

Chapter V



Chapter V

In the Heart of the Country- Paranoia and Alienation

In the Heart of the Country depicts the condition of woman during the period of colonisation.

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 is 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. (Watson 370)

The conditions that subjugate women such as colonialism, patriarchy and apartheid are highlighted in the novel. J.M.Coetzee has narrated this novel by using the stream of consciousness technique. The protagonist Magda is portrayed as a woman occupying diverse roles within the colonised patriarchal society. Even though *In the Heart of the Country* defines women as "a reserve of purity and silence in the materiality of its traffic with the world and its noisy discourse" (Jacobus 28), the character Magda is badly affected by the clutches of colonialism. Her position describes the status of white woman in a colonised set up. She is a victim of the patriarchal society. J.M.Coetzee has portrayed Magda as a victim inspite of belonging to the dominant race.

Magda is an old spinster who lives in a state of fear and hatred. In the course of time she starts to live in a world of fantasy. White women like Magda were not allowed to move freely with other people in the society. Their higher status becomes a fence that prevents them from socializing with others. Hence, Magda's loneliness makes her to feel

alienated from the real world and she seeks solace in a world of fantasy. “It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference- that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (Bhabha 02). Cultural values are determined by the factors like colonialism, racial discrimination and patriarchy.

J.M.Coetzee has used first person female narrator to narrate the story. J.M.Coetzee challenges the system of apartheid and oppression caused by colonialism through his women characters who are the victims of male dominated society. “Magda *In the Heart of the Country* is instrumental in demonstrating Coetzee’s stance as a linguistic and critical cultural theorist in developing his concept of the “self” as a decentred and displaced construct outside the western projects of Enlightenment and rationality” (Kharshiing 29).

Magda sympathizes with native people and it results in various problems. Magda feels isolated from the society because of her father’s dominating attitude towards her. In this novel, Magda is portrayed as a lonely spinster living with her father in a remote farm located in the rural part of Africa. Magda struggles to establish her identity in a colonised country. The novel is written in the form of a diary. She narrates about the happenings in the farm in her diary. “Diary- novel is less an exploration of the mind of a tormented spinster on a remote South African farm than a strict and penetrating intellectual meditation on the nature of history” (Paulin 87-88).

Magda’s alienation makes her neurotic and she recollects her erratic thoughts. She had only a few people to speak with. She was dominated by her father, later by the native servant Hendrik. As her farm was very remote she didn’t get opportunity to meet

other people. Magda's father is a widower and a womanizer. Magda's frustration started when her father brought his new wife to their farm while she remains a spinster.

It is between the signifier in the form of the proper name of a man, and the signifier which metaphorically abolishes him that the poetic spark is produced, and it is in this case all the more effective in realization the meaning of paternity in that it reproduces the mythic event in terms of which Freud reconstructed the progress, in the individual unconscious, of the mystery of the father. (Lacan, *Insistence of the Letter* 126)

Magda is completely ignored by her father and he doesn't consider her as his daughter. Magda becomes a victim of his domineering personality. This led to Magda's lonely life in that ranch. Magda is affected by paranoia. Thus, Magda suffers from extreme anxiety and fear. At times she misconceives certain things and gets into trouble. "Due to the suspicious and troublesome personality traits of paranoia, it is unlikely that someone with paranoia will thrive in interpersonal relationships. Most commonly paranoid individuals tend to be of a single status" (Deutsch 1416). Certain circumstances like unhappy childhood, father's negligence, loss of her mother, sexual abuse in her childhood, abused by the native servant, unmarried life and her father's affair with the native servant resulted in Magda's paranoia. Hence, she possessed a biased opinion on every aspect of life. She started to believe that everything happened out of intention. This also resulted in maintaining strained relationship with her servants.

Magda used to get migraine often due to paranoia as the excess psychological pressure resulted in decline of blood circulation to the brain. "A paranoid reaction may be caused from a decline in brain circulation as a result of high blood pressure or hardening

of the arterial walls” (Deutsch 1408). She believes that the step mother and the servant Anna separated her from her father. She derived conclusions herself and took decisions on her own. The abuses which she suffered in her childhood made her neurotic. She is unable to cope up with other people. Paranoia made her violent and she goes even to the extent of murdering her father. The novel opens with her description of her father’s new wife.

Today my father brought home his new brideMy father wore his black Swallowtail coat and stovepipe hat, his bride a wide- brimmed sunhat and a white dress tight at waist and throat. More detail I cannot give unless I begin to embroider, for I was not watching. I was in my room, in the emerald semi-dark of the shuttered late afternoon, reading a book or more likely, supine with a damp towel over my eyes fighting a migraine. (HC 01)

These lines portray Magda’s thoughts regarding her father and his new lady. She cannot accept her father bringing a new woman to their house. But she could not express that to her father because he will not listen to her words. She spent most of her time in reading books in her room. She feels pity for the girls who are isolated and lonely in that colonised society. Magda says “I am the one who stays in her room reading or writing or fighting migraines. The Colonies are full of girls like that, but none, I think, so extreme as I” (HC 01).

Magda doesn’t have any other work to do rather than reading and writing. Due to loneliness and excessive pressure caused by the hierarchy of class division between the whites and the natives prevented her from befriending anyone. She turned her mind away from the outside world and concentrated on her own self. Magda doesn’t like the woman whom her father brought because while she is a lonely spinster aching for love and

pleasure her father was ignoring his daughter's needs and enjoying his life. She describes his father's new wife as:

The new wife. The new wife is a lazy big-boned voluptuous feline woman with a wide slow smiling mouth. Her eyes are black and shrewd like two berries, two shrewd black berries. She is a big woman with fine wrists and long plump tapering fingers. She eats her food with relish. She sleeps and eats and lazes. She sticks out her long red tongue and licks the sweet mutton-fat from her lips.... I cannot easily sustain her smile. We are not a happy family together. (HC 01-02)

Magda often thinks about her mother. Magda's mother died when she was a baby. She describes her mother as a fragile woman, who was very gentle and loving. She also died because of her husband's incessant sexual demands. And he also didn't forgive her mother because she didn't bear him a son. Magda states the reason for her mother's death as "She was too frail and gentle to give birth to the rough rude boy-heir my father wanted, therefore she died" (HC 02). After all these years now he has married a woman, without considering his daughter who is aging. He took no interest in getting her married. Magda's father is selfish and treats his own daughter as a slave. Magda cooked food for him and now even for his new wife. He did not pay any attention to her. Magda describes her presence to her father as: "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" (HC 02).

