

A Colonized Colonist: The Question of the White Female Colonist in John M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*

*Aya Ahmad and Deema Ammari **

ABSTRACT

This paper traces the differing experiences of a female protagonist in voicing herself as a white colonizer in the land of the colonized in two contexts: her relationship with the white male colonizer, and that with the colonized native. The protagonist's marginalization by the white colonizer, on the one hand, and the colonized native man on the other, does not merely reduce her white supremacy to inferiority, but rather becomes the main reason for the protagonist's sociological confusion, ultimately resulting in her mental illness, which will be argued as a mode of resistance against those patriarchally hierarchized representations. This theme will be tackled in the character of Magda in John Maxwell Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). The selected literary work will be examined through a postcolonial feminist lens, through which gendered hierarchical structures will be explored, and madness will be employed as a possible means for female empowerment.

Keywords: Female-colonist; intersectionality; colonized colonist; creative madness.

Introduction: Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*

Nineteenth century British Imperialism was widely captured in the literary works of the time, emphasizing the Empire's responsibility toward civilizing the colonized Dark Continent, Africa. Such a depiction produced binary projections of white supremacy as a necessity to save the troubled uncivilized native Other. The binary dynamics of white superiority versus native inferiority rendered the interracial relationship difficult to modify at the time, as white settlers rapidly increased in number, specifically in colonized South Rhodesia, Zimbabwe today (Kirton, 10).

Male colonists in South Rhodesia seized land and worked mainly in agriculture to secure ascendancy and "settlement [...] to create and control markets abroad for Western goods, as well as securing the natural resources and labor-power of different lands and peoples at the lowest possible cost" (McLeod 7). Female colonists however, managed the domestic and social aspects of the colonies, away from their spouses, thus creating varied experiences that were chronicled in their self-narratives. Despite the female colonists' association with white hegemony by token of their race, their stories mainly feature isolation, loneliness and depression. In addition, the literary and critical projections of their lives do not take precedence over the status of native women, who are in turn given greater attention as having been doubly marginalized.

Interestingly though, the experiences of white female colonists in South Rhodesia influenced the author John Maxwell Coetzee, whose first hand experiences are projected in his writings that depict the white female colonist undergoing psychological conflict in her relationship with her peer male colonist and the colonized native man. As a South African novelist, Coetzee sets his novel *In the Heart of the Country* during the period of apartheid; the most oppressive of all systems. His novel projects the psychological effects that the colonial attitude has on the white female colonist, Magda, a spinster who lives alone with her father on their South Rhodesian farm. She has almost no contact with other people except for her cruel father and the obedient native servants. As a result of her father's marriage to a native woman, Magda allegedly kills him and gets involved in a romantic relationship with her native servant Hendrik.

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She documents the details of her narrative herself, which reflects her internalization of her situation, her isolation in the colony and the relationship she wishes to have with the natives. Although Magda's story commences with her mental instability, she realizes that her mental deterioration is due to her confusion with her shifting positioning from master to woman. The recognition that she attempts to gain through the relationship she develops with Hendrik, further adds to her confusion, ultimately leading to her insanity.

The paper at hand maintains that Coetzee's novel explores the possibility for the white female colonist to play the role of the colonizer in the context of white society and with the black native. Most importantly, it sheds light on the significant role that patriarchy plays in the projection of the white female colonist's status, and how it influences the interplay of her positioning from master to subordinate in her relationship with the native man. Ultimately, by examining how her rejection in both contexts, the white and the black, leads to her insanity, the paper sheds focus on how madness may be construed by the author as empowering the protagonist.

Simultaneously then, addressing the aforementioned questions, deems a thorough study into the relationship that constitutes the white female colonist, and the white male patriarch, from a socio-political standpoint pertinent. Focus will then be shed on how the female colonist's gender status affects her role as the master in the context of the colonized native, which will ultimately be questioned as she attempts to impose her power over him, especially in the absence of the white male colonizer. The confusion and possible madness that are caused by her representational shift from master to woman will eventually be explored from a feminist point of view.

1. Male Hegemony: Female Colonist or Woman?

The white female colonist has throughout postcolonial fiction been represented as "privileged" or merely "half-colonized" in comparison to her "darker native sisters" (Visel, 39). Robin Visel contends that the status of white female colonists differs from that of the colonized black women, through which the latter are doubly marginalized by white male superiority, in addition to that of the black patriarch. The white female colonist is paradoxically placed in a precarious position, as she is oppressed by the white male patriarchal social structures, yet "shares in the power and guilt of the colonists" (39).

In "Race and Gender", Nancy Stepan explains the position of white and native women in a colonial setting stating that: "lower races represented the 'female' type of the human species [as females represented] the 'lower race' of gender" (264). In other words, colonized colored women were viewed as the lowest in the racial and gender hierarchy, as they projected double inferiority first as women of color, and then as women. On the other hand, white female colonists were privileged as pertaining to their race, but not their gender because they complied with the image of domesticity that was still attached to them in the colonies, thus adding to the complexity of their self-representation (81).

