
In the Heart of the Country: A Deconstructive and Postmodern Analysis of J.M Coetzee's Novel

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i2.2324>

Abstract

This study explores Coetzee's portrayal of the colonial mindset that unmasks the hidden internal representations which were used as a pretext to colonize Africa. All Western thought is organized and founded on the idea of a centre – an Origin, a Truth, an Ideal Form, a Fixed Point, an Essence, a Presence – that serves as a guarantee of all meaning. Coetzee's characters as European colonizers judge the African people and their culture through the norm of European civilization. For them Western culture and civilization are the standard norms and they see anything different as an aberration that they deride as something lacking in originality and authenticity. They betray the mindset of a structuralist who in Derrida's opinion focus on the 'autonomy and idiosyncratic balance' of the colonial system that the European colonizers have imposed on the cultural mosaic of South Africa. They think they are civilized and the African people are savages who live a life of debauchery; they consider themselves to be the descendants of a civilized European race but consider Africans to be living in a state of nature that has seen no evolution towards culture. However, the deconstructive analysis of the novel reveals that the European colonizers are more brutal and savage than the African natives.

Key Words: Deconstruction, 'Play', Centre, Structuralism, Colonialism, Postmodernism

Introduction

In her book *The Critical Difference* (1981), Barbara Johnson defines the term deconstruction: Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction', however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means 'to undo' – a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct'. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself.

Cuddon in his book *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1991) states that deconstruction means a practice of reading which reads a text as stating something quite different from what it seems to be saying on the surface. Deconstructive analysis emphasizes the fact that a text carries a plurality of significance or signifies various different things which

basically vary from, contradict and subvert a single 'stable' meaning. In other words, a text 'betrays' itself. It is also called textual harassment or oppositional reading which unmasks internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text, and aims to show the disunity which underlies its apparent unity. Derrida does not trust the longstanding 'logocentrism' in Western philosophical tradition that accepts metaphysical truths or essences which are acknowledged as the basic foundations of all belief systems (Sarup, 1993). The problem with logocentric thinking is that here meanings are given priority over the signifiers and language is considered as a vehicle for expressing prior concepts that are thought to exist as fully intelligible ideas (Belsey, 2002). This way of thinking generates the concepts of 'transcendental signifier' and 'transcendental signified' which give rise to the creation of foundationalism which Derrida considers a fiction. According to Derrida, there is a strong reliance on a first principle or foundation in all metaphysical systems of thought which excludes other principles different from the foundational principles. This is done by tightly ordering all the units of the system in proper place, and in proper relationship to each other in the binary oppositions. In other words, the center does not allow unimpeded movement inside the structure and strictly restricts it.

Derrida calls this dynamic motion as 'Play' and believes that this center or foundation lends rigid stability to the system and controls the play of the structure (Klages, 2006). He thinks that the absence of play in a philosophical system is unhealthy and it creates rigid systems of thinking which do not tolerate other systems which are different. This pattern of binary oppositions generates hierarchical structures where one set of things is defined and placed with other categories which are conceptually opposite to it. As such, he stresses the erasing of such binary constructions such as center and periphery, meaning and nonsense, activity and passivity as their inherent hierarchization leads to the exploitation and marginalization of the disadvantaged and weaker groups of the society. In Derrida's opinion centers attempt to exclude, ignore, repress or marginalize others that become the Other. In a patriarchal society women are ignored, repressed and driven to the margins and thus end up being the marginalized Other. In a culture dominated by Christ as its central icon there will be no place for Buddhists, Muslims and Jews due to their difference as Christians are accepted as central to that culture and the others are pushed to margins outside the mainstream culture (Powell, 1998). According to Derrida, the desire for a center creates binary opposites where one term is given a central and privileged position but the other term remains marginal and secondary in importance. And importantly all centres try to freeze, fix, or restrict the play of the binary oppositions or arrest the free play of differences.