Magda feels totally ignored and neglected by her father and sometimes even by the society and her servants. She keeps thinking that her father and step-mother would be enjoying their marital union. Josephine Dodd asserts that Magda's behaviour refers to oedipus complex in the novel.

The Freudian analysis of the Oedipus complex only partially applies. Magda is supposed to visit the (displaced) scene of her parents' love making. Magda is supposed to desire her father as representative of the law and custodian of reason and language, but it is only male children who are suppose to fantasize the killing of the father, only male children can hope to accede to that position of power. (159)

Magda spent all her life brooding over her father's lack of love and concern towards her.

In a house shaped by destiny like an H I have lived all my life,.....spinning my trail from room to room, looming over the servants, the grim widow-daughter of the dark father. Sundown after sundown we have faced each other over the mutton, the potatoes, the pumpkin, dull food cooked by dull hands. Is it possible that we spoke? No, we could not have spoken, we must have fronted each other in silence and chewed our way through time, our eyes, his black eyes and my black eyes inherited from him, roaming blank across their fields of vision. (HC 03)

Magda hardly communicates with her father. They ate, simply retired to sleep and the life on the farm passed away. Somehow she wanted to beat the time by keeping busy with some reading or writing. But she failed and her mind revolved around her father and the new wife. Magda says:

The land is full of melancholy spinsters like me, lost to history, blue as roaches in our ancestral homes, keeping a high shine on the copperware and laying in Jam. Wooed when we were little by our masterful fathers, we are bitter vestals, spoiled for life. The childhood rape: someone should study the kernel of truth in this fancy. (HC 03-04)

Magda is dominated by her father and by Hendrik, the native servant. Her father treats her as a servant rather than his daughter. Her father's subjugation is not physical but purely mental strain to Magda. Magda is the metaphor or a symbol for colonial life in South Africa and her father colonises her. From her version of traumatized childhood it is evident that her father has physically abused her. But in the novel there are no references of the physical abuse of Magda by her father.

She is always faced with the fact that these narratives are coercive and face her into the role of either avenger or mad woman. The action or fantasy that proceeds from this construction of self is scripted by her dominant literary discourse to go mad, we are scripted by our dominant psycho analytic discourse to identify her as wanting to be seduced by her father. (Dodd 159)

But his neglect, lack of love, rude words, and worse treatment made Magda to feel completely isolated from the outside world. "I live, I suffer, I am here. With cunning and treachery, if necessary, I fight against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history. I am a spinster with a locked dairy but I am more than that. I am an uneasy consciousness but I am more than that too. When all the lights are out I smile in the dark" (HC 04).

In the later part of the apartheid regime not only the native people are affected but also the white people are also affected as they were the minority. Magda's stepmother approaches her and persuades her to be friendly, as she wants to make a happy household. Magda defines herself "as an angry spinster in the heart of nowhere" (HC 04). Her yearning for marital life and conjugal bliss turns her into a paranoid.

Magda's bitter acceptance of her non-position in her father's household is eclipsed by her fear of total displacement with the arrival of her father's bride. Though the courtship and marriage of her father is her own construction, Magda's imaginary stepmother poses a threat to the only close relationship and social identity that she enjoys by virtue of belonging to her father's household. Magda is resentful of the patriarchal imperialist structure of her world, but at the same time, she realizes that her father and the imperial system that he symbolizes are the only available means of social identity for her. (Kharshiing 37-38)

Magda feels that she was living a double life by suppressing all her troubled consciousness and trying to lead a normal life. "Aching to form the words that will translate me into the land of myth and hero, here I am still dowdy self in a dull summer heat that will not transcend itself" (HC 04). Magda consoles herself by accepting the truth. Her mood changes on account of the incidents which happen around her. "Do I not Quiver at every pore with a passion of vexation? Is it that my passion lacks will? Am I an angry yet somehow after all complacent farmyard spinster, wrapped in the embrace of my furies? Do I truly wish to get beyond myself?" (HC 04-05).

Magda is completely embraced only with anger and fury. Her father's indifferent attitude and lack of compassion has traumatized her. Magda right from her childhood was treated badly by her father. Her motherless childhood has given her a lot of injuries both physically and mentally. Sometimes she wishes to go beyond herself. She wants to climb into a vehicle and travel through a downstream, through the broken water, and get refreshed on an estuary. Due to paranoia she dreams of weird things and behaves in an unusual manner.

What automatism is this, what liberation is it going to bring me, and without liberation what is the point of my story? Do I feel rich outrage at my spinster fate? Who is behind my oppression? You and you, I say crouching in the cinders, stabbing my finger at father and stepmother.

But why have I not run away from them? (HC 05)

Magda blames her father and stepmother for her unhappy state. She feels that without freedom what is the point in living a bonded life in the lonely farm. She curses her spinster fate. She has become a miserable victim of fate which made her as pitiable person in the society.

She begins her story with the imagined arrival of her father with his new bride. Thus, she chooses for a beginning the moment of her displacement, the moment in which she is forced to renounce her place in the household, a place that is ambiguous to start with. After giving a fairly detailed account of this imagined arrival, she quickly revises it, and finally admits that she wasn't watching. She was behind closed shutters, impersonating the sickly heroine of man Victorian texts. When she reminisces about her

mother, she casts herself into the role of the orphan gazing lovingly at the mother's portrait. (Briganti 35)

Magda wants a person to live with, to share her thoughts and her mind yearned for love. "I am not a happy peasant. I am a miserable black virgin, and my story is my story, even if it is a dull black blind stupid miserable story, ignorant of its meaning and of all its many possible untapped happy variants" (HC 05).

