Chapter III

In the Heart of the Country,
Waiting for the Barbarians,
Life and Times of Michael K,
Disgrace
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After studying the violence in *Dusklands, Foe* and *Age of Iron* the present chapter intends to present the study of Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country, Waiting for the Barbarians, Life and Times of Michael K,* and *Disgrace.* These novels also express violence. It is intended to examine the violence and find out how these novels give a call to all the human beings to allow the natives to be in love with their land, its people, and environment.

*In the Heart of the Country*

*In the Heart of the Country* is the winner of premier South African literary award and the CNA Prize. It exists in two forms, the 1977 British and American version (the American publisher preferred the title as *From the Heart of Country*) and the 1978 South African version. The latter has the dialogue in Afrikaans. The novel is set in a desolate farm in South Africa. It relates the racial conflict and mental deterioration of the white spinster, Magda. The novel has no consistent plot because it is in the form of diary entries narrated in the first person by Magda. Her account is presented in two hundred and sixty six numbered paragraphs.

Magda is an aging, unattractive, psychologically disturbed spinster. She lives on the farm with her widowed father in the heart of the country, South Africa. The novel begins with Magda’s account of her father bringing his newly wed African bride. This event seems apparently fictitious which is followed by Magda’s brutal murders of the newlyweds. Then she imagines sealing the room where the dead bodies are kept. She seals it with the help of her black servant, Hendrik. Later on, she tries very hard to push her father’s corpse into a porcupine hole in the graveyard. In another sequence she informs about her father’s sexual relations with Hendrik’s new bride whom she calls Klein-Anna. In one event she tries to shoot Hendrik. In another paragraph, there is the account of Magda’s imaginative killing of her father accidentally while discharging a shotgun through the window of her bedroom. After father’s death, she imagines her failure in establishing good communication with
Hendrik and Klein-Anna. When she cannot give his salary to Hendrik, he humiliates and rapes her. After this event, Hendrik regularly visits Magda every night and Magda tries to do her best to learn the ways of sexual love for him. Soon it is told that both Hendrik and Anna desert Magda leaving her all alone on the farm. At the end of the novel Magda is seen with her father. It is clear that she does not succeed in killing him. Now he is very old and depends thoroughly on Magda’s love and mercy. It becomes difficult to understand whether Magda really murders her father or not because after each murder he reappears in the novel. The diary entries in the novel contain contradictory information of the various events.

There is no exact historical period mentioned in the novel. But the references to the horse, bicycle and train can be related to the second half of nineteenth century and the reference to the aeroplanes at the end the novel can be related to the last quarter of the twentieth century. It is suggested that Hendrik is brown. For instance, Magda says: “Reading the brown folk I grope, as they grope reading me . . .” (7). Again with reference to Klein-Anna, there is a reference, “No. what can she do? What can brown people do?” (112). Hendrik also refers to himself as a brown man. But whether Hendrik and Klein-Anna are brown or black does not matter because what matters is the treatment given to them by the whites under the colonial rule. Both the browns and the blacks are treated alike. Although, the novel has difficult style, no doubt, it offers Coetzee’s clear understanding of the life of both the colonizers and the colonized. The novel gives an expression to violence which can be studied by classifying it as psychological, physical and sexual.

- **Violence : Psychological**

There are many examples of psychological violence in the novel. The study of these examples will explain the psychology of the colonizers as well as the colonized. Colonizers are the victims of the Empire’s harsh struggle for dominance in the colonies and the colonized are the victims of the colonizers’ oppression in their own land and its environment.

Magda is an example of despair, neglect, stupidity, emptiness and loneliness brought by colonization for a white woman. Her life is ruined by her father’s negligence towards her. She informs that her mother died while delivering a child.
Her father disliked her mother because she was unable to give him a male child. Magda’s mother symbolizes the typical colonial woman whose life was, “under her husband’s thumb” (2). About her mother Magda writes:

> Her husband never forgave her for failing to bear him a son. His relentless sexual demands led to her death in childbirth. She was too frail and gentle to give birth to the rough rude boy-heir my father wanted, therefore she died. The doctor came too late. Summoned by a messenger on a bicycle, he had to come trundling along forty miles of farm-track in his donkey-cart. When he arrived my mother already lay composed on her deathbed, patient, bloodless, apologetic. (2)

The expectation of Magda’s father for “the rough rude boy-heir” stresses the psychology of a white man for continuing the empirical domination over the colonized through the generations to come. Magda’s father has no love and affinity for his wife. Hence, Magda imagines:

> And then, in the bloom of her tentative young motherhood, the woman must have died trying to give birth to a third child, died as she feared she would, afraid to deny the man his detested relentless pleasure in her, her death, a hideous storm of terror with the midwife wringing her hands about the room and recommending ipecacuanha as a last resort. (38)

Magda’s mother represents the white man’s mentality toward woman. The whites are interested in patriarchal dominance. According to Susan Gallagher the feminist and anti-apartheid efforts of many South African white women, the majority of Afrikaner women in the 1970s “were still primarily focused on upholding these old-style Boer family ideals”(90). Magda’s mother lived in a colonized land as a colonizer but she was unable to escape her culture’s norms and live happily in the natural environment of the farm along with its people.

Magda’s father dislikes Magda. She grew up with the servants’ children. She cannot forget her childhood with those children. She was happy with them. She remembers them because the present for her is confusing, unhappy, and violent. The childhood memories play very important role in her life. Because these memories; at the end of the novel make her psychologically confident to decide to live on the farm. She says:
I spoke like one of them before I learned to speak like this. I played their stick and stone games before I knew I could have a doll’s house with Father and Mother and Peter and Jane asleep in their own beds and clean clothes ready in the chest whose drawers slid in and out while Nan the dog and Felix the cat snoozed before the kitchen coals. With the servants’ children I searched the veld for khamma-roots, fed cowsmilk to the orphaned lambs, hung over the gate to watch the sheep dipped and the Christmas pig shot. I smelled the sour recesses where they slept pell-mell like rabbits. I sat at the feet of their blind old grandfather while he whittled clothes-peg and told his stories of bygone days when men and beasts migrated from winter grazing to summer grazing and lived together on the trail. 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. (6-7)

Magda’s memories reveal her psychological affection with the natives. Her innocent world is traumatized when her mother dies leaving her “alone among rough hands and hard bodies . . . (7).

As Magda grows, she passes her time in the kitchen. There is not a single innovative task which she has to perform. During the afternoons, she reads the books or puts a damp towel over her eyes fighting migraines. She says, “The colonies are full of girls like that, but none, I think, so extreme as I” (1). This comment by Magda holds a mirror to the colonizers’ life under the control of the Empire. This is the farm life where Magda, the daughter of the colonies lies with her eyes shut. Her father does not love her and she is dejected. She knows that her father was properly educated and still he has not cherished any human values in his mind. Hence, she bitterly questions the validity of her father’s upbringing:

What did he learn from Hansel and Gretel about fathers who lead their daughters into dark forests? What did Noah teach him about fornication? What did the six times table tell him about the iron laws of the universe? And even if it was not he but my grandfather who sat on these benches and sang out his tables, why did he pass on no humanity to my father but leave him a barbarian and me too after him? Or is it possible that we are not aboriginal here, my line? Did my father or my grandfather perhaps simply gallop up pistolled and bandoliered to the
farmhouse one day, out of nowhere, and fling down a tobacco-pouch of gold nuggets, and shoo the schoolmistress out of the schoolhouse, and install his hands in her place, and institute a reign of brutishness? Or am I wrong, quite wrong? Was I the one who attended school here, sitting in the darkest corner draped in spiderwebs while my brothers and sisters, as well as the children from the neighbouring farms, clamoured to have a turn to tell the story of Noah; and have I put them all from my mind utterly, . . . . (46-47)

Magda is frustrated because the circumstances around her violently harass and sadden her mentally. She calls her father, “barbarian.” She says, “I cannot believe that fraternal intercourse would not have left its marks upon me, and it has all too painfully not left its mark upon me, the mark that has been left upon me instead is the mark of intercourse with the wilds, with solitude and vacancy” (47). This thinking of Magda reflects her loneliness and also her callous views regarding her fraternity. It stands for the colonizers’ failure in their colonies, their solitude, and vacancy.

Magda cannot forget her mother. Mother’s memory makes her gloomy and increases her alienation from her father and also the surrounding life. She reflects:

Or perhaps there is only the empty kitchen, and the cold stove, and the rows of gleaming copperware, and absence, two absences, three absences, four absences. My father creates absence. Wherever he goes he leaves absence behind him. The absence of himself above all — a presence so cold, so dark, so remote as to be itself an absence, a moving shadow casting a blight on the heart. And the absence of my mother. My father is the absence of my mother, her negative, her death. She has soft, the fair; he the hard, the dark. He has murdered all the motherly in me and left me this brittle, hairy shell with the peas of dead words rattling in it. I stand in the empty kitchen hating him. (37)

Magda suggests that all that is “motherly” and kind in her is destroyed by her father and converted her into an apathetic woman.

Magda’s unhappy childhood plays a key role in her life later on because as Sigmund Freud says, “Many people linger unusually long in their condition and many of its features are carried over by them into later stages of their development” (198). 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” (3). According to Ryszard Bartnik, the adjective ‘masterful’ in this sentence “appears to play a particularly important role because her father does not represent exclusively himself, but also the systematic colonial setting, the overbearing presence of which, makes Magda absent and mute…” (47). Magda fights, “against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history” and so she says, “I am a spinster with a locked diary but I am more than that” (3). Magda like the oppressed black South Africans needs to maintain “a history and a culture” (120). It is true that history and culture contribute much to one’s marginalization. In the view of David Attwell, the narratives like Magda’s “exist in tension with other discourses . . . that are the products of history and the bearers of culture” (13). She is lonely because she has no contacts with either the blacks or the whites. No white neighbour comes to visit her. She does not recognize, like Mary in Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing*, the need for “esprit de corps” (11) which is the first rule of South Africa’s white society. She has no idea, for example, if she has or has ever had brothers or sisters, or neighbours. When men come to the farm to search for her missing, dead father, she says, “I did not know, in my aboriginal innocence, that there were so many people in the world” (121).

Magda’s father symbolizes colonial master who oppresses not only the blacks but his own daughter also. His love for power and authority has made him blind towards his daughter. Robert Post identifies Magda’s father as “the Afrikaner government” and Magda as the “oppressed black race” (70). Magda’s father exploits the black servants, particularly black women, for his physical satisfaction. When Magda imagines a new black bride with her father she looks at them and questions:

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? As long as an elsewhere exists where I can lead a life, there are heavenly fingers pointing at me too. Or am I, hitherto unbeknown to me, but now alas known, reserved for a more complex fate: to be crucified head downward as a warning to those who love their rage and lack all vision of another tale? But what other tale is there for me? Marriage to the neighbour’s second son? 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. I am

1. Character is fate. History is God. Pique, pique, pique. (4-5)

Magda thinks herself to be unlucky, “a miserable black virgin.” By “character is fate” Magda suggests that the colonizers including her father are responsible for the fate the virgins like her suffer in a far away colony.

After her father’s death, probably envisioned by her, Magda is unable to communicate with Hendrik. She says:

I cannot carry on with these idiot dialogues. The language that should pass between myself and these people was subverted by my father and cannot be recovered. What passes between us now is a parody. I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective. It was my father-tongue. I do not say it is the language my heart wants to speak, I feel too much the pathos of its distances, but it is all we have. (97)

The English language of Magda is the language of hierarchy but in the circumstances she lives; that language is not the proper medium to communicate with others, particularly with the natives. About such insufficiency of language, Bill Aschcroft in his “Irony, allegory and Empire: Waiting for the Barbarians and In the Heart of the Country” says, “This is what makes the colonized Hendrik so much more dangerous than the illusory barbarians beyond the reach of Empire; Magda is locked into a language which can only say “No!” to Hendrik’s “Yes!” – the language of the Father” (112). Psychologically, Magda has lost the capacity to speak meaningfully with Hendrik. She has to find a new language in which she will be able to speak with the Africans on their land. According to Brian Macaskill, “The contradiction that emerges between the characterization of Magda and the intellectual qualities and qualifications of the voice in which she speaks underscores the extent to which Magda’s narrative is not only Magda’s narrative but also an act of “speculative linguistics” on the part of Coetzee, . . .” (73). According to Hena Maes-Jelinek, “Coetzee’s implicit emphasis on the power of language to transform life, a power Magda misuses, is evidence that her long monologue is an allegory of the South African situation; what she calls her own “spinster fate” (4) can be read as a reference to the isolation of South Africa” (90).

The relation between Magda’s father and Hendrik’s wife collapses Magda’s mind. She observes:
Hendrik is ducking and grinning secretly all the time he offers me the old locutions. ‘Miss, miss, miss!’ he says to my face; ‘I know you, you are your father’s daughter.’ He says behind his hand; ‘you are my wife’s half-sister, where your father lay I lie too, I know that man, his mark is in my bed.’ ‘You, you, you,’ sings Klein-Anna from behind him where I cannot see her. (97)

Magda’s continuous obsession with her father’s sin breaks her mind. Magda’s loneliness is the result of her distressed psyche. She says:

I live neither alone nor in society but as it were among children. I am spoken to not in words, which come to me quaint and veiled, but in signs, in conformations of face and hands, in postures of shoulders and feet, in nuances of tune and tone, in gaps and absences whose grammar has never been recorded. Regarding the brown folk I grope, as they grope reading me: for they too hear my words only dully, listening for those overtones of the voice, those subtleties of the eyebrows that tell them my true meaning: ‘Beware, do not cross me,’ ‘What I say does not come from me.’ (7)

Magda’s uncomfortable ways of communication with herself and others throw light on her beleaguered mind. Her gestures warn the brown folk not to cross her. Her warning is her colonial dominance. She regards herself to be “incomplete” (9) and says, “I stare out through a sheet of glass into a darkness that is complete, that lives in itself, bats, bushes, predators, and all, that does not regard me, that is blind, that does not signify but merely is” (9). It indicates that the darkness on the farm is complete in itself with all its natural things included in it. But it does not have any regard for Magda because she has not been able to unite herself with the life around her. She accepts that she herself is responsible for her loneliness. She says, “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. While I am free to be I, nothing is impossible. In the cloister of my room I am the mad hag I am destined to be” (8).

Magda confesses that she has not considered others equal to her. Her love of her own self makes her blind toward the feelings of others. Now she understands her mistake but she cannot correct it. She is distressed and becomes “a mad hag.” She says, “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” (10). She experiences that, “Pleasure is hard to
come by, but pain is everywhere these days, I must learn to subsist on it” (34). Magda’s loneliness, to put in Erich Fromm’s words, is “a symptom of psychical dysfunctioning, of inner emptiness and a lack of center within oneself. It is a pathological manifestation of the failure to develop fully” (208).

Magda is psychologically estranged from everything around her. She does not get mother’s love and care in her life. Her father is engaged in his selfish happiness. Hence, Magda feels insulted and alienated. She says:

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 as tool, to bring the house to order, to regiment the servants. But I have quite another sense of myself, glimmering tentatively somewhere in my inner darkness: myself as a sheath, as a matrix, as protectrix of a vacant inner space. I move through the world not as a knifeblade cutting the wind, or as a tower with eyes, like my father, but as a hole, a hole with a body draped around it, two spindly legs hanging loose at the bottom and the two bony arms flapping at the sides and the big head lolling on top. I am a hole crying to be whole. I know this is in one sense just a way of speaking, a way of thinking about myself, but if one cannot think of oneself in words, in pictures, then what is there to think of oneself in? I think of myself as a straw woman, a scarecrow, not too tightly stuffed, with a scowl painted on my face to scare the crows and in my centre a hollow, a space which the fieldmice could use if they were very clever.

But this is more than a picture, I cannot deny it, . . . . (40-41)

Magda is used by her father only as “a scarecrow” for getting the household work done by her. She is thus granted no other significant responsibility. Magda passes her time forlornly. She sees her father giving heart and diamond shaped candies to Klein-Anna. In her mind she always says:

I want a life of my own, just as I am sure my father said to himself he wanted a life of his own when he bought the pocket of hearts and diamonds. 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. (50)
Magda lacks many things but she does not lack freedom. She has the freedom of imagination. So she continuously imagines so many things. But she knows that she is wrong and says, “I am wrong again, wrong, wrong, wrong as I have been since I was born at the wrong time, in the wrong place, in the wrong body” (51).

The psychological violence caused to Magda makes her wide awake to think, “What is there for me after my purgatory of solitude?” (53). She even confesses, “Too much misery, too much solitude makes of one an animal. I am losing all human perspective” (53). Magda, even questions her father:

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! Wake up and embrace me! Show me your heart just once and I swear I will never look again, into your heart or any other, be it the heart of meanest stone! I will give up this kind of talk too, every word of it! When the words come I will set fire to them! Do you not see that it is only despair, love and despair, that makes me talk this way? (71)

Magda’s anger toward her father is very clearly expressed. She knows that her father’s heart is like a stone. The behaviour of the Magda’s father toward his own daughter and the colonized can be described in the words of Aime Césaire, “colonisation works to decivilise the coloniser, to brutalise him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (13). Magda’s father does not realize that he is oppressing his own daughter and decivilizing himself.

Magda asks Klein-Anna about love and marriage. It expresses Magda’s inner wish to be loved by someone and get married. It can be taken as a disclosure of the suppressed feelings of spinster Magda. Magda asks Klein -Anna:

Tell me, do you sleep with your clothes on when your husband is with you? That I can’t believe . . . . ‘Do you have a nice time with your husband, Anna? Come on, you don’t have to be shy, no one will hear us. Come, tell me, do you have a nice time? Is it nice to be married?’ . . . . ‘I too would like a man, but it has not been possible, I have never pleased anyone enough, I have never been pretty’. . . . ‘But that is not
the worst. Energy is eternal delight, I could have been a quite different person, I could have burned my way out of this prison, my tongue is forked with fire, do you understand; but it has all been turned uselessly inward, what sounds to you like rage is only the crackling of the fire within, I have never been really cross with you, I only wanted to talk, I have never learned to talk with another person. . . ’ (101)

Magda’s talk with Klein-Anna gives a vent to Magda’s suppressed feelings of sexual desires. She clarifies that she has never learned to talk with others. Her father has closed her life and cut it from communication. It is the lonely life of the colonizer. She cannot communicate with others. Shy says to Anna, “It has always been that the word has come down to me and I have passed it on. I have never known words of true exchange, Anna” (101). It is true as Ashcroft in On Post-colonial Futures points out that Coetzee’s characters, “search for the place that can be constructed in a different language” (151).

Magda always ponders over the irrecoverable things around her. Colonial policies have harmed her mind. Dissatisfactorily she says:

I am not easy. I cannot believe in what is happening to me. . . why I should not be spending the night in my bed asleep; I cannot see why my father should not spend the night in his own bed asleep, and Hendrik’s wife the night in her own bed and Hendrik’s, asleep. I cannot see a necessity behind what we are doing, any of us. We are no more than whim, one whim after another. Why can we not accept that our lives are vacant, as vacant as the desert we live in, and spend them counting sheep or washing cups with blithe hearts? I do not see why the story of our lives should have to be interesting. I am having second thoughts about everything. (59)

The “vacant” lives of both the colonizers and the colonized are the outcome of the loss of rhythm between themselves and their surrounding society, politics, morals, and other colonial disorders.

Magda’s psychological breakdown makes her a mystified being. For instance, she kills her father imaginatively but gets lost in the thoughts about him and reflects:

This would explain how he came to die so hideously draped over the edge of the bed, his face purple, his eyes bulging, his tongue hanging out. Perhaps I wanted to move him out of the morass he lay in. Perhaps
I wanted him to another room. Perhaps, dismayed and sickened, I abandoned him. Perhaps I cradled his head in my arms and sobbed, saying, ‘Daddy, please help me, I can’t do it by myself.’ Perhaps when it grew clear that he could not help, that he had no strength, that he was preoccupied above all else with what was happening inside him, perhaps then I said, ‘Daddy, forgive me, I didn’t mean it, I love you, that was why I did it’. (80)

Magda is lost in the love-hate dilemma about her father. She tries to calm down and says, “But, to tell the truth, I am wary of all these suppositions. . . . Once I lived in time as a fish in water, breathing it, drinking it, sustained by it. Now I kill time and time kills me. Country ways! How I long for country ways” (80). Magda’s killing the time stresses her mental boredom. Magda says, “I long to be folded in someone’s arms, to be soothed and fondled and told I may stop ticking” (108). Magda’s dilemma can be put in the words of E. M. Stone who says, “Magda vacillates between her desire to be rid of the dictates of her culture which tell her that only married, fertile woman matter and the desire to be one of those very women.” (226).

The rape by Hendrik changes Magda’s mind and she desires to love Hendrik. In his regular visits to Magda, she appeals him, “Stay just a moment longer, Hendrik. Can’t we talk? We get so little chance to talk to each other” (112). She tells him that all that she wants is the peace between them. She wants to develop her physical attraction for him. But Hendrik does not love her. It makes Magda accept that, “It is a principle of life forever to be unfulfilled. Fulfilment does not fulfil. Only stones desire nothing. And who knows, perhaps in stones there are also holes we have never discovered” (114-15). Sometimes she thinks that Hendrik wants only her humiliation. Most of the critics have stressed Magda’s psychology and hysteria and her insanity, which has, according to Chiara Briganti, resulted into “the marginalization of the novel itself” (85). Briganti comments on the voices that Magda hears at the end of the novel and says, “These messages address the issue of colonisation in their references to slaves and masters but also accuse her of turning her life into fiction, not in rebellion against true oppression” (93) but as Magda says, “in reaction against the tedium of serving my father” (128). About these voices Briganti says, “In other words, like the novel’s critics, the sky-gods ignore her attempt to be more than the protagonist of a political allegory and reduce the specificity of her experience to a case of hysteria” (93).
Magda is aware of the insufficiency of colonial language to communicate with the “brown folk” who hear her words “only dully” (7). According to Diana Brydon, like Miranda in The Tempest, she finds that language is “paradoxically both the tool of oppression and of potential liberation” (79). She has to come out of her confusion regarding whether she has to speak father’s language or the language, which could be understood by the natives. According to Sue Kossew, when Magda says, ‘‘We are the castaways of God as we are the castaways of history’ (135), she is “referring to not just as to the perceived marginalization of the Afrikaners but also to her role as woman coloniser” (171).

Magda must invent a language out of which a new reality can emerge. Her father’s language is out of place, for instance, when describing her most private feelings to Klein-Anna she says, “Do you know what I feel like Anna? Like a great emptiness, an emptiness filled with a great absence, an absence which is a desire to be filled, to be fulfilled” (114). Language is important for her because in the words of Audre Lorde, language “is the way we help give names to the nameless so it can be thought” (127).

These examples show Magda’s father to be an oppressor of both the blacks and his own daughter. He causes psychological violence to his wife also. She is unable to come out of norms of the Western culture. He never loves his wife. He has no affection for Magda who loses her peace of mind. He has not developed any good communication with the other whites also. Like Lessing’s Dick Turner in Grass is Singing he is a failure for “esprit de corps” (11). At the end of the novel he is seen staying on the farm itself which indicates that there is no alternative for him other than to accept his life on the farm. In the same way, Magda’s decision to stay on the farm and her recognition of Hendrik’s contacts with her also symbolizes her acceptance of the land as it is along with its environment and its people. Sheila Roberts interprets the farm as “South Africa itself, the father as the Afrikaner baas, and Magda as the ineffectual, dreaming liberal” (30). Magda’s acceptance of her fate can be described in the words of Nadine Gordimer who says that the white man “must lose himself in order to find himself” (521).

The paragraphs in the novel contain contradictory information of various events. According to Gallagher, the novel “spans the period of approximately 1870-1960” (83). In words of Dick Penner, the various events in the novel make it “impossible to ascertain whether any of the events Magda describes happen anywhere
but in the mind” (56). However, it can be said that all the events have introspective impulse. They present the story of the lack of harmony in the family and its psychological effect on Magda. Coetzee succeeds in probing into psyche of the oppressed as well as the oppressor.

- **Violence: Physical**

There are examples of physical violence in the novel. A critical examination of the examples will explicate the deep-rooted violence in the minds of the colonizers as well as the colonized.

