Lopez writes that Coetzee deals with both "the perspicuous and subtle ways in which personal relationships in post-apartheid South Africa are conditioned by the persistent and entrenched legacy of apartheid and of centuries of racial inequality and oppression" (923). Acts of violence in his texts may be interpreted as symbolic of the hostility that exists between different social groups such as "landowners and tenants, country people and people from the city, men and women, parents and children, the old and the young, religious and non-religious

people, and between human beings and animals" (Lopez 923). The works that have been selected for this study were published between 1977 and 1999, over a span of twenty-two years which was also a period during which the political chaos of South Africa was at its peak.

Through the characters in the select narratives, Coetzee presents a vivid description of the lives and experiences of members of different communities in the country. The effects of colonialism by European powers as well as the subsequent marginalization of the native communities under apartheid regime are portrayed. As a white man weaving his narratives around the political turmoil in South Africa, he chooses to present his stories from the point of view of white characters such as Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*, an unnamed white magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Mrs. Curren in *Age of Iron* and David Lurie in *Disgrace*. Aware of his vantage point as a privileged white man, a member of the oppressor community, he avoids the temptation to write on behalf of the black community. The voices of his black characters are presented only through conversations thereby offering a limited viewpoint and there are no attempts to meditate on what happens in the minds of black characters. He explores the concept of colonialism and apartheid and the inevitable consequences on both individual and community level. The experiences of his characters from all walks of life are conveniently used to explore different issues that trouble a society that is inflicted with legacies of colonialism and apartheid.

In *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Bill Ashcroft et al. examine a wide range of post-colonial texts and their relation to the larger issues of post-colonial culture, and surmise that all writings from South Africa are "a form of protest or a form of acquiescence" (84). Ashcroft et al. opine that writers from the country must "explicitly engage in resistance to the oppressive regime in order to fully avoid acquiescence" (85) as all writings have obvious and immediate political consequences. It is also imperative to note that South African literature has been subjected to various forms of censorship by various agents. Having being suppressed by various forms of colonization by external powers as well as internal ones, South African people have not had much freedom to freely express themselves through

actions and artistic productions. Coetzee who has attracted the attention of scholars across the world has been at the receiving end of criticism that his works do not reflect direct condemnation of apartheid, but it is necessary to take into consideration such forces that curbed the freedom of anti-apartheid writers. Despite state sponsored censorship laws, a close reading of Coetzee's works exposes his staunch anti-apartheid stance. His texts, particularly the ones that have been selected for this study explores what it means to be black in a society where blacks are not seen as equal to their white counterparts. However, with the exception of *Age of Iron,* Coetzee's stances are only subtly denoted in the select texts. This may be the result of the Publications and Entertainment Act enacted by the South African Parliament in 1963. Even prior to the enactment of this Act, customs officials controlled all foreign publications, seizing at least 12,629 foreign publications. Domestic publications had also been banned frequently under the provisions of various laws such as the Suppression of Communism Act. In *The Muzzled Muse: Literature and Censorship in South Africa* (1997), Margreet de Lange notes that all publications and objects could be reviewed and banned if they are found to be harmful or offensive (8). Books that are banned could not be reproduced, imported or distributed under the Publications and Entertainment Act. This Act was put into place to "uphold a Christian view of life in South Africa" and it identified categories in which a product may be considered undesirable including obscenity, moral harmfulness, blasphemy, causing harm to relations between sections of the population, or being prejudicial to the safety, general welfare, peace, or order of the state (Lange 8).

Though an appeal could be made against the decisions made by publications committee, high costs of court cases often proved to be obstacles. The passing of a new law called the Publications Act in 1974 further curtailed the freedom of writers by effectively abolishing the judicial review of censorship process. Though the 1974 Act was eventually amended in 1978 as a result of a dispute between writers and members of the parliament, it was still up to a committee of experts to judge the value of a literary work. The committee had the power to impose restrictions on distributions. Though the Publications Appeal Board gradually made relaxations for both black and white writers, it was only in January 1994 that political paragraphs of

the law were suspended to see that the general elections to be held in April of that year was free and fair. A study of Coetzee's works requires the understanding that he wrote under such conditions, and that he may have been largely restricted by contemporary socio- political situation.

As somebody who opposes apartheid and the segregation of citizens along racial lines, Coetzee's texts offer significant glimpses into the consequences of state sponsored systematic racism. Coetzee's texts provide ample material for studies on how the categorization of people and the stereotypes that are enforced by such categorizations only serve the interests of people who have political dominance. In the essay "The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", Michael Valdez Moses writes that though Coetzee has been criticized for his "reluctance to represent contemporary South African political events of South African directly in his fiction" and has been charged with "quietism and rarified aestheticism", his "allegorical tales" reflect upon "the metaphysical ground and philosophical landscape in which the present historical controversies and political disputes of his country are rooted" (115).

Coetzee makes it a point to highlight the prejudices that the settlers hold against the natives through his texts. For instance, the settlers or colonizers continuously asserted that the barbarians are "lazy, immoral, filthy, stupid" and their children were taught to recognize the barbarians by their "ugliness" (41), in their attempts to justify their horrifying actions of torture and even murder in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said elucidates on this justification:

> Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest mission civilizatrice. (xvi)

Frantz Fanon has also pointed out that "[T]he Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 42) emphasizing that the white man's sense of superiority often leads him to indulge in inhumane behavior while the black man also often shows signs of behavior that may be considered outside the norm.

In his depictions of racial conflict and its subsequent consequences, Coetzee also problematizes the issue of complicity through his texts. Through characters such as the Magistrate and Mrs. Curren, he offers insight into the white South Africans who are troubled by a sense of complicity and moral dilemmas even when they are not necessarily direct advocates of colonization and apartheid. The perception of one's complicity and role in the subjugation of another is however a process which requires deep introspection. As an educated woman with liberal views, Mrs. Curren had never been an ally of the apartheid regime and the oppression of the black community, but her shielded life never truly exposed her to the suffering of black people. In fact, she had benefited from the apartheid regime as an educator working for the state. The revelation came to her very late in life and was only revealed to her through her association with her black domestic help Florence. She had a moment of breakthrough when she witnessed the two black young men Bheki and John being ruthlessly pursued by the police on mere suspicions. The truth about the condition of life for black South Africans was further revealed to her only after her visit to Guguletu, the black settlement which was in a state of total chaos because of resistances against the government. It was only after this visit that she becomes self-aware and learns to accept that her silence makes her complicit. By positioning her as a first-person narrator, Coetzee uses "the white woman's voice" as a "vehicle or textual strategy for interrogating structures of power, authority and language" (Probyn-Rapsey 248).