And the enigmas which desire seems to pose for a 'natural philosophy' – its frenzy mocking the abyss of the infinite, the secret collusion by which it obscures the pleasure of knowing and of joyful domination, these amount to nothing more than that derangement of the instincts that comes from being caught on the rails- internally stretching forth towards the desire for something else- of metonymy. Wherefore its 'perverse' fixation at the very suspension –point of the signifying chain where the memory-screen freezes and the fascinating image of the fetish petrifies. (Lacan, *Insistence of the Letter* 137)

Magda is obsessed with death, which is a symptom of paranoia. She considers death as liberation from all her problems. Every night Magda fought for sleep. She dreams of the angel who takes care of the ill people. Magda thinks that in the war people will breathe their last breath by looking into the eyes of an angel.

If my father had been a weaker man he would have had a better daughter. But he has never needed anything. Enthralled by my need to be needed, I circle him like a moon. Such is my sole risible venture into the psychology of our debacle. To explain is to forgive, to be explained is to

be forgiven, but I, I hope and fear, am inexplicable, unforgivable....Do I really have a secret or is this bafflement before myself only a way of mystifying my better, Questing half? Do I truly believe that stuffed in a crack between my soft mother and my baby self lies the key to this black bored spinster? (HC 05-06)

Magda loves to be in the company of nature and particularly she loves insects so much as she used to play with them during her childhood. Magda's childhood was not that easy as she had nobody to take care of her. Her father failed to be affectionate and she spent most of her childhood days with the servant's children. She played with them and even ate with them. At times she yearned for love and she sat with her grandfather and listened to the old stories of his days. She thinks about her golden days which she spent with her grandfather. Magda was completely ignored by her father since childhood.

J.M. Coetzee here has brought out the relationship between the man and the master. This is one of the major themes of J.M.Coetzee's novels. When Magda was a child she played with the servant's children and when she has grown up she became a master of her servants. But at a point of time man and master understand the transience of their presence in this world. "At the feet of an old man I have 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 and I am far from laughing" (HC 07).

Magda feels that this age has brought her a never ending ache of loneliness since she is unable to develop meaningful relationship. She craves for her mother's love.

And mother, soft scented loving mother who drugged me with milk and slumber in the featherbed and then, to the sound of bells in the night,

vanished, leaving me alone among rough hands and hard bodies – where are you? My lost world is a world of men, of cold nights, woodfire, gleaming eyes, and a long tale of dead heroes in a language I have not unlearned. (HC 07)

Magda grew up in the company of the servants. She knows very well about the psychology of the servants. Magda also has an opinion that the servants are curious to know everything which happens in their master's house. The servants want to work in a big house but they do not want to do any hard work. They want to simply while away the time by dozing under the shade of the trees. Here, the author has depicted the mentality of the coloniser towards the colonised. Magda even though subjugated by her father has a domineering attitude towards her servants.

All that Magda possessed was only loneliness to overcome boredom and she communicated with herself through a self-invented language of signs. Magda describes her language as father-tongue because of the patriarchal domination of her father. Magda also says that the language she uses were not from her heart. She feels so because she comes to know that the master and the slave suffer equally because of colonialism. Magda is “a reluctant inheritor of her progenitor's masterful language and speculative bias, she nevertheless has access to the world of emotional experience that the patriarchal intellect has despised and repressed” (Gillmer 112).

Loneliness and lack of compassion made her a paranoid individual. Magda had a collection of books and spent most of her time in reading and dreaming what she read. “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” (HC 08). She lived in her own world creating her own language and words. Magda says that if she has freedom to do as per her wish nothing is impossible for her to achieve. She thinks that she has lot of duties to do in her room. Sitting alone and reading gives her utmost pleasure. Magda enjoys herself in her own company. She releases herself from the outer world and feels comfortable with her inner self.

My clothes cake with dribble, I hunch and twist, my feet blossom with
horny callouses, this prim voice, spinning out sentences without occasion,
gaping with boredom because nothing ever happens on the farm, cracks and
oozes the peevish loony sentiments that belong to the dead of night when the
censor snores, to the crazy hornpipe I dance with myself. (HC 08)

Magda feels jealous of the step mother who is enjoying her marital life. She feels utterly disgraced of herself and says, “A jagged virgin, I stand in the doorway, naked, asking” (HC 09). Magda goes back to her childhood and remembers how she took pains to please her father. She remembers how she admired her father in all his activities. But at present Magda is not able to speak with him because he ignored her. “In the absence of the mother, the role of the father becomes a terrifying legitimising factor that seeps into Magda’s consciousness, locating her firmly in the historical destiny of the coloniser” (Kharshiing 37).

Magda has a tendency to commit suicide. “There is no act I know of that will liberate me into the world. There is no act I know of that will bring the world into me” (HC 10). She further says “Labouring under my father’s weight I struggle to give life to a world but seem to engender only death” (HC 11). She has fantasies of patricide.

By having her reader listen to repressed speech, she exposes the vulnerable status of the father and taps the unconscious of psychoanalysis. The strategies that she adopts to affirm herself as a presence by negotiating her relationship with the father, the recurring references to a possibly incestuous relation with the father and to hysteria involve both appropriation and rejection of her master- narrative. They demand that we, as her readers/listeners, allow for a return of the repressed of psychoanalysis and recall its wavering between seduction theory and sexual fantasy, and perhaps also pay attention to the fact that this wavering parallels the dual view of colonisation as violation and as benign, paternal appropriation. They demand that we are never comfortable with simply seeing Magda as repressed spinster who spins erotic fantasies about her father or as a violated daughter. (Briganti 37)

Magda imagines about the sexual act of her father and his new wife and the pleasure they enjoy. She also wonders why her father had distanced himself from his daughter after his marriage. Magda claims that she cannot even imagine exchanging words with her father in the recent days. “Is it possible that I am a prisoner not of the lonely farm house and the stone desert but of my stony monologue?” (HC 13).