The first example of physical violence is that of Magda’s attempt to murder her father and his new bride. Although, it is painful to accept the reality of the event, it explains the feeling of revenge present in Magda’s mind. It is not only the revenge upon her father but it can be taken as a racial revenge also because her father marries and loves a black woman. She describes the dying father and his mistress:

My father lies on his back, naked, the fingers of his right hand twined in the fingers of her left, the jaw slack, the dark eyes closed on all their fire and lightning, a liquid rattle coming from the throat, the tired blind fish, cause of all my woe, lolling in his groin (would that it had been dragged out long ago with all its roots and bulbs!). The axe sweeps up over my shoulder. (11)

Magda justifies her act of murder. She says, “All kinds of people have done this before me, wives, sons, lovers, heirs, rivals, I am not alone” (11). She describes the bodies:

The woman snaps upright in bed, glaring about her, drenched in blood, bewildered by the angry wheezing and spouting at her side. . . . Leaning forward and gripping what must be one of their four knees, I deliver much the better chop deep into the crown of her head. She dips over into the cradle of her lap and topples leftward in a ball, my dramatic tomahawk still embedded in her. . . . But fingers are scratching at me from this side of the bed, I am off balance, I must keep a cool head, I must pick them off one by one, recover (with some effort) my axe, and hack with distaste at these hands, these arms until I
have a free moment to draw a sheet over all this shuddering and pound it into quiet . . . I have two fullgrown bodies to get rid of besides many other traces of my violence. (11)

Magda takes a revenge on her father and his mistress. She observes their dead bodies and says, “Though her last act was to flinch from the terrific axe, screwing her eyes shut, clenching her teeth, the face has now relaxed. But the man, tenacious of life, has moved. . . . He lies head and arms over the edge of the bed, black with his heavy blood” (14).

Magda has to get rid of the bodies besides many other traces of violence. She has to burn the bedclothes and the mattress, which are soaked in blood. She is afraid to bury the bodies in the riverbed because in the next spate they would probably return to fence. If weighted and sunk in the dam, they will contaminate the water and reappear as chained skeletons in the next draught. When she worries about how to carry the bodies she says:

Am I strong enough to move them unaided in a wheelbarrow, or must I hack away until I have portable sections? Am I equal to carrying even a single monolithic trunk? Is there a way of partitioning a trunk without obscenity? I should have paid more attention to the art of butchery. And how does one chain flesh to rock without drilling holes? And with what? An auger? A brace and bit? (15)

Magda’s thoughts and actions of physical violence are horrible. They result from her anger towards her father. She is destined to inhabit in a false world. She tries in vain to be in harmony with herself. She realizes that she is an alien, an outsider in the world around her. In the words of Albert Camus, it is the “divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting (13). She wants to rebel but her rebellion is futile as she fails in each attempt. According to Herbert Read, “the decision to live is the vindication of the value of personal existence. While the decision to rebel confirms some positive value of human society” (7). Magda can neither rebel nor live cheerfully. However, at the end of the novel she decides to live on the land where she is born.

In one of her reflections Magda throws light on the colonizers’ brutal violence. She writes:

A mind mad enough for parricide and psedu-matricide and who knows what other atrocities can surely encompass an epileptic Führer and the
march of a band of overweening serfs on a country town from whose silver roofs the sunfire winks and from whose windows they are idly shot to pieces. They lie in the dust, sons and daughters, of the Hottentots, flies crawl in their wounds, they are carted off and buried in a heap. Labouring under my father’s weight I struggle to give life to a world but seem to engender only death. (10)

The “Hottentots buried in a heap” indicate the colonizers’ cruelty. In one event Magda’s frustration is noted in her attempt to commit suicide. She says, “Of all adventures suicide is the most literary, more so even than murder” (13). In another event she attempts to shoot Hendrik. In one event she imagines Hendrik kicking his wife for her contacts with Magda’s father. She says, “Gun in hand I emerge on to the bare stoep. I raise it and aim at the patch of white shirt. The barrel wavers crazily, there is nowhere to rest it. Anna screams and points at me. They spring into motion running like hares across the yard towards the vegetable garden” (99). There are many paragraphs describing the murder of Magda’s father. The description of his dead body gives the examples of revenge in the form of physical violence. About Klein-Anna Magada writes, “Hendrik is kicking rhythmically at her with his soft shoes. He does not look up at me, his face is wet with sweat, he has work to do. If there were a stick to hand he would be using it, but there are not many sticks in this part of the world, his wife is fortunate” (75). There is one more example of physical violence where Magda describes her efforts to pick the dead body of her father. With the help of Hendrik she puts the body in the bathroom. She says:

We pick up the body and carry it to the bathroom, Hendrik taking the shoulders, I the legs. We strip off the nightshirt and unwind the bandages. We seat the body in the bath and pour bucket after bucket of water over it. The water discolours and strings of excrement begin to float to the surface. The arms hang over the sides of the bath, the mouth gapes, the eyes stare. After half an hour’s soaking we clean the clotted hindparts. We bind the jaw and sew the eyes to. (82)

There is a once again the description of the father’s dead body. Magda says, “We lift the parcel, he at the head; I at the feet, and carry it through the house into the sunlight. . . . My father reclines in his wheelbarrow, making a last tour of his domain. We trudge up the track to the graveyard, Hendrik pushing. I keeping the bundled legs from slipping sideways” (90).
In another description Magda digs a grave for her father’s dead body. She describes the body:

Again the body slides in as far as the hips and sticks. I kneel and push at it with all my force. I sit beside it and kick with both heels together. It turns slightly and the hips slip through. I heave at the torso, rotating it further till the shoulders lie flat. Now shoulders and head will pass through, but feet and knees refuse to slide further, for the floor of the burrow drops and then slopes upward again. The fault is not in the knees, I see, but in the spine, which will not flex. I struggle on and on in the crimson glory of the declining sun, kicking at the shoulders first from the right, then from the left, achieving nothing. I will have to haul it all out again, cut open the sailcloth, and tie the ankles against the thighs so as to shorten it. But will there be enough flexure at the knees? Will I have to cut the tendons in the knees? (91-92)

Magda thinks that instead of burying the body it would have been better if she could have “burned the body with the mattress and the bed and gone for a long walk in the veld to escape the smell” (92). It is hard for Magda to complete the procedure of the burial of the body. She questions herself:

But if I do not bury it now will I ever bury it? Perhaps I should simply go to bed and wait there day in, day out, with a pillow over my head singing to myself, while the bag lies in the sun, the flies buzzing around it and the ants crawling in and out, until it bloats and bursts and runs in black fluids; and then wait on until its passion is complete, until it is simple bones and hair, the ants having taken everything worthwhile and gone elsewhere; and then, if the stitching has held, get out of bed at last and pick it up and sling it into the porcupine hole and be free of it. (92)

There is a reference to the physical violence caused by the colonizers. Anna, an old servant has spread the stories that Magda’s father was messing around with Hendrik’s wife. Hendrik is upset to listen to the stories and he decides to leave the farm. He says, “So when they say I shot him, who will believe me, who will believe a brown man? They will hang me! Me! No – I’m leaving. I’m leaving tomorrow . . .” (117). It is true as Frantz Fanon says, “The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (33), Hendrik’s fear clearly indicates the injustice and
exploitation of the blacks by the colonizers. The novel becomes an allegory of the South African situation because, to put it into the words of Fredric Jameson, all the third-world texts are necessarily national allegories because, “the story of the private individual identity is always an allegory of the embattled structure of the public . . . culture and society” (67).

These examples of physical violence reflect the hidden thoughts of Magda. Magda represents a typical colonial woman. Her role becomes vital because it highlights the tragedy of a colonizer woman. About colonial women Pat Barr says, “What they did and how they responded to their alien environment were seldom thought worthy of record, either by themselves or by contemporary chroniclers of the male-dominated imperial scenario” (1). Hence, Magda’s tragedy gets significance.

Magda’s anger results from her inability and refusal to accept the black bride of her father. Her father exploits Hendrik’s wife and Magda exploits Hendrik, who in turn, takes a revenge on Magda. It is basically a result of not allowing the natives to live happily on their own land. Whites, even though politically powerful, are not able to adjust with the natural environment because they cannot develop healthy relationships with the natives. The whites depended completely on the labour and the land of natives. Magda becomes ready to accept her fate, the farm life and wants to love Hendrik. Symbolically her acceptance emphasizes the need to love the environment and its people. It will result into the human interdependence on a world level.

**Violence : Sexual**

In addition to these ways of violence there are several examples of sexual violence in the novel. Sexual violence against the natives on the part of the whites is their way of exploiting the natives. Sexual violence by the blacks against the whites is the result of revenge.

The first example of the sexual violence is introduced with the offer of the gifts and candies by Magda’s father to Hendrik’s new bride, Klein-Anna. She is as innocent as a child and is unaware of the colonial trap to demoralize her. When Hendrik is out for tasks, Magda’s father visits Klein-Anna who “is bashful, she hides her face. He tries to soothe her. Perhaps he even smiles, but I cannot see. He leans
down and gives her a brown paper packet. It is full of candies, hearts and diamonds with mottoes on them. She stands holding the packet while he rides away” (33). Sometimes he gives her a silver coin also. Magda imagines the talk between them:

My father is exchanging forbidden words with Klein-Anna. I do not need to leave my room to know. *We*, he is saying to her, *we two*; and the word reverberates in the air between them. *Now: come with me now*, he is saying to her. There are few enough words true, rock-hard enough to build a life on, and these he is destroying. He believes that he and she can choose their words and make a private language, with an *I* and *you* and *here* and *now* of their own. But there can be no private language. Their intimate *you* is my *you* too. Whatever they may say to each other, even in the closest dead of night, they say in common words, unless they gibber like apes. How can I speak to Hendrik as before when they corrupt my speech? How do I speak to them? (35)

Magda notices the progress of physical love between Klein-Anna and her father:

I lie here involved in cycles of time, outside the true time of the world, while my father and Hendrik’s wife travel their arrow-straight paths from lust to capture, from helplessness to the relief of surrender. Now they are past cajolements and gifts and shy shakings of the head. Hendrik is ordered to the remotest marches of the farm to burn the ticks off sheep. My father tethers his horse outside his servant’s house. He locks the door behind him. The girl tries to push his hands off, but she is awed by what is about to happen. He undresses her and lays her out on his servant’s coir mattress. She is limp in his arms. He lies with her and rocks with her in an act which I know enough about to know that it too breaks codes. (36)

By sending Hendrik away, Magda’s father very systematically seduces Klein-Anna. He uses his colonial domination. What happens to Klein-Anna can be described in the words of Ashish Nandy who says that colonialism “colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all” (xi). Magda is sorry for Hendrik and says, “Poor Hendrik: undone, undone. I weep drunken weeping. Then I screw my eyes tight against the pain and wait for the three figures to dissolve into streaks and pulses and whorls: Hendrik
playing his mouthorgan beneath a far-off thorn-tree, the couple clenched in the stifling hut” (36).

The next example of sexual violence is Magda’s rape by Hendrik. It is the result of Hendrik’s anger but it is also a racial revenge. When he does not get his money from Magda, he says, “How must I live? The storeroom is empty. Where must we get food? From heaven?” (104). Furiously, he springs at Magda and grabs her arm. Magda describes the event:

‘Let go!’ I shout. He grips me tightly and pulls me back to the kitchen. ‘No, wait a bit!’ he hisses in my ear. I pick up the first thing I see, a fork, and lunge at him. The tines scrape his shoulder, probably not even piercing the skin; but he exclaims in surprise and hurls me to the floor. I stumble up into a deluge of blows. I have no breath left, everything has been gasped out, I cover my head and fall slowly and awkwardly back to the floor. ‘Yes! . . . Yes! . . . Yes! . . .’ says Hendrik, beating me. I raise myself on hands and knees and begin to crawl to the door. He kicks me in the buttocks, heavily, twice a man’s kicks, catching bone. I flinch and weep with shame, ‘Please, please!’ I roll over on my back and lift my knees. This is how a bitch must look; but as for what happens next, I do not even know how it is done. He goes on kicking at my thighs. (104-05; ellipsis in orig.)

All the anger and hatred of the colonized is directed towards the colonizer. Magda, too, tries to attack Hendrik with fork but it falls down. She says:

His pelvis grinds hard into me. . . . I weep, the situation is shameful, I do not see how to get out of it, something is going limp inside me, something is dying. He bends and fumbles for the bottom of my dress. I scuffle, but he finds it and his fingers come up between my legs. I grip as tightly as I can to keep them still. ‘No, please not, please, not that, only not that, I beg you, Hendrik, I will give you anything, only please not that!’ He slides down my body, . . . scratching me. . . . I am faint with fright, there is no pleasure in this. ‘Ah Hendrik please let me go, I don’t even know how!’ I am falling, perhaps even fainting, held up only by his arms around my thighs. Then I am lying on the floor smelling the beeswax, the dust. I am nauseous with fear, my limbs have turned to water. If this is my fate it sickens me. (105)
Hendrik rapes Magda brutally. It is also possible that what is done with his wife makes Hendrik sexually violent towards Magda. Magda pleads him to stop hurting her but Hendrik does not stop. She sobs in despair. She appeals him: “What have I done to you? It is not my fault that everything is going so badly, it is your wife’s fault, it is her fault and my father’s. And it’s also your fault! You people don’t know where to stop!” (106). In the next paragraph Magda again describes the rape: “He closes the bedroom door and stands against it. ‘Take off your clothes!’ says this stranger. He forces me to undress. My fingers are numb. I am shivering” (106). She questions herself “I am finally a woman, or, Am I finally a woman?” (107). But finally she says, “This is my fate, this is a woman’s fate” (106). It is her fate to suffer doubly; as a woman and as a white colonizer. She is prepared to understand her own self and also the self of a colonizer. So she says, “I must simply endure until finally I am left alone and can begin to rediscover who I am” (106) because “there is no end to the humiliation” (107). She knows it well that the colonizers have to pay for their crimes. She says, “In the small hours of the night Hendrik creeps into my bed and takes me. It hurts. I am still raw, but I try to relax, to understand the sensation, though as yet it has no form. . . . I would like to sleep in his arms, to see whether it is possible to sleep in someone else’s arms, but that is not what he wants” (110). Magda even asks Hendrik “‘Am I doing it right, Hendrik?’” (110). It can be said that Magda accepts Hendrik’s body because she wishes to be a woman fulfilling woman’s role, particularly sexual role. She is a spinster and her father has not cared for her marriage. The second possibility is that being a white woman she wants to be punished by Hendrik for the guilt of her race. She knows, “What passion he has shown for me has been a passion of rage” (117). Hendrik starts visiting her regularly every night. Now Magda wants to change her mind and suit her body for Hendrik’s pleasure. She sometimes requests him, “Stay just a moment longer, Hendrik can’t we talk? We get so little chance to talk to each other” (112).

When Hendrik declares his decision to leave Magda’s farm and go to the Cape, Magda is upset. Very helplessly she appeals Hendrik:

Do you know, Hendrik, you hurt me. Do you know, you have the power to hurt me, and you do it every time. Do you really think I would turn you over to the police? Do you think I am too spineless to acknowledge my guilt? If so, you don’t know me, Hendrik. 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! Look at me! You know who I am, I don’t have to tell you! You know what they call me, the witch of Agterplaas! Why should I side with them against you? (117-18)

Magda’s existence “outside the human society” and “humanity” reflects her loneliness and alienation from the human beings and humanity. She needs Hendrik and wants that he should accept her not like other whites but as a different woman in his life. She tries to convince him of this truth:

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 don’t you even tell me if I do it right? ... 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 you 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? Is that your secret, Hendrik? (118)

Magda’s appeal to Hendrik is her confession also. She predicts the lot of the whites in the post-apartheid era of South Africa. Magda is ready to become Hendrik’s slave or wife. According to Dominic Head:

... it makes no difference whether or not the rape is a fantasy of Magda’s. The allegorical point is that the colonizer is necessarily the instigator of revolutionary counter-violence. There is also a sense that Magda is a psychological victim, alienated from the ‘native’ Other through her internalization of the rape fear/fantasy, a recurring topos in the discourse of racism. (59)

Head further says, “Magda’s spinsterhood is the mark of a colonial dead-end” (69). Magda’s fate symbolizes the consequence of the colonial tyranny on its own people.

Magda attempts to make contacts with Hendrick. But she prefers sexual relation for it. In one paragraph she says, “Labouring under my father’s weight I
struggle to give life to a world but seem to engender only death” (10). Here it is not clear whether she is having or thinking of incestuous relation with her father. Because most of the time it becomes difficult to find whether any of the events actually takes place or remains in Magda’s mind only.

When Hendrik leaves the farm Magda’s suppressed sex reaches to such a madness that when one little boy comes to give her a letter, she symbolically shows him the sexual activity with her fingers and asks him whether he knows it or not. The boy stands as a symbol of exploitation. Magda’s attitude towards him is contemptuous. She is not able to understand his age. It indicates that if the elders are not careful about their behaviour, the children will imitate them in future. If the innocents are abused in this manner, there is no guarantee of refined life.

Klein-Anna is raped by the colonizer. If she had been powerful economically and mentally, she could have saved herself. But she gets attracted towards the gifts easily and is victimized. Economy of the natives in shattered by the colonizers by alienating them from their land and its environment. Magda is raped because Hendrik wants to take revenge and give a way to his antagonism. The rapes of Magda and Hendrik’s wife also show that sexual violence is the potent weapon to show the male superiority. According to Gloria Watkins, “Sexism fosters, condones and supports male violence against women, . . . In patriarchal society, men are encouraged to channel frustrated aggression in the direction of those without power – women and children. And white and black men alike abuse women.” (105).

Magda gets lost in the thoughts about Hendrik after his departure:

Is he lost to me forever? . . . What is the lesson I should learn, . . . Is it the lesson my father learned when he could not raise a hand to wave the flies from his face: Beware of intimacy with the servants? Is it that Hendrik and I are, in our different ways, ruined for love? . . . Or is this desert of fire and ice a purgatory we must pass through on the way to a land of milk and honey? And what of Anna? Will she come too? Will she and I one day be sisters and sleep in the same bed? Or will she, when she finds herself, scratch my eyes out? (118-19)

Magda’s wish to be the sister of Klein-Anna indicates a hope of human relations between the blacks and the whites. It predicts the need of such relationship. It can be justified in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong’o:
Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations. (xv)

Magda says, “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” (120). History and culture are the marks of human development. Magda’s place in history and culture of South Africa will be an important factor for its past. Because in the desert where the colonizers live, Magda says “Nothing is punished. Everything is permitted here. God has forgotten us and we have forgotten God. There is no love from us toward God nor any wish that God should turn his mind to us. The flow has ceased. We are the castaways of God as we are the castaways of history. That is the origin of our feeling of solitude” (135). She reflects: “I for one do not wish to be at the centre of the world, I wish only to be at home in the world as the merest beast is at home” (135). In the last part of the novel Magda listens to some voices. She listens: “The feeling of solitude is a longing for a place. That place is the centre of all the world, the naval of the universe” (135). It means that Magda is not content with her colonial position. If it is South Africa where she wants to live, she wants to live there peacefully. Magda’s dissatisfaction represents the colonizers’ failure. Her feeling of solitude is a longing for a place. It is proper in this connection to quote George Lamming, who in an interview by Raymond Gardner says, “There is a tendency to speak of colonialism as though it were exclusively a black experience. That is a very limited understanding. It was a two-way thing. Colonialism has been as much as a white experience as a black one. It is simply that it has taken the white world a very long time to understand the nature of that enterprise . . . .” Magda’s introspection reveals the colonial experiences of the whites.

Magda is ready to do all the farm work:

One of these days, if they are not to stifle, the sheep must be shorn. If Hendrik refuses to do that task I will, my energies are boundless; I will put on my sunbonnet and go out with my sewing-scissors and catch the sheep by their hind legs and trap them between my knees and shear
them one by one, day after day, until it is all done – let the wind take the wool, what good is it to me? Or perhaps I shall keep some of it to stuff a mattress with, so that I can lie on it at night, on all that oily warmth. If I cannot succeed in catching the sheep, which is not unlikely (I have no sheepdog, dogs snarl and cower when I call them, they do not like me, it is the smell), then there is nothing for it, the sheep must perish, . . . . As for the windmills, the windmills will go on pumping day and night, they are faithful, they do not think, they do not mind the heat. The dams are overflowing. Hendrik still irrigates the lands. I see him in the evenings. When he ceases, out of the boredom, out of pique, I will carry on. I need the fruit-trees and vegetable garden. For the rest, the rye can die, the lucerne can die. The cow is drying up, the cow can die. (95-96).

The hundreds of flies, common houseflies, and the larger green-tailed blowflies devour the blood from Magda’s dead father. It suggests his pathetic end. Magda says, “The pitch of buzzing rises as the flies make way before me. One fly continues to sit on the bridge of his nose and clean its face. I brush it away. It rises, circles, and settles on my forearm. I brush it away. I could spend all day like this. The hum grows steady again” (77). For Head, “The flies feed off the patriarch, explicitly denoting the demise of colonialism . . .” (60).

Magda experiences the disturbances around her and she observes and says, “the snake has come and the old Eden is dead!” (70). The entry of the colonizers in South Africa is no doubt Satanic like a snake. What Lewis Nkosi says about the Africans is relevant to note here: “As for black South Africans, their nationalist discourse is based on the notion of having been robbed by colonialism of what was a pristine, almost flawless identity, a perception of an Eden that was ruthlessly brought to naught by European settlers” (172). However, at the end of the novel there is the possibility of Eden again on the land of South Africa. The whites have to adjust themselves with the land which is inhospitable for their rule. Those like Magda who want to stay have to love it. The power of the blacks and the whites, who stay where they are born, will not corrupt this garden but their love for each other will purify their hearts. Hence, in the words of André Brink, Coetzee succeeds in achieving “the universality of allegory” in the novel (192). Magda confesses at the end of the novel:
I am corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world. If
the truth be told, I never wanted to fly away with the sky-gods. My
hope was always that they would descend and live with me here in
paradise, making up with their ambrosial breath for all that I lost when
the ghostly brown figures of the last people I knew crept away from
me in the night. I have never felt myself to be another man’s creature
(here they come, how sweet the closing plangencies), I have uttered
my life in my own voice throughout (what a consolation that is), I have
chosen at every moment my own destiny, which is to die here in the
petrified garden, behind locked gates, near my father’s bones, in a
space echoing with hymns I could have written but did not because (I
thought) it was too easy. (139)

The novel remains the best example of post-colonial experience. Magda’s
father, as a colonial master, subjugates Hendrik’s wife but fails to preserve healthy
life for his daughter. The novel represents the despair as well as the cynicism and
negativity of the colonizers. Magda struggles to find a language of communication
within her territory as well as outside world. This problem of language faced by
Magda represents an important feature of post-colonialism. It is related to the issue of
language of master and servants. Other features like identity crisis, ethnicity, and fear
of displacement can also be examined.

It is possible to study Magda as a woman or a spinster. Her wish to get
married or the reasons of her sexual mania can be examined. She can be taken as an
example of repressed white woman struggling to get an identity of her own. Magda’s
life as a woman in the kitchen, her relation with her father, her social isolation, and
her behaviour with the servants can be studied. Her feminine world as a single woman
is exposed in the novel on different levels. Her mother’s life also throws light on the
life of the white women.

The colonial life in the novel can be examined from the Marxist approach. The
relation between the master and his servants announces a lot about the power and its
abuse. The wives of the servants are commodities for the whites. The racial hierarchy
allows the exploitation of the servants on many levels. It would be encouraging study
to investigate whether Coetzee succeeds in the Marxist analysis.

Coetzee uses a very unique technique of diary entries in the form of small
paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered and haphazardly organized. This is very
difficult technique handled by Coetzee. It would be possible to study this novel by concentrating on the technique of paragraphs and the organization of the matter in them. Though the diary entries have contradictory information; they succeed in unlocking Magda’s mind. Magda’s character can be studied from the perspectives of psychoanalysis and hysteria. The device of the diary entries, according to Derek Attridge, “encourages the reader to treat each paragraph as having more self-sufficiency than is usually the case with fictional prose: each one a little mini-narrative or speculation or diary entry, something like the stanzas of a long poem” (22). The paragraphs become the psychoanalytical discourses related to Magda. It is challenging to observe the interplay of fantasy and reality in the novel. The novel can also be studied as an allegory of South African situation.