However, in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak contends that all women, whether white or native are regarded as "Other" or "Subaltern". They have the ability to speak out but they cannot because they represent the other extreme of the patriarchally hierarchized system. Spivak argues that the only voice to be actively heard is that of the white male, stating that: "white men are saving brown women from brown men" (297), thus placing themselves on top of the hierarchy. Whether 'brown' is a physical reference to native women or a generalized connotation that includes all women, they are to be saved from the native man who projects potential threat to white male hegemony. White male colonists also impose their power due to the fixed patriarchal social norms that place them in the center and women on the margins. Nevertheless, literature shows that regardless of the colonists' gender, they feel the necessity to impose their power over the natives to reinforce their white hegemony, as it is the main colonist's ideology which is based on their belief that they are superior and the natives are allegedly inferior even though they are the indigenous inhabitants of the land (419). Such a colonial pattern does not permit direct contact with natives and further allows their dehumanization on the premise of embodying savagery and barbarism, who are in desperate need for direction and development, which consequently creates psychological complications with the natives usually resulting in violence and chaos. In the same sense, the white man not only oppresses native women, as white women

have also been raised upon and taught obedience and subordination to the white patriarch over centuries.

However, in colonial relations, the racial binary paradigm of white/black is not as simplistic as it may seem, especially when directly intersecting with gender. White women are objectified as unattainable property of white men through the stereotypical image given, not merely for white women as lawful property, but more so for native men as violent, savage and sexually threatening. These double strategies strip white women from their individuality, thus reducing them to sexual objects constantly in danger and in need of the heroic protection of their white men. Concurrently, white women serve as a tool that masks a certain fear that the white man has in regard to the potential superior sexual potency that native men may embody, as threatening to white patriarchy. The dominant white culture projects "all of those qualities and characteristics which it most fears and hates within itself" onto the natives, ultimately creating for the subordinate group "a wholly negative cultural identity" (Walsh 7).

As it follows, the universality of women's oppression by white men in a colonial context is discussed by Adrienne Rich in her article, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism and Gynophobia" stating that white women, although racist with the black natives, are led by the white man's racist ideology which makes them just as oppressed as native women. Rich opines that:

Women did not create the power relationship between master and slave . . . but in the history of [...] slavery and racism white women have been impressed into its service, not only as the marriage-property and creature-objects of white men, but as their active and passive instruments (281).

Subsequently, the hierarchized relationship projected in colonization is not merely the predicament of the colonized subject, but more so places the white female colonist in a dual representational quandary. She is, on the one hand, the silent 'Angel in the House', an inferior woman, in the context of the white patriarchal society, yet is found to shift roles onto that of the oppressive master in the presence of the native man. However, her multiple representation as colonizer and colonized is found to lead to the white female colonist's attempt to affiliate her weakness with that of the native man's, in the absence of the white male colonizer, on the premise that recognition as a white woman takes precedence over her darker sisters. This is ironically found even more complex, as the native man fails to recognize her race and demotes her representation to that of a mere objectified gender. In other words, in the presence of the native man, her otherness is still not dark enough to justify her affiliation with him, she is ultimately led to her representational confusion.

2. The Native Man's Predicament: Fight for Recognition

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Franz Fanon discusses the psychological effects of racism on natives, focusing on the attitude of both colonizer and colonized, as he states that "White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (Fanon 1,3). He argues that both races are enslaved as: "the Negro [is] enslaved by his inferiority, [while] the white man [is] enslaved by his superiority [. With both alike, they] behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (Fanon 1,60), further insisting that the white colonizer is trapped in his whiteness while the colonized native is likewise enslaved by his blackness (Fanon 1,13).

Although both are dictated and directed by their roles, Fanon contends in *The Wretched of the Earth* that: "The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession" (Fanon 2, 38). The colonized native's ultimate wish is to occupy the position of power that the white colonizer inhabits. He also believes that the colonizer is aware of that gaze, which is why he, the colonizer, always takes the defensive mechanism (Fanon 2, 38). It is then through a lower Other that the native man will gain worth and self-esteem, as the white man is the only admirable and respected citizen in the colony (Fanon 1, 467). Imitating the white man's attitude is subsequently done unconsciously when occupying the same geographic space.

Homi Bhabha expands on Fanon's theory in "The Other Question" by further exploring the concept of mimicry. He states:

In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject

its representations as a normalizing judgment. Only then does it become possible to understand the productive ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity (Bhabha, 67).

Bhabha condemns the colonizer's stereotypical image that is sustained about the colonized native, further objecting to the way that the colonizer disregards the psychological aspects of the identity of the Other. However, Bhabha projects the concept of mimicry within the realm of anxiety toward the colonizer, which offers a resistance strategy for the colonized native. In this sense, colonial mimicry becomes "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (122). He also states that: "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence; in order to be effective; mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (122), thus causing anxiety toward the fear of rebellion which may "disrupt [...] authority" (126).