J.M.Coetzee has brought out the state of mind of the people in the colonised country. Through the character of Magda the author has raised the following questions “Does an elementary life burn people down to elementary states, to pure anger, pure gluttony, pure sloth?” (HC 13). Basic values and morals are lost due to the prevailing

social conditions in a colonised country. The colonised fall as a prey to the temptations and become the victims of the society.

Magda condemns her upbringing which has not helped her to face the complexities of life. She preferred to keep away from socializing. She is ashamed of herself as the one who has spent all her days over the cooking pot in the kitchen. She felt like dying and says, “Like killing, dying is probably a story drearier than the one I fell myself. Deprived of human intercourse, I inevitably overvalue the imagination and expect it to make the mundane glow with an aura of self – transcendence” (HC 15).

The continuous thoughts about her father made her to dream like killing him and her step mother. She is worried that whether she will be caught by her servant Hendrik while trying to murder her father. Magda even goes to the extent of planning to burn the dead bodies without the knowledge of anyone. She also comments that the tasks require lot of patience. “Until this bloody afterbirth is gone there can be no new life for me” (HC 16). Magda’s dream is her attempt to break free from her alienated state that she is subjected to in her father’s farm. “The imaginary murder of the bridal couple is symbolic of Magda’s rebellion against the rule of her father as well as the colonial history that he represents” (Kharshiing 38).

Magda feels that her self-monologue will not help her achieve mental peace unless someone helps her to get rid of her mental oppression. “No matter with what frenzy I live the business of death or wallow in blood and soapsuds, no matter what wolf howls I hurl into the night, my acts, played out within the macabre theatre of myself, remain mere behaviour. I offend no one, for there is no one to offend but the servants and the dead” (HC 17). Magda claims that she will take up the sole responsibility for her suffering.

Magda feels bitter for leading a lonely life. She feels that even becoming the wife of a peddler is a decent life rather than glooming over this spinster life. “Is there something in me that loves the gloomy, the hideous, the doom-ridden that sniffs out its nest and struggles down in a dark corner among rats’ droppings and chicken bones rather than resign itself to decency” (HC 25).

Magda questions herself as how she coped up with monotony. She feels that she has got it from father or mother or from her grandparents and finally from Adam and Eve. “Original sin, degeneracy of the line: there are two fine, bold hypotheses for my ugly face and my dark desires, and for my disinclination to leap out of bed this instant and cure myself...Fate is what I am interested in; or, failing fate, whatever it is that is going to happen to me” (HC 25). Magda calls her desire as dark and is hopeless that she could be cured. “Philosophical cogito is at the center of that mirage which renders modern man so sure of being himself even in his uncertainties about himself, or rather in the mistrust he has learned to erect against the traps of self –love” (Lacan, *Insistence of the Letter* 135).

Magda confesses that she possesses an ugly face which is not really ugly. She has a very low estimate of her physical self. Magda also feels that her life will die alone in this heart of the country. When Hendrik brought his wife to the farm Magda says, “...man was not made to live alone” (HC 26). So, this indicates she wanted somebody in her life. But with Hendrik she maintained a distance as he was a servant. Magda proudly says about her behavior as “I am a good mistress, fair-minded, even-handed, kindly, in no sense a witch-woman. To the servants my looks do not count, and I am grateful” (HC 27).

Sometimes Magda could not sleep throughout the night because of the anguish within her and by trying to suppress her feelings.

Between the enigmatic signifier of a sexual trauma and its substitute term in a present signifying chain there passes the spark which fixes in a symptom the meaning inaccessible to the conscious subject in which its resolution-a symptom which is in effect a metaphor in which flesh or function are taken as a signifying elements. (Lacan, *Ecrits* 137)

Hendrik introduced his new wife Anna to Magda and Anna was scared and full of shyness. Magda describes her silence as, “Words are coin. Words alienate. Language is no medium for desire. Desire is rapture, not exchange. It is only by alienating the desired that language masters it. Hendrik’s bride, her sly doe-eyes, her narrow hips, are beyond the grope of words until desire consents to mutate into the curiosity of the watcher” (HC 28-29).

Magda’s father is unaware about his daughter’s passion and longing. He visited Hendrik’s cottage and offered Anna attractive gifts like candies, coins etc. Magda was able to understand the cunningness of her father. “Where can she possibly spend the money? Where will she hide it from her husband? Where will she hide the sweets? Or will she eat them all herself in a single day? Is she so much of a child? If she has one secret from her husband she will soon have two. Cunning, cunning gift!” (HC 36-37). Magda’s father goes to the extreme of thinking that Hendrik as a hindrance to consummate his desire with Anna. Magda knows very well that if her father once wanted to have a woman surely he will trap her to satisfy his lust.

I am prepared to believe he is sincere when he says to himself that he wishes I and Hendrik and all the other hindrances would go away.

But how long does he think their idyll will last, the two of them alone on the farm, an ageing man a servant- girl, a silly child? ... What will they do together day after day after day? What can they have to say to each other? The truth is that he needs opposition, our several oppositions, to hold the girl away from him, to confirm his desire for her, as much as he needs our opposition to be powerless against that desire. (HC 37)

Magda's father planned to seduce his servant's wife. He exploited Anna to satisfy his physical desire. Hendrik believed his master and left his wife to work in remote area of the farm. But the master seduced his wife by threatening her. Hence the ruling class suppressed the working class economically, physically and mentally. They were made dependant on the ruling class for their livelihood. The ruling class oppressed them in their own homeland.

The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'. (Althusser 132-133)

Magda has the capability of withstanding the pain amidst all her sufferings. Magda keenly observes the changes in her mind and tries to connect with the outer world. "In a trance of absorption I hear the pulse in my temples, the explosion and eclipse of cells, the grate of bone, the sifting of skin into dust. I listen to the molecular world inside

me with the same attention I bring to the prehistoric world outside” (HC 38). Magda encapsulates her psychological trauma as, “I am lost in the being of my being” (HC 38).