Magda’s choice of staying and dying in the land of South African environment is the fulfillment of her wish of getting home, a permanent home in the blacks’ land. Her love for this land and its environment does not take her away from it. In the same way it suggests that Magda is ready to adjust herself with the natives. If the natives’ life is not destroyed by the colonizers, the natives would be happy with their people on their land. While the novel narrates the story of tangled relations between people and land, it also introduces the probable picture of a new country of the blacks and the whites in world literature. Hence, the novel has, what Forster calls, a suggestion of a prophecy.
Works Cited


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Waiting for the Barbarians

After examining the violence in In the Heart of the Country, the present study attempts to place in the critical perspective the violence in Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians. It is the recipient of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and CNA Literary Award in 1980. It also received the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1981.

The title of the novel is taken from a poem written in 1904, by the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy. The novel is set in a frontier settlement of state referred to just as the Third Bureau. It relates the story of a Magistrate who for decades has run the affairs of the tiny frontier settlement. He has lived a comfortable life by ignoring the impending war between the barbarians and the Empire. But the peace of this area is disturbed by Colonel Joll, an official of the Empire, who arrives to search the enemies, the barbarians because they are said to be challenging the power of the Empire. The barbarians are variously described as desert nomads, settled farmers, herdsmen and fisherpeople. They live near the settlement and also far out in the unmapped lands beyond. Colonel Joll interrogates the prisoners for the security of the Empire. When he fills the yard with vagrants as prisoners, the Magistrate is disappointed because he knows that these prisoners are harmless fishermen and simple nomadic people.

After the release of the prisoners, one barbarian girl is left behind. She begs in the streets. She is half-blinded and crippled by Colonel Joll and the other representatives of the Empire. The Magistrate befriends her sympathetically. He cleans her body and later starts loving her. After the improvement in her eyesight and the legs, the Magistrate decides to return the girl to her people. Following a tiresome journey, the Magistrate succeeds in returning the girl to her people. But when he returns to the settlement he is not welcomed by anybody. Charged with treason by the Colonel, he is thrown into prison. At the end of the novel, Colonel Joll, Warrant Officer Mandel, other officials, and the soldiers are seen to be returning Home. The Magistrate does not leave but lives on the settlement as a free man without any bond with the Empire, whose servant he was.

Though the setting of the novel is unspecified, it can be taken as an image of the Empire in any time and hence, it can be read as a political story of South Africa also with its racial conflicts. The violence inflicted on the natives in this novel vitiates the social fabric of their life. They are powerless against the forces of destabilization.
purposefully unleashed by the Imperial power. The violence in the novel can be studied with reference to its physical, sexual, and environmental aspects.

- **Violence: Physical**

  There are many examples of physical violence in the novel. The interpretation of these examples will throw light on the brutal behaviour of the colonizers.

  The Empire’s servants impose physical violence on the bodies of the colonized. The novel refers to the conditions of the prisoners. It indicates the worst unhygienic conditions in which the prisoners have to stay. For instance, the hut where the two prisoners are kept has no windows. It is close and smelly. From the two prisoners’ body comes “a smell of old urine” (2). The small boy in the prison has puffy and bruised face and his one eye is swollen shut. The explanation of the old man is: “Excellency, we know nothing about thieving. The soldiers stopped us and tied us up. For nothing. We were on the road, coming here to see the doctor. This is my sister’s boy. He has a sore that does not get better. We are not thieves. . . . I was bringing him to the doctor when the soldiers stopped us. That is all” (3-4). The old man asks the boy to show his injury on his forearm. But Colonel Joll does not believe in his story and forces him to confess the truth that his people are planning to attack the Empire. About his strategy Colonel Joll says, “First I get lies, you see – this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth” (5). It is also a fact that the Empire’s servants are not interested in learning the language of the barbarians to know what they speak. Hence, they use the barbarians’ bodies for torture.

  The Magistrate, though the Empire’s servant, is sympathetic and so he disagrees with Colonel Joll’s views. But he knows, “The Empire does not require that its servants love each other, merely that they perform their duty.” (6) The small boy is in a corner; his hands are tied in front of him. In the other corner lies a long white bundle containing the body of the old man who dies in prison out of the Empire’s torture. The Magistrate asks the guard to report his statement about the old man’s death. The guard says: “The prisoner became uncontrollable and attacked the visiting officer. I was called in to help subdue him. By the time I came in the struggle had ended. The prisoner was unconscious and bleeding from the nose” (6). The guard
reports the Magistrate what the Empire’s officer tells him to report the Magistrate. The Magistrate says, “While the boy still lies rigidly asleep, his eyes pinched shut, we carry the corpse out. In the yard, with the guard holding the lantern, I find the stitching with the point of my knife, tear the shroud open, and fold it back from the head of the old man” (7). The Magistrate knows that the old man dies for no wrong done by him. But he cannot strongly oppose the Empire’s officers though he tries to convince them that there is no danger on the frontier for the Empire. No one cares to bury the dead body until the Magistrate orders the burial party. He loosens the rope around the boy’s little hands and imagines himself to be just like “a mother” (8) caring the child. The Empire’s officials have listened to the stories of the unrest among the barbarians and so they are ready for war and oppression by inflicting physical violence on them.

The magistrate is shocked to see the injury on the boy’s arm. He says, “The boy lies on his back, naked, asleep, breathing fast and shallow. His skin glistens with sweat. For the first time the bandage is off his arm and I see the angry open sore it hid. I bring the lantern closer. His belly and both groins are pocked with little scabs and bruises and cuts, some marked by trickles of blood” (10). When asked what the interrogators did to the boy, the guard informs the Magistrate that they stabbed the boy with a small knife. The Magistrate is upset when he comes to know about the false confession brought by the Empire’s official from the boy. He wants to save the boy. He asks the boy:

They tell me you have made a confession. They say you have admitted that you and the old man and other men from your clan have stolen sheep and horses. You have said that the men of your clan are arming themselves, that in the spring you are all going to join in a great war on the Empire. Are you telling the truth? Do you understand what this confession of yours will mean? Do you understand? . . . he looks back vacantly at all this vehemence, like someone tired after running a great distance. “It means that the soldiers are going to ride out against your people. There is going to be killing. Kinsmen of yours are going to die, perhaps even your parents, your brothers and sisters. Do you really want that?” He makes no response. I shake his shoulder, slap his cheek. He does not flinch: it is like slapping dead flesh. (11)
The violence of the Empire’s representatives is so cruel that it makes the victims helpless. In the words of David Sussman the Empire’s torture is such that “the victims will say what he/she thinks torturer wants to hear” (24). Ruthlessly, the officers injure the boy. In the words of André Brink the “Violence denies not only the humanity of the person against which it is directed but also that of the person who practices it” (72). But the Empire’s people are not in a position to understand anything. The Magistrate calls in the only doctor who recommends nourishing food and “smears ointment on the hundred little stabs” and leaves in a hurry without asking “how the boy sustained his injuries” (11). Later on, the boy is taken as a guide by Colonel Joll along with his expedition though the boy is very sick to travel.

The prisoners imprisoned by the Colonel Joll stay in the worst state. Their habits are frank and filthy. One corner of the yard becomes their latrine “where men and women squat openly and where a cloud of flies buzzes all day” (20). A rumour begins to spread that they are diseased and will bring an epidemic to the town. One baby of the barbarian woman dies in the yard. The Magistrate is sorry for the incident and is angry with the “Third Bureau, unsleeping guardian of the Empire” (21). He is ashamed for his “indifference to annihilation” (22). He looks at the prisoners and thinks, “It would be best if this obscure chapter in the history of the world were terminated at once, if these ugly people were obliterated from the face of the earth and we swore to make a new start, to run an empire in which there would be no more injustice, no more pain” (26). Of course, obliterating the natives from face of the earth is not a civilized solution to solve the problem of racial strifes. It indicates the hidden thoughts in the mind of the colonizers. However, the Magistrate later on understands that it is not possible for the Empire to obliterate the natives from their own land.

The next example of physical violence is that of the barbarian girl who is installed by the Magistrate in the barracks kitchen as a scullery maid. Colonel Joll and his companions have injured her feet and eyes. The Magistrate unwraps her dirty bandages, cleans her feet, stubby toes and the nails crusted with dirt. She does not want to tell him about the blur in her eyes when the Magistrate notices in the corner of her one eye a grayish puckering as though “a caterpillar lay there with its head under her eyelid, grazing” (33). He investigates that the Empire’s officials have broken her feet and molested her in front of her father who also dies as a victim of their torture. Slowly, some days after her contact with the Magistrate, the girl informs him about the injury of her eye:
It was a fork, a kind of fork with only two teeth. There were little knobs on the teeth to make them blunt. They put it in the coals till it was hot, then they touched you with it, to burn you. . . .

They did not burn me. They said they would burn my eyes out, but they did not. The man brought it very close to my face and made me look at it. They held my eyelids open. But I had nothing to tell them. That was all. (44)

After this cruelty, she could not see properly as there remains a blur in the middle of everything she looks at.

Next example of physical violence is in the context of twelve prisoners brought by Colonel Joll’s successful campaigning of the months. The Magistrate describes it:

The-standard bearer’s horse is led by a man who brandishes a heavy stick to clear his way. Behind him comes another trooper trailing a rope; and at end of the rope, tied neck to neck, comes a file of men, barbarians, stark naked, holding their hands up to their faces in an odd way as though one and all are suffering from toothache. . . . A simple loop of wire runs through the flesh of each man’s hand and through holes pierced in his cheeks. “It makes them meek as lamb,” I remember being told by a soldier who had once seen the trick: “they think of nothing but how to keep very still.” My heart grows sick. I know now that I should not have left my cell. (113)

The spectators enjoy the site of the miserable captives. One man carries his child on his shoulders so that the child can see the barbarians. The Magistrate cannot control his anger, wants to go away from the scene. He says, “I cannot save the prisoners, therefore let me save myself. Let it at the very least be said, if it ever comes to be said, if there is ever anyone in some remote future interested to know the ways we lived, that in this farthest outpost of the Empire of light there existed one man who in his heart was not a barbarian” (114).

Colonel Joll steps forward. Stooping over each prisoner in turn he rubs a handful of dust into his naked back and writes a word with a stick of charcoal, “ENEMY” (115). The Magistrate observes:

Then the beating begins. The soldiers use the stout green cane staves, bringing them down with the heavy slapping sounds of washing-
paddles, raising red welts on the prisoners’ backs and buttocks. With slow care the prisoners extend their legs until they lie flat on their bellies, all except the one who had been moaning and who now gasps with each blow. (115)

The black charcoal and ochre dust begin to run with sweat and blood. Their game is to beat the captives till their backs are washed clean. On the face of everyone gathered to enjoy the violence, there is “the same expression : not hatred, not bloodlust, but a curiosity so intense that their bodies are drained by it and only their eyes live, organs of a new and ravening appetite” (115). When the soldiers are tired of beating, one girl from the spectators is given the cane and her friends cheer up her by saying: “Go on, don’t be afraid!”(116). The Magistrate observes the situation and sees that “A soldier puts a cane in her hand and leads her to the place. She stands confused, embarrassed, one hand still over her face. Shouts, jokes, obscene advice are hurled at her. She lifts the cane, brings it down smartly on the prisoner’s buttocks, drops it and scuttles to safety to a roar of applause” (116). The call of the officers to the spectators serves an important purpose of exhibiting the power of the Empire. It also gives them a chance to allow the spectators to participate in the Empire’s policies and get satisfied for their involvement.

The behavior of the Empire’s officials is brutal. Frantz Fanon in Towards the African Revolution says that torture is inherent in the whole imperialist configuration; it is “an expression and a means of the occupier / occupied relationship” (66). Colonel Joll is interested in treating the natives as per his set procedures. Whether it is interrogation or beating the victims; he uses his power thoroughly. He cannot see the innocence in the eyes of the natives. His sunglasses hide his “healthy eyes” (4). According to Lance Olsen, his sunglasses “imply the absence of humanisms, his spiritual blindness” (53). But they can also be taken as his pretense not to see the innocence. Colonel Joll wants to exploit the natives and forcefully make them confess that they are preparing to oppose the Empire. According to B. J. Eckstein the irony of such torture is that the “confession” puts the burden of “betrayal” on the prisoner who may have nothing to confess and may have lost a sense of everything other than his pains to which his “confession” refers (78). The Empire uses various strategies to bring and continue its dominance.

The Magistrate is beaten when he howls at the Colonel for his injustice towards the captives. But still he screams, “You would not use a hammer on beast, not
on a beast!” (117). He is disappointed to see that he fails in demanding justice and says:

*Justice:* once that word is uttered, where will it all end? Easier to shout *No!* Easier to be beaten and made a martyr. Easier to lay my head on a block than to defend the cause of justice for the barbarians: for where can that argument lead but to laying down our arms and opening the gates of the town to the people whose land we have raped? (118)

The Magistrate is sympathetic towards the guiltless natives. Hence he wants to say to the Colonel, “Those pitiable prisoners you brought in – are they the enemy I must fear? Is that what you say? You are the enemy, Colonel!”(125). He cannot restrain himself. He pounds the desk with his fist and further says, “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). Colonel Joll and Mandel want to maintain law and order but their brutality gives a way to understand the Magistrate’s humanity though he belongs to their group. Hence, Albert Memmi’s words can be used to say that the Magistrate, “shares a collective responsibility” (39) as a member of the Empire.

The Magistrate, the Empire’s servant, official of the oppressors, becomes a victim of the Empire’s harsh and inhuman policy. In a way, an oppressor becomes oppressed and realizes intensely and radically what oppression means. He is charged for consorting with the barbarians. He is imprisoned and treated badly by Colonel Joll and Mandel. He has to live a lonely life. He describes his life and the place where he is imprisoned:

At night when everything is still the cockroaches come out to explore. I here, or perhaps imagine, the horny clicking of their wings, the scurry of their feet across the paved floor. They are lured by the smell of the bucket in the corner, the morsels of food on the floor; no doubt too by this mountain of flesh giving off its multifarious odours of life and decay. One night I am awoken by the feather-light tread of one crossing my throat. Thereafter I often jerk awake during the night, twitching, brushing myself off, feeling the phantom probings of their antennae at my lips, my eyes. From such beginnings grow obsessions: I am warned. (87)
The Magistrate cannot bear the solitude. His own speech seems strange to him. According to Lois Zamora, “The Magistrate is both the symbol of the empire and its victim” (2). He remains only as a victim of the Empire after his return from the journey for the barbarian girl. He is alienated from the people of the Empire. He says, “Truly, man was not made to live alone! I build my day unreasonably around the hours when I am fed. I guzzle my food like a dog. A bestial life is turning me into a beast” (87). He dreams of the barbarian girl, her father and the pains experienced by them in the same prison. About his insult he says:

There are other humiliations too. My requests for clean clothes are ignored. I have nothing to wear but what I brought with me. Each exercise day, under the eye of the guard, I wash one item, a shirt or a pair of drawers, with ash and cold water, and take it back to my cell to dry (the shirt I left to dry in the yard was gone two days later). In my nostrils there is always the mouldy smell of clothing that does not see the sun. (93)

About his physical pains he says: “Under the monotonous regimen of soup and porridge and tea, it has become an agony for me to move my bowels. I hesitate for days feeling stiff and bloated before I can bring myself to squat over the pail and endure the stabs of pain, the tearing of tissues that accompany these evacuations” (93). His cell is very dirty. When he escapes from the cell, he says:

I walked into that cell a sane man . . . but after two months among the cockroaches with nothing to see but four walls and an enigmatic soot-mark, nothing to smell but the stench of my own body, no one to talk to but a ghost in a dream whose lips seem to be sealed, I am much less sure of myself . . . . To lie in a woman’s arms in a proper bed, to have good food to eat, to walk in the sun – how much more important these seem than the right to decide without advice from the police who should be my friends and who my enemies! . . . I have no plan of escape. Hiding away in the reeds I would starve within a week, or be smoked out. I am simply seeking ease, if the truth be told, fleeing to the only soft bed and friendly arms I have left to me. (104-05)

The disregard towards the Magistrate explains the tyranny of the Empire for the person suspected of anything wrong done against it. There are many wounds on the Magistrate’s body. He says:
The wound on my cheek, never washed or dressed, is swollen and inflamed. A crust like a fat caterpillar has formed on it. My left eye is a mere slit, my nose, a shapeless throbbing lump. I must breathe through my mouth.

I lie in the reek of old vomit obsessed with the thought of water. I have had nothing to drink for two days. (125-26)

He stays in the prison in worst conditions and to such a suffering man Mandel comes to teach “the meaning of humanity” (126). This situation of the Magistrate can be compared to Lucy Delaney’s nineteenth century slave narrative. She says, “My only crime was seeking for that freedom which was my birthright! I heard Mr. Mitchell tell his wife that he did not believe in slavery, yet, through his instrumentality, I was shut away from the sunlight because he was determined to prove me a slave, and thus keep me in bondage? (35). In both the cases of the Magistrate and Delaney; the Empire’s determination for violence can be noted.

The Magistrate is able to see that the barbarians are also human beings like the Empire’s people. He actually experiences that the barbarians have their own history of their land. He does not want his reference in such a history. According to Indrajit Sarkar, “This is the typical position of a ‘white liberal’ in the South Africa which is allegorized through this unnamed magistrate of this unnamed Empire” (47).

It is proper in this context, to quote Teresa Dovey who gives characteristic of the Magistrate’s liberal thinking:

. . . belief in the power and efficacy of the judiciary system; belief in “civilization” and the continual progress of humankind; an abhorrence of violence, accompanied by an attitude of tolerance and rationality; a capacity for fairly ruthless self-scrutiny and a sense of guilt that can be incapacitating; and more significant than all of these, a belief in individual autonomy and freedom of choice. (142)

The physical violence inflicted on the Magistrate is made a subject of entertainment. According to Judie Newman, “In the successive acts of public torture to which he is subjected, the magistrate undergoes a series of inversions – from adult authority to childish clown . . . .” (135). He is called in the yard and asked to run naked. He says:

They call me into the yard. I stand before them hiding my nakedness, nursing my sore hand, a tired old bear made tame by too much baiting.
“Run”, Mandel says. I run around the yard under the blazing sun. When I slacken he slaps me on the buttocks with his cane and I trot faster. The soldiers leave their siesta and watch from the shade, the scullery maids hang over the kitchen door, children stare through the bars of the gate. “I cannot!” I gasp. “My heart!” I stop, hang my head, clutch my chest. Everyone waits patiently while I recover myself. Then the cane prods me and I shamble on, moving no faster than a man walks (127).

Mandel asks the soldiers to stretch a rope at knee height and asks the Magistrate to jump back and forth over it. They call the cook’s little grandson and give him one end and the rope and ask the Magistrate to jump. On another occasion, Mandel asks him to wear a woman’s calico smock. A salt bag is slipp ed over his head and tied around his throat with a string. A ladder is brought and is propped against the branch of a tree. His foot is set on the lowest rung, the noose is settled under his ear and he is asked to climb. Mandel then asks him to state what happened between him and the barbarians. The Magistrate says, “I want to say that nothing passed between myself and the barbarians concerning military matters. It was a private affair. I went to return the girl to her family. For no other purpose” (130). But Mandel is not satisfied with the Magistrate’s answer. He wants this spectacle to be enjoyed by the crowd. He also uses this occasion to exhibit the Empire’s power and punishment. When the Magistrate sees children looking at the scene of his punishment he thinks: “let us only pray that they do not intimate their elders’ games, or tomorrow there will be a plague of little bodies dangling from the trees” (133). In an interview by Folke Rhedin, Coetzee states that he has deliberately shown the presence of children on many occasions, because, he wants to emphasize, “what those children might do and what sort of life they might lead” (7). It indicates that if the elders do not behave in a human manner, the children will definitely imitate them. The children are taught to make a fun of the tortured. The magistrate wants to give the same message. The outcome of violence witnessed by children will be horrific in the times to come.

The Magistrate’s body becomes very dirty. He says, “I smell of shit. I am not permitted to wash. The flies follow me everywhere, circling around the appetizing sore on my cheek, alighting if I stand still for a moment” (127). About his nakedness he says:
Now I am past shame. My mind is turned wholly to the menace of the moment when my knees turn to water or my heart grips me like a crab and I have to stand still; and each time I discover with surprise that after a little rest, after the application of a little pain, I can be made to move, to jump or skip or crawl or run a little further. Is there a point at which I will lie down and say, “Kill me – I would rather die than go on”? Sometimes I think I am approaching that point, but I am always mistaken.

There is no consoling grandeur in any of this. . . . There is no way of dying allowed me, it seems, except like a dog in a corner. (128)

Empire brings out the complete fall of the Magistrate. For the Empire; the Magistrate does not remain a human being and he is treated like a beast. The Empire’s settlement becomes unstable and then the Magistrate is not kept imprisoned. But even when he comes out he is not the friend of Empire’s people. The Magistrate dreams of the barbarian girl holding out to him a loaf of bread but he says, “I cannot re-enter the dream or taste the bread that has made my saliva run” (120). This dream emphasizes the sympathetic attitude of the girl who wants to feed the Magistrate. It can be interpreted to suggest that the foreigners can live with the natives if the natives are allowed to enjoy their life or their own land. His condition becomes very miserable. He says:

I, the old clown who lost his last vestige of authority the day he spent hanging from a tree in a woman’s underclothes shouting for help, the filthy creature who for a week licked his food off the flagstones like a dog because he had lost the use of his hands, am no longer locked up. I sleep in a corner of the barracks yard; I creep around in my filthy smoke; when a fist is raised against me I cower. I live like a starved beast at the back door, kept alive perhaps only as evidence of the animal that skulks within every barbarian-lover. I know I am not safe. . . I know that for some the attraction must be strong to clear the yard by putting a bullet through my skull from an upstairs window. (136)

The incidents of continuous physical exploitation of the natives make the Magistrate very sad. He thinks that the Empire’s people have no human mind and hence they can be so cruel with the colonized. The Empire’s tyranny upsets the Magistrate and he asks very important question to Mandel, “How do you find it
possible to eat afterwards, after you have been . . . working with people? That is a question I have always asked myself about executioners and other such people” (138; ellipsis in orig.).

The physical violence occurs even in the last phase of the Empire. The soldiers loot the houses and rudely disturb the people. According to Patrick Lenta:

The torture that occurs in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is of three kinds: *interrogational* torture . . . for the purpose of extracting “confessions”; *spectacular* torture, which invites the public to witness and participate the torture of captives; and *terroristic* torture, whose purpose is the paralysis of resistance. These categories overlap and blend. In the novel, for example, both interrogational and spectacular torture produce “truth” and both contain terroristic elements. (74)

Lenta compares the torture in the novel with torture at various locations by the US administration after September 11, 2001 attacks, “from Bagram in Afghanistan, to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and to Abu Ghraib in Iraq” (71). Torturing the victims was a common strategy of the colonizers. They terrified the natives with their dehumanizing atrocities.

The references to the physical injuries and bloodshed bespeak the Empire’s tyrannies. Gregory O’Dea points out that the bodies in the novel are “tortured, broken, and made to endure” and borders are “defended and attacked, questioned and crossed, made for what is within and what is without” and both bodies and borders “imply limitations, division and separation” (6).

The study of the examples of physical violence in the novel proves that the crucial intention of the Empire’s violence is its craving to control and rule the natives by displacing them from their land and its environment. The chief place of the Empire’s violence is prison. About prison Nguigi wa Thiong’o says, “the prison system is a repressive weapon in the hands of the ruling minority determined to ensure maximum security for its class dictatorship over the rest of the population and it is not a monopoly exclusive to South Africa and England” (4). The Empire in *Waiting for the Barbarians* follows this weapon to oppress the natives. But it fails to settle on the natives’ land because the Empire’s people are visitors for the natives. In the same way, in spite of the sincerely intended efforts of the Magistrate, he fails in leading a successful life with the girl. He fails because, as Coetzee in an interview by Folke Rhedin puts it, “a mere effort of the will is not enough to overcome centuries of
cultural and spiritual deformation” (7). The suffering of the Magistrate imparts him the knowledge that even after the failure, the Empire’s people “have learned nothing” and “there seems to be something granite and unteachable” (157) in them. According to Edward Said, imperialism means the “practice, the theory, and the attitudes of the dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” and it is “simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.” For him, colonialism is the “implanting of settlement on distant territory” and is “almost always a consequence of imperialism” (9). In *Waiting for the Barbarians* there is imperialism as well as colonialism. The town is the result of imperial colonialism and the practice, theory and attitudes of the imperialists control the territory. The novel has contemporary political echo of the treatment given to the prisoners. South Africa faced the effects of the Soweto rebellion of 1976. It resulted in the imprisonment of many blacks. The suffering of the prisoners in the novel reflects the mystifying death of Stephen Biko, the prominent young leader of the Black People’s Convention in detention.