Under colonization then, the native man is merely deemed efficient for manpower whether on plantations or within the household, and so when the black man encounters white supremacist hostility, he will attempt to replace his lost subjectivity by avenging himself against the white colonizer in any means possible. In this sense, the black man substitutes his lack of power by projecting the colonial attitude of power and hostility onto the white woman, which he finds rewarding as it feeds into his self-worth (233). However, the brutal treatment that the white male colonizer projects and is reflected in the black man's attitude is also projected in the lives of white female colonizers. Applying male superiority to the white female becomes a means of imitating the role of power, thus assuming white supremacy. The attitude of imitation as a result to constant oppression that the colonized native upholds is best described as thus:

[...] I am a brute beast, [...] my people and I are like a walking dung-heap that disgustingly fertilizes sweet sugar cane and silky cotton, [...] I have no use in the world. Then I will quite simply try to make myself white (Fanon 1, 98).

In other words, Fanon suggests that imitation is a form of internalization of inferiority, which leads to his double consciousness that results in his motivation to dominate the white woman in order to be white (10). Simultaneously then, one of the means by which to imitate white male supremacy is the reductionist gaze and attitude that the native male projects onto the white female colonist from one of race/superiority to one of gender/inferiority.

3. The Double-Oppression of White Female Colonists

In colonial South Rhodesia, the development of any form of relationship between the native man and the female colonist was deemed atrocious and unheard of to the point of regulating laws that controlled any possible sexual contact between a white woman and a native man. Although native men were given privileges regarding their relationships with their native female partners, they were forbidden from developing any form of relationship with the white women of colonial Africa. Racial oppression was a fixed pattern in the colony and the regulation of sex by the white patriarchal and colonial society in the early colonial era clearly bore this matrix of domination. Along those lines, Clarence Lusane explains in *Hitler's Black Victims*:

While white men could freely exercise sexual power over white and black women, and racial power over black men, white women were circumscribed to exhibit only racial power, still a very significant force nevertheless. Black men, trumped by the racial power of white women and the totalizing power of white men, were then left with only a limited gender power whose boundaries were thrown over the political and social spaces of black women (131).

In this regard, Lusane explains the power that the white male has over the colonized natives, either men or women in terms of race, sex and gender. White women's only privilege is their race over both native men and women, who are consequently oppressed by the black men's patriarchal confusion with the white man's absolute power and the white woman's racial prejudices. With her inevitable and inescapable gendered and racial oppression, Fanon suggests that a black woman prefers to have her oppression come with some advantage, as being with a white man instead of a native does not merely save her from the latter's supremacy, but more so gives her a sense of whiteness. Fanon contends that "It is always essential to avoid falling back into the pit of niggerhood, [...] whether in a casual flirtation or in a serious affair, [she] is determined to select the least black of the men" (47-50). For Fanon, white supremacy gives native

women the justification to be with white men, because being in a relationship with a white man turns them into white privileged individuals.

Similarly, the black man's relationship with a white woman improves his gender and racial statuses, out of revenge against white injustice. Fanon writes of "the Negro who wants to go to bed with a white woman" that "there is clearly a wish to be white. A lust for revenge, in any case" (14). Fanon also suggests that this may happen if the black woman marries a white man: By controlling a white woman, the native man's gender position shifts from one of inferiority to that of superiority because his behavior around the white woman is not merely based on her gender, but also her race, thus justifying the native man's determination in projecting his control over a white woman. A romantic involvement with a white woman then regenerates the native man's superiority and helps him assume whiteness, through which he feels worthy of love and human gratitude: "By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a White man. I am a White man. Her love takes me into the noble road that leads to total realization...I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness" (63). In *Taboo Subjects*, Gwen Bergner also argues that gender authority which white and native men impose is executed through sexual acts with women whether native or white. Bergner proposes that the white man fears the black man's possible authority, which he gains from having a relationship with white women and consequently controlling their bodies and lives. She contends that: "white men articulate a fear of racial difference through concern with black men's influence over the bodies of white women" (9).

However, Bell Hooks asserts that the white female colonist and the native man are construed to shifting roles and positioning as oppressor and oppressed according to the given context, thus placing them on the same pedestal in comparison to the white man's ultimate supremacy and the native woman's double oppression. Hooks explains that:

White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people (16).

In other words, the white female colonist is objectified for her sex by the white male colonist, while projecting white supremacy in her racial interaction with the native man. On the other hand, the native man internalizes his inferiority when interacting with the white male colonist, thus making up for his racial inferiority by practicing his male supremacy over the white female colonist.

Interestingly though, once the white woman is involved in an interracial relationship with a native man, she is capable of affiliating her sexual inferiority with his racial weakness, ultimately finding a point of empathy between them on her part. This positioning, however, is not reciprocated by the native man, who instead, sees in his romantic involvement with a white woman an opportunity for vengeance against white supremacy by means of conquering the white man's property: her white body. Consequently, looked at from this lens, the white female colonist fails at experiencing gender egalitarianism even with the native man, ultimately internalizing her double gendered oppression as she loses her white supremacy to the native man's masculinity. This subsequently results in her confusion, isolation and possible mental illness. Such is the case of Magda, the protagonist of Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*.