According to Probyn-Rapsey, the white woman narrator's "failure to communicate, to authorize, to liberate" (247) is where her value lies in the feminist discourse. Whether it is Magda who expresses herself by writing in her diary, or Mrs. Curren who relates news or occurrences in daily life to her exiled daughter through a letter, they remain powerless to navigate the course of their lives in accordance with

their will and their voices remain inadequate as a form of expression because they lack authority. Probyn-Rapsey focuses on the vulnerability of the women narrators as she writes:

> Coetzee's adoption of the feminine narrative voice constitutes both a strategic evasion of a lack of an adequate vantage point from which to speak and a strategic encoding of the lack of authority in the figure of the white woman . . . The white woman's possession of the word is unstable, unauthorised and also outside 'recognised' literary forms . . . Because of this the white woman narrators are particularly self-conscious of the effects of writing and write self-reflexively, placing under question or suspicion the act of writing itself, which in turn highlights its attendant gaps and silences. (248)

In *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren tells her daughter of an incident where she was in conversation with Vercueil and how her "words fell off him like dead leaves the moment they were uttered" (79). Mrs. Curren also realizes that her opinions do not matter to her black domestic help Florence and her brother Mr. Thabane. Spivak asserts that the subaltern "cannot speak" as her subordinate position obstructs her speech from being heard, both in the political and social arenas. Her speech is not recognized as legitimate. In Spivak's words, the subaltern is the person who is "removed from all lines of social mobility", and though characters like Mrs. Curren and Magda are privileged white woman, their voices remain muted, and Coetzee may be seen to be suggesting their marginality through their lack of authority. Though deeply troubled by what she sees is happening to young black men, Mrs. Curren is powerless to watch out for them and provide them protection from agents of the state who see young black men as enemies trying to create anarchy. Through her expressions of grief and frustrations at what was happening around her, Coetzee indicates his opposition of the white government that had implemented apartheid in South Africa. After her visit to Guguletu where she witnesses the depraved manner in which black people were being treated by the police, Mrs. Curren exclaims her "eyes are open" (98). Coetzee here seems to suggest that through self-awareness, a positive change can happen in the society.

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1990), Michel Foucault writes "[W]here there is power, there is resistance" (95) suggesting the possibility or existence of resistance where power is exercised. In apartheid South Africa, young men such as Bheki take it upon themselves to resist the powers that were oppressing them. In *Age of Iron* Bheki and several other young men refuse to attend school as they considered educational institutions as an instrument to make them "fit into the apartheid system" (67). For them, it was more important to fight and destroy apartheid than to go to school. This is one of the few incidences in which Coetzee explicitly discusses apartheid through his texts. Apparently conscious of the acts of brutality exercised by the state on those who actively participate in fighting against apartheid, through *Age of Iron,* Coetzee also dwells on how the police try to silence and repress dissidents. Several passages in the text describe the actions of the police force who resort to violence and even murder in their quest to suppress such young men. Florence tells Mrs. Curren that in Guguletu, a black neighborhood there is "trouble all the time, and then the police come in and shoot" (53). Such acts of violence on the part of the police may be read in tandem with Fanon's assertion:

> In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 29)

By assuming the voice of Mrs. Curren, Coetzee appears to voice his personal concerns over the oppression of the black community as a number of passages speak of guilt and complicity in *Age of Iron*. Even though Mrs. Curren reiterates that she is a "good person" who does not wish bad on anyone, and that there are "plenty of good people in the country", she accepts that "to be a good person is not enough" and that "[W]hat the times call for is quite different from goodness" because the times call for "heroism" (165). Through the character of Mrs. Curren, Coetzee voices his "overt - and certainly angry - denunciation of the apartheid state" and his "scathing assessment of the South African state - its leaders, its rhetoric, its agents (whether the

police or the military) and its sheer brutality" (Worthington 125). Rachel Ann Walsh links Coetzee's political stance with that of his character Mrs. Curren:

> *Age of Iron* overturns the authorial constructions of maternity and universal humanism that so dominate Curren's narrative. In doing so, the novel mirrors Coetzee's admission that responding to the other involves being overwhelmed both by a sense of one's complicity as a witness and by one's helplessness in the face of reality of the neighbor's suffering . . . *Age of Iron* offers us an ethics that is, in many ways, faithful to the spirit if not the letter of Levina's writings: a relation in which the subject is conscious that she never fully paid witness to the neighbor's bodily suffering. (168 - 71)

Gunnars and Gurnah also agree that his writings are "firmly rooted in South African realities, in its history and its political complexities and ironies, in the failure of human sympathy that is the consequence of colonialism and apartheid" (12). Coetzee refuses to be content in emphasizing the unfortunate influences of the state's ideology; he "strives to show that it is possible to recognize the forces which shape the individual's identity, and thereby to escape them and recuperate selfhood" (Marais 7).

In *Disgrace,* Lurie initially refuses to wholeheartedly acknowledge that he had done Melanie wrong claiming that his twenty-year-old student is "old enough to know her own mind" (45). Despite the complaint that had been raised against him and the inquiry he had to face he "feels quite sure of himself" (47). He proudly maintains that he is a grown man and "not receptive to being counseled" (49) as he is beyond the reach of counseling. David's nonchalant attitude towards the incident "offers the portrayal of a country in crisis, or better, in disgrace" (Drichel 162). However, when his daughter herself becomes a victim of rape and violence, he visits Melanie's family and asks them for forgiveness. This act of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation from a family that he had wronged has been interpreted by several scholars as representative of the many white South Africans who had come forward after the abolition of apartheid in 1994 to formally apologize and seek forgiveness for their past wrongdoings.

Coetzee's texts are replete with violence and aggression, inflicted by both white and black characters. Several postcolonial scholars and critics have explicated on violence as a frequent occurrence in colonized or formerly colonized spaces. Sartre writes that in a colonial state, the only violence is the settler's at first, but the "traumatized" natives who have "seen their fathers being flogged" soon make violence "their own" (15) while Franz Fanon also surmises that "the youth of a colonized country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire" discover the reality of their situation and transform it into the "pattern of his customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 45). Incidents of violence in all the four texts may be seen as a result of a troubled state where the sense of ethics of both the oppressors and the oppressed is heavily distorted.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee's paints the character of Petrus, a black farm help in post-apartheid South Africa, as an ambitious man who makes use of the Land Grant to set himself up as a profitable farm owner. Lucy stands in the way of him achieving this as she still owns part of the land he has set his eyes on. Lucy's father David suspects that Petrus may have resorted to ordering some young men to rape Lucy to make her recognize her vulnerability in a land where the formerly oppressed were gradually being empowered. The portrayal of Petrus and his ambitions may be understood in correspondence to Franz Fanon's postulation that owning land brings dignity among natives as it is concrete evidence of the rise in their social standing. Fanon also points out that:

> The more the people understand, the more watchful they become, and the more they come to realize that finally everything depends on them and their salvation lies in their own cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests, and in knowing who their enemies are. The people come to understand that wealth is not the fruit of labour but the result of organised, protected robbery. Rich people are no longer respectable people; they are nothing more than flesh eating animals, jackals and vultures which wallow in the people's blood. (154)

Likewise, Lucy, even in the presence of her father, is no longer a respectable woman to the young men who assaulted and robbed her. To them, she is a part of the system that had dehumanized and stripped them of their dignity, and thus nothing more than a “fair game”. In her essay “Writing Across the Color Bar: Apartheid and Desire”, Lynne Hanley writes that apartheid offers “a peculiarly graphic illustration of the inextricability of systems of racial and sexual control” and that for the sustenance and reproduction of its white ruling class, the apartheid state must “impose and enforce a ban on sexual intercourse between white women and black men” (496). Since apartheid cannot survive the erosion of its rigorous control of the sexuality and procreativity of the white woman, her body becomes both the property of the state and a terrain of resistance to the state. Therefore, the "defilement" of a white woman by a black man becomes an act of revolution for the black man, while for the white man, it is a crime against the state. Hanley continues that it is a crime, above all else, “against her own person” only for the woman (496).

Though Coetzee does not make any implicit statement in the text to place blame on the white colonizers and settlers for what had been done to Lucy, both David and Lucy are conscious that the incident could not be taken in isolation as they perceived the attack to be the result of the history of oppression of black people. David tells Lucy that the assault was “history speaking through them” and that the history was “[A] history of wrong” which “came down from the ancestors” (156). Lucy herself wonders if “that is the price one has to pay for staying on” (158).

Jean-Paul Sartre explains that the colonized have no choice left but to resort to “irrepressible violence” if they are to reassert their presence, identity and ownership of what is rightfully theirs:

> The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self . . . When the peasant takes a gun in his hands, the old myths grow dim and the prohibitions are one by one forgotten. The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a

> European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a *national* soil under his foot. (18,19)

Petrus' proposal of marriage to Lucy to "become part of his establishment" as it was "too dangerous" (202) for a woman to live alone could be interpreted as him implying that more dangers could come her way if she chooses to stay on the farm on her own. Frantz Fanon had emphasized that:

> "[T]he first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and aggression" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 40).

In the light of this statement put forth by Fanon, the criminal actions of the young men who had assaulted Lucy and her father may be contextualized as manifestations of their "dreams of action and aggression". It must be noted here that while Lucy, a white woman is no longer safe on her own in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee seemingly suggests that the dangers that women face come from different angles. While Petrus' methods to dominate Lucy instantly come across as blatantly horrifying because of the violence involved, David's role as a predator is highly questionable as well even though it does not involve physical violence. He stalks Soraya, a sex worker he had been visiting even though she decides to end her liaisons with him. He sleeps with a student of his, exerting his power as a teacher over her. When she files a complaint against him for sexual harassment compelling him to appear before a committee of enquiry, he refuses to issue a public apology. Hakim, David's colleague who is also a part of the enquiry committee also tells him that he has his "sympathy". David initially regrets his behavior only because he lost his job and not because of the pain he had inflicted on the young woman. Hakim's sympathy for David and not for Melanie after the ordeal she had been through also reinforces how women's bodies are often viewed as a site of pleasure for men. David's detached antagonism towards women is exhibited through his interactions with them.

Towards the end of the text, he sleeps with Bev Shaw and the encounter is narrated from his point of view:

> Never did he dream he would sleep with a Bev. She is lying under the blanket with only her head sticking out. Even in the dimness there is nothing charming in the sight . . . Of their congress he can at least say that he does his duty. Without passion but without distaste either. (149,50)

The frequency of episodes in which rape and the violation of women's bodies have been presented in Coetzee's texts, usually with a gendered perspective, serves to illustrate the marginality of women. The treatment of women characters in these texts may be considered in tandem with the history of the colonized. Oyeronke Oyewumi writes that the histories of both the colonized and the colonizer have been written from the male point of view and that women are "peripheral" if they appear at all (256). Of the several women characters presented in the texts, the experiences, emotions and feelings of many of the characters are assumed from the male gaze and are seldom represented from the women's perspective. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Magistrate talks about a girl that he sometimes visits a girl for sexual gratification. He says that he has known her for a year and that he visits her about twice a week and claims that he has developed a "quiet affection" for her which is, according to him, the "best that can be hoped for between an aging man and a girl of twenty" (24). He also admits that he has thought about asking her to live with him but has refrained from doing so. A passage in *Waiting for the Barbarians* also states that the barbarian girl has "begun to settle into a routine in which she seems content". This supposed sense of contentment in her routine is not, however, voiced by the barbarian girl herself in the text. It is an assumption made by the narrator, the white Magistrate. David also assumes that Melanie would not have taken the step of filing a complaint in her own convincing himself that she is "too innocent . . . too ignorant of her power" and that her father and her cousin Pauline must have "worn her down" and "talked her into it" (39).

Moser writes that silence has long surrounded the violence suffered by women and children at the hands of men. According to her, as long as a society

allows silence to veil certain types of crimes, that society is, to a certain extent, culpable as cultural response to sexual violence is related to the cultural scripts existent in the society in question (8). Though men are also victims of various agencies of oppression, it is the womenfolk who bear the brunt of all kinds of oppression. While there is no undermining the fact that black men are also victims of colonialism and apartheid, the patriarchal nature of African societies entails that black native women face double colonization or dual oppression, from black men and the white settler population. Coetzee uses characters such as Soraya who is stalked against her wishes, Melanie who is snared into sex by her teacher, Anna who is forced to have sex with her white master and is also forcibly penetrated by her own husband, and the barbarian girl who is kept captive by the colonizers to explore the many ways in which native women have been marginalized. The Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* also realizes that the barbarian girl would be considered an outcast by her own people because her relationship with him marks her as "the property of a stranger" (148).

Though this study has delineated rape and sexual harassment of women as acts that marginalize them in a patriarchal society, it must also be taken into consideration that the perpetrators commit the acts on the women characters to assert power over them, and not necessarily because the victims are black or women. Rape has long been used as a tool to establish power and control, particularly in battlefields and conflict-ridden areas, with young boys and men often being subjected to rape. Rape is therefore a crime against humanity, and is a violation of human rights. In the context of the narratives in which this study has been based, the desire to rape also arises out of unresolved conflicts in ethically and politically troubled locales, where rape is seen as a form of vengeance.