- **Violence : Sexual**

There are examples of sexual violence in the novel. These examples are mainly concerned with the prostitutes in the settlement. They are exploited, including the barbarian girl, by the Empire’s officials and soldiers. These women do not protest about their exploitation. They themselves have accepted the task of providing sexual pleasure to the males.

The first reference to the sexual violence in the novel appears when the Magistrate, after witnessing the cruel interrogation sessions is upset and goes upstairs to “the warren of cubicals and partitioned rooms where the ostlers sleep and the girls entertain men-friends” (24). The Magistrate is unmarried. He symbolizes white men who are not able to enjoy the family life and are forced to live life in the colonies. Most of the white men came without their wives. These men used the black women for their sexual needs.

The Magistrate has been visiting one girl twice a week since one year. He feels comfortable in her company and the affection she has for him. He says that it is the best “that can be hoped for between an aging man and a girl of twenty. Better than a possessive passion certainly” (24). Such girls are involved in sex business as they
are economically deprived by the Empire. They are commodities. Men are free to choose them. For example, the cook’s daughter to whom the Magistrate always visits works in the barracks. He says: “We are old friends. Years ago, before she married the second time, she used to visit me in my apartment in the afternoons” (165). The father of her children was in army and has not returned and she is not sure about his return. He left some money behind. She says to the Magistrate, “I am terrified to think what is going to become of us. I try to hope for the best and live from day to day. But sometimes all of a sudden I find myself imagining what might happen and I am paralyzed with fear. I don’t know what to do any more. I can only think of the children. . . . “What is going to become of the children?” (167). The Magistrate tells her, “They won’t harm the children” (167). Then he strokes her hair, calms her, holds her tight, till it is time again to feed her baby. It is obvious that she earns money by working in the kitchen and also by selling her body. She is worried about the children’s future as in the last phase of the Empire the settlement is disturbed and has affected her business also. It is not clear in whose army the father of children works. But it can be no other than the Empire’s army. The Empire thus has separated the natives and created the problems of livelihood for women. Here, it is worth to note Khalid Kishtainy’s view. He says, “The permanent threat of death and the cheapened price of life diminish the sanctity of human values, and at the same time engender a burning desire to ensure the survival of human life by a crude response to the sex instinct” (79). The Empire separates the natives from their dear and near ones and destroys their peace. Because of poverty and ignorance the native women accept their sexual exploitation.

The Magistrate relieves the barbarian girl from the shame of begging and grants her a job in the kitchen. The soldiers comment on the girl that she has reached “From the kitchen to the magistrate’s bed in sixteen steps” (34). About the Magistrate’s lust for the new girl, they say, “What is the last thing the Magistrate does when he leaves in the morning? - He shuts his latest girl in the oven” (34). The magistrate, very sympathetically wants to help the barbarian girl. So he starts washing her legs and applying the ointment to her broken legs. Slowly, it becomes for him almost, “the ritual”, (32) “a trance”, (59) “rapture” (31), and a kind of an emotional involvement. He says, “I wash hear feet, as before, her legs, her buttocks. My soapy hand travels between her thighs, incuriously, I find. She raises her arms while I wash her armpits. I wash her belly, her breasts. I push her hair aside and wash her neck, her
throat. She is patient. I rinse and dry her” (32). The Magistrate uses the girl for his sexual pleasure though he helps her with a good intention.

The Magistrate gets involved in the sexual pleasure with the girl. He says, “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). As the Magistrate’s emotional involvement with the girl increases; he cannot bear the idea of the girl being beaten and molested in front of her father in the prison. During the sessions of the physical rituals he says, “I feel no desire to enter this stocky little body glistening by now in the firelight. . . . I feed her, shelter her, use her body, if that is what I am doing, in this foreign way” (32). Her swollen, broken legs and the burning of her eye by the Empire’s servants make him restless and hence he says:

There are other times when I suffer fits of resentment against my bondage to the ritual of the oiling and rubbing, the drowsiness, the slump into oblivion. I cease to comprehend what pleasure I can ever have found in her obstinate, phlegmatic body, and even discover in myself stirrings of outrage. I become withdrawn, irritable; the girl turns her back and goes to sleep. (44-45)

The magistrate feels guilty in the company of the barbarian girl. While describing what happens to him he says:

She lies on her back with her hands placidly over her breasts. I lie beside her, speaking softly. This is where the break always falls. This is where my hand, caressing her belly, seems as awkward as a lobster. The erotic impulse, if that is what it has been, withers; with surprise I see myself clutched to this stolid girl, unable to remember what I ever desired in her, angry with myself for wanting and not wanting her. (35)

In this unstable state, the Magistrate visits another girl whom he calls “bird-woman” (45) and thinks that the barbarian girl is “incomplete” (45). He returns from the “bird-woman” to the sleeping barbarian girl and thinks:

There is no link I can define between her womanhood and my desire. I cannot even say for sure that I desire her. All this erotic behaviour of mine is indirect: I prowl about her, touching her face, caressing her body, without entering her or finding the urge to do so. I have just come from the bed of a woman for whom, in the year I have known
her, I have not for a moment had to interrogate my desire: to desire her has meant to enfold her and enter her, to pierce her surface and stir the quiet of her interior into an ecstatic storm; then to retreat, to subside, to wait for desire to reconstitute itself. But with this woman it is as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry. Is this how her torturers felt hunting their secret, whatever they thought it was? For the first time I feel a dry pity for them: how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other! (46)

The Magistrate understands that it is really impossible to master the body of the other, particularly when the body is of a totally different race. The barbarian girl’s body remains a mystery for him. He says, “I have not entered her. From the beginning my desire has not taken on that direction, that directedness. Lodging my dry old man’s member in the blood-hot sheath makes me think of acid in milk, ashes in honey, chalk in bread” (36). The milk and honey can be taken to represent the natural sources of the barbarian life. And these sources are polluted by the Empire. The milk and honey can also be taken as the barbarian womanhood which is sexually contaminated and damaged by the Empire.

The Magistrate is surprised to see that the barbarian girl adapts to his new pattern without any complaint. He thinks that “she submits because of her barbarian upbringing. But what do I know of barbarian upbringings? What I call submission may be nothing but indifference? (60). He says:

I prefer not to dwell on the possibility that what a barbarian upbringing teaches a girl may be not to accommodate a man’s every whim, including the whim of neglect, but see sexual passion, whether in horse or goat or man or woman, as a simple fact of life with the clearest of means and the clearest ends; so that the confused actions of an aging foreigner who picks her up off the streets and installs her in his apartment so that he can now kiss her feet, now browbeat her, now anoint her with exotic oils, now ignore her, now sleep in her arms all night, no moodily sleep apart, may seem nothing but evidences of impotence, indecisiveness, alienation from his own desires. While I have not ceased to see her as a body maimed, scarred, harmed, she has perhaps by now grown into and become that new deficient body,
feeling no more deformed than a cat feels deformed for having claws instead of fingers. I would do well to take these thoughts seriously. 

More ordinary than I like to think, she may have ways of finding me ordinary too. (60-61)

The Magistrate uses the girl for his sexual pleasure but at the same time he feels guilty for her exploitation by the Empire’s people. It is however true that if he feels guilty he should not keep sexual relationship with the girl. But the Magistrate is confused. His confusion becomes a fine example of an encounter between the human feelings of good and evil. About the Magistrate’s situation, Menàn Du Plessis says:

His drowsy impotence when he is with the barbarian girl seems to suggest at first that his true desire is not primarily sexual—an impression reinforced by the fetishistic displacement of his erotic attention towards her crippled feet. Perhaps his real longing is at some level similar to Joll’s—a desire for “being.” Gradually, however, he comes to an awareness that the other is in some phenomenological sense always an utterly unknowable stranger. (122 – 23)

In his dream, the Magistrate sees one girl building a fort of snow, a walled town. This dream takes root and he sees that “the town she is building is empty of life” (57). This dream explains the girl’s, no doubt, the barbarian girl’s psychology that in spite of her relationship with the Magistrate, she is lonely. He understands, “She is as much a prisoner now as ever before” (60). She is not happy. The fact is, as James Phelan points out, “the woman is with him by his command – he is the official of the Empire; she has no choice but to submit – she is the ‘barbarian’” (236). The Magistrate himself realizes that he and Colonel Joll are the two sides of Imperial rule, no more, no less. According to Bill Ashcroft, the Magistrate, “sees to his horror that his erotic attentions are perhaps merely a different version of Colonel Joll’s tortures, which are, in a perverse way, the ultimate intimacy. He is thus both rescuer and torturer” (104). According to Ayobami Kehinde, the Magistrate “has bailed the girl out of injustice in order to set her under another form of injustice. He has indeed followed the criminal instinct in him. If he really hates the prejudice of the Empire, his supposed assistance to the barbarian girl should not have been for egotistic interest” (81).

In spite of the Magistrate’s use of the girl as a sex object, his benevolent self forces him to decide to return the girl to her people. During the hard journey, the
Magistrate sees that the girl is “not just the old man’s slut, she is a witty, attractive young woman!” (68). He thinks that they might have warmed more to each other if he had known her nature. But instead of giving her good time he confesses that he has “oppressed her with gloom” (68). He says:

I sleep a sleep of utter exhaustion. I barely emerge into wakefulness when she lifts the edge of the huge bear-fur and snuggles against me . . . . A ripple of sensual joy runs through me, I yawn, stretch, and smile in the dark . . . she is warm, swollen, ready for me; in a minute five months of senseless hesitancy are wiped out and I am floating back into easy sensual oblivion. (69)

However, when the sex is over, the Magistrate reflects:

Except that it has not escaped me that in bed in the dark the marks her torturers have left upon her, the twisted feet, the half-blind eyes, are easily forgotten. It is then the case that it is the whole woman I want, that my pleasure in her is spoiled until these marks on her are erased and she is restored to her self; or is it the case (I am not stupid, let me say these things) that it is the marks on her which drew me to her but which, to my disappointment, I find, do not go deep enough? Too much or too little: is it she I want or the traces of a history her body bears? (70)

The Magistrate becomes restless when he sees the marks of the torture left by the Empire’s people on the body of the girl.

The Magistrate feels guilty. While returning the girl to her people, he says to himself, “And here I am patching up relations between the men of the future and the men of the past, returning with apologies, a body we have sucked dry – a go – between, a jackal of Empire in sheep’s clothing!” (79). Of course, it is true, as Susan VanZanten Gallagher points out that the Magistrate is already guilty of having participated “in the acts of the torture first by his passive acceptance of the actions of Colonel Joll and later in his objectification of the woman as the site of torture” (128). However, the Magistrate’s repentance can be taken as the dawn of his being an initiator of the good future of the oppressed country. According to Paul Rich, the terrain the Magistrate crosses with the girl is “bleak and metaphysical one; this wilderness is almost Bunyanesque in its illustration of the loneliness and isolation of the imperial frontier” (383). It can be said that this Bunyanesque wilderness provides
the Magistrate necessary strength to finish his committed work and also adds to the spiritual and historical meaning that seems to be rendered in the tune of Paul Rich.

The Magistrate’s guilt makes him say:

I am aware of the source of my elation: my alliance with the guardians of the Empire is over, I have set myself in opposition, the bond is broken, I am a free man. Who would not smile? But what a dangerous joy! It should not be so easy to attain salvation. And is there any principle behind my opposition? Have I not simply been provoked into a reaction by the sight of one of the new barbarians usurping my desk and pawing my papers? (85)

He calls the people of Empire as “the new barbarians.” He calls himself “a jackal of Empire in sheep’s clothing!” because he knows that he has used the barbarian girl for his sexual instincts. The Magistrate can be compared to the “a whisky priest” (60) in Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* because like this priest the Magistrate is also a conscious sinner. The priest knows that he is guilty of drunkenness, seducing Maria and other sins. The priest confesses, “O God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins. . . . crucified . . . . worthy of thy dreadful punishment” (210; ellipsis in orig.). Further it is reflected: “What an impossible fellow I am, he thought, and how useless. I have done nothing for anybody. . . . He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all?” (210). His spirit faces the battle between the forces of salvation and damnation. The Magistrate, too, thinks of his salvation and damnation as a man belonging to the group of oppressors whose empire he calls as “the empire of pain” (24). He accepts that he too has committed crime as a part of the Empire. So he says, “For I was not, as I liked to think, the indulgent, pleasure-loving opposite to the cold, rigid colonel. I was the lie that Empire tells when times are easy, he the truth, that Empire tells when harsh winds blow. Two sides of Imperial rule, no more, no less” (148-49).

During the withdrawal period of the Empire the increase in sexual violence can be noted in a reference to rape. The Magistrate narrates:

Three weeks ago a little girl was raped. Her friend, playing in the irrigation ditches, did not miss her till she came back to them bleeding, speechless. For days she lay in her parents’ home staring at the ceiling. Nothing would induce her to tell her story. When the lamp was put out she would begin to whimper. Her friends claim a barbarian did it. They
saw running away into the reeds. They recognized him as a barbarian by his ugliness. Now all children are forbidden to play outside the gates and the farmers carry clubs and spears when they go to the field. (134-35)

If the girl is raped really by the barbarian it means that it is an act of revenge. It is natural for the barbarians to be angry because second expeditionary force is sent to teach the barbarians “a lesson they and their children and grandchildren would never forget” (135).

The Magistrate goes to the herbalist to kill his sexual desires. The herbalist asks the Magistrate why he wants to kill off his desires. The Magistrate says, “It has nothing to do with desire, father. It is simply an irritation” (164). According to Dominic Head, “Indeed, the theme of sexuality is not used to explore the grounds of some kind of utopian physical bond. Its primary connotation has to do with broader issues of control and discourse, with the male desire for penetration consistently indicative of the kind of assertiveness the magistrate is learning to grow beyond” (84). The Magistrate’s and other soldiers’ obsession with sex underlines the exploitation of women by the oppressive Empire.

- Violence : Environmental

Environmental violence plays significant role in shaping the lives of both natives and foreigners. There are examples of the violence inflicted on the environment of the native land.

The first reference to the destruction of the environment occurs in Colonel Joll’s description of his hunting drives in which “thousands of deer, pigs, bears were slain, so many that a mountain of carcases had to be left to rot” (1). This huge pollution and destruction of the fauna is harmful as the native’s life depends on their land. The Magistrate informs Colonel Joll about the glory of the land with its great flocks of geese and ducks that descend on the lake every year in their migrations and about native ways of trapping them. He suggests him to accompany him for fishing by night in a native boat to see the native ways of fishing.

The Magistrate thinks that the history of their captivity will enter the legends of the barbarians. However, he says that the “memories of the town with its easy life
and its exotic foods, are not strong enough to lure them back” (20). This thought implies that the natives’ ways of life cannot be adjusted with those of the foreigners. The land was once very glorious. Its past beauty is described by the Magistrate: “A generation ago there were antelope and hares in such numbers that watchmen with dogs had to patrol the fields by night to protect the young wheat” (41). But under the pressure from the settlement, particularly from dogs running and hunting in packs the antelope have retreated to the far shore. According to the Magistrate, “It will take years to patch up the damage done in those few days” (54). The old folk living among the natives remember their parents telling them about the oasis near the settlement as “a well shaded place by the side of the lake with plenty of grazing even in winter” (55). The difference between the picture of the land remembered by the natives and the actual dry land destroyed by the settlement bespeaks the cruelty towards the environment. The Magistrate says:

I wish that these barbarians would rise up and teach us a lesson, so that we would learn to respect them. We think of the country here as ours, part of our Empire – our outpost, our settlement, our market centre. But these people, these barbarians don’t think of it like that at all. We have been here more than a hundred years, we have reclaimed land from the desert and built irrigation works and planted fields and built solid homes and put a wall around our town, but they still think of us as visitors, transients. (55)

The Magistrate is sure about the change because he knows that the barbarians “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” (55). Every year the lake water grows a little more salty. The barbarians know this fact and so they say to themselves, “‘Be patient, one of these days their crops will start withering from salt, they will not be able to feed themselves, they will have to go’” (55). This guarantee indicates the Empire’s inability to understand the native land. It does not see that the barbarians will “outlast” (55) the Empire.

The best description of the difficulties of the foreigners to face the life on the native land occurs in the journey of the Magistrate to the barbarians. There are the plains of terraces, flat marshlands, belts of reeds and the lake on which the central ice-sheet has not melted. Apart from the salted meat, flour, beans, dried fruit, the
Magistrate and his men have to shoot the windfowl for their food. Because of the salt and alum in the lake the fear of the Empire is, “What will become of the settlement if the lake grows into a dead sea?” (64). But the natives know how to deal with such calamities. The natives are physically stronger than the foreigners. For instance, after a day of salty tea, the Magistrate and his men suffer from diarrhoea but the barbarian girl does not become sick. In another example they face a great storm which even when miles away, seems as if it is “devouring the earth in its approach” (72). The snow begins to eddy and fly, The Magistrate narrates:

The storm-wall is not black any more but a chaos of whirling sand and snow and dust. Then all at once the wind rises to a scream, my cap is whirled from my head, and the storm hits us. I am knocked flat on my back: not by the wind but by a horse that breaks free and blunders about, ears flat, eyes rolling. “Catch it!” I shout. My words are nothing but a whisper, I cannot hear them myself. The horse vanishes from sight like a phantom. At a same instant the tent is whirled high into the sky. I hurl myself upon the bundled felts, holding them down, groaning with fury at myself. Then on hands and feet, dragging the felts, I inch my way back towards the girl. It is like crawling against running water. My eyes, my nose, my mouth are already stopped with sand, I have to breathe. (72-73)

But in this horrible environment, “The girl stands with her arms stretched like wings over the necks of two horses. She seems to be over the neck of two horses. She seems to be talking to them: though their eyeballs glare, they are still” (73). It indicates the girl’s capacity and skill as a native to face the environmental changes of her land.

The Empire decides to clear the river banks as it would form a more defensible line for the barbarians. The Magistrate says:

So they have fired the brush. With the wind blowing from the north, the fire has spread across the whole shallow valley. I have seen wildfires before. The fire races through the reed, the poplars flare up like torches. Animals that are quick enough – antelope, hare, cat – escape; swarms of birds fly out in terror; everything else is consumed. But there are so many barren stretches along the river that fires rarely spread. So it is clear that in this case a party must be following the fire downriver to see to its progress. They do not care that once the ground
is cleared the wind begins to eat at the soil and the desert advances. Thus the expeditionary force against the barbarians prepares for its campaign, ravaging the earth, wasting our patrimony. (89-90)

The barbarians are able to resist the Empire without weapons. They know the secrets of their land. For example, the barbarians cut away part of the embarkment and flood the fields. No one sees them. They come in the night and the next morning it was like a second lake. As a result, the farmers are shocked, their crop is ruined and “it is too late to plant again” (108). The barbarians succeed in their trick. There is a reference to the two horsemen from the expedition. They return because “They fell sick from the water-bad water” (109) of the land. It is even predicted that the main force will also return soon because, the Empire’s people cannot “Live on the fruit of the land” (109) during the expedition. Whatever work the Empire does, according to the Magistrate, it is certain that at “any moment their work can be brought to nothing by a few men armed with spades! How can we win such a war? What is the use of textbook military expeditions, sweeps and punitive raids into the enemy’s heartland, when we can be bled to death at home?” (109-10). The silent resistance of the barbarian reminds the resistance by the natives in John Steinbeck’s The Moon Is Down. Colonel Lanser, the leader of the invading army tries to operate under a veil of civility to rule a small coastal town. But this veil is torn when Alexander Morden, an erstwhile alderman and a free man is ordered to work in the mine. Morden strikes out at Captain Loft but Captain Bentick comes in between and dies in the attack by Morden. Morden is executed by a firing squad. But this incident arouses the town people into a slow and silent revenge. Sections of the railroad are often damaged, the machinery in the mine is broken, and the dynamo of the electricity generators gets short circuited. If a soldier relaxes, his guard drinks or goes away with a woman, he is killed. Mayor Orden who stands for his people tells firmly to Colonel Lanser that the aim of the army “to break man’s spirit permanently” (65) is impossible. In Waiting for the Barbarians also the barbarians use their tricks very silently and resist the Empire withing breaking their spirit of unity. Thus the magistrate recognizes that the Empire’s attempts to rule the barbarian’s land are violent and useless. He knows that if Empire’s people want to live on their land, they should surrender and mix with them. Hence, he says, “I can always stroll down to the fisherfolk’s camp and help them clean fish. I have learned a few words, of their language, I am received without suspicion, they understand what it is to be a beggar, they share their food with me?”
He likes the lifestyle of the natives. He looks at the fishermen and says, “What a peaceful ways to make a living! Perhaps I should leave off my beggar’s trade and join them in their camp outside the wall, build myself a hut of mud and reeds, marry one of their pretty daughters, feast when the catch is plentiful, tighten my belt when it is not” (145). He is not able to understand, “What has made it impossible for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children? It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history” (146). The Empire dooms itself to live in history and also plot against history. What is important for the Empire is the thought of how not to end, die, and prolong its era. “By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation” (146). The land of the barbarians is very beautiful. The Magistrate says:

No one who paid a visit to this oasis, . . . failed to be struck by the charm of life here. We lived in the time of the seasons, of the harvests, of the migrations of waterbirds. We lived with nothing between us and the stars. We would have made any concession, had we only known what, to go on living here. This was paradise on earth. (168-69)

And this “Paradise” is destroyed and defiled by the Empire.

The study of the above examples of physical, sexual and environmental violence puts forth the oppressive regime’s policies to rule and dominate the natives. The colonizers’ concern was to govern the natives and their environment. It is like the wish of Prospero. O Mannoni says, “The typical colonial is impelled to live out Prospero drama, for Prospero is in his (the colonial’s) unconscious as he (Prospero) was in Shakespeare’s” (108).

The Empire hates the natives. According to Richard Martin, the Magistrate is alienated:

. . . from both events and language, from himself. The consequent mixture of despair, horror, sentimentality, and nostalgia – of hopelessness – with which the book ends dominates the whole text, not only its content, but its form, its signifying strategies, as well: from the outset it is frustrated attempt to regain old certainties of self-presence, of significance, or order. (19)
But the most important thing in the novel is that the Magistrate’s own oppression fortifies his view that the barbarians are also equal to the Empire’s people. The Empire’s people are “visitors, transients” for the natives and this confidence of the natives stands in total opposition to the colonizers. According to George Steiner “the Empire cannot exist without the presence of its opposite, and Joll cannot exist without the presence of the Magistrate: we all need our scapegoats, and our scapegoats need us” (102). In Cavafy’s poem “Waiting for the Barbarians” the Emperor, consuls and praetors have been waiting for the arrival of the barbarians who do not arrive. They are restless and return to their homes thinking that their existence is meaningless without their enemies, the barbarians. The last stanza of this poem can be quoted here:

> Why are all the streets and squares emptying so quickly?  
> And everybody turning home again so full of thought?  
> Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.  
> And some people have arrived from the frontier;  
> They said there are no barbarians any more.  
> And now what will become of us without Barbarians?  
> Those people were some sort of a solution. (29-35)

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* also no barbarians appear except some fishers and nomads. In both of these pieces the barbarians are essential for the racial politics of the Empire. The Empire cannot exist without their opposites; enemies.

The natives are really civilized. For instance, the man returned from the expedition tells about the barbarians to the Magistrate, “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!” (161). Here “they” refers to the barbarians. The barbarians prove themselves to be human and non-violent. Hence, “No one can accept that an Imperial army has been annihilated by men with bows and arrows and rusty old guns who live in tents and never wash and cannot read or write” (157). The simple barbarians win because of their knowledge of their land, and their, self-confidence.

It is significant to note what goes on in the mind of the barbarian girl in her following dialogue with the Magistrate when they reach to her people:

> “Speak to them”, I tell her. “Tell them why we are here. Tell them your story. Tell them the truth”.  