Postmodernism as a philosophical and cultural crusade developed in the last quarter of 20th century and questioned the existence of objective reality or truth and also doubted the relevance or meaningfulness of metanarratives in the age of late capitalism. It is characterized by scepticism and believes in the equivocal nature of truth or reality. It, therefore, prefers indeterminacy or ambiguity and disdains fixedness of meaning or universality of truth. This study aims to analyse the novel as a text depicting the 'play' and disintegration of colonial and patriarchal structures as a result of the aggressive manoeuvres of Magda and Hendrik which weakens the centre's ability to arrest 'play'. This paper addresses the following research questions.

1. What are the elements of play revealed in Coetzee's selected novels?
2. How do Coetzee's novels reveal the disruption of binary oppositions?

Research Methodology

The theoretical framework of the study is postmodernism in which the theories of Jacques Derrida are used as primary sources of data to analyze the text of *In the Heart of the Country*. The researcher uses the abbreviation *IHC* in the analysis.

Literature Review

Roberts (1992) argues that Magda, the heroine of *In the Heart of the Country*, is both colonizer and colonized. The novel portrays a cruel interaction between the white farmers and the powerless colonized who are subject to the rule of the white Afrikaners whose will is the law of the land. The brown people can only flee the farm. Magda too is subjugated to a rigid patriarchal system which she tries to resist. Her deliberate search and desire for mother makes her different from other seduced women. The book depicts females colonized by a culture of masculism. This colonization varies from one based on race and exploitation. Magda's circumstances as a female like most women since antiquity make her complicit with the Father to subjugate her. The other problem is that she lacks a prototype of a free life outside the structures of patriarchy. Women historically have had no existence grounded in equality alongside men and as such have no snippets of memory about such ideal life. That is one reason why she uses her imagination to recreate her potential 'mothers'.

Bagabas (2005) analyzes the tension between self-assertiveness and marginality in *In the Heart of the Country*. The novel portrays father/ master and daughter/ servant relations and focuses on how they are reversed when Magda and Hendrik try to break the shackles of patriarchy and colonial subjugation. Coetzee's heroine challenges the prevailing discourse of masculinity and her odyssey becomes a battle for female identity and self-expression. However, Magda's search remains unfulfilled due to the fact that the servant, Hendrik, has inherited the language and norms of patriarchy and the mental schemas of colonialism which frustrate her quest for self-realization because language and colonial oppression are intimately connected.

Al-dhamari (2013) explores isolation and desire in *In the Heart of the Country* in the light of the proclivity of humans towards socialization and togetherness. All human beings are "social animals" and cannot live in isolation. It is the basic instinct together with the need for procreation of all human beings that they form a society to live together and maximize the chances of survival. The nervous breakdown of Magda, the protagonist of the novel, is occasioned by the fact that these two desires get frustrated. Her mental health is also exacerbated by her lack of communication and interaction with other humans.

Diakhaté (2021) states that Coetzee explores love, sex, and parents-daughter conflicts in *In the Heart of the Country*. Magda, the spinster living a life of alienation on a farm in a "stone country", needs to "love and be loved". She as a female wants to "need and be needed". Magda's monologue shows her need for human company to satisfy her sexual drive. Her father's rejection and inattention result in her mental disorientation. Parents symbolically represent protection, shelter, and love. The longing for the affirmation of her feminine self remains unfulfilled because after her mother's death the father does not bother to find a male, a companion, for Magda but brings another girl for his sexual satisfaction. There occurs a betrayal in this parent-/ daughter bond which forces her to accept Hendrik as a husband-figure but this further aggravates her social situation.

Hassanin (2021) also analyzes Magda's efforts at liberation and the issue of silence and narrating in *In the Heart of the Country*. Colonialist ideology and patriarchy work along similar lines with regard to the issues of women and marginalized races. The novel brings to light the strong resistance on the part of women against colonialism and patriarchy. There is a challenge of control, dominance and authority in all her inner soliloquies which point out her role both as a casualty and an agent of colonialism. She tries to find her identity by murdering her father but the incident drives her crazy as is obvious by the various versions of her father's murder. Magda tries to reform the identity of women which the colonizers had created. She emerges as a powerful female subaltern voice who tries to break free of the Afrikaans patriarchy.