Coetzee's texts remain relevant as his production "faces directly onto a problematic of postcolonial consciousness, and that penetrates deeply into this consciousness at every turn" (Mehigan 16). The prevalence of violence in a colonized/formerly colonized state, the marginalization of women - of both white and colored women in multiple ways and the presence of systematic racism in South Africa in Coetzee's texts may be said to provide significant insight into the lives of

South Africans in both apartheid and post-apartheid era, touching on various aspects of life and relationships for a "literary text speaks more or less directly of a living reality" (291) as Said has rightfully claimed. Coetzee, through his narratives "dramatizes the moral dilemmas and political paradoxes of all imperial enterprises" (Marais 115).

Through this study of Coetzee's works, it can be surmised that the experiences of the different characters, regardless of their race or gender, cannot be generalized. Though many of the characters are, to a certain degree silenced and therefore unable to fully articulate themselves, it can be perceived that their experiences are unique and specific to the context and environment they find themselves in. His works are important sites through which human life is explored and the portrayal of the troubled human condition may be seen as his attempt to empower the lives of people who have been victims of all kinds of oppression.

The analysis of the manifold representations of struggle and dilemma in Coetzee's texts establishes that racial and gender biases promote conflict. The investigation of diverse forms of violence which dominate the narratives determines that violence is employed for demonstration of power and authority by colonizers and as a medium of resistance by the colonized. The depiction of South Africa as an unwelcoming and hostile territory where inequality and injustice are widespread serves to denounce colonial and imperial enterprises. This study accentuates the centrality of conflict as a repercussion of colonialism and apartheid, and also delineates the discord that transpires in gendered societies where prevailing hierarchies dictate the marginalization of women irrespective of their race or social status. By negotiating with complex themes through his characters who belong to different races, age groups and social classes, Coetzee's texts offer substantial insight into South African society in colonial/apartheid and post-apartheid era.

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OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

List of Publications:

Sl. No.	Year	Title of Chapter/Research Paper	Name of book/journal	Publication Details (Place/Publishers) with ISBN/ISSN
1.	2019	Women and Narratives of Resistance	MZU Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies Vol VI Issue II December	Aizawl, Dept. Of English, Mizoram University ISSN: 2348-1188
2.	2021	Reassertion of Identity through Poetry	North East India: Problems, Prospects & Perspectives	Aizawl, Blue Mountain Offset Printer ISBN: 978-81-939844-9-9
3.	2021	Marginalized Subjects in the Narratives of J.M. Coetzee Co-authored with Prof. Margaret L. Pachuau	Margins: A Journal of Literature and Culture Vol X (UGC Care Listed Journal)	Guwahati, Gauhati University ISSN: 2250-0731
4.	2023	Writing the Self: Voices of Young Mizo Women	Negotiating Culture: Writings from	New Delhi, Bloomsbury India

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Offline:

1. “Reassertion of Identity through Belief Narratives in Select Poems from Northeast India” in National Seminar on Rethinking Tribal Identity organized by Department of English, Mizoram University (28-29 March, 2019)

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3. “Power Dynamics in Post-Apartheid South Africa” in National Conference on The Story – Life Narratives of Experience, Memory, Identity and Agency organized by Department of English, Kristu Jayati College (25-26 March, 2021)

4. “Rethinking Trauma - A Study of Mari and Zorami: A Redemption Song” in ICCR-NERC Sponsored National Seminar on “Literature and Nation Building: Perspectives from Northeast India” organized by Department of English, Tezpur College (12-13 August, 2022)

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DEGREE	: Ph.D.
DEPARTMENT	: ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
TITLE OF THESIS	: A Study of Racial and Gender Conflict in Select Texts by J.M. Coetzee
DATE OF ADMISSION	: 24.7.2017

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. DRC	: 19.9.2018
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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF RACIAL AND GENDER CONFLICT IN SELECT TEXTS BY J.M. COETZEE

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

LALSANGLIANI RALTE
MZU REGISTRATION NO.: 242 OF 2013
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES
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MARCH, 2023

A STUDY OF RACIAL AND GENDER CONFLICT IN SELECT TEXTS BY J.M. COETZEE

BY
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Submitted
In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

John Maxwell Coetzee (b. 1940) popularly known as J.M. Coetzee is one of the most prominent and significant writers from South Africa. A novelist, essayist, literary critic and translator, he draws inspiration from the socio-political realities of his country for many of his works. This study looks into four texts by Coetzee - *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Age of Iron* (1990) and *Disgrace* (1999). With the exception of *Disgrace* published soon after the end of the apartheid regime, the other three texts were written and published during the period of apartheid. The themes detected in these texts range from motherly love, relationships, death, rape, crimes, colonialism, racial segregation and patricide. All four of the selected texts have white protagonists, with three of them functioning as the narrators. The lives of these white characters are intricately linked with black characters in the narratives, thereby allowing Coetzee to explore the world of both the white settlers and the black native communities. This study examines the selected texts through postcolonial lens and makes use of concepts and ideas that are central to postcolonial studies, emphasizing on the conflict that culminates as result of racial and gender biases.

In the Heart of the Country is set in the beginning of the twentieth century in colonial Karoo semi-desert of the South Cape in South Africa and is narrated by Magda, a white woman who lives on a farm with her widowed father and their black servants. The narrative centres around the problematic relationship between Magda and her father, as well as the relationship between white masters and their black servants. Leading a lonely life ignored by her father and scorned and feared by their servants, Magda proclaims “I live neither alone nor in society” (9) and exposes the lack of intimacy between herself and her father to whom she claims to have been “an absence” all her life. She is a captivating postcolonial protagonist through which Coetzee explores the position of a displaced subject in a society that subordinates women. Magda regularly dreams of revenge against her father, even narrating episodes where she violently murders him. However, it is evident that her internal monologue cannot be trusted as she describes herself taking care of her father in his old age as the narrative comes to an end. This text is significant for its portrayal of a white settler woman who is entrapped within a colonial and patriarchal history that

marginalizes her and does not allow her to form meaningful relationships with her black servants who are the only people she sees regularly on her isolated farm. Though she maintains that she is "not simply one of the whites" and that she is an individual and "not a people" (147), she is regarded with mistrust and doubt by the servants who are aware of their place in a society that functions on a hegemony where the blacks are not regarded as equals by their white counterparts.