She looks sideways at me and gives little smile. “You really want me to tell them the truth?”

“Tell them the truth what else is there to tell?”

The smile does not leave her lips. She shakes her head, keeps her silence.

“Tell them what you like. Only, now that I have brought you back, as far as I can, I wish to ask you very clearly to return to the town with me. Of your own choice.” I grip her arm. “Do you understand me? That is what I want.”

“Why?” The word falls with deathly softness from her lips. She knows that it confounds me, has confounded me from the beginning. The man with the gun advances slowly until he is almost upon us. She shakes her head. “No. I do not want to go back to that place.” (77-78)

The girl’s refusal to go back to the town with the Magistrate is the refusal of the barbarians, the natives to live with the colonizers, their enemies. It is her refusal to continue her relationship with the Magistrate though he brings her back and unites her with her people. According to Rosemary Jolly, “The reunion of the girl and territory is the turning point of the fiction: the narrator returns, resigned, to the settlement as a prisoner- not agent- of the Empire.” (73). The girl’s refusal thus confirms the need to allow the natives to be in love with their own land as they dislike the foreigners.

The role of the barbarian girl can become a topic of special focus. It would be significant to highlight her world. Her life as a barbarian girl, her sexual torture, her resistance, her marginalization, and male domination can become noteworthy topics of study. Her relation with the magistrate can offer a new perspective of her life solely as a woman. She barely speaks in the novel and hence she becomes Coetzee’s silenced character. Even the role of the other women as prostitutes and maids in the kitchen can be studied.

It is probable to read this novel from the perspective of Marxist point of view. The novel presents the encounter between oppressor and oppressed. It depicts the political and social struggles. There are unfortunate natives struggling to protect themselves. They have no weapons like their exploiters. They protest in their own aboriginal ways. The women sell their bodies and are treated as commodities. The picture of power and victimization in the novel highlights the dangerous political and
social structures. It is possible to discover whether Coetzee satisfies the stance of the Marxists.

The first person narration increases the effect of narrator’s victimization. It makes the readers undergo along with the narrator the same feelings, suffering, and relationships. The language of the novel is simple but has the high command to express the exploitation. Coetzee does not give any name to the magistrate and also to the place. Coetzee succeeds in making the magistrate and the place universal because the magistrate symbolizes any oppressed man and in the same way the place can be any exploited place. This technique of not naming either the person or the place becomes effective as a special feature of the novel.

Though at the end of the novel, the Magistrate feels like “a man who lost his way long ago but presses on a long road that may lead nowhere” (170), it is significant that there is hope that the natives will be saved. The novel emphasizes that the saviour will not be a foreigner but only a barbarian. The Magistrate imagines that one day the barbarian girl will return riding with her people. He says, “I imagine her trotting through the open gateway at the head of a troop of horsemen, erect in the saddle, her eyes shining, a forerunner, a guide, pointing out to her comrades the lay of this foreign town where she once lived. ‘Then everything will be on a new footing’” (167). This prophetic note also stresses that the barbarian girl will be the saviour of her own people. She will create the paradise on her land and hence the Magistrate declares, “‘I was born here, I’ll die here, I’m not leaving’. Now they are gone, and it’s better without them, I say” (164). It indicates that the natives and the whites will have to live together in South Africa. The most significant thing in the prophetic note is that the savior is ‘the girl.’ It means that a woman who is twice colonized by race and gender will begin a new chapter in the history of the oppressed. The land in the novel is waiting for a new and human beginning. In this context what Fanon says in *The Wretched of the Earth* is relevant. He says, “For a colonized people, the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and above all dignity” (34). The Magistrate says, “Is there any better way to pass these last days than in dreaming of a saviour with a sword who will scatter the enemy hosts and forgive us the errors that have been committed by others in our name and grant us a second chance to build our earthly paradise?” (157). The Magistrate wishes to be forgiven for the crimes committed by his people. Thus the novel emphasizes that the paradise will be regained along with its divine delight and it
will be devoid of any type of oppression. It will have the natives’ rule. The people like the Magistrate are ready to stay in this paradise and experience the divine joy.

Considered as a political allegory, the novel best represents the post-coloniality. It reveals the cultural and political personalities of the barbarian girl and the Magistrate. The situation portrayed in the novel can take place at any place. The struggle in it can be between any exploiter and victim or between any powerful and weak. The racial protest, imperial authority, anguish of the victims, and past history are the post-colonial features of the novel.

The physical, sexual, and environmental violence in the novel confirms the view that everything was fair enough with the natives before the Empire’s ingress in their land. The Empire smashes the natives physically and sexually. It annihilates their environment. The natives are able to manage the whims of their land, its people, weather patterns, the directions of wind, and flows of water. They have no armaments and are illiterate but they love their own land. They fight their liberation struggle silently. They must be allowed to enjoy their existence in their environment where they are positioned geologically. Coetzee succeeds in generating this message without becoming a propagandist and this is as important as the literary success of the novel.
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Life and Times of Michael K

After studying the violence in Waiting for the Barbarians, it is intended to study in this part the violence in Coetzee’s Life and Times of Michael K. It is the recipient of the CNA Literary Award, Jerusalem prize for the Freedom of the Individual in Society, Prix Femina Etranger, and the winner of the Booker McConnell Prize.

Set in South Africa torn by civil war, Life and Times of Michael K is split into three parts. Michael K was born fatherless and with a disfigurement: a hare-lip that prevents him from being nourished at his mother’s breast. His mother, Anna K does not think of operating his disfigurement and she does not like it also. She puts him into a government institution and ignores him until she has no one in her illness. Michael is dull in school but sincere towards his duty as a son. The story begins when Michael is 31 years old and he has to help Anna K, who is seriously ill. Formerly a gardener in Cape Town, Michael sets out to take Anna, as per her wish, to the farm of her birth in Prince Albert. It is not easy to go to Prince Albert because they need permit to move there. They do not get the permit in spite of Michael’s sincere efforts. Michael builds a cart to take Anna to Prince Albert. Anna dies in a hospital during the journey. Michael decides to continue his journey to Prince Albert to deliver Anna’s ashes there. Along the way, he is detained for not having the required documents and is assigned to work on a railway track. After this job he makes his way to the farm his mother spoke of in Prince Albert. Though, he is not sure whether the farm belongs to his mother, he is able to discover the joys of cultivation. Unfortunately, one of the relatives of the real owners of the farm arrives and treats Michael like a servant. Michael dislikes this treatment and so he escapes into the mountains.

In a malnourished condition, Michael finds his way down to a town and is picked up by the police and is sent to the resettlement camp at Jakkalsdrif. The people of this camp are taken to town for work. Eventually, there is an attack on Prince Albert and the workers of the camp are blamed. Michael escapes from the camp and returns back to the farm. He builds a shelter now in the open where he is able to watch his garden. Rebels come out of the mountains and use his garden but Michael stays in hiding till they leave. Again, Michael is found by some soldiers. They suspect him for sheltering the terrorists. He is taken to a rehabilitation camp in Cape Town. At this camp, a medical officer becomes interested in Michael. For him Michael’s nature is
extremely simple and fascinating. He finds Michael to be badly accused of helping rebels. Michael becomes very sick as he refuses to eat. The doctor tries to understand Michael’s stubborn ways while attempting to get Michael released. Somehow, Michael escapes and returns to the apartment where his mother lived in Cape Town. The novel ends with his thoughts of farming and longing for freedom.

There are many examples of violence in the novel. They can be studied by dividing them into two types of violence: socio-political and psychological.

**Violence: Socio-political**

The novel delineates many situations of civil and military terror. The race of Michael is not mentioned in the novel. But his mother’s work as a servant and Michael’s suffering insist that he is not a white. He and his mother are uprooted from the peaceful life in the war-torn South Africa.

The loss of social order in Cape Town results into the terror for the weakest in the society. At the beginning of the novel we come across social disorder. Michael, while returning from his job as a night attendant at the public lavatories, faces two robbers who beat him. They take his watch, money, shoes, and leave him “lying stunned with a slash across his arm, a dislocated thumb and two broken ribs” (4). After this incident, Michael quits the night work and returns to parks and garden, where he rises slowly in the service to become gardener, grade I. The attack on Michael indicates the social violence which is the result of economic inequality, lack of employment opportunities and political laxity in the city.

Next disorder can be noted in the description of the hospitals which are not the places of treatment but of suffering for the poor and helpless like Anna. Anna suffers from gross swelling of the legs, arms and belly. When she is admitted in hospital, she spends, “five days lying in a corridor among scores of victims of stabbings and beatings and gunshot wounds who keep her awake with their noise, neglected by nurses who had no time to spend cheering up an old woman where there were young men dying spectacular deaths all about” (5). When Anna wants a bedpan, there is seldom anyone to bring it. The needs of her body become a source of torment. When nurses ask about the pills, she says that she has taken them, but often she lies. When she is discharged her tears “were thus largely tears of relief that she was escaping this
purgatory” (5). Michael is not allowed to use wheelchair for her. Somehow, he takes her to the bus stop where there is a long queue. The timetable pasted on the pole promises a bus every fifteen minutes but actually it arrives after an hour. In the bus there is no vacant seat. Michael balances himself and his sick mother in the bus.

There is a curfew in the city which refers to the unrest and violent incidents. Anna shivers and her swelling increases but because of the curfew Michael cannot take her out of the damp room under the stairs of Côte d’Azur, a shelter provided by Anna’s masters, the Buhrmanns. Anna, unable to work “saw herself withheld from the gutter only by the unreliable goodwill of the Buhrmanns, the dutifulness of a dull son and, in the last resort, the savings she kept in a handbag in a suitcase under her bed, the new currency in one purse, the old currency, valueless now, that she had been too suspicious to exchange, in another” (7). She decides to go back to the farm in the district of Prince Albert where she was born. She dreams “of escaping from the careless violence, the packed buses, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars, sirens in the night, the curfew, the cold and wet, and returning to a countryside where, if she was going to die, she would at least die under blue skies” (8). Anna’s dream states the terrifying socio-political conditions of the city. Michael cannot get the permit essential to leave the city. The police and the officials are ruthlessly careless about the desires of the underprivileged like Michael and Anna.

Social violence is inflicted everywhere in the city. There in a description of a military jeep travelling down Beach Road at high speed which strikes the youth crossing the road, hurling him back among the vehicles parked at the curbside. The jeep itself swerves off and comes to a halt on the lawns outside the Côte d’Azur, where its two occupants are confronted by the youth’s angry companions. There is a fight and a crowd soon gathers. Parked cars are smashed. Sirens announce the curfew. An ambulance that arrives with a motorcycle escort turns about short of the barrier and races off, chased by a hail of stones. Then from the balcony of a fourth floor flat a man begins to fire revolver shots. Amid screams the crowd spreads “into the beachfront apartment blocks, racing along the corridors, pounding upon doors, breaking windows and lights. The man with the revolver was hauled from his hiding-place, kicked into insensibility, and tossed down to the pavement” (11). Some residents of flats choose to cower in the dark behind locked doors, other run to the sheets. One woman is trapped at the end of a corridor and has her clothes torn from her body. Someone slips on a fire escape and breaks an ankle. Doors are beaten down
and flats ransacked. In the flat immediately above Anna’s room, looters tear down curtains, heap clothing on the floor, break furniture, and light a fire, which, though it does not spread, sends out dense clouds of smoke. On the lawn outside the Côte d’Azur, the Côte d’Or and the Copacabana a constantly growing mob, some with piles of stolen goods at their feet hurl stones from the gardens through the windows till not a pane is left intact. The police shoot to curb the violence. The situation is described thus:

A police van with a flashing blue light drew up on the promenade fifty yards away. There was a burst of fire from a machine pistol, and from behind the barricade of cars answering shots . . . . One looter, a woman who did not run fast enough, was shot dead. From streets all around the police picked up abandoned goods which they stacked on the lawns. There, late into the night, the folk of the flats searched by flashlight to recover their own. At midnight, when the operation was about to be declared concluded, a rioter with a bullet through his lung was discovered huddled in an unlit angle of a passageway in a block further down the road and taken away. (12)

The riot results in total anarchy in Cape Town.

Throughout the violent event Michael and Anna are huddled quiet as mice in their room beneath the stairs, not stirring even when they smelled the smoke, even when heavy boots stamped past and a hand rattled the locked door. They could not guess that “the tumult, the screams, the shots and the sound of breaking glass were confined to a few adjoining blocks: as they sat side by side on the bed, barely daring to whisper, the conviction grew in them that the real war had come to Sea Point and found them out” (12-13). Poor Michael is so much afraid of the war that when Anna snores he grips her shoulder to make her stop.

There are a great number of homeless, destitute, beggars, and thieves in the town. Crossing the city on his way to work, Michael rubs shoulders every day with the army of “homeless and destitute who in the last years had taken over the streets of central district, begging or thieving or waiting in lines at the relief agencies or simply sitting in the corridors of public buildings to keep warm, finding shelter by night in the gutted warehouses around the docks or the blocks and blocks of derelict premises” (13) where the police never visit. Cape Town “had been flooded with people from the countryside looking for work of any kind. There was no work, no accommodation to
be had” (13-14). The poverty reveals the outcome of violence and the rootlessness of the country people like Michael who are thrown into the urban disaster.

The reality of war and violence is stated by Michael in one of his comments. He shows to Anna, one picture of the gleaming flank of roast pork garnished with cherries and pineapple rings and set off with a bowl of raspberries and cream and a gooseberry tart. Anna looks at the picture and says, “People don’t eat like that any more” (16). But Michael’s answer is: “The pineapples don’t know there is a war on. Food keeps growing. Someone has to eat it” (16). This view of Michael emphasizes the truth that the earth grows food for people without thinking who eats it. But it is the human beings who make a difference, hence, some enjoy the food while others don’t. In this connection the epigraph Coetzee puts on the first page of the novel bespeaks significantly:

War is the father of all and king of all.
Some he shows as gods, others as men.
Some he makes slaves and others free.

It is true that some become happy while others are sad due to war. Once, Michael reads news from one old newspaper: “KHAMIESKROON KILLER TRACKED DOWN” over a picture of a handcuffed man in a torn white shirt standing between two stiff policemen. It is noted that though “the handcuffs brought his shoulders towards and down, the Khamieskroon Killer looked at the camera with what seemed to K a smile of quiet achievement” (17). Michael sticks the news on the refrigerator door of the Buhrmanns and for days afterwards, his eyes continue to meet the man from Khamieskroon. It indicates Michael’s agreement with the man’s achievement. Michael sees the cruelty and the negligence of police and he likes the look of the Killer’s triumph of opposing them. This act of Michael is his silent resistance to the political system of South Africa.

Michael cannot get the permit but decides to take Anna by his hand-made cart to Prince Albert. He makes one cart to carry her. His difficulties on the way present the civic and military life of South Africa. He fails in his first attempt to travel as he is asked by the police to show his permit and papers. The soldier warns Michael:

You can’t travel outside the Peninsula without a permit. Go to the checkpoint and show them your permit and your papers. And listen to me: you want to stop on the expressway, you pull fifty metres off the roadside. That’s the regulation: fifty meters either side. Anything
nearer, you can get shot, no warning, no questions asked. Understand?

(22)

All the pleas of Michael are in vain. But Michael promises his mother, “We’ll try again in a day or two Ma” but then tells her, “Ma the permit isn’t going to come!” (23). Two days later, again Michael sets off with his sick mother who “complained of pains in her chest and sat stiff and sullen in the box under the plastic apron K pinned across her to keep out the worst of the rain” (23).

Road robbery is common in the country. Michael faces some robbers when he sets for the journey again. The robbers try to snatch the suitcase by threatening him with knife. But Michael, too, collects strength and advances with a knife on the youth and opposes him. Michael faces many hardships on the way but continues his journey. It proves him to be a loving son of Anna. According to Liliana Sikorska, when Michael “sets off on a journey to Prince Albert to fulfill his dying mother’s wish, the trip becomes a kind of penitential voyage abounding in purgatorial adventures” (87).

Anna’s health fails. She coughs, is feverish and labours to breathe. Michael takes her to hospital in Stellenbosch. Like the hospital in Cape Town, this hospital is also a place of torture. Anna is put “on a trolley amid a sea of trolleys…” (27). When Michael suspects that her breathing has stopped, he rushes to the nurse, who says, “These are all people waiting to be attended to. We are working twenty four hours a day to attend to them. When I come off duty… I am so tired I can’t eat. I just fall asleep with my shoes on. I am just one person. Not two, not three – one” (28). The inadequate staff in the hospital states the disregard on the part of the government. When Michael goes to see Anna after spending the night in a doorway recessed from the street, Anna’s bed was occupied by another woman. When he asks about his mother to the woman doctor; she says, “Your mother passed away during the night…” (30). On the second day after Anna’s death the nurse hands over Michael her suitcase. She gives him one parcel and says, “This parcel… contains your mother’s ashes. Your mother was cremated this morning, Michael. If you choose, we can dispose of the ashes fittingly, or else you can take them with you” (32). The hospital authorities do not worry to ask or report to Michael about Anna’s dead body.
Michael is shocked with the situation in the hospital. But he is too weak and helpless to protest for the social violence. His condition after Anna’s death is described thus:

Though he had no more business there, he found it hard to tear himself from the hospital. By day he pushed the cart around the streets in the vicinity; by night he slept under culverts, behind hedges, in alleys. . . . For a while he went around asking for garden jobs, but grew to shrink from the distaste that householders, owing him no charity, showed as they opened their doors on him. When it rained he crawled under the cart. There were long periods when he sat staring at his hands, his mind blank. (33)

Michael is left all alone in the world after Anna’s death. The insensitive realities of the terror persist to make him sad.

Anna’s death symbolizes the deaths of the neglected and unwanted natives of South Africa. Anna is uprooted from her land and is forced by the country’s economy to lead a hard life in city. She works sincerely, honestly but when she is sick no one comes to help her except her son, Michael. For eight years Anna had been employed as a domestic servant by a retired hosiery manufacturer and his wife living in a five roomed flat in Sea Point. The wage was fair, her employers were reasonable people, jobs were hard to come by, and Anna was not discontented. When she is sick, the Buhrmanns keep her on to do the cooking, cut her pay by a third, and hire a younger woman for the housework. She was allowed to stay on in her room, over which the Buhrmanns had the disposal. For weeks before entering hospital she had been bedridden, unable to work. She lives in dread of the end of the Buhrmanns’ charity. Michael cannot forget Anna’s death and her suffering. He remembers that his mother worked all her life long and says:

She scrubbed other people’s floors, she cooked food for them, she washed their dishes. She washed their dirty clothes. She scrubbed the bath after them. She went on her knees and cleaned the toilet. But when she was old and sick they forgot her. They put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her in the fire. They gave me an old box of ash and told me, “Here is your mother, take her away, she is no good to us.” (136)
Michael’s feelings about his mother and the system in which she worked highlight the social disparity as well as the disregard of the authority regarding it.

The violence in the country is spread everywhere. For example, Michael falls into the company of men and women who sleep under the railway bridge. One night someone tries to pull his suitcase from under his head while he is sleeping. There is a fight and he moves on to next place. With the box of mother’s ashes and suitcase, Michael is suspected to be “A thief running away over the mountains” (36). He is taken along with other fifty strangers by railway for work. While doing the work of cleaning the road covered with rocks and clay, Michael gets tired but the overseer raises his stick and prods Michael in his chest. Michael picks up his shovel and continues to work:

Till midnight they toiled, moving like sleepwalkers. Herded back into the carriage at last, they slept slumped against one another on the seats or sprawled on the bare floor, the windows shut against the bitter upland cold, while outside the guards stamped up and down and shivered and cursed and took turns to sneak into the cab to warm their hands. (42-43)

The officials on duty are very cruel towards the workers who are in the “labour gang’ (43) for the country. When the work is over they are “turned without a word and abandoned” (44) to resume their interrupted lives. Thus the socio-political situation portrayed in the novel, emphasizes the victimization of the blacks. In the words of Lewis Nkosi, the literature of South Africa is nothing but a “conflict between the white conquerors and conquered black, between white masters and black servants, between the village and the city” (76). Michael suffers for no fault of his own. He is alienated from his own world of gardening. For his situation Michael is compared to Franz Kafka’s Joseph K. Dominic Head states that in the name of Michael K there is, on the face of it, a direct reference to “Joseph K, the protagonist of Kafka’s The Trial. This together with various other allusions, suggests a shared theme of alienation, though there may be limits to how such connections assist in the interpretation of Coetzee’s novel” (95). According to Derek Attridge also, “there’s no escaping the allusion to another antihero in modernist literature, Kafka’s Joseph K” (51).

Away from the society and violence, in the company of the mother earth, Michael discovers bliss of life. Remembering his mother’s references to the names Mr Vosloo, Mr Visser; he reaches Visagies’ farmhouse in Prince Albert. Though he is not
sure whether it is the same farmhouse referred to by his mother, he prefers to stay there living on the birds that he kills with his catapult. “He hoped that his mother, who was in some sense in the box and in some sense not, being released, a spirit release into the air, was more at peace now that she was nearer her natal earth” (57). Clearing a patch of a few meters square in the middle of the field, he distributes the fine grey flakes of Anna’s ashes over the earth. He finds in the house some pumpkin seeds. In a week he clears the land near the dam and restores the system of burrows that irrigate it. Then he plants patches of pumpkins, mealies; and near the river bank he plants beans so that if they grow they can climb into the thorn trees. This is the new beginning of Michael’s life as a cultivator after Anna’s death. He lives by the rising and setting of the sun and “Cape Town and his passage to the farm slipped further and further into forgetfulness” (60). He is extremely happy with land of his residence. Here, it will be fair enough to quote Breyton Breytenbach, who about Coetzee’s description of the landscape says, “it is indeed curious that the white South African writer should be so acutely aware of the landscape, as if he needs to reaffirm his puny presence . . . whereas the black African writer quite obviously accepts the land as his natural and unquestionable dimension” (208).

The violence and war has made the lives of the recruits sorrowful. It can be best explained with the example of a stranger who comes on Michael’s farmhouse and claims to be the grandson of Visagie. He deserts army and comes to hide in mountains. He says to Michael:

Michael, I am speaking to you as one human being to another. There is a war on, there are people dying. Well, I’m at war with no one. I have made my peace. Do you understand? I make my peace with everyone. There is no war here on the farm. You and I can live here quietly till they make peace everywhere. No one will disturb us. Peace has got to come one of these days. (64)

According to Derek Wright, the fallacy is obvious: the division between the “you” and “I” of this sentence, the black and the white, “is what the war is being fought over and the hard fact is that there is now no future, in the same country, for both” (3). However, Michael is not interested in any war and hence he prefers to leave the boy silently. The Visagie boy describes war to Michael:

Michael, I worked in the paymaster’s office, I know what is going on. I know how many men are going eleven-63 every month, whereabouts
unknown, pay stopped, docket opened. Do you know what I mean? I could give you figures that would shock you. I’m not the only one. Soon they are not going to have enough men, I’m telling you, they are not going to have enough men to track down the men who are running away! This is a big country! Just look around you! Lots of places to go! Lots of the places to hide! (64-65)

His description throws light on the government’s conscription policy and the reality of the army life.

Michael’s first and last love in life is his plantation in which there is no place for any obliteration. While leaving the farm after the Visagie boy’s appearance; he is upset to look at the first stubby pumpkin leaves pushing through the earth. He opens the sluice for the last time and watches the water running slowly across the field. He looks at the leaves and says, “Now when I am most needed . . . I abandon my children” (63). This thought reflects his fatherly relation with the produce of the earth. It also shows him to be a responsible man caring his creation. Michael is not interested in anything other than his plantation. He feels sorry to leave the company of his plants. The war and the violence have no importance in his life. According to Tamlyn Monsoon, “The presentation of K and the farm as being a kind of family may be an attempt to represent a heteronomous relation; a relation which defies the violence that separates entities through dialectical self – other identifications” (97). It can also be said that Michael represents the agrarian culture of the Africans. About the relation between land and human being, what Sheila Roberts notices about the writing of Nadine Gordimer can be applied to Coetzee also. She says, “White writers in South Africa give a good deal of emphasis to the land, while black writers take the land for granted, concentrate on communities. For blacks the land is simply there. It’s theirs” (409). Michael considers himself to be very close to the land and cultivates on it without thinking about who owns it.