3.1. Magda's Colonial Quandary

In the Heart of the Country tackles issues of loneliness and repressed desires in the binary relation between master and slave, as white and black. In *Strong Opinions: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, Chris Danta argues that the novel is full of colonial contradictions that are not resolved as the reader finds "a most troubled and unusual domestic space, not only because the mother is absent and the father is killed, but because the female protagonist, Magda, is clearly posed against the conventional female character we would expect to find in an Afrikaner household" (Danta, 85). Magda's romantic relationship with Hendrick goes beyond her sexual desire for him, onto a desire to find her self-worth as a white woman settled in South Africa. Danta adds that the presence of the black servants Hendrick and Klein Ann has significant influence in the details of the novel which lies in Ann's relationship with the protagonist's father, consequently "transform[ing] their relation of hierarchy into one of equality (Danta, 85).

As a male author, Coetzee handles his female protagonist with utmost care and sensitivity. He does not merely give her the lead role in his novel, he more so allows her enough space to opine herself and venture away from the influence of his maleness. As he distances himself from her narrative, Magda is capable of projecting her internal conflict by writing her own story. Through Magda's eyes however, the reader may note the instability of her narrative, especially that she calls herself "crazy" and imagines multiple alternating fantastical scenarios to document in her diary. Coetzee apparently gives the marginalized a voice to tackle "the powerlessness of power and non-belongingness of affiliation in relation to women" (Jyothimol, 8). In other words, Coetzee shows that for a white female colonist, she is powerless and equals the status of a black colonized woman. She feels she does not belong in the African colony, suffering from her patriarchal father's sexism and the subversion of roles between herself and her native servant, Hendrik. Sheila Roberts contends that throughout the novel, "the reader might begin to see that stone farm at this point as South Africa itself, the father as the Afrikaner baas [representing white supremacy] and Magda as the ineffectual, dreaming liberal" (Roberts, 30).

Magda suffers from the confusion of her status as colonizer and colonized. She initially attempts to play the role of the white colonizer in her interaction with the native servants, which ironically leads to her victimization by Hendrik. Caroline Rody analyzes Magda's role as a white colonizer when she suggests that *In the Heart of the Country* provides the reader with a representation of the real white colonizer in a colonial context. She explains that the protagonist is "designed to enact the psychosexual fantasy of her race and thus to embody the failure of English liberal humanism" (Rody, 159). She further explicates, as a marginalized individual within her patriarchal society, Magda "rebels against her own passive construction". Rody states that Magda is "a woman whose furious rebellion, in words and violent action, against the patriarchal, imperialist structure of her world re-inflects the conventional 'madness' of her literary kind" (Rody, 159). However, it is through the conflict caused by the gendered-racial marginalization in which Magda finds herself trapped, that she is driven into mental instability (Rody, 161).

In *Critical Perspectives on Coetzee*, Ian Gleen argues that the author creates a woman who embraces her madness as a result to the circumstances that cause her suffering. They claim that Coetzee: "makes Magda self-consciously choose to be the madwoman in the closet as a way of reaching a certain bodily and expressive freedom, as a way of asserting the body to escape the father censor," (130) in addition to escaping her society's judgmental projection of her spinsterhood. When her father brings home his new bride, Magda is filled with repulsion and hatred because of her fear of losing her supremacist status as the white female colonist among the colonized natives. Her fear further forces her to take guard behind her colonial attitude as she describes "The new wife [as] a lazy big-boned voluptuous feline woman with a wide slow-smiling mouth. [...] She sleeps and eats and lazes. She sticks out her long red tongue and licks the sweet mutton-fat from her lips" (2). The rage that Magda projects is one that repeatedly reminds her of her ancestors' supremacist demeanor, and how it differs from that of the natives.

Magda admits that having been born into a hierarchical system, dictated by a phallogentric discourse and an Afrikaner's attitude, is her only way to preserve an identity as a colonist: "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). Her use of "father tongue" also indicates the totalitarian discourse of the patriarch, projecting itself as the only discourse she grows up knowing, further limiting her existence to her gendered definition of inferiority in society. This leads Magda to the realization that she too suffers, from her position as a female master, just as much as the colored slave; the white female Self is enslaved by the patriarchal system. As a colonist, Magda wants to create a new reality that fits her, in order to allocate and practice her superiority over the natives, and perhaps even subvert her father's hegemony.

Magda justifies her rage at her father for empowering Klein-Ann over her as she contends: "Perhaps my rage at my father is simply rage at the violations of the old language, the correct language, that takes place when he exchanges kisses and the pronouns of intimacy with a girl who yesterday scrubbed the floors and today ought to be cleaning the windows" (43). Magda further questions Klein-Ann's relationship with her father: "What does this new man mean to her? Does she [give in to him] merely [...] because he is the master, or are there refinements of pleasure in subjection

which wedded love can never give?" (52). In response, Michelle Plott and Lauri Umansky argue that in most encounters between white and native women, the white woman does not envy the latter for her sexual ability, but rather fears "that her newly acquired social status might be threatened by white male sexual interaction with black women" (409) because the native woman's relationship with the white man reminds "the white female of her subordinate position in relationship to him" (409). This, expectedly then, leads to the protagonist's radical reaction of murdering her father in order to protect her racial image.