Waiting for the Barbarians is set in an unnamed frontier settlement that had been colonized by a totalitarian power referred to as the Empire. The text is narrated in the first person by an agent of the Empire who remains nameless but is called the Magistrate. The Magistrate reveals that there are rumors of an impending uprising by the natives of the land who are referred to as barbarians in the text. Though the Empire and the barbarians are not explicitly identified in the narrative, it can be assumed that the novel has been written to reflect the political situation of South Africa. The Magistrate is revealed to be sympathetic towards the barbarians when Colonel Joll, an officer of the Empire arrives at the settlement to investigate rumors of the revolt. Colonel Joll begins to capture several barbarians in and around the settlement in an effort to elicit confessions about the uprising and tortures the barbarians when they do not confess. Some of the prisoners even die during the questioning unable to survive the injuries that had been inflicted on them. The Magistrate, on his part, does not approve of the methods of Colonel Joll as he believes that the barbarians are peace loving people with no intentions of participating in the alleged uprising. He even undertakes a long and difficult journey to return a barbarian girl who had been imprisoned, raped and tortured by Colonel Joll's men to her people. When Colonel Joll learns of what he had been up to, the Magistrate is accused of treason against the Empire and is dismissed from his service and sent to jail where he is heavily tortured. Colonel Joll then discovers that all the soldiers sent on an expedition to capture barbarians around the settlement had died as the barbarians had lured them on in the wilderness and then stolen all their horses, leaving them to die in a territory they were not familiar with. This resulted in chaos in the settlement, and the remaining soldiers begin to behave even more unruly, pillaging goods from the shops and raping the womenfolk. With the eventual

departure of Colonel Joll and his men, the Magistrate is released from jail and he continues to take charge of the settlement, while helping the people to rebuild their lives.

Through the character of the Magistrate, Coetzee challenges and explores the terrorizations of colonialism. The methodical violence that Colonel Joll and his soldiers resorted to, in order to subdue the barbarians radically alters the perspective of the Magistrate. After all that he had witnessed, the Magistrate displays personal growth as he poignantly says to himself, "When some men suffer unjustly . . . it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it" (152). As a representative of the Empire, he had considered himself a champion of civilized justice but he comes to the conclusion that the justice system he once championed not only dehumanizes the barbarians who are tortured and degraded but also dehumanizes the soldiers who exploit the unequal application of justice as they pillage, rape and murder without any visible sign of guilt.

Age of Iron set in Cape Town, South Africa in the late 1980s during the period of apartheid centers around the experiences of its narrator, Mrs. Curren. The narrative is presented in the form of a long letter that Mrs. Curren, a retired professor who is dying of cancer writes to her daughter living in the United States of America. In this text, Mrs. Curren is gradually exposed to the harsh impact that the apartheid regime has on the black community. Though a white woman who benefits from the system of apartheid, she had never supported the apartheid regime but had been blind to the full intensity with which the blacks are being oppressed in her country. The revelation only occurs when she witnesses two young black men, Bheki and John who were temporarily living with her being hounded by the police and eventually resulting in a near fatal accident when the police force Bheki and John to collide with a truck while they were riding on a bike. She is further exposed to the cruelty and brutality of the system when she visits Guguletu, a black neighborhood where she witnesses the challenges faced by the black community who were demonstrating their resistance of apartheid by burning schools as they believed that the education system enforces the system that discriminated against them. The demonstration led to the death of Bheki and four other young men in the hands of the police. The police

also fatally shot at John in her home after her return from Guguletu. Her experiences cause her to lose faith in the police who shoot at the young men “as if they are waste” (104) and she questions the repressive and violent actions taken by the government to suppress the dissenters. She wonders about her own complicity as she contends that it is not enough to be a good person who opposes the inhumane treatment of the black community silently and accepts that she must live “in a state of shame” (99).

As Coetzee explores both the lives of white and black people through *Age of Iron*, he brings to light the injustices that govern the lives of the white settlers and the black natives. Through the character of Mrs. Curren, Coetzee directly addresses "one of the governing concerns of J.M. Coetzee's oeuvre: how does the white South African subject, and by extension the white South African writer, respond to the crimes of apartheid in which he or she is biopolitically implicated" (Walsh 168).

Disgrace, unlike the other texts that have been selected for this study, is set in post-apartheid South Africa. The novel traces the story of a fifty-two-year-old professor David Lurie who lives in Cape Town. Twice divorced, he has a daughter named Lucy who owns a farm in a small town in the Eastern Cape. After a complaint is filed against him for sexual harassment by Melanie, a student in his class, David Lurie is forced to leave his job and he visits his daughter on her farm. There he experiences life in the countryside and the days go by idyllically until he and his daughter are robbed and separately attacked by three black men at their home. After the departure of their attackers, he finds out that Lucy had been raped but she refuses to mention the rape in their complaint to the police. She also refuses to terminate her pregnancy when she finds out that she had been impregnated by one of her rapists. David Lurie suspects Petrus, Lucy’s neighbor and former farmhand of being an accomplice in the attack when he recognizes one of the attackers at a celebratory party hosted by Petrus who had recently become a landowner with the acquisition of land**.** Concerned about her safety, he tries to convince her to leave the country but she objects. Meanwhile, Petrus proposes marriage to Lucy, and David realizes that Lucy would eventually end up marrying Petrus giving him her land in exchange for

her protection and the right to remain in her house as the power structure between mistress and servant was slowly becoming reverted.

This text may be read as a reflection of the shift in social order in a post-apartheid South Africa. The status of the black people was slowly rising as is evident through the character of Petrus who goes from being a farm hand to a land owner. White people and their privileged position were constantly being challenged. Melanie's intense refusal to report being raped to the police and her decision to keep the baby of her rapist may be seen as an act of penance on her part as she asserts that her attackers most likely see themselves as "debt collectors, tax collectors" (158) and also her understanding that consequential actions will not be taken by the police. David also comes to the conclusion that his daughter thinks she has to pay for the past atrocities on the black community by submitting herself to them. This presents a bleak portrait of a new South Africa where the end of apartheid does not necessarily usher in a new era of peace and harmony among the different communities.

Chapter I: An Author: J.M. Coetzee

This chapter denotes significant aspects that are related to J.M. Coetzee and his works. J. M. Coetzee was born on February 9, 1940 in Cape Town, South Africa to Afrikaner parents of Dutch descent. He relocated to Australia in 2002 and became a naturalized Australian citizen in 2006. Though Coetzee normally prefers to stay away from the limelight, he has been accorded with several awards and honorary degrees in acknowledgement of his literary production. The South African government awarded Coetzee the Order of Mapungubwe (gold class) for his "exceptional contribution in the field of literature and for putting South Africa on the world stage" in 2005. Becoming the first person to win the Booker Prize twice, he was awarded the prize in 1983 for *The Life & Times of Michael* K and in 1999 for *Disgrace*. In 2003, Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. According to the Swedish Academy, Coetzee is an artist "who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider". He has also won the reputed South African Central News Agency (CNA) Literary Award thrice for *In the Heart of the*

Country (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983). In 1985, he was awarded the Prix Femina Étranger for the French translation of his novel *The Life & Times of Michael K* translated by Sophie Mayoux. He was awarded the Jerusalem Prize in 1987 and remains the only South African writer to have been conferred by the Jerusalem International Book Forum which places emphasis on themes related to human freedom. He won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (1980) and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (1981) for *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Besides these he also won The Sunday Express Book of the Year (1990) for *Age of Iron*, The Irish Times International Fiction Prize (1995) for *The Master of Petersburg* and two Commonwealth Writers' Prizes for the African region *for Master of St Petersburg* in 1995 and for *Disgrace* in 2000. He received the Lannan Literary Award for Fiction in 1998, an award which is, according to the Lannan Foundation "dedicated to cultural freedom, diversity and creativity through projects which support exceptional contemporary artists and writers, as well as inspired Native activists in rural indigenous communities".