When Michael is on the roads of city, the violent socio-political systems do not allow him his freedom:

There was no one on the streets. K made his bed in the doorway of the Volkskas office with a rubber doormat under his head. When his body had cooled he began to shiver. He slept in fits, clenching his jaws against the pain in his head. A flashlight woke him but he could not separate it from the dream in which he was involved. To the questions
of the police he gave unclear answers, shouts and gasps. “Don’t! . . . Don’t! . . . Don’t! . . .” he said, the word coming out like a cough from his lungs. Understanding nothing, repelled by his smell, they pushed him into their van, took him back to the station, and locked him in a cell with five other men, where he resumed his shivering and his delirious sleep. (69-70; ellipsis in orig.)

In the morning he is listed as “Michael Visagie–CM–40–NFA–Unemployed” (70) and charged with leaving his magisterial district without authorization, not being in possession of an identification documents, infringing the curfew, and being drunk and disorderly. Attributing debilitation and incoherence of Michael to alcohol poisoning he is taken to hospital. The doctor examines him for venereal infection. He asks Michael, “Have your ever seen a doctor about your mouth?” He informs Michael, “You could get it corrected, you know” (72) but he did not offer to correct it. Michael is not interested in his looks. Michael then is taken to the resettlement camp at Jakkalsdrif. The unemployed, derelict are taken to this camp and interned for labour in the city and are provided shelter in turn in the camp. This camp is also not free from the crimes and theft. Michael’s room is dark and without windows. One woman in the camp warns Michael to take care of his clothes otherwise, she says, “‘they’ll be gone in the morning’” (75).

The camps are the parts of government’s political policies of using the poor Africans for the labour needed by the whites. It is a type of socio-political violence done in the name of charity. The authorities “want to stop people from disappearing into the mountains and then coming back one night to cut their fences and drive their stock away” (80). Robert, the man from the camp informs Michael that there are a large number of women and children in the camp but no one knows about the men who aren’t here with their families. The women’s answers about their men are “He has got a job, he sends me money every month,” or “He ran away, he left me” (80). The unhygienic conditions in the camp can be noted in the following piece:

In the back of the truck . . . K mentioned the crying in the night. “You want to know how they shut that child up in the end?” said Robert “Brandy. Brandy and aspirin. That’s the only medicine. No doctor in the camp, no nurse.” He paused. “Let me tell you what happened when they opened the camp, when they opened the new home . . . for all the homeless people, the squatters . . . the beggars . . . the unemployed, the
vagrants who sleep on the mountain . . . everyone was sick. Dysentery, then measles, then 'flu, one on top of the other. From being shut up like animals in a cage. The district nurse stood in the middle of the camp where everyone could see, and she cried. She looked at children with the bones sticking out of their bodies and she didn’t know what to do, she just stood and cried.” (88)

Although later on the authorities provided the latrines and spraying for flies, they did it not because they love the camp people. Robert says, “They prefer it that we live because we look too terrible when we get sick and die” (88). Very important comment is made by Robert about the charity of the whites: “Why do you think they give you charity, you and the children! Because they think you are harmless, your eyes aren’t opened, you don’t see the truth around you” (88-89). The people of Prince Albert did not like even the camp near their town. Robert says, they “ran a big campaign against the camp at the beginning. We breed disease, they said. No hygiene, no morals. A nest of vice, men and women all together” (81-82). The people of Prince Albert wanted the camp miles away; because Robert tells Michael that they wish that “we could come on tiptoe in the middle of the night like fairies and do their work, dig their gardens, wash their ports, and be gone in the morning leaving everything nice and clean” (82).

About who is in favour of the camp, Robert says:

First, the Railways. The Railways would like to have a Jakkalsdrif every ten miles along the line. Second, the farmers. Because from a gang from Jakkalsdrif a farmer gets a day’s work blood cheap, and at the end of the day the truck fetches them and they are gone and he doesn’t have to worry about them or their families, they can starve, they can be cold, he knows nothing, it’s none of his business. (82)

Thus the whites exploit the blacks for their advantage.

For the government and police the camp people are lazy. The government exploits them. When the camp people are suspected for the explosion at the town the captain of police, Oosthuizen shouts at them: “‘You appreciate nothing! Who builds houses for you when you have nowhere to live? Who gives you tents and blankets when you are shivering with cold? Who nurses you, who takes care of you, who comes here day after day with food? And how do you repay us? Well, from now on you can starve!’” (91-92). The government does not want to work on equal levels. In the words of Amartya Sen, it does not want to believe that “The well-being aspect is
especially important in such matters as social security, poverty alleviation, removal of gross economic inequality, and in general in the pursuit of social justice” (71). Michael’s mind is upset with the captain’s allegations. He cannot react violently but what he thinks symbolizes the defenselessness of the deprived. Michael broods:

If these people really wanted to be rid of us, . . . if they really wanted to forget us forever, they would . . . command us to dig . . . order us to climb in and lay ourselves down; and . . . break down the huts and tents . . . throw the huts and the fence and the tents as well as every last thing we had owned upon us, and cover us with earth, and flatten the earth. Then, perhaps, they might begin to forget about us. (94)

In spite of the injustice done towards Michael by the government, he cannot abandon his human love when the white Free Corps man is stabbed in the camp by his comrade. He raises his voice for the first time in the camp and requests the guard to take the injured to hospital. But other camp people advise him: “Leave them, let them look after each other” (96). Michael dislikes the camp life and so he escapes from the camp. In the words of Laraine O’ Connell, Michael, “becomes the symbol for man’s personal freedom, personal identity and dignity” (40). Michael escapes because his likings are different. According to Mike Marais, “Indeed the novel consists of a variety of replicated episodes, each of which brings Michael K into contact with a character who attempts to assert himself by negating K’s alterity” (107).

Michael’s only choice and solace of life in the socio-political violence is cultivation. He returns to the Visagie farm, searches for Visagie boy’s signs and then settles down. He wants “the pleasures of digging and planting he had promised himself” (99). He works hard and “When the dusk fell he realized with surprise that he had spent a second day without eating” (100). He is not interested in constructing a permanent home to pass on to other generation. He plants pumpkins and melon seeds. As he tends the seeds, watches and waits for the earth to bear food, his own need for food grows slighter and slighter. He waits for the food that will come out of the earth and tells himself, “I will recover my appetite, for it will have savour” (101). He eats insects and roots. He has no fear of being poisoned from the roots because “he seemed to know the difference between benign bitterness and a malign one, as though he had once been an animal and the knowledge of good and bad plants had not died in his soul” (102).
Michael is worried when he sees eleven men in his area of plantation. He even wants to hide the pumpkin leaves. He wants no one to disturb his life with the pumpkins and melons. He wishes to bury himself “in the bowels of the earth” (106) than to be found by anybody. To put a check on goats he rests by day and stays up at night to protect his land and till it. He says, “My mother was the one whose ashes I brought back” and “my father was Huis Norenius” (104) where he became a gardener. But after mother’s death; his mother is the mother earth. He wants that the mother earth should protect him. It was clear to him that the visitors were not soldiers who were at the dam but they were men from the mountains “who blew up railway tracks and mined roads and attacked farmhouses and drove off stock and cut one town off from another, whom the radio reported exterminated in scores and the newspapers published pictures of sprawling gape-mouthed in pool of their own blood” (108-09) and who appeared in the news. He hides away from them and imagines the difference between the stories told by the people in the camp and the stories these men will tell. The left behind, the women, the children, the old men, the blind, the rippled, the idiots in the camp “have nothing to tell but stories of how they have endured. Whereas these young men have had adventures, victories and defeats and escapes” (109). Michael does not belong to either of the types of people. He just knows one truth that “enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over; whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children” (109). Michael’s worry about maintaining the life-long relation between the land and its children underlines Coetzee’s focus on the bond of love between the two. Land is very important for the Africans. Michael’s view is like the view expressed in the song by Ngugi wa Thiong’o in his *A Grain of Wheat*:

> Ngai has given Gikuyu beautiful country,
> Never without food or water or grazing fields,
> It is good so Gikuyu should praise Ngai all the times,
> For he has ever been generous to them. (155)

In Kenya, land is not only held to be of much greater importance than money or cattle but it has spiritual associations also. In the story of creation, the legendary figures of a first man and first woman are Gikuyu and Mumbi who are gifted with a land by god. The political freedom in Kenya becomes synonymous with the repossession of the land. In the same way Michael always tries to get the land and cultivate on it. Of
course, he does not want it for any political need but it is his spiritual need to be close to his mother earth. While appreciating Susan Gallagher’s pointing out of the myths of lands underlying Coetzee’s texts, Smith Rowland says:

This is particularly true in . . . her linking of the protagonist’s actions to the motif of the return to the land in Afrikaner writing, and her analysis of the parallels in the novel between the wrongs suffered by the protagonist and the Afrikaner mythology of wrongs suffered by women and children in the British concentration camps of the Boer War – a consequence of the British policy of scorched earth to deal with Afrikaner guerrillas. (129)

Michael suffers the wrongs for no fault of his own. But no one understands his longing for the land.

The produce of the earth seems to Michael as one family. His melons look for him like “two sisters” and the pumpkins “as a band of brothers” (113). He has a great faith in this produce. He eats the melons praying that they will make him well. He scrapes their seeds together and spreads them to dry, “From one seed a whole handful: that was what it meant to say the bounty of the earth” (118). According to Gallagher, the theme of gardening is very powerfully related to the return of the Africans to their land and garden is “a millennial alternative to the cataclysm of the camps” (156).

Michael’s peaceful life with the mother earth is destroyed for the second time by the soldiers who suspect him of sheltering the terrorists from the mountains. Captain Oosthuizen recognizes Michael and pokes Michael in the ribs with his boot. The army officer interrogates Michael: “So when are your friends coming?” (122). The soldier who holds Michael grips his nape of neck between thumb and forefinger and guides him down till he is kneeling, till his face is touching the earth. He is hit a terrific blow in the pit of the stomach and he faints. Michael is so sick that he looks like an idiot. The Captain says, “This joker . . . He’s not sick, he always looks like this . . .” (124). Michael is suspected for stocking pumpkins and melons for the terrorists. His only answer to the officers is: “I am not what you think” and further he says, “I was sleeping and you woke me, that’s all” (123). It is true that in Michael’s life many events happen and he is rarely responsible for them. About fortune, Terry Eagleton says, “the medieval notion of the wheel of fortune suggests that tragedy may just randomly afflict you, as opposed to the supposedly more dignified notion that it must arise organically from your own conduct” (107). Michael’s tragedy arises not out of
his own conduct. In fact he stands for all the colonized blacks who suffer for no fault of their own. No one believes in Michael. The soldiers put Michael’s pumpkins and melons in their truck and destroy his farmhouse by an explosion. Michael is sorry to leave the piece of the mother earth planted by him:

So what is it, he thought, that binds me to this spot of earth as if to a home I cannot leave? We must all leave home, after all, we must all leave our mothers. Or am I such a child, such a child from such a line of children, that none of us can leave, but have to came back to die here with our heads upon our mothers’ laps. I upon hers, she upon her mother’s, and so back and back, generation upon generation? (124)

It is Michael’s reflection on death. He knows that everyone has to leave the mother-earth but the bond between the two continues.

Michael has startling resistance power for his sickness. He is taken to hospital for treatment so that he is then interned again for labour in the camp. The doctor tries his best for Michael to improve his health but Michael does not eat anything. When asked, “Where is your mother now?” Michael says, “She makes the plants grow” (130). When the doctor asks him whether he would agree for the operation of his cleft lip, Michael says, “I’m what I am. I was never a great one for the girl” (130). To his superior Noël, the doctor tells that Michael “is a person of feeble mind who drifted by chance into a war zone and didn’t have the sense to get out. He ought to be in a protected environment weaving baskets or stringing beads, not in a rehabilitation camp” (131). But Michael is noted in the register by the name “Michaels” as an arsonist, an escape from a labour camp. He is said to be “running a flourishing garden on an abandoned form and feeding the local guerrilla population when he was captured” (131). According to the doctor; Michael “is locked up as an insurgent, but he barely knows there is a war on” (130). He even argues with Noël and says, “They have mixed him up with some other Michaels. This Michaels is an idiot. This Michaels doesn’t know how to strike a match. If this Michaels was running a flourishing garden, why was he starving to death?” (131). The doctor wants physiotherapy for Michael because he is week like one of the toys made of sticks held together with rubber bands. The doctor advises for Michael graduated diet, gentle exercise so that one day soon he can rejoin camp life and “have a chance to march back and forth across the racetrack and shout slogans and salute the flat and practise digging holes and filling them again” (133).
While Michael is in hospital there is an attack on Prince Albert’s water supply. The police want to interrogate Michael again about his friends. The doctor forces him to speak but Michael’s only answer is “I am not in the war” (138). When he is asked whose vegetables he grew, Michael says, “They weren’t mine. They came from the earth” (139). When asked whether he minds that the soldiers took his vegetables, Michael says, “What grows is for all of us. We are all the children of the earth” (139). These answers reflect Michael’s spiritual sublimity amidst violence.

The doctor advises Michael to tell his story:

> Give yourself some substance, man, otherwise you are going to slide through life absolutely unnoticed. You will be a digit in the units column at the end of the war when they do the big subtraction sum to calculate the difference, nothing more. You don’t want to be simply one of the perished, do you? You want to live, don’t you? Well then, talk, make your voice heard, tell your story! We are listening! Where else in the world are you going to find two polite civilized gentlemen ready to listen to your story all day and all night, if need be, and take notes too? (140)

But Michael confesses, “I am not clever with words” (139). The doctor wants to relieve Michael and he requests Noël not to twist a story out of him “because truly there is no story to be had. . . . Make up something for the report” (141). He even requests Noël to write any twenty names as Michael’s friends and report that they come to his farm every four, five, six weeks. The doctor discharges Michael exempting him from physical exercise for seven days. But Michael is brought back after two days unconscious. Michael is reported to have refused to participate in prescribed activity of singing. As a result he was punished with squats and star-jumps. In spite of all the efforts of the doctor Michael does not eat. Michael’s resistance to eat food and speak is his non-violent opposition to war and violence. Like Friday in *Foe*, Michael, too, does not tell his story. Because of the socio-political violence there is a flood of refugees from the countryside seeking safety in the towns. There are also people tired of living five to a room and not getting enough to eat. They slip out of the towns to the abandoned countryside. And Michael is “one of a multitude” (136) wishing to go to the country life. Michael symbolizes the native man. The doctor requests Noël to free Michael because he thinks that Michael “only eats the bread of freedom” (146). Noël tells the doctor that the country’s government wants war “so
that minorities will have a say in their destinies” (157). According to Wright the “minorities” refer to the ruling white minority keeping their “say” rather than the other, “excluded minorities obtaining theirs” (4). Michael is totally out of the war because he is busy in solving his own problems of poverty and helplessness. The subordination of the blacks is always beneficial for the whites. Michael suffers the predicament brought by war. About Michael’s freedom what Robert Post states is worthy to quote here. He says that Michael’s freedom stands for the “non-white South African asking for his own land” (75). Thinking about Michael, the doctor says, “You are no soldier, Michaels, you are figure of fun, a clown, a wooden man” (149). The doctor writes a letter addressed to Michael. He writes that Michaels is “the very embodiment of great Mother Death” (150) and he is plotting to follow her by fasting hard in spite of his appeal for him to “yield!” (152). He ends this letter by addressing himself as “A friend” (152). The doctor’s wish to be the friend of Michael is the probable answer to the exploitation of Michael.

After Michael’s escape the doctor requests Noël to close Michael’s story as “The poor simpleton has gone off like sick dog to die in a corner” (155). When people will ask Michael his whereabouts, the doctor says that Michael will tell them, “he comes from the Garden of Paradise” (155). It is true that the type of life Michael wants and has experienced for some period is a Paradise for him away and different from the worldly conflicts for power. Hence, it is true what Dana Dragunoiu says: “Unlike his predecessors in Kafka’s The Trial and The Castle, Coetzee’s K succeeds in evading the power structures that seek to enslave him” (70). The doctor is impressed by Michael’s simplicity. About himself and Noël, he wishes:

Perhaps the two of us should take a leaf out of Michael’s book and go on a trip to one of the quieter parts of the country, the obscurer reaches of the Karoo for example, and set up house there, two gentleman deserters of modest means and sober habit. How to get as far as Michaels did without being picked up is the main difficulty. Perhaps we could make a start by discarding our uniforms and getting dirt under our fingernails and walking a little closer to the earth; though I doubt we will ever look as nondescript as Michaels, or as Michaels must have looked in the days before he turned into a skeleton. (160-61) The doctor feels sorry for his inability to understand Michael. He imagines saying to Michael:
Michaels, forgive me for the way I treated you, I did not appreciate who you were till the last days. Forgive me too for following you like this. I promise not to be a burden (‘Not to be a burden like your mother was’? That would perhaps be imprudent). ‘I am not asking you to take care of me, for example by feeding me. My need is a very simple one. Though this is a large country, so large that you would think there would be space for everyone, . . . . Yet I am convinced there are areas that lie between the camps and belong to no camp, . . . . I am looking for such a place in order to settle there, perhaps only till things improve, perhaps forever. I am not so foolish, however, as to imagine that I can rely on maps and roads to guide me. Therefore, I have chosen you to show me the way’. (162-63)

By choosing Michael as a guide for the whites, Coetzee predicts the change in the positions of the whites and the blacks in which the whites have to depend on the blacks for guidance. The doctor knows that the garden for which Michael is heading is another name for the only place where he belongs and it is “off every map, no road leads to it” (166) but only Michael knows it. In the words of Michael Chapman, Michael’s story becomes “the story of the single, vulnerable being in a time of the collective demand” (390). It can be said that Michael represents the South Africans’ longing for their homeland.

Cape City abounds in violence among the unemployed and the wanderers. For instance, the pimp who gives food to Michael, tries to steal his packet while Michael is asleep. But the packet was not the packet of money but of the seeds. Michael does not want money to earn his livelihood but he wants just the seeds. When the prostitute on the beach forces Michael for sex, Michael thinks that for everybody he has “become an object of charity” (181). According to Dragunoiu, “K objects to the injustices perpetrated by a society that ascribes no intrinsic value to human life. His refusal to eat in the rehabilitation camp is an attempt to evade an exploitative system that claims to be founded on an ethics of care” (71). Michael does not want any charity. He is able to survive all by himself; he finds the truth about him and he says, “I am a gardener” (181). He remembers “the farm, the grey thorn-bushes, the rocky soil, the ring of hills, the mountains purple and pink in the distance, the great still blue empty sky, the earth grey and brown beneath the sun save here and there, where if you looked carefully you suddenly saw a tip of vivid green pumpkin leaf or carrot-brush”
He even thinks that it would have been better if he could have taken plenty of seeds, a different packet of seeds, for each pocket: pumpkins seeds, marrow seeds, beans, carrot seeds, beetroot seeds, onion seeds, tomato seeds, spinach seeds, seeds in his shoes and coat also. He thinks:

Then my mistake was to plant all my seeds together in one patch. I should have planted them one at a time spread out over miles of veld in patches of soil no larger than my hand, and drawn a map and kept it with me at all times so that every night I could make a tour of the sites to water them. Because if there was one thing I discovered out in the country it was that there is time enough for everything. (183)

According to Sikorska because of the “lack of proper last name, and the obvious biblical connections of his first name, Michael becomes an Everyman, the universal human being still instead of bearing similarities to the figure of a sinner, in the course of his peregrinations he becomes a version of God’s fool” (97). On the other hand, Nadine Gordimer says:

Michael K (the initial probably stands for Kotze or Koekemoer and has no reference, nor need it have, to Kafka) is not Everyman. In fact, he is marked out, from birth, by a harelip. . . His mother is a servant in Cape Town, which means he is a so-called coloured, and he grows up fatherless in a home for handicapped children. . . thus he appears to be . . . one of those unclassifiable beings that fascinated Dostoevsky, a “simple.” (139-40)

Michael is like God’s fool who is Christ’s chosen for suffering and he is also a simple man.

It is sure that Michael is happy physically and spiritually only in the company of the mother earth. Michael’s portrayal as the ‘Other’ for the whites becomes important in the novel. His representation is a way of giving voice to him. According to John Sarev, “From Michael K onwards Coetzee has searched for faithful representative of this Other and has constantly acknowledged the problems and urged the necessity of literary constraint, in speaking for him” (134).

Michael imagines himself to be “like an earthworm” which is also a gardener, “that does not tell stories because it lives in silence. But a mole or an earthworm on a cement floor?” (182). He remembers the farmhouse, wishes to go the water pump, lower it down the shaft deep into the earth, and “when he brought it up there would be
water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way, he would say, one can live” (184). Michael wishes to be a silent earthworm to get enough time to serve the mother earth.

- **Violence: Psychological**

  Michael’s disfigurement and inability to speak fluently cause psychological violence to his mind. It can be explained with the help of some examples. Michael is born with a hare lip “curled like a snail’s foot, the left nostril gaped” (3). Such a type of disfigurement is taken to be auspicious as the midwife says to Michael’s mother: “You should be happy, they bring luck to the household” (3). But Anna does not like Michael’s mouth that could not close and the living pink flesh it bares to her. She shivers to think of what was growing in her all these months. The child could not suck from the mother’s breast and cries with hunger. She tried a bottle; when it could not suck from the bottle she fed it with a teaspoon, fretting with impatience when it coughed, spluttered and cried. The midwife promises, “It will close as he grows older” (3) but it does not close.

  Anna takes the child with her to work and continues to take it when it is no longer a baby. She keeps Michael away from other children because they smile and whisper about Michael’s looks. The behaviour of the other children underlines their tendency of teasing others and making fun of the disfigured. It seems that no one teaches the other children not to sneer at Michael’s odd looks. The behaviour of the children is intentionally pointed out to emphasize Michael’s seclusion. Loneliness thus accompanies Michael right from his birth. As a child he “sat on a blanket watching his mother polish other people’s floors, learning to be quiet” (4). As his mind was not quick he was committed to the protection of Huis Norenius where at the expense of the government, he spent the rest of his childhood in the company of other variously afflicted unfortunate children learning the elements of reading, writing, counting, sweeping, scrubbing, bed making, dishwashing, basket weaving, woodwork and digging. Michael’s aloofness in the school and his being ridiculed can be compared to Pinki Kumari, a protagonist of Megan Mylan’s documentary, the 81st Academy Award winner for Best Documentary *Smile Pinki*. Pinki is an eight-year-old girl with a cleft lip in one of the poorest Indian village, Rampur Dahaba in Mirzapur. She
cannot attend school and is detested because of her deformity. Her parents could never afford the surgery but by chance they meet a social worker who is traveling village to village to collect patients for free cleft surgery to poor children through The Smile Train Programme. The Smile Train is an organization, the world’s leading cleft charity in 76 of the world’s poorest countries. Unfortunately neither Anna nor anyone else gets interested in operating Michael. The doctor suggests him surgery but could not do anything for it.

Michael speaks sparingly and that too, unless, spoken to. He is not jealous of anyone. He even does not hate any person around him. According to DuBois the only place where democracy can be set up is “in the hearts of black folk” (130). Michael eats less, is able to strive for long period. He is never angry with anyone. He is silent. His silence is partly the result of his deformity and partly because he is a black or a coloured child. His mind is psychologically broken. According to Glennis Stephenson, Michael’s, “disfigurement and early brutal experiences make him shun the company of others and retreat into himself. Only silence, darkness and isolation provide him with any sense of security” (83). Michael thinks that there is no need to have the surgery for his lips because he says, “I am what I am. I was never a great one for the girls” (130). The doctor wants to tell Michael regarding his deformity that “never mind the girls, he would find it easier to get along if he could talk like everyone else; but said nothing, not wanting to hurt him” (130-31). It is true that because of his lack of the power to protest and behave violently he cannot get the permit from the police. In the same way the hospital authorities do not ask him about his mother’s cremation. He tries to explain the story about his mother and the hospital to the camp people but when he wants to tell them further about her ashes, by that time, he sees that the people start listening to the music. According to Attridge, “K’s hare lip is less an allegorical indicator of the handicaps suffered by certain sectors of the South Africa population than an important part of the causal chain that has produced the particular individual he is revealed to be during the events of the novel” (59).

