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J. M. COETZEE'S WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS: A PORTRAYAL OF INTER-RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

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ARTICLE HISTORY	Abstract
<p>Received : 14-10-2024</p> <p>Revised : 23-12-2024</p> <p>Accepted : 02-01-2025</p> <p>Published : 31-01-2025</p> <p>Author Affiliation: India</p> <p>Corresponding Author: Dr Severine Pinto</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Coexistence, Boundaries, Colonization, Propagation, Imperialism, Oppression, Reconstruction, Resistance</i></p>	<p><i>The depiction of the problems of conflicts and contradictions and graphical portrayal of the web of human relationship among people of varied races in South African society by Coetzee has been identified as the focus of the study. The British rule had an impact on South Africa that comprised the native South Africans or black race, Afrikaners or the white South Africans and the white people of colonial authority. A close reading of select novels of Coetzee also reveals the effects of racism and colonial oppression. More importantly, his writings transcend political, geographical and social boundaries to achieve universal significance. The study of related literature in the works of Coetzee further discloses his ability not only to delineate local situations and characters but to infuse them with universal ideology and characteristics of his mission as well. His use of the country's apartheid system and its post-apartheid transition to represent the bareness and desolation of the human state has also been brought under the discussion. Thus, the present study intends to bring out social relationship existing amidst the native South Africans, the Afrikaners or the white South Africans and the people from white authority in apartheid society of South Africa, with specific reference to select novels. It's proven that the web of social relationship and social reality are not a fixed presence. Human relationships are considered both the cause for societal ills and a remedy for the malady of the society. What is required is the propagation of the essential and everlasting ethical codes for human relationship in a multilayered society in order to maximize the remedy through the web of human relationships.</i></p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human relationships are to an extent determined by the power structure in which they are placed. In other words, the power dynamics of a given environment have an impact on human relationships. The postmodern technique of 'reflectivity' to ascertain the type relationships wherein the people are placed and their predicaments that result from the web of human relationships, Marxist concern of oppressive aspect of power and Foucaultian assumption of coexistence of resistance and ubiquitous nature form the backdrop for the analysis of the human relationships as embedded in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (WB).

2. UNDERSTANDING REALITY

Understanding the reality in a society becomes primarily a mandate to perceive the human relationships. Postmodernist writers meant that 'reality' is elusive, complex, multiple and unstable and at the same time, they maintained their view that the aim of their art is to convey knowledge, by some new aesthetic means, of that intangibility. These thinkers differed with realism that believed in the accurate, detailed, unembellished depiction of nature or of contemporary life. Adorno (1903-1969) and Horkheimer (1895-1973) viewed the project of the Enlightenment as disastrous since knowledge is to be understood as a form of rational functionalism. For them, knowledge is desired only as a means of mastering and making use of the world. Pam Morris acknowledged the words of Adorno and Horkheimer as, "knowledge is a means of human empowerment [but] Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise power. Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator towards men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them" (18). Human beings and objects alike are categorized, regularized and unified into the conforming mass order required by a capitalist mode of production and consumption.

Hegel insisted that reality is the result of a process of mediation; it is not the first principle, but the last result. The real is not to be found in sense-perception: it is only the result of the process of thought. This emphasis of the mediated aspect of reality is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Hegelian philosophy. In contrast to the meditated process of thought, Marx treated the capital system as necessarily transient. The socialist enterprise had to be defined as a radical alternative to the social metabolic mode of control of the capital system as a whole. The capitalist authority and its power are

rejected by the people, whenever they are affected by it. In reality, the power of politics and its authority increased the condition of 'self', and 'Other'. It also became a reason for civil and international wars. Colonized people began to oppose the authority. So, they started reacting both physically and psychologically against the power. The concept of freedom is defined "as a belief that one can engage in a particular behavior[u]r" (Chade 13). Derek Chade had quoted the definition of Brehm as, "psychological reactance as a motivational state directed toward the re-establishment of the free behavior[u]rs which have been eliminated or threatened with elimination" (13-14). The theory makes no assumption about the psychological reactance being aroused to acquire a freedom but refers solely to reinstating a threatened or eliminated freedom. Psychological reactance, therefore, arouses an individual and motivates towards restoration of freedom.