Nader and El Bakal (2024) analyze the themes of representation, identity, and self in the novel. Coetzee subverts the conventional structures of narrative and questions the traditional understanding of truth and reality as depicted in realist novels. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the*

Country depicts a world of fragmentation which means a world characterized by discontinuity, disorder, and non-linearity. His fiction does not focus on coherence typically shown in traditional realist narratives. There is no linearity in Magda's story but a world of disorder and mental disorientation. Coetzee does not follow a strict chronological order in his novels. Magda, an unreliable narrator, describes a world that has no logical coherence and lacks logical sequence. Her stream of consciousness tells a story that subverts the conventional mode of linearity. The present paper explores this lack of coherence through deconstructive analysis of the text.

Deconstructive and Postmodern Analysis of Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*

The postmodern individual in Coetzee's novels betrays skeptical attitude, subjectivism, or relativistic understanding of culture or civilization. Coetzee's postmodern writing tackles themes of representation, fragmentation, ambiguity, or intertextuality. Coetzee uses the literary device of self-reflexivity and often stresses the fictional nature of reality in his novels. Representation is closely connected to the idea of truth and postmodern writing advocates the notion that there is no one overarching Truth but different versions of it. The present research focuses on the confrontation of the European colonizers with the natives of the colonized territories and their cultures and also foregrounds the resistance of the blacks. It also aims to highlight the struggle of Magda against the nexus of colonialism and patriarchy. *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) was J.M. Coetzee's second novel which deconstructs the binary oppositions of culture/ nature, civilized / degenerate, civilization / barbarism or savagery. The novel is a first-person monologue of Magda, a kind of journal, in which she emerges as the symbolic daughter of colonialism. Magda is a white spinster who lives a lonely life on a farm with his father in Africa.

Derrida (1978) argues that Western metaphysics or the structure of Western philosophy fabricates binary oppositions which are political and always assign one part of the pair a higher cultural value than the other. Postmodernism subverts the essentialist and foundationalist narratives of the Western thinking as constructed in its writings about women, Africa and other parts of the world. Magda exposes this mindset in her monologue when she says that 'my father pays no attention to my absence. To my father I have been an absence all my life' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 2). It shows that her father regards women as creatures of no importance. Magda is a postmodern woman and does not accept the passive role assigned to women in patriarchy. She raises questions about the circumstances of her mother's death and refuses to believe that 'the doctor came too late... in his donkey-cart' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 2). She counters it and suggests that the doctor could have come on horseback. She even doubts the story told to her that the messenger went to the doctor on a bicycle: 'were there bicycles in those days?' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 2). It shows that Magda thinks rationally and confronts the patriarchal and colonial structures head-on. She is not 'patient, bloodless, [and] apologetic' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 2) like her mother who had 'lived and died under her husband's thumb' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 2). Her monologue is a rebellion against the patriarchy and colonialism. She is determined to fight 'with cunning and treachery, if necessary against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 4).

Coughlan (2010) argues that postmodernism is 'anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist' and considers as questionable and problematic the existence of universal truths, or absolute reality. Magda shows through her monologues that she is not physically weak and rationally inferior to men. Her monologue is a rational analysis of the inherent problems of colonialism and patriarchy. She says about herself that 'I am an uneasy consciousness' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 4) which means that she knows and feels the wicked treatment that patriarchy and colonial subjugation mete out to women and blacks. She is not one who passively like her mother tolerates this cruel system. She foregrounds the double colonization of women in colonized areas and claims that 'the land is full of melancholy spinsters like me, lost to history' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 3). She accuses the fathers of deception and treachery who bring their daughters to colonized territories where they rot in

loneliness. She states that 'wooded when we were little by our masterful fathers, we are bitter vestals, spoiled for life' (IHC, 1977, p. 4). She is clearly decrying the loss of men and their company which is a must for a woman's psychologically sound health. She states that 'I am incomplete, I am a being with a hole inside me, I signify something, I do not know what, I am dumb...' (IHC, 1977, p. 10). She knows that women in patriarchy are kept in subjugation and are not encouraged to decide things in their own lives. This is her consciousness about the history of colonialism and patriarchy. Magda is a voice of heterogeneity, difference, and fragmentation that characterizes the postmodern ethos.