Born and brought up in South Africa, Coetzee was personally exposed to apartheid, a political system that discriminated against non-white South Africans by mandating segregation of public facilities and social events, and by dictating housing and employment opportunities by race. In his works, he continuously treads on the socio-political impact of settler colonialism and internal colonialism embodied in the form of apartheid in South Africa. He addresses concerns related to race and gender particularly in societies inflicted with various forms of colonialism. The theme of violence, which is demonstrated in its varied forms in settings that have been troubled by socio-political conflicts, also permeates through his works. His intricate position as a white writer writing about colonialism and apartheid, predominantly focusing on their negative consequences, subjects him to intense examination by academics. Though he has been charged of "political quiescence, of producing novels that neither sufficiently address nor affirm the contiguities between the literary domain and historical-economic-political realities" (Macaskill and Colleran 432) by some critics, he continues to be widely acclaimed for his representation of the realities of life in South Africa. According to Jane Poyner, Coetzee's novels

> address themes and issues pertinent to the (post)colonial and apartheid situations: colonial discourse, the other, racial segregation, censorship, banning and exile, police brutality and torture, South African liberalism and revolutionary activism, the place of women, the relationship of South Africa's peoples to the land and, not least, the ethico-politics of writing all figure prominently in the oeuvre. (1)

In his study of Coetzee's narratives, Stephan Watson detects an unusual appeal in that they "do not deliver the usual moral condemnation of greed and hypocrisy" as other novels that discuss colonialism are inclined to. Watson is of the opinion that Coetzee's novels do not just allude to historical reality but also expose the type of psyche, the psychology being dictated by the reality of colonialism (371). Coetzee deliberately illustrates relationships between white settlers and black natives in his novels, focusing on the tension that exists in hierarchies where one holds power over another.

Aware of his position of privilege as an educated white male from the middle class, Coetzee comprehends the complexity of being a white male author writing about the historical and political situation of South Africa. In his rejection of the hierarchy that places white people in a position of authority, he maintains that he is a writer "without authority" (*Doubling the Point* 392). The predicament of his authorial position is echoed in the voices he chooses to engage with in his texts. He frequently adopts narrative strategies that distance him from his works to attain an impersonal and detached voice. By engaging with female narrators in texts like *Age of Iron* and *In the Heart of the Country*, he "combines the twin strategies of projecting the lack of an adequate vantage point as well as lack of authority" (Kharshiing 40) as he draws from the overriding patriarchal ideologies that render the voice or the word of a woman as limited and lacking authority.

Coetzee's works, most of which are set in South Africa, are both realistic and allegorical in their portrayal of the period of colonialism and apartheid, as well as the transitional period which South Africa had to endure with the abolition of apartheid. A writer who believes that "all writing is autobiography" (*Doubling the Point* 391),

his works indicate that he is deeply influenced by his personal background and history with South Africa. His works mirror his opposition of colonialism and apartheid but he refrains from offering explicit solutions to the problems afflicting the South African society. The theme of violence is recurrent throughout the texts that have been selected for this study. Violence is explored as a phenomenon that is unavoidable in colonial/apartheid settings where the colonizers execute control over colonized subjects through brute force and also in post-colonial/apartheid settings where the formerly oppressed assert themselves with violence. He brings to the forefront the intersections between the political past and the present to seemingly accentuate that the past continues to haunt the present.

Issues related to the problematic relations between male and female characters who are products of a culture that perpetuates gender inequality are found in abundance in his works. He draws attention to how women are frequently marginalized socially and economically. He presents the South African society as a society inflicted with gender conflict where both white and black women suffer at the hands of their male counterparts. A glaring and recurrent theme that is observed in his texts is the powerlessness and voicelessness of women who are forced to submit to their fate. Several of his white characters also find themselves interrogating their own ethics and morality as they become increasingly exposed to injustice raising questions on the subject of complicity. Stephan Watson notes that Coetzee's novels "not only allude to an actual historical reality, but they also give us, in fictional form, the type of psyche, the psychology that this reality dictates" (371). The works of J.M. Coetzee, when contextualized within the history of South Africa capture the manifestations of racial and gender conflict, and the consequences of such conflicts on the people of the country. By combining his ethical and political consciousness, he presents an intellectual challenge to colonialism and apartheid inviting reflections on power and morality as he illuminates his readers on the socio-political realities of South Africa.

Chapter II: Racial Conflict

Racial conflict, in the context of this study may be elaborated as the disparity and tension that characterize the relationship between the white and the black communities of South Africa. This chapter looks at the relationships between characters of different races and the tension that exists between them on account of their supposed racial differences. The differences have been constructed out of the perception that some races are inherently superior while some are inferior. This perception results in racism, also referred to as racialism, which is "the belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called 'races'; that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioural features; and that some races are innately superior to others" (Smedley). Smedley concurs that the term race is often applied to political, economic or legal institutions and systems to justify discrimination on the basis of race.

The discrimination and Othering on the basis of race is notably portrayed in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the indigenous people whose ancestors had lived on the land for hundreds of years are referred to as barbarians and are perceived as violent and immoral. Such "representations and modes of perception", according to John McLeod are "fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonized peoples subservient to colonial rule" (17). In his assertion that the division between the western countries and the rest of the world had become fairly complete in the nineteenth century through the extension of European empires, Robert J.C. Young writes that colonial rule was "legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interest" (2). Qualities such as "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality" (Loomba 93) are often attributed to such natives. Such anthropological theories were based on the concept of race as a result of which the relation between the west and the non-west came to be regarded as "whites versus the non-white

races" (Young 2). Young emphasizes that white culture is still largely regarded as "the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, literature - in a word, civilization" (3).