Magda’s father managed to capture Anna’s attention and he has an affair with her. Magda feels pity towards Hendrik who was assigned a work in the remote area of their farm-house. Magda comments about Hendrik thus; “... totally undone if he has the misfortune to have an honest heart, a fine wife, and a powerful neighbour’. Poor Hendrik: undone, undone” (HC 39). Magda does not feel sympathetic towards the girl instead she was angry with her as she has betrayed her husband. Magda considers herself as the one living in a black hole in a desert. She tells that she looks like a machine which does the entire house hold work. Magda considers herself as; “- I am full of contradictions – telling me to hide in a corner like a black widow spider and engulf whoever passes in my venom” (HC 43). She sympathizes with herself for being suppressed and to live as a spinster in the lonely farm house.

I am a black widow in mourning for the uses I was never put to. All my life I have been left lying about, forgotten, dusty, like an old shoe, or when I have been used, used a tool, to bring the house to order, to regiment the servants, but I have quite another sense of myself, glimmering tentatively some-where in my darkness: myself as a sheath, as a matrix, as protectrix of a vacant inner space. (HC 44)

She imagines herself as a straw woman, and as a scare crow who was tightly stuffed with suffering. She does not want to waste her life and longs to live her life with freedom.

...my life will continue to be a line trickling from nowhere to nowhere, without beginning or end. I want a life of my own,...The world is full of

people who want to make their own lives, but to few outside the desert is such freedom granted. Here in the middle of nowhere I can expand to infinity just as I can shrivel to the size of an ant. Many things I lack, but freedom is not one of them. (HC 54-55)

Magda's father started to bring Anna to the house for preparing his breakfast. Magda was ashamed of her father's act of sitting with a servant maid in the dining table. "The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the 'class' of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion" (Althusser 137). Magda's father who is a white man cunningly makes the young native girl Anna as his mistress. He assigns work to Hendrik on the remote area of the farm and used the opportunity to seduce his wife. Hence, the working class people were forced to live the life which the ruling class dictated. "Portrayals of rape have ambivalent potential, and the stakes are high where rape stories have served the interests of colonialism and apartheid" (Graham 9). Magda ponders about the reason for Anna betrayal of her husband. "What does this new man mean to her? Does she merely part her things, stolid, dull nerved, because he is the master, or are there refinements of pleasure in subjection which wedded love can never give?" (HC 57).

Magda took the heavy gun and she cannot believe what was happening to her and she ignored her conscience. She went to her father's room and pulled the trigger of the gun through the window. There was a loud screaming which she has not heard before. She met Hendrik on the way and said him that tomorrow will be another day. Magda says:

When will I live down tonight's behavior? I should have kept my peace or been less half hearted. My distaste for Hendrik's grief showed my half heart. A woman with red blood in her veins.....would have pushed a hatchet into his hands and bundled him into the house to search out vengeance. A woman determined to be the author of her own life would not have shrunk from hurling open the curtains and flooding with the guilty deed with light, the light of the moon, the light of firebrands. But I, as I feared, hover ever between the exertions of drama and the langours of meditation. Though I pointed the gun and pulled the trigger, I closed my eyes. It was not only a woman's faintness that made me act so, it was a private logic, a psychology which meant to keep me from seeing my father's nakedness". (HC 68)

These are the forceful words of Magda after shooting her father with the gun. Being ashamed and enraged of his activities, Magda has committed this murder. Magda admits that when her freedom was at risk and when things went beyond her control she committed this murder. Magda says that she would have deceived herself if she had claimed for any support.

Magda is the victim of double colonisation... At the level of character, she is subjected to the patriarchal domination of her father and Hendrik and the cultural hegemony of the First world. At the level of text, she has meanings thrust upon her by the representatives of the same orders. A colonist is etymologically one who ploughs and reaps. The story of Magda's text is one of colonial exploitation. (Dodd 160)

When Magda went to her father's room he was heaving his last breath. Magda sought the help of Hendrik to dispose the body. Magda says, "What purgatory to live in this insentient universe where everything but me is merely itself!" (HC 73). Hendrik and Magda dressed her father and covered his wound with a bandage. She says that crime has been done and she is responsible for that. She knows very well that he will not survive. She feels that she had done justice by murdering her father.

Magda saw her father, the master of the house lying dead. She addresses her father thus: "Father if I could only learn your secrets, creep through the honeycomb of your bones, listen to the turmoil of your marrow, the singing of your nerves, float on the tide of your blood, and come at last to the quiet sea where my countless brothers and sisters swim, flicking their tails, smiling, whispering to me of a life to come!" (HC 77). Magda has felt her father in her every pulse. And she wanted a second chance to come out from him and to be born as a new baby. She further adds "Let me annihilate myself in you and come forth a second time clean and new, a sweet fish, a pretty baby, a laughing infant, a happy child, a gay girl, a blushing bride, a loving wife, a gentle mother in a story with... kind neighbours, a cat on the doormat, geraniums on the windowledge, a tolerant sun!" (HC 77).

Magda was badly affected by paranoia which made her to feel estranged from the society. Magda describes her longing for a life which every woman loves to live. But every positive impulse of Magda was disturbed and undone by self pity. "There was a black fish swimming among all these white fish and that black fish was chosen to be me" (HC 77). She feels unlucky of and she hates her father for not recognizing her paranoiac behaviour at the beginning itself. "What kind of merciful father were you who never cared for me

but sent me out into the world a monster? Crush me, devour me, annihilate me before it is too late! Wipe me clean, wipe out too these whispering watchers and this house in the middle of nowhere, and let me try again in a civilized setting!” (HC 78). This passage reveals the greater state of depression of the character. Murdering her father is an instance of self-inflicted pain. In order to forget the pain in her mind she commits this murder.