Colonialism like structuralism relies on a fixed centre, that is European culture and civilization, which anchor the system of interrelated meanings. Derrida describes this centre as 'transcendental signified' against which the colonizers judged the cultures of Third World. Colonial discourse works like a structuralist mode of thought that disregards the intrinsic difference of a field of study like a culture outside Europe and imposes stability on it. According to Derrida, a structuralist refuses to describe or classify something as an aberrational accident that is not comprehensible as an ideal type. In other words, a structuralist has no mechanism of description for something different. He fails to see the difference or tries to reduce difference to the laws of the Same. Derrida believes that the pathological itself is not the simple absence of structure. It is organized. It cannot be understood as the deficiency, defect, or decomposition of a beautiful, ideal totality. It is not the simple undoing of telos [an ideal norm]. Africa is a different continent with its different people and cultures. African society with its different customs and traditions is not similar to European society. Magda critiques the colonial project because it imposed the structures of European civilization on the cultural map of Africa.

Magda shows a fragmented and fluid sense of self. She does not try to reduce the Other to the Same but tries to understand their alterity and uniqueness. She sees the Other as different from the Same (Western self). Hendrik is a slave working now on the farm of Magda's father but Magda can see that he was a patriarch in the past who bowed before no one and slept with two wives who feared him and showed reverence to him. She states that his wives 'did his will, adapted their bodies to his desires, the old one on one side, the young one on the other' (IHC, 1977, p. 20), but this practice of polygamy ended with the advent of colonization in Africa. This colonization of Africa also ended the crisscrossing of the desert by Hendrik's ancestors with their flocks and chattels as the colonial rule erected fences across the land. Magda writes that men on horseback came and 'issued invitations to stop and settle that might also have been orders and might have been threats' (IHC, 1977, p. 20).

Postmodern thinking stresses the fluidity of identity. It rejects division of things into rigid black and white binaries. It believes in the power of language and local social structures to shape reality and define norms. Coetzee's characters do not behave according to the fixed norms of European culture. Magda is on the side of Africa and its people. Africa is not a place of sexual degeneration and indolence for her. Coetzee (1988) maintains in *White Writing : On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* that the origin and force of the European people's righteous indignation and condemnation of the Hottentot can be found in the accumulated weight of two centuries of denunciation of idleness in the teachings of Church and the pronouncements of the judicial branch in the West. The European travel author writes about the culture of African people with contempt and pure disdain and never bothers to look beyond the structures of the Western culture and civilization. The structures of Western civilization blind these Westerners to the norms and traditions of African people. Africa represented a place of moral degeneration, violence, lust and indolence in the imagination of the European colonialists. Magda does not agree to such a fantasized image of Africa and behaves like a postmodern woman with no rigid cultural schemas. She goes against the mindset of the colonizers when she states about the destruction of Africa by colonizers: 'Already the snake has come and the old Eden is dead!' (IHC, 1977, p. 77). In other

words, she believes that the onslaught of colonialism ruined Africa and its culture and ecological balance.

McClintock (1995) writes that Africa, the Americas, and Asia, which were the uncertain continents for the Westerners, were depicted for centuries in Western lore as areas of libidinous eroticism. Africa and the Americas had assumed a status of a porno-tropics for the European imagination ; it had become ‘an imaginary magic lantern of the mind’ onto which the West projected its forbidden sexual desires, fantasies and fears. This Western inclination to conceptualize Europe and the external world outside it in terms of binary division reduced Africa to the quintessential place of sexual aberration and anomaly. African people were declared as lazy, thievish, treacherous, and addicted to every kind of lust. This trope was used to discredit and disavow the agency of women, and the colonized. The deconstructive analysis of the text also debunks this fiction. Magda as a white spinster lives a life of utter loneliness on an African farm with her father and faces his indifferent attitude towards her life and needs as a woman. She displays a hybrid and fragmented identity. Baudrillard (1993) says that people are not constrained anymore to stick to fixed identities or cultural norms or categories in the postmodern age. Magda serves as an aporia in the novel because she is one of the characters in Coetzee’s novels who does not accept the absolute logic of Western thinking. She challenges the essentialism of Western humanism and states that

I would have spent my days in the sun doing whatever it is that men do, digging holes, building fences, counting sheep. What is there for me in the kitchen? The patter of maids, gossip, ailments, babies, steam, food-smells, catfur at the ankles – what kind of life can I make of these? (*IHC*, 1977, p. 22).