The supposition that white culture is superior is echoed in Coetzee's texts where white settlers continuously torment the lives of black natives in their attempt to maintain control over them. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the law enforcing agents of the Empire who are in perpetual fear of an uprising by the barbarians to overthrow the Empire torture and punish the natives that had been captured to subdue them. This novel may be read as an allegory of oppressor and the oppressed in which race plays a predominant role. All the selected texts that have been chosen for this study reflect the myriad experiences of various characters who find themselves being confronted with discrimination and prejudices. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, native people are constantly accused of crimes such as robbery and rape without proper evidence by the settlers. *Age of Iron* also depicts the role of race in the process of discrimination of a group of people. In this text, black men such as Bheki and John are constantly pursued by the police on grounds of mere suspicion and without evidence that they have committed crimes. Both of the young men are eventually shot to their deaths by the police. Hendrik, a black servant in the text *In the Heart of the Country* also comments that he will be blamed for the murder of his master though he did not commit the crime as his word would not be taken into account by white men.

In *Disgrace* set in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee also presents racial tension that finds its expression through the attack on David and the rape of Lucy by three black men. Lucy perceives of the rape as an act of vengeance to make her pay for the centuries of oppression of black natives at the hands of white settlers. When Lucy finds out that she had been impregnated by one of her rapists, she is determined to be "a good mother and a good person" to her child of mixed race. In order to protect herself and her child, she also makes the decision to marry Petrus, her black former farmhand who would take her land in exchange for his protection. The compromises that Lucy makes to find a way to survive in the future may be seen as

the symbol of change that Coetzee expects to see in South Africa. Just as Lucy hopes for "love to grow" in her for her future child, Coetzee's texts may be read as his attempt to show the way for a pragmatic approach to a new kind of life in post-apartheid South Africa. His texts provide hope for the future where there is restorative justice through its narrativization of trauma and oppression. The process of revealing racial conflicts in South Africa through narratives that represent the experiences of the oppressed is crucial in the repair of the damage that had been caused by a long history of oppression.

Chapter III: Marginalization and Women

This chapter looks into the lives and experiences of female characters in the texts in an effort to establish the manners in which marginalization of women is represented in Coetzee's texts. The term marginalization may be described as the treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral. It is a "condition and a process that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society" (Alakhunova et al. 2). Noted feminist bell hooks also notes that "[T]o be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body". Throughout history, women have been positioned on the margins of society and restricted to subaltern spaces in social, political and economic institutions through social norms and conventions.

Like many other countries across the globe, South Africa is "deeply conservative and patriarchal" and this characteristic of South African society has "an enormous impact on the lives of women and children" (Bower 108). Women of all races in the country have met with countless challenges under the mechanisms of patriarchy that subjugate them. Two of the texts that have been selected for this study, i.e., *Age of Iron* and *In the Heart of the Country*, have women narrators from whose perspectives the narratives are presented. Coetzee also makes use of other female characters as vehicles through which the conflict that often arise between men and women, particularly in societies ridden with political turbulence, is scrutinized. His fictions portray the marginalization of women in patriarchal

societies where men are perceived as figures of authority. Existing theories on sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, exoticization, objectification, silencing and menstruation are employed to examine the female characters and their experiences in this chapter.

In Coetzee's *Disgrace, Waiting for the Barbarians* and *In the Heart of the Country* sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape are repeated themes. They are demonstrated in multiple ways, with the perpetrators being male and the victims being female characters. In the incidents where women are victimized by men across the three narratives, there is a power imbalance wherein the male perpetrators assume a position of control over their victims regardless of race. Magda is raped by her black servant Hendrik when she is unable to pay him his wages after the death of her father in the text *In the Heart of the Country*. Though she is the mistress of the household, her position becomes relegated in the absence of her father revealing that even white women are not safe in the absence of male figures to protect them. Likewise, Lucy in *Disgrace* is also raped by three black men. The rape in Lucy's case is not just one of physical offence but also an act that silences her. Apart from her refusal to report the rape to the police, she also decides to keep the baby she conceived as a result of the rape. Her silence and lack of action against the rapists even when she later comes into contact with one of them is a demonstration of her submission.

Discussions revolving around gender and conflict, particularly in the last few decades, have progressively focused on sexual violence or harassment against women. Victims of sexual harassment are typically "members of oppressed identity groups" while harassers generally share a characteristic which is their "maleness" and, thus, they act out of "their possession of power" (Patai 60). It is a form of marginalization of women that has its roots in gendered and patriarchal societies. Sexual harassment which may be physical or verbal can cause psychological problems in the victims and result in mental illnesses such depression, anxiety, fear, sleep problems and post-traumatic stress disorder. Scholars such as Harriet Samuels have argued that sexual harassment should be seen in the context of women's subjugated role in patriarchal societies and must be analysed in a similar way to

other concerns, such as rape and domestic violence as it is characteristic of gender inequality and the tolerance of hostility against women (26).

Women are also marginalized in more subtle ways as depicted in *Waiting for the Barbarians* where a native woman begins to menstruate during a journey with three men who believe that it is back luck to be with a menstruating woman. They maintain their distance from her during her cycle and she has to perform a rite every morning to cleanse and purify herself. It is, however, not always men who are perpetrators but also women who internalize patriarchal ideologies and marginalize themselves by subscribing to existing standards that bind them as is evident in the character of Magda. Magda hates her physical appearance and believes one has to be physically appealing to capture the attention of men. Considering herself ugly and undesirable, she thus objectifies herself and is uncomfortable in her own skin though there is no indication that she has been called ugly or undesirable by anybody in the text. Magda's desire for outward validation, particularly from men is a case of "male approval desirous" which is a tendency to seek validation from being considered attractive and worthy by men (Daly 78).

All the female characters examined in this chapter have been affected by colonization/apartheid and patriarchy, and are marginalized albeit in different ways. Though the female characters belong to different races and social classes in the society, their lack of agency to free themselves from patriarchal oppression is a feature they all have in common. Their marginalization is not a situation they can change even when they are white land-owning women or former professors. In *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren, a former professor of classics finds herself powerless to protect John from the police and comes to learn of her voicelessness when she expresses herself to other characters in the text who refuse to acknowledge her opinions on the apartheid regime. When white women who are accorded with certain privileges are forced to submit, it is even harder for black women to break free from the margins and resist the forces that repress them. The condition of women characters in the selected texts, regardless of their race, may be examined in correspondence with the history of the colonized. Oyeronke Oyewumi writes that the histories of both the colonized and the colonizer have been written from the male point of view and that

women are “peripheral” if they appear at all (256). Through the study of Coetzee’s narrativization of the mechanisms that marginalize women in his works, a parallel may be drawn between the woman subject and the colonized subject, with the inference that forces of patriarchy permeate through all sections and classes of society.