After shooting her father Magda made Hendrik to be completely dependent on her. The power has been shifted from the master to Magda. She thought that Hendrik is helpless and so she can bring him under control. “Rather than interpret Magda’s killing of her father as originating in her inability to take the place of Anna in her father’s bed... Magda’s actions can be read as an attempt to overthrow the rule of the patriarch” (Dodd 159). Magda was not able to accept Anna, the servant maid being treated as an equal. Therefore Magda is also caught in the colonial system of racial prejudice.

Magda, the spinster on an isolated farm in what appears to be the Great Karoo, is capable of vivid expression of her emotions, and we share, as the bare narrative unfolds, the modulations and eruptions in her anger, her bitterness, her self-pity, her hatred of her father, her attraction toward the servants Hendrik and Anna. When her father takes Anna to his bed, she kills him by shooting through the window with his rifle. In the aftermath of that event, drawn out by the father’s slow death, she tries to achieve some intimacy with Hendrik and Anna, for both of whom she feels physical desire. (Attridge, *Ethical Modernism* 665)

Magda felt bad to sleep alone and she compelled Hendrik and Anna to be with her in her house. She also thinks that Hendrik will accept her and satisfy her carnal pleasures.

I need a man that I need to be covered, to be turned into a woman. I am a child, he tells her, despite my years, I am an old child, a sinister old child full of stale juices. Someone should make a woman of me, he tells her, someone should make a hole in me to let the old juices run out. Should I be the one to do it, he asks her, to climb through the window one night and lie with her and make a woman of her and slip away before dawn? (HC 94)

The food on the farm was running out and Magda didn't discover any money left by her father. Hendrik demanded his salary. Magda handed him a white envelope and asked him to go to the post office for getting her father's money. She also advised him to tell them that his master is sick and he cannot come to the post office. Hendrik came with a letter stating that the withdrawals are not allowed unless the depositor signs the form. Hendrik was angry that he didn't receive any money from the post office. He shouted at Magda and said they cannot live without food and money. Hendrik also says that if his master was alive he would have paid regularly every month and would have provided them with food.

However, that is in fact how it 'works', since wages represents only that part of the value produced by the expenditure of labour power which is indispensable for its reproduction: so indispensable to the reconstitution of the labour power of the wage-earner (the wherewithal to pay for housing, food and clothing, in short to enable the wage earner to present himself again at the factory gate the next day – and every further day God grants him); and we should add: indispensable for raising and educating the

children in whom the proletariat reproduces himself (in n models where $n = 0, 1, 2, \text{etc.}\dots$) as labour power. (Althusser 130-131)

Magda's father paid Hendrik for the work which he does on the farm. But when he is murdered Hendrik was not given wages to satisfy his basic needs. Hence, he behaves rude to Magda. He accuses Magda for murdering her father. This situation turns him to be the oppressor and he tortures Magda. The lack of money changes the attitude of the master and the slave. "The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white" (Bhabha 04).

Hendrik started to kick Magda and abused her with bad words. So from the position of the master Magda is relegated to the position of a slave; thus the oppressed is changed into oppressor. But Magda is unsuccessful in her attempts at kindness and equality, and this ended up in her frustration. She became mentally deteriorated slowly into an isolated state.

Hendrik rapes Magda and leaves her to her fate. Magda says "This is my fate, this is a woman's fate. I cannot do more than I have done" (HC 116). When her father was alive Hendrik treated her decently. After his death he misused Magda and gave her no respect but ill treated her. She asks herself "Am I now a woman? Has this made me into a woman?" (HC 117). Finally her desire was fulfilled by Hendrik but the way it was done was very cruel which made Magda to have bitter thoughts. "I long to be folded in someone's arms, to be soothed and fondled and told I may stop ticking" (HC 118). Her longing was not complete because Hendrik didn't act softly. He came daily when Anna was asleep in the kitchen and sometimes he won't. He was not kind to Magda as

she expected. Magda asks, “Are you happy, Hendrik? Do I make you feel happy” (HC 120). She wants to make love with Hendrik which he did not allow. Hendrik, having been oppressed in his whole life, uses the opportunity of abusing Magda as a revenge against the dominant community. He physically abused her body by raping her and which in turn made her submissive to him. Thus, the power is shifted from master to the slave.

The black man cannot take pleasure in his insularity. For him there is only one way out, and it leads into the white world. Whence his constant preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man, his concern with being powerful like the white man, his determined effort to acquire protective qualities—that is, the proportion of being or having that enters into the composition of an ego. (Fanon, *Black Skin* 36)

Hendrik left the farm after sometime. Magda felt disgusted about her relationship with Hendrik. Magda says, “I am humiliated; sometimes I think it is my humiliation he wants” (HC 122). Magda also reveals her state of mind as “This is how I spend my days. There has been no transfiguration. What I long for, whatever it is, does not come” (HC 124). Magda comments about the Africa’s dry, arid landscape and the dull wind and also the colonised society which make them to feel morose always.

In Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda dramatizes the altercations and negotiations of the linguistic and existential aspects of the “I-You” relationship. She displays the implications of the “I-You” relation for the subject in a society as divided as South Africa, where the possibility of a language of equal exchange does not seem to be attainable. She recognizes that the language that she speaks with her black servants

has been contaminated by her Afrikaner father and the regime that he represents. (Kharshiing 32)

Magda thinks the world exists and everything happens because of desire. She says “A man comes to Anna and comes to me: we embrace him, we hold him inside us, we are his, he is ours” (HC 124). Magda feels every desire is only for a short time like her relationship with Hendrik that ended quickly. “I am not one of the heroes of desire, what I want is not infinite or unattainable, all I ask myself, faintly, dubiously, Querulously, is whether there is not something to do with desire other than striving to possess the desired in a project which must be vain, since its end can only be annihilation of the desired” (HC 124). Hendrik didn’t value Magda as a woman, he just wanted to humiliate and hurt her. Hendrik uses Magda to take revenge on the superior race which oppressed him.