3.2. The Victimization of Magda

At her own attestation, after Magda shoots her father, her attitude starts to change. She becomes more aware of the racial differences between herself and the servants, which she attempts to deconstruct. As she has Hendrik and Anna stay with her in the house, Magda attempts to create a channel of communication through the use of a mutual language which she was not capable of affecting in her father's presence. She asserts that all she wants from the servants is "to attain with them the dialogue that she was originally denied because of their different social positions and a contact she could never hope to attain with her father because of his temperament and authoritarianism" (Canepari-Labib, 82). But her attempts to create equality between herself and the servants are interrupted by their internalized subordination. Hendrik and Ann continue addressing her as "the miss". In one incident, Magda asks Ann to call her by her own name and Ann refuses, which the protagonist questions:

'Tell me, Anna, what do you call me? What is my name?' I breathe as softly as I can. 'What do you call me in your thoughts?' 'Miss?' 'Yes; but to you am I only the miss? Have I no name of my own?' 'Miss Magda?'/ 'But now I am just Magda, and you are just Anna. Can you say Magda? Come, say Magda for me.' 'No, miss, I can't' (111).

It is clear then that Magda attempts to deconstruct the typical image of the colonizer who is represented as superior. Magda wants to experience recognition as a mere human being by the "inferior" native woman but she fails because she sees herself as the daughter of her father, "[her] black eyes inherited from him." As a symbol of white hegemony, she automatically is associated with the colonizing legacy her father represents; together they "chewed [their] way through time" (3). This also leads to her shift in power because Magda refuses to be Hendrik's boss, but after her success, he no longer obeys her because their roles eventually shift. When Magda's father is no longer present, it appears that she instantly loses her racial supremacy, and so in Hendrik's eyes she is no more white, but rather a woman.

On the other hand, having been oppressed his whole life, Hendrik seizes the chance, after the father's death and Magda's inability to pay his wages, to play the role of the master instead of the slave by subjugating her body, the forbidden territory, thus leading to her submission. Even though Magda is theoretically the master and Hendrik the slave, their roles shift. Through their romantic attachment, Magda hopes to gain confirmation of her womanhood as she repeats "Am I now a woman? Has this made me into a woman?" (117). In their attachment, Magda's only desire is to satisfy Hendrik as she expresses her wish to be perfect in his eyes:

I lean over him, stroking him with swings of my hair, it is something he seems to like, it is something he allows me. 'Hendrik, why won't you let me light a candle? Just once? You come in the night like a ghost – how am I to know it is really you?' 'Who else would it be?' 'No one...I just want to see how you look. May I?' 'No, don't! (111).

Hendrik's attempt to gain power over the white woman is obviously guaranteed in Magda's case. He exploits her sexual repression and weakness toward him in order to elevate his status onto that of the white colonizer and regain his lost subjectivity. By doing so, he causes her double marginalization, first as white and second as a woman.

There is a point where Magda realizes the reversal of the racial hierarchy between herself and Hendrik as she attests: "you have the power to hurt me" although all she wants from him is to rise above gendered and racial binarisms (118), she nevertheless ends up feeling like "a miserable black virgin" and a "black fish" who fails at allocating her self-worth (5, 71). Not much later Hendrik quits the farm, leaving her lonely, confused and humiliated: "sometimes I think it is my humiliation he wants" (212).

4. The Question of Madness: A Condition or a Remedy?

4.1. Magda's Condition:

Magda's double oppression and rejection, bombarding her from two different sources of power, reduces her to mere body and color, each intersecting with the other. Such a double projection is what Kimberle Crenshaw coins as Intersectionality. She explains that it:

simply came from the idea that if you're standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both. These women are injured, but when the race ambulance and the gender ambulance arrive at the scene, they see these women [...] lying in the intersection and they say: well, we can't figure out if this was just race or just sex discrimination. And unless they can show us which one it was, we can't help them (Crenshaw, 2).

Although Crenshaw's perception of the theory is particularly concerned with women of color, it is significantly applicable to the multiple projections that Magda is represented by; as an inferior woman by the white colonizer, and a white woman by the colonized native. The inseparable connection between race and gender seen in terms of society, politics and culture does not only generate a new scope of feminist theory, but also explicitly reinforces the vulnerability and marginalization of all women. Ultimately then, the constant state of confusion and lack of representation is seen to eventually cause mental instability, as projected in the protagonist by the end of the novel.

The notion of madness as pertaining to women may be traced throughout time as a hierarchical mode of oppression practiced for the sole purpose of sustaining patriarchal hegemony in different contexts. Madness was always regarded as a form of silencing that women were exposed to. Women who seem to have questioned their places in society and refused to reduce their existence to the domesticized image of the 'Angel in the House' were automatically linked to physical maladies, accused of sin, witchcraft and hysterical tendencies, subsequently exposed of either physically or psychologically.

Gilbert and Gubar argue in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that the sustained pressure of patriarchy which constantly imposes gender roles and further suppresses women's potential, thus excluding them as active members of society, leads to their mental instability (Gilbert & Gubar, 17). In addition, the association between madness and women is strongly apparent in the social context because the patriarchally hierarchized system operates on binary oppositions in gender relations, where men represent the neck-up/rationality, while women are reduced to the neck-down/the deformed body with its fluctuating emotions. Showalter similarly argues that:

These dual images of female insanity – madness as one of the wrongs of woman; madness as the essential feminine nature unveiling itself before scientific male rationality – suggest the two ways that the relationship between women and madness has been perceived. In the most obvious sense, madness is a female malady because it is experienced by more women than men (3).