Chapter IV: Locating Violence

An investigation of Coetzee’s texts show that violence is persistently portrayed in varying degrees. This chapter looks at the depictions of violence in the selected texts to put into perspective as to how violence is performed as a tool of oppression and also as a tool of resistance. Violence may be described as “an act of physical force that causes or is intended to cause harm. The damage inflicted by violence may be physical, psychological, or both” (Jacquin). It is a key factor in the “production, maintenance and legitimization of domination and subordination. People often experience multiple forms of violence that are interrelated, co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing, and that exist at state, institutional and individual levels” (Aisha K. Gill et al.112).

Several characters in Coetzee’s works resort to violence as a means to achieve their desires. His narratives exemplify an intellectual challenge to colonial violence as well retributive violence during and after the period of transition to a democratic state. Coetzee highlights the traumatic consequences of violence which may be physical, sexual and psychological in nature. Several characters in the texts are perpetrators of violence while some are direct and indirect victims. Apart from the portrayal of the different forms of violence which comes with the process of colonization and apartheid, violence associated with long established values entrenched in mechanisms of patriarchy are also represented. The narratives negotiate with the interstices of the historical, political and social contexts within which violence is located.

The emergence of theories on colonial discourses and postcolonial criticism has impeded the focus on violence, particularly in relation to colonialism and anti-

colonial struggles. According to Jean-Paul Sartre, colonizers inflict violence on the natives in their colonies not just to assume political control over them but also to dehumanize them. They seek to wipe out the traditions and cultures of the natives as they occupy and take possession over their lands. To achieve this, they often had to use force and physical coercion (13). The influential theorist in postcolonial studies, Homi K. Bhabha brings into focus the intention of colonial discourses 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" (70). To justify acts of violence and occupation of other peoples' land, the colonial powers rely deeply on representations and modes of perception.

Coetzee's texts highlight how tyrannical agents of colonialism and apartheid use violence as a tool for supressing control over natives. For instance, Colonel Joll in *Waiting for the Barbarians* tortures several natives to elicit truth from them. Suspecting that all natives are complicit in a rebellion to overthrow the colonial Empire, he does not spare any suspect that has been captured from being tortured. Though many of his captives insist that they are innocent and have played no role in the planning of a revolution, he nevertheless punishes them brutally even leading to the death of some of them. In the text *In the Heart of the Country,* Magda demonstrates her inclination for violence as she repetitively visualizes herself resorting to violence and even murder, to fill the void in her life. Her violent temperament is exposed as she details her act of committing murder with a hatchet. She strikes at her father's throat with her weapon and seemingly tries to justify her act with the thought "[A]ll kinds of people have done this before me, wives, sons, lovers, heirs, rivals. I am not alone" (13). Her action is propelled by her quest for vengeance, as she believes her father responsible for the death of her mother and the miserable state of her own life. As somebody who is witness to the violence committed by colonizers, she has internalized the perception of violence as means to achieve one's desires. Through Magda, Coetzee demonstrates the psychological impact of being exposed to violence.

A reading of Coetzee's *Disgrace* renders Vron Ware's remark that "real or imagined violence towards white women became a symbol of the most dangerous

form of insubordination" (176) relevant to this study. In *Disgrace*, three young black men attack David and rape his daughter Lucy. The text informs that Lucy sees the rape as an act of retribution for the history of offences by the white settlers against the blacks. Magda is also brutally raped by her black servant Hendrik in *In the Heart of the Country*. The violence committed in the form of rape by the black characters in Coetzee's texts may be seen as acts of resistance against oppression and the desire to assert control.

Through an examination of Coetzee's representation of colonial violence, it can be assumed that that he does not approve of violence as acts of violence by colonizers in his texts fail to yield positive outcomes. By highlighting the moral depravity of the perpetrators of violence his narratives denounce violence. The portrayal of aggression and brutality in characters such as Colonel Joll signify the possible lack of moral consciousness on the part of colonizers in their relations with native populations. The illustrations of the violence of white characters in the texts may also be seen as his subversion of existing colonial discourses that tend to attribute violence on natives, thereby seeming to suggest that all people are susceptible to violent behaviour in times of conflict, regardless of their race if their sense of ethics is distorted. By giving his attention to characters such as the Magistrate and Mrs. Curren who reject violence as a vehicle of control, he marginalizes characters who resort to violent means to achieve their goals by rendering them voiceless in the narratives.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Coetzee's own experiences as a white man are not similar with those of the black natives and the white women that he attempts to represent in his texts but he ventures to create voices that recount the socio-political reality of a society that had been troubled by colonization and apartheid. He is continuously "in search of his subject: the voice especially, embedded in a distinctive genre and a distinctive history" (Attwell xx). By relating the experience and perspective of white people who morally oppose the apartheid regime in his texts, he establishes his own position

as a writer writing against apartheid. His works deal with both "the perspicuous and subtle ways in which personal relationships in post-apartheid South Africa are conditioned by the persistent and entrenched legacy of apartheid and of centuries of racial inequality and oppression" (Lopez 923).

The works that have been selected for this study were published between 1977 and 1999, a span of twenty-two years during which the political disorder of South Africa reached its climax. In the essay "The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", Michael Valdez Moses writes that though Coetzee has been criticized for his "reluctance to represent contemporary South African political events of South African directly in his fiction" and has been charged with "quietism and rarified aestheticism", his "allegorical tales" reflect upon "the metaphysical ground and philosophical landscape in which the present historical controversies and political disputes of his country are rooted" (115). His texts remain relevant as his production "faces directly onto a problematic of postcolonial consciousness, and that penetrates deeply into this consciousness at every turn" (Mehigan 16).

Through the examination of the multiple ways in which racial and gender conflict in its varied forms have been explored by J.M. Coetzee, the study establishes that conflicts stem from racial and gender biases as encountered by the characters in the selected texts. A study of the ways in which violence, which figures prominently in all the texts in its diverse forms of manifestations, have been presented infers that violence is employed for exhibition of power and control by colonizers and for demonstration of resistance by the colonized. The study also delineates the marginalization of women in societies where patriarchal norms are strictly embedded. The portrayal of a bleak and disturbing picture of South Africa, where inequality and injustice are rampant, using wide-ranging themes and narrative techniques serves to denounce colonial and imperial enterprises. This study emphasizes the centrality of conflict as a consequence of colonialism and apartheid, and also highlights the friction that occurs in gendered societies where existing hierarchies dictate the subordination of women of all races. By navigating complex themes through his characters who differ vastly in terms of their race, age and social

standing, Coetzee's texts provide significant insight into the lives of South Africans in colonial/apartheid and post-apartheid era, touching on various aspects of life and human relationships.

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