She vehemently decries the arrival of colonialism in Africa as it disrupted the old bucolic way of life and divided Africa into Europeanized ‘farms’. She is clearly against the obstacles that were raised everywhere to obstruct the free movement of African people. Colonialism disturbed the pastoral way of life that Africans lived. Magda as a postmodern woman does not appreciate in her mind the disintegration of this bucolic way of life. She can see in her imagination Hendrik taking his child-bride in a donkey-cart and the chickens and children scampering behind the cart, all held in a unity under the sun, which is an innocent scene evoking the idyllic way of life of shepherds or herdsmen. But that is gone and Magda weeps for that lost innocence, hers and mankind’s. She says that she has ‘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’ (*IHC*, 1977, p. 7). Coetzee criticizes the colonial occupation through the thoughts of Magda who is critical of the colonizers who came to Africa and caused the disintegration of its culture and civilization. Magda as a postmodern woman believes in cultural pluralism and the coexistence of different cultures. She thinks that in the past the African people were free to roam everywhere in Africa. Hendrik and his tribesmen could move and graze their fat-tailed sheep everywhere and take them from pasture to pasture. She calls that time ‘ the golden age before the worm arrived on the wings of the howling storm.’ (*IHC*, 1977, p. 20).

Hendrik, the black hand on the farm, is an African servant who comes to the farm and requests Magda’s father to be given a job. Her father employs his skills for the job of rearing the sheep on the farm. The analysis of the text shatters the narrative about the violence and lust of African people. When Hendrik brings his young wife to the farm, Magda’s father is attracted by her and his daily routine changes. Like Magda, he reveals fluidity and variety in his identity. He does not remain the chaste Western male who is in control of his body’s biological urges. He wanders through the house until he sees Klein-Anna, who is busy sweeping or polishing, and stands near her, and watches. He even sends out Hendrik to do a godforsaken task in the heat of the sun and seduces his wife with candies, a shilling or even a florin. At night he provides brandy to Hendrik to make him drunk and rapes his wife. Magda’s response to her father’s lustful behavior is full of

anger. She does not acknowledge black women to be the chattel of the white colonizers. Magda describes the scene of her father's sexual overtures to Klein-Anna and says that Hendrik is sent to the remotest corners of the farm 'to burn ticks off sheep' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 39). Her father visits his servant's house and locks the door from inside. The girl does not willingly receive him and tries to rebuff his advances by pushing his hands off. However, he overpowers her and makes love to her on his servant's coir mattress. However, she is not the libidinous creature of Western fantasies. She remains 'limp in his arms' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 39) and betrays no sexual frenzy. This violation of Klein-Anna's body makes Magda angry and she considers this intrusion a shameful act that 'breaks codes' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 39). It also proves that Magda's father no longer respects the old violent hierarchy of colonizer and colonized. That has evaporated. He is in favor of fluidity, not rigid division of races.

Magda, Klein-Anna, and Hendrik also show postmodern characteristics in their identities. They are free of the stultifying influences of European and African cultures respectively which impose features of one culture on individuals. Postmodern culture dissolves everything that is solid. Anna does not behave like the exoticized African female who was depicted as an immodest, active creature of sexual pleasure who held the key to a myriad of mysterious erotic delights. She remains 'limp' in his hands and does not betray abnormal sexual frenzy. On the other side of the binary division lies Magda who is also raped by Hendrik after her father's death. However, she does not resist his assault in a true sense. She asks him one night:

'All I want to know is whether I am doing it right. Please give me just the little help. Are you happy, Hendrik? Do I make you feel happy? Do you like what we do?' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 120).