Michael is never angry with anyone or any situation. Michael’s simplicity and undemanding attitude to life make him a tragic character. He just goes on in his life because he thinks that everything will be alright. Gilbert Yeoh compares Michael with Samuel Beckett’s Molly. According to him:
Like *Molloy*, Michael K recounts the episodic encounters of an itinerant tramp-like protagonist who ekes out a vagrant and minimal existence... Coetzee specially invokes three Beckettian paradigms—nothingness, minimalism, and indeterminacy—and envisions their operation within South African reality. (121)

Michael’s silence is remarkable. No one believes in Michael. The doctor fails to find out the secret of Michael’s strength and his food. Here, it is relevant to quote Zillah Eisenstein who writes:

Silences and secrets are not exactly the same. Silences are absences with often no known record. Secrets are known and then not told. So there is a consciousness to a secret even though it may just appear as a silence. But it is also much messier than this because exclusions, invisibility, misrepresentation, repression, and lying are usually embedded in silences and secrets. There are difficult spaces to inhabit.

(38)

Michael does not speak about his exploitation and suffering anywhere in the novel. His exploitation remains a secret hidden in his mind. The whites in power exploit him. His suffering is invisible; it is misrepresented, repressed, and it is always a lie for the whites. It is essential to understand Michael’s silence without misinterpreting it. It must be understood that ‘silence,’ like that of Friday in *Foe*, is Michael’s weapon to fight against the war and violence. About Michael, the doctor says:

He is like a stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand. A hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. He passes through these institutions and camps and hospitals and God knows what else like a stone. Through the intestines of the war. An unbearing, unborn creature. I cannot really think of him as a man, though he is older than me by most reckonings. (135)

Michael becomes a pebble thrown in the hands of doctor also. The doctor forces Michael to speak and also eat the food of the patient. But actually, this force is also a psychological violence against the will of Michael. The doctor broods on Michael’s life in camp and says, “Your stay in the camp was merely an allegory, if you know that word. It was an allegory — speaking at the highest level — of how scandalously,
how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without becoming a term in it” (166). According to Tony Morphet:

Reading the allegory as an account of Coetzee’s work in South Africa has an immediate appeal in the way that it dramatizes the elusiveness of the writing (through Michael) and the exasperated bafflement of readers (through the “doctor”). I have no doubt that readers elsewhere shared some of the same perplexities, but outrage and scandal seemed to have been especially South African responses. (14)

There is a not a major role given to women character in the novel. However, it is Anna who changes the mode of Michael’s life. Though Anna does not like Michael, it is Michael who shows his unconditional love towards Anna. For his mother he begins the journey to his unpredictable life. Anna’s world is a world of poverty and physical pain. Her life as a maidservant is full of uncertainties. The other woman is the prostitute who tries to excite Michael. Because of the limited roles given to women there is no possibility of studying women’s world in this novel.

It is possible to study this novel from the Marxist view. The dominant power structures, ownership of the land, and enslavement exploiting the poor can be focused on. The war against the feeble creates violence and makes them helpless. There are workers who are victimized and paid very less. Even Michael’s refusal to speak and express his feelings fluently can also speak about the hierarchical structures around him. It would be possible to see to whether Coetzee satisfies the Maxist scholars’ expectations.

The story of Michael is told by the narrator and the doctor. Along with the third person narration, Coetzee uses diary entries and letters in second part of the novel. They can be studied to find out the mind of the doctor who writes them. The doctor opens a new chapter through his sympathetic attitude. The technique of using diary entries and letters can be studied to highlight their implication and relevance in the story.

The novel can be studied as a post-colonial work. Conflict and authoritarianism in oppressive society do not allow Michael to decide his own fate. Coetzee focuses on the importance of self-determination. The terrorists, the detention camps, the roles of master and servant, minorities and majorities, and insecurity can be the focal points of post-colonial interpretation of the novel.
The study of the examples of socio-political and psychological violence directs to state that violence will not bring peace. Michael does not speak much but he speaks with seeds, melons, pumpkins, leaves, water etc. Because this “bounty of the earth” is made for him and he is made for taking care of his biological mother as well as the mother earth. He does not hate anybody and he is away from war and violence. It confirms M. K. Gandhi’s view: “Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul” (68). According to Gandhi the real home-rule is self-rule or self-control and the “way to it is passive resistance: that is soul-force or love-force” (90) and one can resist passively because “one who is free from hatred requires no sword” (75). Michael’s silent love and urge for cultivation is his soul-force, a way of passive resistance to war in South Africa. Sarah Joseph, acclaimed Malayam writer is one of the organizers of the journey from Kerala to Imphal under the banner of the Hind Swaraj Centenary Samiti to highlight the Satyagraha of Irom Sharmila, who through her hunger strike demands repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Manipur. While answering a question about linking gender and ecology to justice Joseph says:

A Vietnamese woman who had lost her son in the war once said Vietnam would defeat the US by cultivating more rice in the time between bombings. Rice instead of bomb: there is a message in that. Mothers don’t have time for bombs. Away from the mainstream, many women are searching for new ways to live, to produce food, to create a new green world. I see Sharmila as one of those women who are dreaming of a new world. They have a right to do so. (12)

Michael too fights violence by giving attention only to cultivation. It is his way of resistance. He gives a message for maintaining the green world. Michael represents the need of the South Africans to allow them to love their own land, its environment along with their people. The novel also shows that the land of Africa can sustain human life in spite of poverty and starvation. It is essential to learn the lesson from the past. About the South African writing regarding past and present; it is relevant to quote what Stanley Frielick says, “through exploring the dynamic connections between past and present, we can gain a clearer picture of the forces that are shaping our future” (22). South African scenario in the novel portrays Michael’s resistance to apartheid and adversities intensified by the communal disintegration brought by civil
war. It can also be taken as a depiction of the forces that are shaping the future of South Africa by exploring its realities. The novel may also stand as an expression of this century’s global apathy and laxity towards the bond of love between man and the land allotted to him by his natural residency in the world.
Works Cited


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After studying the violence in *In the Heart of the Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and *Life and Times of Michael K*, it is an endeavour in this part to critically interpret the violence in *Disgrace*.


Set in South Africa in the late 1990s, *Disgrace* opens with the introduction to the protagonist, David Lurie, a fifty-two-year-old professor at the Technical University of Cape Town. It tells the story of the fate of an ageing scholar, David, a specialist in the Romantic poets. He is reduced to teaching introductory courses in Communications, which he dislikes, as the university has changed its focus from liberal arts to that of technical education. At the opening of the novel David is visiting a prostitute, Soraya, for the weekly session. Later on, he starts an affair with one of his students, Melanie Isaacs, the dark one, who is 30 years his junior. She, after some meetings, turns sour and her boyfriend threatens David. She then lodges a complaint about David in the university. There is a Committee of Inquiry at which David admits his guilt but refuses to apologize.

Leaving the university in disgrace, David goes to visit his lesbian daughter, Lucy, who lives alone on a smallholding in the Eastern Cape. Lucy earns her livelihood managing dog kennels and raising flowers and vegetables for market in cooperation with her black neighbour, Petrus. David hopes to write an opera about Byron. For a while everything is peaceful and David volunteers at an animal welfare refuge with Bev Shaw, a veterinarian. However, the peace is shattered when the farm is invaded by three black men. They at first pretend to need help and then rape Lucy and set fire to David and rob them of their car and valuables.

The rest of the novel concerns attempt of David and Lucy to come to terms with what has happened to them. It turns out that one of the attackers is a brother of one of the wives of Petrus. Lucy is pregnant as a result of the rape and Petrus offers to marry her in exchange for the smallholding and Lucy’s protection. Lucy determines to keep the child. Horrified by her decision, David, too, sees the assault in terms of
historical inevitability. Later on he visits Melanie’s parents and apologizes. The novel ends with David putting down his favourite dog at the animal refuge.

There are examples of violence in *Disgrace*. They can be studied by dividing them into sexual and socio-political types. In the new age in South Africa after 1994 a kind of reconciliation process started with the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the chairmanship of a priest, an Anglican archbishop, Desmond Tutu. The primary aim of the TRC was to find out truth about the many alleged atrocities of apartheid. It conducted hearings all over South Africa. People of different races in South Africa were shocked to know about the deeds done in their country. *Disgrace* reflects traces of the TRC’s ethos.

- **Violence : Sexual**

There are examples of sexual violence in the novel. The novel begins with the reference to David’s sex: “FOR A MAN of this age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (1). For David, sex is a ‘problem’ to be solved. He easily finds the solution for it in the Cape City which is ready for the sex business with prostitutes as commodities varying in qualities and costs. David visits a prostitute, Soraya on each Thursday afternoon at Windsor Mansions in flat No. 113. The prostitutes like Soraya have accepted this business as a way of earning money in the new socio-economic system of the country. The sexual violence for them is a way of living. The sex business is very well flourished in the city and it is undertaken by an agency, Discreet Escorts. Soraya was on their books under “Exotic” and the entry said “Afternoons only” (7). For a ninety-minute session David pays her R400, of which half goes to Discreet Escorts. David’s childhood is spent in a family of women. As mother, aunts, sisters fell away they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, a daughter. The company of women “made him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer” (7). He easily attracts the women towards him. If David “looked at a woman in a certain way, with a certain intent, she would return his look, he could rely on that. That was how he lived; for years, for decades, that was the backbone of his life” (7). He “had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores” (7).
David is an expert in seducing women. Soraya leads a double life - as a mother of two sons and a prostitute. David is “all for double lives, triple lives, lives lived in compartments” (6). He continues his visits to Soraya for a year. However, after noticing her with her two sons, “he feels a growing coolness as she transforms herself into just another woman and him into just another client” (7). David is sure that Soraya works for the agency only one or two afternoons a week. David is sure that Soraya is not her real name: “It may be that she is not a professional at all. She may work for the agency only one or two afternoons a week, and for the rest live a respectable life in the sururbs, in Rylands and Athlone. That would be unusual for a Muslim, but all things are possible these days” (3). This information notes the changes taking place in the society. The business of sex seems to be well organized. When Soraya takes a break, the agency offers David another Soraya, “no more than eighteen, unpracticed, to his mind coarse” (8). David’s relation with these prostitutes is based on money. It epitomizes his disrespect for ethics.

David continues to solve the problem of sex through his new secretary in his department, Dawn but finds her unpleasing. His experience with Dawn is described thus:

The second time he takes her out they stop at his house and have sex. It is a failure. Bucking and clawing, she works herself into a froth of excitement that in the end only repels him. He lends her a comb, drives her back to the campus.

After that he avoids her, taking care to skirt the office where she works. In return she gives him a hurt look, then snubs him.

He ought to give up, retire from the game. At what age, he wonders, did Origen castrate himself? Not the most graceful of solutions, but then ageing is not a graceful business. A clearing of the decks, at least, so that one can turn one’s mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die. (9)

David is bored until he finds his young student, Melanie Isaacs, “thirty years his junior: she is a student, his student, under his tutelage” (12). David brings Melanie home, praises her beauty and requests her to spend a night with him, “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). When she hints that she already shares her beauty, David says, “Then you should share it more widely” (16). Next day by
obtaining her address and telephone number David invites her for lunch in which she is uncomfortable. They return home and have sex but Melanie is passive in it. Next day she is absent in the class but David finds her on campus and drives her to her flat. When she is in the class next day she does not look at David.

David runs after his lust. Without thinking of any moral he thinks of sex with Melanie. On next occasion he goes to Melanie’s flat and seduces her. For him it is, “Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away.” (25). Deceptively, David uses different words for rape. Next day Melanie is absent for the mid-term test but David enters seventy marks and ticks her off as present. After a week Melanie suddenly comes at night to sleep at David’s house but avoids his eyes. He makes her bed on his daughter’s, Lucy’s bed. He feels no shame in having sex on Lucy’s bed with the girl of his daughter’s age. On the other hand he is excited to think about Melanie:

He stretches out on the bed beside her. The last thing in the world he needs is for Melanie Isaacs to take up residence with him. Yet at this moment the thought is intoxicating. Every night she will be here; every night he can slip into her bed like this, slip into her. People will find out, they always do; there will be whispering, there might even be scandal. But what will that matter? A last leap of the flame of sense before it goes out. He folds the bedclothes aside, reaches down, strokes her breasts, her buttocks. (27)

He is confused whether she is his “Mistress” or “Daughter” (27). She uses his pleasures as advantage for her missing so many classes but “if she is behaving badly, he has behaved worse” (28). He makes love to Melanie on one more occasion on his daughter’s bed.

Whatever words David uses for rape, it is sexual violence. It is right as Charles Sarvan states: “Apart from overtones of rape; there are also suggestions of incest in his relationship: Lurie makes up a bed for Melanie in his daughter’s room and has sex with her in Lucy’s bed. Lucy farms in the region in which Melanie grew up, and the latter is like a daughter to Lurie” (27). David is not afraid of threat by Melanie’s boyfriend regarding the disclosure of his relationship with Melanie. Even after the threat when he sees Melanie and the boy on a motorcycle “A quick shudder of lust
tugs him. *I have been there!* he thinks. Then the motorcycle surges forward, bearing her away” (35).

Melanie’s father’s shock puts forth the loss of ethics in academic universities in the Cape City. He says to David:

We put our children in the hands of you people because we think we can trust you. If we can’t trust the university, who can we trust? We never thought we were sending our daughter into a nest of vipers. No, Professor Lurie, you may be high and mighty and have all kinds of degrees, but if I was you I’d be very ashamed of myself, so help me God. If I’ve got hold of the wrong end of the stick, now is your chance to say, but I don’t think so, I can see it from your face. (38)

A complaint is lodged against David for the victimization of student. His divorced wife Rosalind, too, disapproves of his act. She says, “I don’t know what you do about sex and I don’t want to know but this is not the way to go about it. You’re what-fifty-two? Do you think a young girl finds any pleasure in going to bed with a man of that age? Do you think she finds it good to watch you in the middle of your . . .? Do you ever think about that?” (44; ellipsis in orig.). She even warns him that he should not expect sympathy from her or anyone else. To her David’s behavior is “very demeaning” and the “whole thing is disgraceful from beginning to end. Disgraceful and vulgar too” (45). The next day she telephones David and informs him that in the newspaper he is accused and the headline is: “Professor on sex charge” (46). David is immediately isolated from others. This isolation indicates that people in the university are sharing their opposition to the student’s rape.

David is not ready for “Sensitivity training. Community service. Counselling.” (43). It does not mean that he is innocent. About the suggestion to improve himself, he questions to his advocate: “To fix me? To cure me? To cure me of inappropriate desires?” (43). He plays with the words to justify his lust. He should be ashamed but he is not. He uses his power on Melanie as one of the members of the inquiry committee says that “as teachers we occupy positions of power. Perhaps a ban on mixing power relations with sexual relations. Which, I sense, is what was going on in this case. Or extreme caution” (53). David is an oppressor like a colonizer tyrannizing the colonized and the weak sexually. According to Kinga Dunin:

What is said in the course of the trial about the abuse of power sounds artificial. What does power have to do with sex? Of course, men
should have control over their sexual compulsion. They may use prostitutes if need be. Also, a divorced professor uses them but let us leave politics out of it. The protagonist is ready to deal with his disgrace, but he does not intend to change. (77)

However, with South African background of Disgrace David remains a person using his power for sex, and also a representative of such whites who do not want to confess and transform themselves.

Melanie is not a white but “the dark one” (18). According to Jerzy Koch and Paweł Zajas, “many foreign reviewers - with the exception of a report by an expert at South African literature Hans Ester (2000) - and all the Polish reviewers failed to notice the probability that Melanie Isaacs is a Coloured not a white student.” According to them this is suggested by “Isaacs”, “a surname more common among coloureds” (137). Hence, David’s relation with Melanie has a different shade. In the inquiry committee also there is one student observer from the Coalition Against Discrimination. Colonial exploitation also includes excessive aggression and domination over the female which can be described as sexual colonialism. During the hearing held by the inquiry committee David uses words cunningly. He replies, “I have no challenge in a legal sense.” Further he says, “I have reservations of a philosophical kind, but I suppose they are out of bounds” (47). He says:

Very well . . . let me confess. The story begins one evening. I forget the date, but not long past. I was walking through the old college gardens and so, it happened, was the young woman in question, Ms. Isaacs. Our paths crossed. Words passed between us, and at that moment something happened which, not being a poet, I will not try to describe. Suffice it to say that Eros entered. After that I was not the same. (52)

The committee insists upon a confession of his wrong doing but David says, “I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorcé at a loose end. I became a servant of Eros” (52). He says, “I am guilty of the charges brought against me” (54) but one of the committee member says, “Don’t play games with us, David. There is a difference between pleading guilty to a charge and admitting you were wrong, and you know that” (54). The press reporters ask David, “Do you regret what you did?” and his reply is, “No.” He says, “I was enriched by the experience” (56). He even refuses the offer of leave of absence. During the inquiry David’s interest is in
“Freedom of speech. Freedom to remain silent” (188) but Rosalind comments, “That sounds very grand. But you were always a great self-deceiver, David. Are you sure it wasn’t just a case of being caught with your pants down?” (188). Very disgustingly she says, “You have thrown away your life, and for what?” (189). But even after a gap of time, “The mention of Melanie Isaacs unsettles him. He has never been given to lingering involvements. When an affair is over, he puts it behind him. But there in something unfinished in the business with Melanie. Deep inside him the smell of her is stored, the smell of a mate.” (190).

The “Rape Awareness Week” (43) on the university campus throws light on the sexual violence in academic world. Lucy’s reaction toward her father’s case also suggests the evil situation in the universities. She is surprised to listen to the fact that her father is disgraced for his affair with a student; it is a bit extreme for her. She says, “It certainly went on when I was a student. If they prosecuted every case the profession would be decimated” (66). David says, “These are puritanical times. Private life is public business” (66). According to Derek Attridge:

> In this new age, hitherto private details of sexual intimacy have become matter for daily public discourse, but rather than heralding a greater acceptance of sexual diversity and sexual needs, this shift marks an increase in puritanical surveillance and moralistic denunciation. (A perfect emblem of the paradox is, of course, the Clinton-Lewinsky affair that engrossed the U.S.A. – and the world – in 1998.). (168)

David dislikes puritanical approach and desires liberty of sex with a woman he likes. After his disgrace, David chooses to take shelter in the country land where Lucy resides. Being a “disgraced disciple” (46) of Wordsworth, probably, he wishes to find solace in the company of nature, land and country life. Lucy welcomes him to stay with her on her smallholding and suggests him to help Petrus or Bev Shaw. But David is still adamant and says, “All right, I’ll do it. But only as long as I don’t have to become a better person. I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself. I’ll do it on that basis” (77). He compares himself with Lucy’s old bulldog bitch, which no one chooses to take out. He looks at her and questions: “Abandoned, are we?” (78). Lucy becomes David’s “Second salvation” (86) in his disgrace. But David cannot forget Melanie and Soraya. When Lucy shows him three geese visiting
the dam, he reflects: “Three. That would be a solution of sorts. He and Lucy and Melanie. Or he and Melanie and Soraya” (88). It indicates David’s sexual longing.

With David, sex is a mania which makes him cause sexual violence. Lucy stands in contrast to him. She is “in her middle twenties, she has begun to separate. The dogs, the gardening, the astrology books, the asexual clothes: in each he recognizes a statement of independence, considered, purposeful. The turn away from men too. Making her own life. Coming out of his shadow” (89). Lucy is a lesbian who stays with her friend, Helen. David thinks, “Perhaps they sleep together merely as children do, cuddling, touching, giggling, reliving girlhood - sisters more than lovers. Sharing a bed, sharing a bathtub, baking gingerbread cookies, trying on each other’s clothes. Sapphic love: an excuse for putting on weight” (86).

David does not think anything immoral in his sexual pursuits. He compares his sexual desire with his neighbour’s male dog and remembers that whenever there was a bitch in the vicinity it would get excited and unmanageable, and with Pavlovian regularity the owners would beat it. This went on until the poor dog didn’t know what to do. At the smell of a bitch it would chase around the garden with its ears flat and its tail between its legs, whining, trying to hide. David says, “There was something so ignoble in the spectacle that I despised. One can punish a dog, it seems to me, for an offence like chewing a slipper. A dog will accept the justice of that: a beating for a chewing. But desire is another story. No animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts” (90). Lucy objects and asks: “So males must be allowed to follow their instincts unchecked? Is that the moral?” (90). David replies that in such a condition it is “better to shoot it” (90). It reveals David’s deep rooted desire for free sex.

For Lucy her father is a “scapegoat” (91) who wanders in the wilderness while his colleagues breathe easily. But he is not ready to call himself a scapegoat because scapegoating worked in practice while it still had religious power behind it. He says, “You loaded the sins of the city on to the goat’s back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to read the ritual, including the gods. Then the gods died, and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help” (91). It means that if David is considered to be a scapegoat, all must understand him with a sense of divinity for his sexual instincts. He is interested in following his instincts and so even after his disgrace, he immediately accepts Bev’s invitation and has sex with her. About this experience he reflects: “Let me not forget
this day. . . . After the sweet young flesh of Melanie Isaacs, this is what I have come to. This is what I will have to get used to, this and even less than this” (150). He compares Bev with Emma Bovary “strutting before the mirror after her first big afternoon. I have a lover! I have a lover! sings Emma to herself” (150).

David’s obsession with sex is not over even when he visits Melanie’s parents to apologize. He looks at Melanie’s sister, Desiree and gets lost in a deliberation: “The two of them in the same bed: an experience fit for a king” (164). He still is ready for inflicting sexual violence on the innocent girl. To Isaacs he says, “In Melanie’s case, however, something unexpected happened. I think of it as a fire. She struck up a fire in me” (166). About the fire he wants to explain:

A fire: what is remarkable about that? If a fire goes out, you strike a match and start another one. That is how I used to think. Yet in the olden days people worshipped fire. They thought twice before letting a flame die, a flame-god. It was that kind of flame your daughter kindled in me. Not hot enough to burn me up, but real: real fire. (166)

While taking dinner with Isaacs:

He remembers Melanie, on the first evening of their closer acquaintance, sitting beside him on the sofa drinking the coffee with the shot-glass of whisky in it that was intended to – the word comes up reluctantly lubricate her. Her trim little body; her sexy clothes; her eyes gleaming with excitement. Stepping out in the forest where the wild wolf prowls. (168)

Finally David confesses to Isaacs, “I am sorry for what I took your daughter through. You have a wonderful family. I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs Isaacs. I ask for your pardon” (171). He further says:

Normally . . . after a certain age one is too old to learn lessons. One can only be punished and punished. But perhaps that is not true, not always. I wait to see. As for God, I am not a believer, so I will have to translate what you call God and God’s wishes into my own terms. In my own terms, I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter. I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself. It is not a punishment I have refused. I do not murmur against it. On the contrary, I am living it out from day to day,
trying to accept disgrace as my state of being. Is it enough for God, do you think, that I live in disgrace without term? (172)

David who is not a believer at last gives in and asks Isaacs whether his disgraceful state is enough as his punishment from God. Isaacs tells him: “the path you are on is one that God has ordained for you. It is not for us to interfere” (174). But David is incurable! He goes to the theatre to see Melanie’s drama. When spectators appreciate Melanie, he cannot resist a flush of pride and “Mine!” he wants to say, “turning to them, as if she were his daughter” (191). Melanie’s boyfriend, Ryan spots David. He threatens David and warns him, “Stay with your own kind” (194). Ryan threatens David to leave Melanie alone. But David thinks, “What does he know of the force that drives the utmost strangers into each other’s arms, making them kin, kind, beyond all prudence? . . . The seed of generation, driven to perfect itself, driving deep into the woman’s body, driving to bring the future into being. Drive, driven” (194). Returning from the theatre he takes a street walker prostitute. He is thankful for being enriched “By Melanie, by the girl in Touws River; by Rosalind, Bev Shaw, Soraya: by each of them he was enriched, and by the others too, even the least of them, even the failures. Like a flower blooming in his breast, his heart floods with thankfulness” (192).