Showalter argues that madness is a socially constructed term which is associated with women more than it is with men, ultimately reinforcing Saxy Pridmore's contention in "Madness of Psychiatry": "Everybody knows that it's easy to silence people by saying they're mad" (14). Similarly, Kuppers writes that madness is "seen to be structured by attempts to contain the Other, to isolate it, present it as outside 'normal' society and bodies, and thus to exorcise its threatening, disruptive potential" (4). In other words, the easiest way to marginalize women is to accuse them of hysterical tendencies, thus guaranteeing their silence and the loss of mental credibility.

The psychiatric field was also used as means for patriarchal sustainability where women were "defined, and then confined, as mad" not based on "reflections of medical and scientific knowledge, but part of the fundamental cultural framework in which ideas about femininity and insanity were constructed" (5). Foucault argues that his view on madness and psychological status of individuals is also a form of social domination controlled by somebody who has an authoritative voice and has the ability to impose their power: "Madness cannot be found in a raw state. Madness only exists in society" (qtd in Hardcastle, 154). Phyllis Chesler, in *Women and Madness*, also argues that masculine societies usually label women "mad" for defying the norms and projecting unacceptable behaviors, according to what they see right. Chesler asserts that "It is clear that for a woman to be healthy she must 'adjust' to and accept the

behavioral norms for her sex even though these kinds of behavior are generally regarded as less socially desirable [...] The ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture" (68-69).

Feminists however reject the patriarchal postulations over the reasons behind women's insanity, and instead focus on the social influence that patriarchy has on their psyches. In *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed*, Diane Bell and Renate Klein consider the stereotypical position of women in society as the weaker sex in addition to sexual oppression, inferiority, financial dominance and mental control under the name of protection as the true reasons for their mental instability. They explain that women throughout history were taught to be submissive, and their roles were limited to domesticity, raising children and pleasing the husband (Bell et. al, 450). Betty Friedan also argues in *The Feminine Mystique* that depression and insanity, which she calls "the problem that has no name" (Friedan, 11), are caused by women's oppression from within their homes, their intellectual suppression, the reduction of their roles to mere domesticity, which subsequently cause madness (Friedan, 4).

The postcolonial discussion mentioned above forms a pattern that may be traced in Magda. In *Beyond the Limit*, Stephen Clingman argues that "in the colonial setting the analytical consideration of madness is intrinsically connected with a search for significant limits" (Clingman, 247), hence the significance of sustaining a distinction between the Self and the Other, without which "the colony falls apart" and the colonizer suffers from the change of social behavior (Clingman, 248). Concurrently, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon discusses the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized within a colonial setting, which results in a psychological splitting of the psyche (11). Similarly, the white female colonizer, Magda, fails to represent herself as a Self in her relationship with the colonized native because the native is similarly desperate for the same subjectivity and recognition. The protagonist then falls victim: first as an inferior woman, second and more importantly, she represents the perfect opportunity for the colonized native to avenge the loss of his subjectivity at the hands of a white man by practicing power over a white woman, Magda. She is eventually and gradually reduced to madness because she fails and is marginalized twice to gain recognition.

4.2. Magda's Power of Narration: Embracing Madness

In *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda experiences the confusion of her status as colonizer and colonized. She attempts to play the role of the white colonizer in her interaction with the natives, but instead, ends up colonized by Hendrick. On the one hand, Magda is treated unjustly in her white community, as she describes herself as a hole who aspires to be a whole; she says that she does not have value where she lives although she really aspires to being an active member in her society (2). On the other, she still has a place above that over the natives who work for her father. This conflict leads Magda to psychological confusion and isolation (4).

Her father's marriage also enrages her because he replaces her authority with that of the native Ann-Klein. Her fear of being replaced pushes her to allegedly murder her father twice throughout the novel, who seemingly appears to be alive after the first attempt. This indicates that he "does not die so easily after all" (16). Her narration of the multiple murders she commits against her father then attests to her confusion, as it lacks clarity and rationality, thus turning her into an unreliable narrator.

Magda's status as "the Angel in the House" leads to her self-imposed isolation within the confines of her room. She describes herself as "a black widow" (44); as "a thin black beetle" (20); as "a straw woman [...] not too tightly stuffed" (45); and as "a hole crying to be whole" (44); "the mad hag"; "crazed with loneliness" (50), and has a "mind mad enough" to commit a crime and kill her father (10). Ultimately projecting her conscious realization of her state of being in the colony, to the point of suspecting herself victim of her own narrative: "Is it possible that I am a prisoner not of the lonely farmhouse and the stone desert but of my stony monologue?" (13).