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is ‘evidence.’ It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (Spivak 28)

Patriarchy and gender hierarchy operates within the relationship between Hendrik and Magda. Magda expresses her longing for love thus: “Like a great emptiness, an emptiness filled with a great absence, an absence which is a desire to be filled, to be fulfilled. Yet at the same time I know that nothing will fill me, because it is the first

condition of life forever to desire, otherwise life would cease” (HC 124-125). Magda’s desire to lead a married life is thwarted and it becomes the root cause of all her problems.

Hendrik planned to leave the farm house because he thought that he will be in trouble of murdering their boss. Everybody knows that the master was having Anna as his mistress in the farm and they might believe that Hendrik has murdered him. And also they will not believe his innocence because he is a native man. But Magda pacified him by saying that she will not tell anything to the police and she will accept her guilt of murdering her father. She worriedly says to him, “You are so bitter that you are completely blinded. 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!” (HC 128).

Magda pleaded with them not to leave the farm as she will be lonely. “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?” (HC 128). Magda’s words denote the white people’s dominant psychosis. She feels superior about her race even when she is dependent upon them. Magda stoops down from her position of a master to the servant because she was longing for love. She was very much attached to the servants but they ignored her love and planned to leave. Magda questions Hendrik,

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? Do you know that you have never kissed me, never, never, never? Don't you people ever kiss? Don't you ever kiss your wife? What is it that makes her so different from me? Does a woman have to hurt you before you can love her? (HC 128-129)

These lines portray the mind of a white woman who feels humiliated in the hands of a native servant. Magda feels that because of her race Hendrik was behaving badly with her. Hendrik was happy with his wife Anna, but he comes to Magda only to humiliate her. Her state was really pitiable. Her father and Hendrik by their dominant behaviour made her to feel isolated and mentally unstable. Magda tried to eliminate the social difference between her and the servants. "Magda can never be at home in a world where there is an unbridgeable distance between herself and the other human beings peopling it. She can only continue, as she has done in her narration, to toy with ideas of living closely and sensually with the brown people, while in reality retaining her isolation" (Roberts 28).

Hendrik and Anna left the house without informing Magda. Magda is upset and says, "But Hendrik, alas, is gone and I must face my demons alone, a grown woman, a woman of the world" (HC 134). She has to face everything on her own. She wished Hendrik would to return one day and she will accept him, cook food for him and be his mistress.

Magda's "freedom" is always at risk, as it is always at risk, as it is always circumscribed by discursive practices. The only freedom possible is the freedom of the person who lives outside of society. Thematically, Magda achieves this freedom only when she is alone on the farm, although she

attempts to break down the barriers that separate her from Hendrik and Anna. Textually, Magda cannot achieve “freedom”, because to speak is to participate. (Dodd 160)

Magda was left alone and she started to hear voices. She became completely paranoid. Magda creates an imaginary union with the voices which she heard in abstraction. She says, “The voices speak to me out of machines that fly in the sky. They speak to me in Spanish” (HC 137). She describes the words as Spanish vocables and she started to decipher those words. “I am not deluded; or if I am, my delusions are privileged. I could not make up such words as are spoken to me. They come from gods, if not, then from another world. The words last night were: *When we dream that we are dreaming, the moment of awakening is at hand*” (HC 138).

Every night she waited for the words to come to her. She also imagines about a brown man lying tense and angry in her bed. Again the voices spoke to her as “*Lacking all external enemies and resistances, confined within an oppressive narrowness and regularity, man at last has no choice but to turn himself into an adventure*” (HC 139). The voices said that she has become more violent, and also she has made herself like that. She also tried to make messages out of stones but she cannot. She also raises the questions as how do the Gods know about her activities.

The voice also spoke about the crime she had committed. She was not able to comprehend a few words because it was in Spanish. “*The innocent victim can only know evil in the form of suffering. That which is not felt by the criminal is his crime. That which is not felt by the innocent victim is his own innocence*” (HC 141). Magda was confused whether the voice spoke about crime and innocence or about victim and criminal experience. She was

torn between the two. "... Magda does not supply a frame story, she does not "frame" herself as mad. It is only possible to count her (discount her) as mad if one accepts one narrative as true and all the others as false....On a textual level, her madness is undecidable because of the lack of a frame and also because she does not speak like a deranged person" (Dodd 157).

Sometimes the voice spoke about her father's relation with the servants and also his unnecessary rudeness to everybody. "*It is the slave's consciousness that constitutes the master's certainty of his own truth. But the slave's consciousness is a dependent consciousness. So the master is not sure of the truth of his autonomy. His truth lies in an inessential consciousness and its inessential acts*" (HC 141). The servants obeyed him slavishly without replying a word. He has treated them as slaves but they obeyed him and treated him with respect. She was eager to speak back to the voices. She shouted to the sky as "'ES MI',... 'VENE!'" (HC 142) in Spanish.

Magda also started to dance waving her handkerchief. She realized that if a man in the machine had spoken those words it would have been lost in the noise. "Perhaps I am making a fool of myself, perhaps I will draw their attention and approval only when I give up my song and dance and go back to sweeping and polishing" (HC 143). She picked up stones, painted it and arranged it in the order of letters bearing the message of "CINDRLA ES MI ; and the next day : VENE AL TERRA; and: QUIERO UN AUTR; again : SON ISOLADO" (HC 144). She wrote them to her saviours. "Everything transpires as if, in a continuous and underlying way, an assured and rigorous precomprehension of the concept of madness, or at least of its nominal definition, were possible and acquired" (Derrida 49). Magda finally turns out to be a crazy woman and

this happened out of her extreme loneliness and made her paranoiac. Everything was out of control and only the voices accompanied her in that remote farm.