David, “enriched” by his sexual violence, is shocked to witness his lesbian daughter, Lucy gang-raped by the blacks. He wonders: “Rape, god of chaos and mixture, violator of seclusions. Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow. Did they know what they were up to, those men? Had the word got around?” (105). He thinks that perhaps he is wrong in calling Lucy homosexual because probably she simply prefers female company. “Or perhaps that is all that lesbians are: women who have no need of men” (104). He has never thought of the results of his sex with women but about Lucy he is worried. To Bev, he says, “There’s the risk of pregnancy” and “There’s the risk of venereal infection. There’s the risk of HIV. Shouldn’t she see a gynaecologist as well?” (106). Lucy does not want to go to market after the event and remains calm. David knows:

She does not reply. She would rather 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)

In spite of all the trouble, Lucy refuses his offer to leave her smallholding and begin a new life elsewhere. Like many interpreters, Maja Wolny, about South African reality with reference to sexual violence says, “A woman in South Africa hears about rape every day. She knows that on the red clay roads there prowl gangs of aggressive youngsters, for whom an assault is a sign of power and adulthood” (57).

Lucy’s attitude towards rape highlights the racial history of South Africa. She says, “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” (156; ellipsis in orig.). Waldemar Żyszkiwicz, writes in Tygodnik Solidarność that in the novel there is a “contemporary picture of South Africa taken from a nightmare.” David, too, accepts the reality of colonial history. He says that it was history talking through the rapists; it was “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors” (156). Lucy is afraid that the rapists would again attack her in future. She is sure that stealing things is just incidental, a side-line but “they do rape” (158) Lucy looks at her rape from a different angle and says:

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; ellipsis in orig.)

Lucy puts forth the most violent and real picture of rape. About men and sex, she says to David:

Hatred . . . . When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me anymore. May be, 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, put all your weight on her – isn’t it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exciting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood – doesn’t it feel like murder, like getting away with murder? (158; ellipsis in orig.)
David questions Lucy: “Was it the same with both of them? Like fighting with death?” (159) Lucy says, “They spur each other on. That’s probably why they do it together. Like dogs in a pack” (159). The third boy was there to learn. When David is reminded of the three men, he thinks: “They do rape” and “purring” is the word that comes to him (159).

The violence and conflicts in the novel have received different responses. For instance, Max du Preez wishes in The Star that J. M. Coetzee “would stop being such an intellectual recluse and start experiencing the fullness of our different societies, and discover the beauty and excitement and warmth that co-exist with the resentment and hatred. – But Disgrace remains a grim, dark and pessimistic book about post-apartheid South Africa.” Apart from such reactions it is not easy to forget the brutal treatment given to the blacks by the whites.

Although David accepts Lucy’s rape as the revenge of the colonial or apartheid history of ancestors, he is shocked by Lucy’s decision of keeping the child from the pregnancy due to the rape. She is not ready for abortion and does not want “to go through with again” (198). The word ‘again’ shows that Lucy has undergone an abortion sometimes in the past. She is not ready to choose against the child. This acceptance is Lucy’s “paying” for the past wrongs in history. Her decision may seem to be wrong for the whites but such possibility of acceptance cannot be denied in South African situation. The rape and the child are described thus:

The gang of three. Three fathers in one. Rapists rather than robbers. Lucy called them – rapists cum taxgatherers roaming the area, attacking women, indulging their violent pleasures. Well, Lucy was wrong. They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself. And now, lo and behold, the child! Already he is calling it the child when it is not more than a worm in his daughter’s womb. What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog’s urine? (199)

Things like this can happen in “this place being South Africa” (112). Lucy’s paying for her guilt is an answer to a question asked in Bleed by Carl Niehaus, who worked as a South African Ambassador in The Hague. He questions, “Is it possible that white South Africans can learn what humility means unless they are first humiliated
themselves?” Lucy’s disgrace opens her eyes to comprehend the actuality in South Africa.

One of the three boys, Pollux, being the relative of Petrus makes David upset. Lucy’s situation becomes unreasonable and menacing to David. David’s anger reaches its climax when he catches Pollux peering in through the bathroom window and peeping at Lucy. He lets Lucy’s dog mount on Pollux’s body. Lucy comes out to his help wearing only a wrapper. As she rises the sash slips loose and her breasts are bared. David stares and Pollux, too, stares unashamedly at the breasts. Lucy is not angry with Pollux and considers him to be a disturbed child. For Petrus marriage is the only solution for a lonely white woman’s safety. Hence he says, “It is dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry” (202). He himself is ready to marry Lucy. Lucy tells David:

Propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won’t contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, ditto. But then the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land. (204)

Lucy will be his “bywoner” (204) and keep the kennels. She is not sure whether Petrus would want to sleep with her but she does not want to sleep with him. She says to David: “I don’t believe you get the point, David. Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game” (203). Lucy wants peace and she is ready “to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace” (208). In the words of Ashwin Desai, “Lucy’s utter silence about why she makes the choices she does, allows one to read that it is only through acts like Petrus’s and Lucy’s that white guilt may be overcome” (1).

The blacks protect each other from the whites. For instance, Petrus says to David that Pollux “is a child. He is my family, my people” (201). In the same way the other two rapists are also the people of Petrus, and together they are natives. Petrus is ready to marry Lucy who says, “In any event it is not me he is after, he is after the farm. The farm is my dowry” (203). It means that farm is very important for the
natives. By becoming the byowner Lucy wants not to lose her tie with the land. And thus the land is important to both the natives and the whites. Coetzee has written about the Afrikaans Plaasroman (farm novel) in White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa. In the Afrikaans plaasroman the farm represents a mythical tie uniting the farmer to the land. Farm has a sacred significance and it is supposed to be better than the city. About the famous plaasroman writer C. M. Van den Heever, Coetzee says that he is “broadly concerned to integrate nature into the farm, that is to say, to relate certain Romantic common places about the recovery of man’s truth in nature to the thesis that the Afrikaner will lose his independence and (eventually) his identity if he loses his base in landownership” (110). Petrus, too, wants the land; it is the issue of his identity. In the traditional plaasroman, the farmer is lord on his farm and his wife, his children, his bywoners, his servants are next to him. According to H. P. van Coller, “In Disgrace the role-players in the hierarchy exchange places: Petrus advances in stages from labourer, bywoner, neighbour, to finally, in effect, the owner. Through him are presented the changing post-colonial social relationships in which the former masters become stripped of all their potency” (23). Lucy becomes the bywoner of the black Petrus. Lucy calls her smallholding not farm but “just a piece of land where I grow thing” (200). Her piece of land is a garden also as she grows flowers too along with vegetables. Whatever she calls it, it is close to nature where she wants to live along with Petrus. Lucy suggests that it is essential to allow the natives to be in love with their land so that no violence, even sexual, is inflicted on them. Because the blacks were separated from their land by the whites and so they revenge the white women sexually. In David’s case it can be said that he prefers to live in the country side to protect and help his daughter. It means that he, too, chooses the simple land as his shelter for the remaining days of his life.

It is possible to examine the world of women in this novel as a special subject of study. Melanie’s schedule as a student, her submission to David, and later on the complaint against David can be focused on to comment on the life of the woman as a student. It is also possible to study Lucy’s life as a white woman. Her encounter with the blacks and her reaction toward her disgrace can be a focus. Her lesbian life and later on her acceptance of the motherhood make her world reasonably distinctive. Even the life of Rosalind and her comments on David’s behaviour provide a considerable sight of the world of women. Bev’s friendship with David and her sexual involvement with him can also be studied. Soraya and other prostitutes, and the
women who come in contact with David give a different world of women as sex commodities. The world of white as well as nonwhite women is exposed in the novel.

- **Violence: Socio-political**

During the socio-political changes in South Africa in 1980s and 1990s, the government failed to eliminate human misery. In the post-apartheid South Africa, the wounds of the past are inflicted on the marginalized whites. The codes of behavior for both the black and the white have perverted and changed. At one more interpretative level *Disgrace* explores the socio-political climate in post-apartheid South Africa. There are examples of socio-political violence.

The first incident of socio-political violence in the novel occurs after the threat to David by Melanie’s boyfriend. David’s car, parked in the street, is vandalized. The tyres are deflated, glue is injected into the door locks, newspaper is pasted over the windscreen, and the paintwork is scratched. The locks are to be replaced. David’s car in such a condition reflects the wrath of the students in the university. During the Rape Awareness Week in university a pamphlet is slipped under David’s door: “WOMEN SPEAK OUT” and the message is: “YOUR DAYS ARE OVER CASANOVA” (43). These examples point out the social awareness of the students concerning rape. They are ready to show aggression toward the exploiters.

The other examples of socio-political violence express the deep-rooted racial hatred in South Africa which is not safe socially and politically, particularly for whites. Lucy, who has chosen the work on the land, needs the dogs because “There are the dogs. Dogs still mean something. The more dogs, the more deterrence” (60). What the whites in South Africa need is “Dogs and a gun; bread in the oven and a crop in the earth” (60). It is also clarified that South Africa is “a country where dogs are bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man” (110). Lucy lives on her smallholding with dogs like Dobermanns, German Shepherds, ridgebacks, bull terriers, Rottweilers. It is surprising and curious for David to think about Lucy “that he and her mother, city folk, intellectuals, should have produced this throwback, this sturdy young settler. But perhaps it was not they who produced her: perhaps history had the larger share” (61). It means that Lucy needs the protection of dogs because her white ancestors have behaved wrongly with the natives and hence in post-
apartheid era she needs protection from the natives. Such history is unavoidable in South African texts. Hence, Susan Gallagher says, “During the forty years of opposition to apartheid, solidarity criticism – advocating social realism and critiquing texts in terms of their adherence to a materialistic dialectic – was a major force in South African politics and art” (379). On the background of social unrest Lucy is not sure about her safety although she has good relations with her black neighbour, Petrus. There are white persons like Bev Shaw, a veterinarian, who are doing good service “to lighten the load of Africa’s suffering beasts” (84). She treats the African animals very sympathetically. She almost humanizes them. For example one woman who brings her suffering goat says to Bev, “Five hundred rand you pay for a man like him” (82). It is as if the goat is a human being. Hence, Geoffrey Baker says, “Not to be unfair, Coetzee ensures that it is not always human who are compared to animals, but also animals who are humanized, . . .” (44).

Lucy and David become the victims of the black’s revenge. Three blacks enter into Lucy’s home and lock the door after allowing Lucy in. David enters the kitchen by kicking the kitchen door and shouts loudly for Lucy but one man from the three empties one-litre bottle by the neck and demands the keys to David. “Take them” David says and requests: “Take everything. Just leave my daughter alone” (94). But the men are not kind. Soon the barking of the dogs grows louder and more excited. David stands on the toilet seat and peers through the bars of the window. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice and one dog is shot through the chest and dies at once; another with a gaping throat-wound sits down heavily. The man picks up the remaining three dogs also. Footfalls along the passage and the door to the toilet swings open again. The second man stands before David; behind him he glimpses the boy eating from a tub of ice cream. David tries to come out but falls heavily. As he lies sprawled he is splashed from head to foot with liquid. His eyes burn, he tries to wipe them. He recognizes the smell: methylated spirits. Struggling to get up, he is pushed back into the lavatory. The scrape of a match and at once he is bathed in cool blue flame. “So he was wrong! He and his daughter are not being let off lightly after all! He can burn, he can die; and if he can die, then so can Lucy, above all Lucy!” (96). David strikes at his face like a madman; his hair crackles as it catches alight. A flame dances on the back of his hand. He struggles to his knees and plunges the hand into the toilet bowl. Behind him the door closes and the key turns. He hangs over the toilet bowl, splashing water over his face, dousing his head. There
is a nasty smell of singed hair. He stands up, beats out the last of the flames on his clothes. With wads of wet paper he bathes his face. His eyes are stinging. When he runs a hand over his head his fingertips came away black with soot. His whole scalp is hairless and tender. He hears his car start. The refrigerator is open and food lies scattered all over the floor. The living-room is in a mess. David’s car, jacket, shoes and other things are taken by the attackers. The telephone is smashed.

David wants to console and soothe Lucy but Lucy requests David that when people ask, “You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me” (99). In his embrace “she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing” (99). In post-apartheid era relations between the blacks and whites were very tense. Pawel Goźniński says in Gazeta Wyborcza that Disgrace is “the best novel about South Africa changing after apartheid was abolished.” Describing the post-apartheid period, A. Foley says, “different forms of dread ranged from a straightforward fear of personal attack, to a vague terror of some undefined menace lurking in the darkness, to anxiety about the human and social cost of political violence, to nightmarish presentiments of dispossession, retribution and national catastrophe” (24).

The attack, the rape, robbery etc. are very common in South Africa. David knows, “It happens every day, every hour, every minute . . . in every quarter of the country. Count yourself lucky to have escaped with your life. Count yourself lucky not be a prisoner in the car at his moment, speeding away, or at the bottom of a donga with a bullet in your head. Count Lucy lucky too. Above all Lucy” (98). Lucy’s neighbour, Ettinger, too, says to David, “The best is, you save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, not any more, you can be sure” (100). Bill Shaw says, “It’s like being in a war all over again” (102). Thus the comments by Bill and Ettinger express the routine violence in their country. Ettinger is suspicious of Petrus for his absence on the fatal day of attack. He says with reference to the blacks: “Not one of them you can trust” (109).

Lucy does not tell about her rape to the police though David says to her, “Lucy, my dearest, why don’t you want to tell? It was a crime. There is no shame in being the object of crime. You did not choose to be the object. You are an innocent party” (111). But Lucy firmly tells David:

Nothing could be further from my thoughts. This has nothing to do with you, David. You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. I will tell you, as long as you agree not to raise
the subject again. The reason is that, 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 be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone. (112)

David tries to persuade Lucy by telling her about the situation around her:

I don’t agree. I don’t agree with what you are doing. Do you think that by meekly accepting what happened to you, you can set yourself apart from farmers like Ettinger? Do you think what happened here was an exam: if you come through, you get a diploma and safe conduct into the future, or a sign to paint on the door-lintel that will make the plague pass you by? That is not how vengeance works, Lucy. Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets. (112)

The white man’s fate is questioned by David. He asks Lucy: “Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crime of the past by suffering in the present?” (112). Lucy’s act is the answer to the social problems in South Africa. In the words of Frank Schulze-Engler what is significant is the creation of “conditions of possibility” rather than “furthering of particular political or cultural agendas” (35). Such possible condition is created by Lucy. She wants to protect her privacy. David protects his privacy in his trial. But Lucy is cognizant of the cultural context of the crime. She knows the nature of the criminal justice system in South Africa and does not hold unrealistic expectations for the prosecution of crime. Lucy is a victim of rape and David is an exploiter of innocence and a rapist.

David is worried about Lucy’s safety. He thinks to install bars, security gates, a perimeter fence. Lucy’s house should be turned into a fortress and Lucy ought to set a pistol and a two-way radio for her safety. David knows that “She is here because she loves the land and the old, ländliche way of life. If that way of life is doomed, what is left for her to love?” (113). David’s worry states the situation about South Africa. It is a new world. David is suspicious about Petrus but he cannot drive him away because:

In the old days one could have had it out with Petrus. In the old days one could have had it out to the extent of losing one’s temper and sending him packing and hiring someone in his place. But though Petrus is paid a wage, Petrus is no longer, strictly speaking, hired help. It is hard to say what Petrus is, strictly speaking. The word that seems
to serve best, however, is neighbour. Petrus is a neighbour who at present happens to sell his labour, because that is what suits him. He sells his labour under contract, unwritten contract, and that contract makes no provision for dismissal on grounds of suspicion. It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it. (116-17)

David is sure that Petrus will buy Lucy’s land and Ettinger’s land also because he is a peasant and a man of country. He would not mind hearing Petrus’s story but not in English because he is convinced that “English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (117). Petrus has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place. When Lucy and David go to Petrus’s party, he does not play the eager host, does not offer them a drink, but does say, “‘No more dogs. I am not any more dog-man’” (129). Petrus is not ready to call Pollux guilty even though he is recognized by Lucy as one of the attackers. David tells Petrus that Lucy wants a good neighbour and that she loves the Eastern Cape and so he should help him in punishing Pollux. But Petrus tells David that he will protect Lucy. Here the roles have changed. Power shifts from the whites to the blacks, to Petrus. About Lucy, Anvar Sadhath says that Lucy’s “plight into the real heart of darkness, acculturating herself to the value systems of the primal consciousness, coincides with David’s refusal to accept it.” But according to him, for Lucy, “she has her own justifications . . . She comes to terms with the mysterious and the un governable, which are beyond comprehension and therefore accepts the given state of affairs. To her, the immediate choice between the civilized and the primitive is beyond doubt, the latter” (182).

Lucy wants to stay with her land, her home, and her kennels. David, on the other hand, is not tied to any physical place, what ties him is his ideas. David becomes “a recluse, a country recluse” (120). According to Jacques Van Der Elst, “Disgrace gives one a lot to ponder about – in fact Coetzee gives whites in South Africa directives on guilt and repentance, but the author does not give away what he really thinks” (43). But it can be noted that Lucy gives the answer by making adjustment with the situation. Lucy very easily walks on her farm; she is “A frontier farmer of the new breed” (62) and “Nothing could be more simple” (61) for her. She tells David, “‘if I leave the farm now I will leave defeated, and will taste that defeat for the rest of my life’” (161). She decides to give birth to the child. She accepts the existence of Pollux around her because for her he is “a fact of life” (208). According to Bev,
“Women are adaptable. Lucy is adaptable. And she is young. She lives closer to the ground than you. Than either of us” (210). Lucy’s decision is a powerful insight for South Africa. The story of the novel makes Ranjit Das say that *Disgrace* belongs to the literary tradition of “neo-metaphysical discourse in the line of Dostoevsky, Kafka and Beckett. But Coetzee’s project was to rid his novel of all the trappings of the metaphysical novel – even of its highly concealed modern versions. And Coetzee is entirely successful in his project” (172).

On the background of the past of the South Africa, acceptance of the guilt by the whites becomes noteworthy in post-apartheid era. According to the philosopher Johan Degenaar, “Events in the past have to be interpreted in an imaginative way. . . stories about the past enable us to create and share a common future . . . it is through the art of storytelling that a culture is enriched with intertextual significance” (11). The socio-political violence in the novel underlines the need of accepting the rights of the blacks along with the protection of the whites. The land on which the whites live is the land of the blacks and hence robbing the blacks of their land creates problems. They turn to violence and imitate the whites. Coetzee, being the African writer, cannot escape himself from the past of South Africa. He handles this issue in a humanitarian way. What James Ngugi says about the African writer is true for Coetzee. He says:

> The novelist is haunted by a sense of the past. His work is often an attempt to come to terms with thing that has been; has struggled, as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, and the novelist at his best must feel himself, as I think Tolstoy did in *War and Peace*, swimming struggling, defining himself in the mainstream of his people’s historical drama. At the same time he must be able to stand aside and merely contemplate the current (4).

Coetzee puts forth the Africans’ struggle, stands aside and contemplates on the possible answers for their wretchedness.

The study of the sexual and socio-political violence in *Disgrace* gives the picture of South Africa. David’s sexual obsession leads him to be disgraced. Lucy says, “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
right, no dignity.” It is “Like a dog” (205) for David. In this connection it is appropriate to quote Elizabeth Anker who says:

Embracing the need for an existence divested of economies of dominance, superiority, and subordination, Lucy instead endorses equality not only with other people but also with other beings. What Lurie perceives as shameful dehumanization, Lucy celebrates as a reciprocal willingness to “start at ground level” precursory to class, race, and gender oppression and other social stratifications. (255)

For Petrus, the wrong done to Lucy is done by his people and hence, he cannot blame his own people including Pollux. He has to forgive them all. Pollux, who is beaten by David looks at him and Lucy and threatens, “‘We will kill you all’” (207). His threat is the threat of the blacks to the whites. Lucy understands it. David, too, understands that Lucy’s child will be “after all a child of this earth. They will not be able to deny that” (216). To use C. G. Jung’s words, she has, “all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains that fosters growth and fertility” (82). She becomes ready to love the child and says to David, “‘Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too’” (216).

Lucy has a very clear understanding about the circumstances in her country. When David tells her to reject Petrus’s offer, she tells him:

No. Wait. Before you get on your high horse with Petrus, take a moment to consider my situation objectively. Objectively I am a woman alone. I have not brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here. To whom can I turn for protection, for patronage? To Ettinger? It is just a matter of time before Ettinger is found with a bullet in his back. Practically speaking, there is only Petrus left. Petrus may not be a big man but he is big enough for someone small like me. And at least I know Petrus. I have no illusions about him. I know what I would be letting myself in for. (204)

Revealing the influence of the political strains on his writing, Coetzee says in his Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech, “In a society of masters and slaves, no one is free. The slave is not free, because he is not his own master; the master is not free because he cannot do without the slave. For centuries South Africa was a society of
masters and serfs; now it is a land where the serfs are in open rebellion and the masters are in disarray”(96). This elucidation by Coetzee clearly proves to be accurate in the relations between the whites and the blacks in the novel.

The colonial history of South Africa is a factual story of long struggle. It is true what Dan Jacobson says, “A colonial culture is one which has no memory” (7) and hence there is a possibility of its hiding the violence. The study of such violence becomes significant because in the words of Edward Said:

For in the decades-long struggle to achieve decolonization and independence from European control, literature has played a crucial role in the re-establishment of a national cultural heritage, in the re-establishment of native idioms, in the re-imaging and re-figuring of local histories, geographies, communities. As such then literature not only mobilized active resistance to incursions from the outside but also contributed massively as the shaper, creator, agent of illumination within the realm of a colonized. (3)

Literature plays very important role in the colonial and post-colonial history of South Africa.

David’s mind slowly changes but as Mike Kissack and Michael Titlestad say, it is from Lucy, “that he derives a sense of the importance of the limitations of the present and the immediate, and of the need to engage with these in a way that mitigates harm” (146). Although it is too late for David to be good person, he hires a room nearby Lucy’s residence and continues to visit Lucy and helps Bev in her clinic. Andrew ÓHehir in his review of Disgrace says, if “David actually reclaims some dignity by the end. . . it is because he gives up everything, gives up more than a dog ever could . . . without thought for himself” (3). David is seen caring the corpses of the dead dogs euthanized in the animal clinic. He probably gains insight into the suffering of animals as well as human beings. It is very appropriate to quote Ranti Williams who says, “At the beginning, Lurie insists he has no need of grace, but he finds himself on the path towards a new life at the end. The start of this journey for Lurie is the end of another extraordinary journey for the reader. Both might just bridge the distance between disgrace and some sort of grace” (23).

Viewed as a post-colonial work; the novel succeeds in developing the consciousness of the characters and focuses on the significance of the past glory and peace of the natives’ country. The past of South Africa is affected by the politics of
the colonizers. The present of the country is interpreted by demonstrating the class, gender, and hierarchical interactions between the whites and the blacks. The possession of land, fear of displacement, and ethnicity form the major post-colonial subjects which can be specially highlighted. The vision of opulence in Africa and even peaceful co-existence between the whites and the blacks in post-apartheid era is endangered and the novel gives a call of attention to it.

It is possible to study this novel and find out whether there are probabilities of studying it from the Maxist point of view. Power structures can be observed to find out their effects on society. The code of conduct, values, legal processes, ideologies, and the soci-political systems in the various institutions can be highlighted. The racial hatred, insecurity, social justice, the role of the intellectuals in society, gender oppression, and human rights can become key concerns for the Marxist study.

The third person narration succeeds in captivating the readers from beginning to end of the novel. The effective dialogues are employed to increase the curiosity and make the novel interesting.

There are present no children in the novel. However, the birth of Lucy’s child remains a major matter of concern. It is a different child to be born. It will have a unique identity. Can’t this child be taken as a new beginning of Africa? The child’s birth indicates that mere political alteration is not sufficient to diminish human wretchedness but the actual efforts are important for it.

Lucy’s becoming mother of the child of new South Africa and David’s decision to stay in the vicinity of Lucy’s farm accentuate their bond with the Mother Nature or the land of South Africa. The blacks and the whites have to live together in South Africa. About the union of the human being with others and nature; what Erich Fromm, a brilliant thinker on psychological, philosophical and social issues, says can be noted here. He says:

The human desire to experience union with others is rooted in the specific conditions of existence . . . . By the combination of minimal instinctive determination and maximal development of the capacity for reason, we human beings have lost our original oneness with nature. In order not to feel utterly isolated – which would, in fact, condemn us to insanity – we need to find a new unity: with our fellow beings and with nature. (107)
It means that if the whites allow the natives to be in possession of their own land; the natives will be contented and the whites will also be able to recognize their share on the land of South Africa.
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