Initially, Magda's mental instability is illustrated with her decision to kill her father, as discussed earlier, only to find out as one proceeds in the novel that she kills him twice, each time with a different weapon. The first time she kills him and his new wife, she uses an axe, but she is soon skeptical about the murder "Perhaps I beat the water now in one spot only, making a last bargain" (13). It however turns out that they are both still alive as her father's death cannot be

achieved so easily (16). She then plans to shoot him with a rifle and eventually kills him because it “would [...] be] for their own good” (120). After her father’s death she thinks, momentarily, of not burying his body and leaving it to nature so that it completely fades away. She is then seen singing with a pillow over her head (92). Furthermore, her attitude toward her father’s body lying before her eyes does not promise mental stability, but rather psychosis, especially that she decides to wash the body and bury it with the help of Hendrik.

Magda also starts hearing peculiar voices in her head, in addition to visualizing bizarre-looking guests. She imagines a little boy visiting her with the intent to steal oranges from her tree. She describes herself as an old woman who runs after the boy. She further reassures herself of her sanity by conducting a “real” conversation with a “real” person, until she lapses once more by “[recreating] the scene” where she murders him so harshly:

that he would never see his mother again but be butchered like a lamb and his sweet flesh be roasted in the oven and his sinews boiled down to glue and his eyeballs seethed in a potion and his clean bones thrown to the dogs (124).

Murdering a young boy and then describing the act in this graphic manner only reflects the confusion and psychological instability Magda suffers from.

Furthermore, in the final section of the novel, Magda claims to see flying machines which speak to her in Spanish. Although she does not know the language, she nevertheless decides that it consists of truths spoken by philosophers, which is the reason she finds it “immediately comprehensible” (126), as the words that come out of the machines have universal meanings. The responses that Magda creates in turn illustrate her creative means by which to generate a world where her voice is heard. She also attempts to write Spanish on piles of stones in order to deliver her message to the sky gods. Magda simply creates a sociolinguistic environment, in which she can find her own identity, from which she has been deprived throughout her life: “The stones. Having failed to make my shouts heard (but am I sure they did not hear me? Perhaps they heard me but found me uninteresting, or perhaps it is not their wont to acknowledge communications), I turned to writing” (132).

In this regard, Luce Irigaray contends that a woman needs to invent feminine language in order to tell her own story, not in association with any other but herself: “If we don’t invent a language, if we don’t find our body’s language, its gestures will be too few to accompany our story. When we become tired of the same ones, we’ll keep our desires secret, unrealized” (76). Irigaray maintains that a woman under patriarchy does not speak or know words or how to use them. She is voiceless because language is not hers, and so she should “re-appropriate” her mouth and learn to speak (72). Irigaray’s strategy may be traced in Magda’s creation of an alternative world where she communicates competently. Similarly, Helene Cixous employs Post-structuralism as she studies the space between reality as is and its different interpretations in the phallogocentric discourse. In this sense, her post-structuralism revolves around play on words in a way that deconstructs the totalization of the phallogocentric discourse, further reconstructing it to include her individual voice (887). In this manner, Magda too employs Spanish to voice figures from modern Western Literature and philosophy such as “Blake, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Freud, Kafka, Sartre and Beckett” (Kirton, 59). Her choice of literary male figures is significant as it indicates her specific interest in their literary corpus, which will not be comprehended if communicated with humans who totalize the patriarchal experience and universalize the phallogocentric discourse, and so she invents aliens juxtaposing patriarchal society to communicate with, as to them she is comprehensible.

In *A Companion to the Works of J. M. Coetzee*, Tim Mehigan explains that this is the moment when “Fantasy or mental disorder on Magda’s part seems out of the question now” (58). Magda’s mental breakdown is unquestionable. It is not hard to tell whether she is insane or making up her own story creatively, the way she sees the details. Poyner explains, “Coetzee enters the consciousness of a female narrator” who acts as “oppressor, as white colonial, and oppressed, as a female”, ultimately causing her confusion and instability (65). However, being the author of her own narrative, Magda is free to navigate away from the patriarchal reality she refuses to adhere to onto one that she creates in her mind and translates into an alternative reality, where she enjoys her individuality away from all constraints. A woman may also resort to irrational multiple imaginings of certain events to allow herself enough space for self-

reconstruction, in addition to being an act of retaliation against mainstream society which she finds irrational. Magda's creation of multiple scenarios by which she rids patriarchal influence further correlates with her decision to take up a pen and paper as a private space in which she is able to freely fragment and deconstruct her patriarchal reality, and instead reconstruct it the way that suits her individual needs. Writing then, becomes the means by which she translates her mind creatively into an actual reality that may be exposed to the world. Her insanity ultimately becomes the space through which she fully embraces her entirety, juxtaposing, mainstream reality that she believes to be patriarchal insanity.

Magda then recreates herself through her self-narrative as a character who is brave enough to get rid of the patriarchal figure in her life. She wants to gain equality with the colonized black men and women and wants to feel like a real woman through her sexual act with Hendrik. She realizes that her depiction of herself goes against her society's expectations and therefore willingly labels herself "crazy" only to unleash her justified urge for freedom and individuality. Through her narrative, she illustrates that the more detached and irrational she is, the more ability she has to express herself and her thoughts that are otherwise confined in her patriarchal reality. Furthermore, what is more interesting about her depiction is the amalgamation of her imagination, fantasy and reality, where they all merge as one in her mind.