It is in order that we shall not fall victim to the assassin, said the voice, that we consent to die if we ourselves turn assassin. Every man born in slavery is born for slavery. The slave loses everything in his chains, even the desire to escape from them. God loves know one, it went on, and hates no one, for God is free from passions and feels no pleasure or pain. (HC 146)

Magda's thoughts moved towards God, who never excuses the wicked people. But in Magda's life the sinners were not punished and during the course of time everything is forgotten. Magda kills her father and his new bride; the murder might be a reality or an abstraction of her imagination. "Her mother is dead, her father embarking on a late and, in the event, unsuccessful courtship. Envisaging that it might be successful, she murders both him and his voluptuous bride in her mind" (Kitchen 223).

Magda imagines bringing her father out in the armchair and being seated by his side. She remembers her olden days when they went to seaside, the evening train, she also remembered old Jacob, Anna and Hendrik. They had a good time in the olden days and Magda also nursed her father by feeding him with food and dressing him with new napkins.

Magda realizes the present and tells nothing is going to happen and she has to just wait for a long time. Magda wonders; "Will I find the courage to die a crazy old queen in the middle of nowhere" (HC 150). She does not want to run away from the farm house in spite of all the hard times. She managed the things carefully; she clears everything regarding her father's death. She tells that explaining herself as what had happened as a

way of confession. “To die an enigma with a full soul or to die emptied of my secrets, that is how I picturesquely put the question to myself” (HC 150).

...Have I ever fully explained to myself why I do not run away from the farm and die in civilization in one of the asylums I am sure must abound there, with picture-books at my bedside and a stack of empty coffins in the basement and a trained nurse to put the obol on my tongue? Have I ever explained or even understood what I have been doing here in a district outside the law, where the bar against incest is often down, where we pass our days in savage torpor. (HC 150)

Magda finally loses her mind completely by thinking about the past. Magda is mad because of her paranoia and the reasons for her madness can be easily traced. “What is self – evident, what follows of itself, the ‘natural’, is in short, the ultimate outrage” (Barthes 85). The outrage of Magda is the revenge she takes by murdering her father. She was fully out of her sense and imagined hearing the voices from the sky. Slowly she lost her conscious mind. She was alone in the farm and observed nature which was her only companion. “It takes generations of life in the cities to drive that nostalgia for country ways from the heart. I will never live it down, nor do I want to. I am corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world” (HC 151).

The misfortune of the mad, the interminable misfortune of their silence, is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best; which is to say that when one attempts to convey their silence itself, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it, putting its origin into question (Derrida 42).

Magda wanted to live her own life. She spent her life in her own way. At last she wanted to depart her life in the garden, near her father's bones rumbling the music which she wanted to write. At the end of the novel Magda grows crazy. "At all events, whether excluded or secretly invested with reason, the madman's speech did not strictly exist. It was through his words that one recognized the madness of the madman" (Foucault 217).

The psychological stress Magda undergoes makes her alter between fantasy and reality. J.M.Coetzee has portrayed the power between the oppressor and the oppressed which switches over several times during the course of the novel. Magda from the role of the oppressor is turned into an oppressed person by the situation which prevailed in the farm. J.M.Coetzee concludes the novel with the thought that the master relies on the slave to tell him that he is the boss, but the master knows very well that the slave is saying that only for pleasing him: so, both of them are dependent on each other. The novel stresses the truth that neither the master nor the slave can escape from being exploited in the society.

Magda narrates the story of killing her father. Till the end the readers are not sure whether she has done it or not. All these narrations and happenings denote the power and weight of colonialism in the African society upon the dominant and oppressed section of the society. The physical and sexual borders are crossed and torn with brutal force with respect to man woman relationship. Magda longed for company, somebody to talk and to take care. She spent her life in misery and isolation. "It is among the fears, hopes, evasions, fantasies and frustrations of her inner life that she searches for an identity rather than among the facts and events of her interaction with a world..." (Harrison 82).

The author has brought out all the possible relationships such as; the master and the slave, white and native, man and woman relationships in colonised South Africa.

“Magda as writer mediates on the limitations of writing as a way of articulating a poetics for Coetzee himself” (Glenn 127). Magda commits patricide because her father raped Hendrik’s wife Anna and on account of this Hendrik raped Magda. It is because of her paranoia she becomes suspicious of her father’s relationship and murders him. Her constant efforts to reconcile her inner conflict with her conscience, developed a sort of neurosis. Briganti comments about Magda’s psychological state thus:

...her references to the scheme of interpretation that threatens her story suggest her awareness of the uncertainty of the place of the critic in the dynamics of literary interpretation and of the analyst in the psychoanalytic dialogue, and of the importance of the relationship between teller and listener in the production of meaning. She knows that meaning will be thrust on her with her own complicity and that once she is cast in the role of hysterical daughter, she will be fair game for the analyst’s verbal seduction. (37)

Magda at the end realizes that she has become a failure in the struggle for freedom. “Given that it is the narrative of a woman living in the middle of nowhere, its marginalization is very interesting” (Dodd 153). Magda’s pathetic condition is the result of patriarchy. “Coetzee’s writing is 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. His writing is deeply interested in wider philosophical questions about language and imagination, about the life of ideas, and about power” (Gunnars 13). J.M.Coetzee has portrayed the truth about apartheid and the manner in which it boomerangs on the perpetrator itself.

Magda wanted to be a part of the society, but the society did not provide any opportunity to use her full potential or to prove her intelligence. Magda tried to overcome the barriers between her and her father and also with the servants. But her efforts ended in a mere fiasco. She wanted a good rapport with her servants, but the result was that she was raped by the native servant Hendrik. Magda was unable to change the mental barriers between the masters and slaves created by colonialism.

In this novel, J.M.Coetzee has sympathized with his female characters. “Femininity-- heterogeneity, otherness-- becomes the repressed term by which discourse is made possible” (Jacobus 29). J.M.Coetzee has used Magda, a paranoid individual as a weapon to portray his views on colonialism. The author also shows sympathy towards the women as they are doubly oppressed by narrating the novel from the feminine point of view. The theme of master and slave, coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed and finally dominance and submission is stressed and given importance in the novel.