She does not behave like the passive, moral, and chaste European woman that is pitted against the luxuriousness of African women. Hendrik too does not fulfill the expectations of the reader. He does not sport the lascivious sexuality normally attributed to African men. Magda leans over him and strokes him with swings of her hair that according to her is something he likes and even allows her to do it. However, she fails to understand his response. She confesses that 'I stroke his skin but feel no response from it' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 121). This subverts the structure of the moral/lustful and civilized/savage binary oppositions which were constructed by the Western historians and intellectuals to understand Africa and its rich culture. In sum, Coetzee represents in their relationship a liminal space, a zone of contestation and constant engagement where a continual process of interchange and appropriation occurs and something new is formed. Magda wants to foster a relationship of some kind with Hendrik that is free of the colonial animosity. She requests him one night when he visits her room to have sex with her that he should not 'be cross any more' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 118). Similarly, one night she implores him to stay as she is tired and he has to understand her situation: 'All I want is a little peace between us. It isn't much to ask for.' (*IHC*, 1977, p. 122).

Postmodern thinking does not believe in the purity of things. Rather it embraces difference and ambiguity. After the death of Magda's father Hendrik and Magda come together and the old boundaries between 'us' and 'them' end. The use of first person pronoun 'we' is important here. Magda notes in her diary:

We carry the great bed to the stable, all three of us, and hoist it...to the rafters, where we chain it fast against the day when it may again be needed. From the loft we bring down an empty kist and into it pack the deceased's belongings, the Sunday suit, the black boots, the starched shirts, the wedding ring, the daguerreotypes, the diaries, the ledgers, the bundle of letters tied with a red ribbon (*IHC*, 1977, p. 90).

All this shows that Magda and Hendrik together bury the old system of colonialism and patriarchy represented by Magda's father. All his things are removed from their midst which symbolically portrays his replacement by the new postmodern ethos which accepts no hierarchy of boundaries. They work together as if they were no masters and slaves. Magda admits that Hendrik has become

her guide and they together perform the different tasks that need urgent attention around the farmhouse. In a way their labour brings them together. Manual work is no longer Hendrik's prerogative but she is also actively participating as his equal in the different tasks that Hendrik is accomplishing. Magda notes the changed hierarchy in the diary: 'Klein-Anna climbs the ladder to bring us mugs of coffee. We crawl under the house to saw through the foundations' (IHC, 1977, p. 89).

Conclusion

Play, Derrida argues, is the disruption of presence, of the assumptions of transcendental signifieds. It is always play of absence and presence. The qualities normally presumed to be absent in black people are present here in them but the attributes imputed to white Westerners are absent here in them. Culler (1982) calls presence 'the effective presence of an origin in a historical development' that implies the logocentric history of the West and its desire for a stable ground or foundation which anchors and fixes meaning. The analysis of the text shows that the text subverts this presence and shows it as a site of lack and absence. The qualities which the Western colonizers always think are present in the people belonging to West are clearly missing in Magda and her father. Magda's father is shown to be a man of lust who fails to control his libido and rapes Klein-Anna and breaks all codes of apartheid and colonialism in the process. Magda on the other hand fails to live up to the expectations which normally Westerners attribute to white women. The 'play' in Derrida's sense is clearly there because the 'transcendental signifieds' or the regulating concepts of European civilization do not exert an arresting pressure on the behaviors and responses of the characters in the novel. They do not stay on their own sides in the binary division but their behavior and responses subvert the strict structuralist thinking of the colonial binarism.

This also shows that Coetzee envisions a future for South Africa that knows no segregation on the basis of colour or ethnicity, but where all ethnicities live together in an ambience of mutual respect and equality. Critchley (2014) argues that logocentrism always aims and desires to reach a unitary closure, by which it tries to rigorously maintain the difference between the inside and the outside. The Western philosophical enterprise can be aptly called 'the mastery of the limit' which means the reduction of the Other to the Same. The West has always understood Others through its own cultural schemas and never bothered to understand their true otherness or alterity. However, Derrida states that difference is irreducible. In simple terms, Western culture is the name of the desire to command one's frontiers and thereby control and regulate the traffic that moves in and out of one's territory. In Critchley's opinion, philosophy is the territorial desire for 'totality and closure'. However, the deconstructive analysis shows that Coetzee's novel *In the Heart of the Country* portrays no such desire for a 'unitary closure' but rather foregrounds the importance of the frontiers and limits that exist outside the European self.

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