Whether Magda's mental instability is self-inflicted or not, the alternative world that she creates for herself may well be read as a mode of resistance instead of feminine weakness, especially in her colonial context. Since Magda keeps labeling herself 'mad', she also refers to herself as a rational person who thinks so clearly with a mind that works "like the mind of a machine" (15) and she wonders: "How can I be deluded when I think so clearly?" (126). In this sense, Magda poses her mental stability against her patriarchal-colonial reality, the contradictions of which are sheltered by means of disposing of her. Magda further consciously documents her mental status to project her attempt to resist a society that restricts a woman's mind.

Leah White writes in "Narratives of Mental Illness" that women's narratives are a means of resistance to those who are not able to express themselves as they are confined to patriarchal roles and that the narratives "offer the option to create one's own understanding of self, as opposed to accepting an external construction of self, and in turn offer that understanding to others" (4). Ultimately then, the role that Magda plays illustrates the significance of resistance of oppression and marginalization of a woman's voice against the social norms that propose binary logic in which women are determined thought their lack, irrationality and silence. Therefore, Magda is seen to appropriate the label of madness repeatedly used against women and then reverses its function to expose the irrationality of patriarchal binarisms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, insanity may take on different forms for different reasons. It is not always genetic, as it may either be a choice or a socially constructed phenomenon. In *In the Heart of the Country*, Coetzee does not represent Magda as mere writer or merely insane. He rather projects her as embodying both, so she may fluidly create her private space where she experiences her freedom. He also illustrates how writing a narrative that reflects her insanity may be creatively employed to channel her individuality. In this sense, insanity here is synonymous with feminist creativity and rebellion against patriarchy, in juxtaposition to being driven into it by outer forces.

This paper aimed at questioning gender relations in a colonial context, and more specifically offered an affiliation that the patriarchal relationship between the white female and the white male projects on the one hand, with the colonial relationship between the white female colonizer and the colonized native, on the other. Ultimately, the end result projected a deconstruction of the white female colonist's racially derived power, in which her representation is reduced to gendered inferiority, ultimately leading to her inevitable insanity, which was explored as a socially constructed prison created to subordinate women who question their individualities and as a creative way in which women turn a patriarchal tool meant to silence them onto one that empowers them away from patriarchal influence.

In *In the Heart of the Country*, I have projected how Coetzee, although a man, empowers his female protagonist through the use of her imagination and writing skills. Since she narrates her story from a first point of view, Magda labels herself as mad, as her conscious and creative means for recreating her identity and documenting her self-worth away from colonization and patriarchy. As she regards herself a “woman determined to be the author of her own life would have not shrunk from hurling open the curtains and flooding the guilty deed with light (62). Magda herself admits that she chooses to write her story as a way to avoid her father’s oppression and maltreatment of her: “It was not only a woman's faintness that made me act so, it was a private logic, a psychology which meant to keep me from seeing my father's nakedness” (63). She chooses to write because her pen becomes her only weapon against confinement and oppression, practiced by her father who undermines her until she makes the decision to extricate him entirely from her life.

No matter how white a white woman is, she is always projected as black in the eyes of patriarchy. Her association with the white colonizer does not deem her powerful over the colonized native man. I ultimately argued that her intersectionality leads to her insanity, possibly viewed as a form of release for her. Since the novel reflects the South African postcolonial situation following the apartheid era, the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized is characterized by struggle for power, reconstructing representation, and revenge. Understandably, by shifting the focus of the colonized native from avenging himself against the colonizer onto the white female colonizer, a new postcolonial and feminist perspective is offered to colonial relations.

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المستعمر المستعمر: تساؤلات حول الأنثى المستعمرة البيضاء في رواية جون كوتزي ماكسويل "في قلب البلاد"

آية أحمد، ديما عماري *

ملخص

تتبع هذه الورقة البحثية التجارب التي تميز بطلّة في التعبير عن نفسها كمستعمرة بيضاء في بلاد المستعمرة داخل سياقين، وهما: علاقتها بالمستعمر الذكر الأبيض والمستعمر ذا البشرة السوداء. كما أن تهميش البطلّة من المستعمر الأبيض من جهة ومن المستعمر ذا البشرة السوداء من جهة أخرى لا يقلل فقط من السيادة البيضاء ويسقطها للقاع، بل ذلك أيضا سبب رئيس لارتباك البطلّة من الناحية الاجتماعية، مما يقودها إلى استخدام الجنون كوسيلة تمكين ومقاومة ضد الهيمنة الذكورية العليا. وقد درس الباحث هذا الموضوع في شخصية ماجدة في رواية "في قلب البلاد" للكاتب جون ماكسويل كوتزي (1977). وسيدرس الباحث العمل المختار على أساس نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار النسوية، التي من خلالها سيكتشف الباحث البنى الهرمية التي أساسها الجنس، إضافة إلى موضوع الجنون كونه أداة لتمكين المرأة.

الكلمات الدالة: المستعمرة الأنثى، نظرية التداخل، المستعمرة المستعمرة، الجنون الإبداعي.

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