3. SOCIAL REALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The experience of reality in South Africa is revealed by both the native people and the Afrikaners, through the writings of South African writers. The South African people struggled to live in their own place, because of the power of imperialist white authority. The life of the colonizer and the colonized, oppression and repression, and sufferings and struggles were recorded by the native South Africans from the beginning of the 19th century. During apartheid movement, the Afrikaners began to express the reality of South Africa, through their literary writings. All the struggles of South Africa, during apartheid movement were expressed through fictional works of both the native South Africans and the Afrikaners. The reality is fictionalized in their works, sometimes with historical reference. The expressions of the native South African writers were the experience of oppression in their own country. Therefore, it should be considered as the firsthand experience. The Afrikaner writers like, Andre Brink, Brayten Breytenbach, Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee expressed the life and struggles of the native South Africans through the voice of their protagonists.

The protagonists portrayed by J.M. Coetzee are the Afrikaners and most of them project their experience in South Africa as the persons from authoritative community during apartheid movement. In this context, Coetzee's works may be referred to as statements of opposition to oppression. In his fictions, he has portrayed a conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, the colonizers and the colonized, and the white and the black. This, of course, is a universal struggle, and Coetzee's novels may be related to the oppressed or oppressor of most of the countries at significant points in history,

but it is only natural that, when considering a South African author writing about victimization, it is specifically of the persecution implicit in the system of apartheid in South Africa. His fictional characters might dwell in a multitude of locales. His novels repeatedly focus upon the process by which history is made and regarded emphasizing how history is registered in human consciousness through the medium of language. Here, the reality of South Africa is revealed in three ways as, 'what the South Africans conceived of reality', 'what the colonizers and the Afrikaners expected from the reality' and 'what the reality ought to be' or 'move towards truth', with specific reference to J.M. Coetzee's novels such as, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Age of Iron* (1990). Attwell (1993) has rightly said that dominant literary traditions "have adopted various forms of realism as the unquestioned means of bearing witness to, and telling the truth about, South Africa" (7). The revelation of reality through the experience of the native South Africans and the Afrikaners in South Africa and the democrats move towards a revelation of truth as a universal concept.

In the context of the social conditions of South Africa, it is primarily important to analyze the reality of South Africa during the apartheid era. In South Africa, even with freedom, the native people struggled to live in their land. The imperial authority enforced them to live with the limitations: they could not move from one place to another place without getting permission, or without pass, and they were not able to enter into inter-racial marriages. Therefore, the native South Africans opposed the authority through movements such as Pan-Africanism, African National Congress (ANC), Black Conscious Movement (BCM) and Soweto Uprising. During that period, the native people burnt the schools and other things which were introduced by the Western imperialism. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) attacked what they saw as traditional white values, especially, the 'condescending' values of the white people of liberal opinion. They refused to engage the white liberal opinion of black consciousness, and emphasized the rejection of the white monopoly on truth as a central tenet of their movement. The Black Consciousness Movement's policy of perpetually challenging the dialectic of apartheid South Africa, as a means of conscientising black thought brought it into direct conflict with the full force of the security apparatus of the apartheid regime.

A confrontation sparked eventually on June 16, 1976 in the Soweto Uprising when at least two hundred people were killed by the South African Security Forces, as students

marched to protest the use of the Afrikaans language in the South African schools. It spread like wild fire throughout the country especially amidst the black community of South Africa. It successfully implemented a system of comprehensive local committees to facilitate organized resistance the Black Consciousness Movement itself was devastated by security action taken against its leaders and social programs. In 1977 all Black Consciousness Movement related organizations were banned; many of its leaders were arrested; and their social programs were undone under provisions of the newly Implemented Internal Security Amendment Act. The new Black Consciousness Movement, not only called for resistance to the policy of apartheid, freedom of speech, and more rights for the South African blacks who were oppressed by the white apartheid regime, but also black pride and a readiness to make blackness, rather than simple liberal democracy, the rallying point of unapologetically black organizations. More importantly, the group defined black had to include other people of colour in South Africa, most notably the large number of the South Africans of the Indian descent. The movement stirred many blacks to confront not only the legal but also the cultural and psychological realities of apartheid. It seeks not black visibility but real black participation in society and in political struggles.

It was understood that white settler's political ideology in South Africa was traditionally perceived itself as the embodiment of some form of 'civilization' against the threatened 'barbarism' of the African majority rule. The term has a significance both in its Victorian imperial roots and in its facility for acting as a kind of common ideological denominator binding the political discourse of both the Afrikaner and the English settlers into a common defense of the 'white civilization'. Moreover, it reflected the essentially urban nature of the white South African society and thus reinforced the apartheid notion of territorial separation between the white urban race in the city areas and the rural abodes of the African majority in the tribal 'homelands', though limited economic development in certain sections of these rural slums has brought urban aspects even to the originally pastoral vision.

4. SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION IN WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS

Exploration of the dichotomy between justice and law is the motive behind Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). It is about the empires, imperialism and human conscience. Set in a colonial outpost, the novel depicts the lives of local nomadic tribes who are called 'barbarians' by the Empire's men and portrays the character of a

Magistrate, a nameless narrator who wants to lead a quiet life in quiet times. The peaceful existence of the remote place is changed by the arrival of Colonel Joll, a representative of the imperialist Empire to do an inquiry on a scandalous 'barbarian' uprising. Colonel Joll puts down the rebellion using the cruelest strategies of torturing common people in order to gain information about the possible rebellion. The 'barbarians' are constantly tortured to provide Joll with information. The Magistrate who has been acting as a loyal man to the Empire starts questioning the way the native people are treated by Joll. Joll has done collateral damage in terms of deaths and tortures before he leaves for the capital.

Once the people are let off from prison, they vacate the place leaving behind a young girl whom the Magistrate encounters. As a humane person, the Magistrate accommodates her and nurses her. Her disability has been caused by the torturous treatment by Joll. The Magistrate is not sure of his emotions towards her as he is sympathetic. Further, he has been sexually attracted to her. His sense of judgement is also in a confusion. Therefore, he is skeptical about the method with which the empire employs to detect the rebellion and crush it. Despite the understanding, the Magistrate and the girl struggle to communicate and therefore, he decides to enable her return to her people.

While going on a journey to find her tribe, the girl enters into a relationship with the Magistrate. They still remain separated as she desires to join her people. The Magistrate could not succeed in persuading her to stay with him. As he returns to his outpost, he is imprisoned without even any formal inquiry for he has been associating with the 'barbarians'. Eventually, the Magistrate is put in to torture and humiliated by Joll's warrant officer, Mandel in a mock execution of being hanged him from a tree. He subsequently goes out to beg in the town. The people of the town start leaving when the 'barbarians' gather there to avenge their tortures. Manipulating the crisis, Mandel's soldiers vandalize the town.

The soldiers who turned out to render their support to Joll put an end to the apparent rebellion and the nomads eventually made them go into the desert and confiscate their horses at night. It leaves them without sufficient food supplies or transport. Joll finds out that his lieutenant, Mandel has fled as well. Meanwhile, the Magistrate recommences his position in the outpost town enabling those who engage themselves in their own food preparation for winter. Joll is apparently licensed to torture the native people, the barbarians since they become potential threat to the Empire.

Thus, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is about the impact of the space wherein the torture has the life of a man of conscience. It explores the impact of the environment in which a man of integrity is tortured. In this context, it is worth noting that Coetzee depicts the colonial outpost as a timeless, nameless and placeless one. The Empire goes unnamed. Perhaps, it permits the scheme of things to be more an allegorical one about themes and topics than a historical one and the one that considers a specific current situation through the perspectives of morality. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is regarded in a sense a postcolonial novel in spite of the truth that its setting is in an unspecified time and location. In this aspect, the novelist is able to achieve his approach to subjectivity and the elusive nature of truth and the novel is described as postmodern. Even though postmodernism is viewed as a study of the past, current and potential future effects of colonialism at various levels such as local, societal and global, it draws support from various lived experiences of the author himself from societies that are either previously colonized or currently colonized. In this context, the novel is characterized by a promulgation of subjectivity over objectivity or global truths.

Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) is based on the subject that the Empire looks down upon the nomadic tribes as the 'others.' It further considers the native people as 'barbarians' and the nomadic people who exist outside of the civilized world. In other words, the concept of 'other' creates a dehumanizing effect on the people who do not belong to their group based on the differences in race, religion, ethnicity, gender or disability.

Joll's insistence that the 'barbarians' plan a revolt is baseless. He therefore goes on to torture old people and children to persuade them agree that they rebel. It is done illegally and considered an inhuman act. It is not that children and old people would be able to give information even if a revolt is planned. It is quite paradoxical that even the civilized people who indulge themselves in 'othering' sound more barbarious than the barbarians. The Magistrate who sympathetically understands the 'barbarian' girl could not sustain his support as there are several differences. His mixed emotions of the sexual and a sense of judgment towards her is a cause of imbalance between them. Hence, the Magistrate undertakes a milder kind of interrogation in his effort to get the girl to tell him about what happened to her. His approach is not the same as Joll's. Instead, he looks for understanding versus intel. Despite the humane approach

to understand, he could still not comprehend the extent of the girl beyond her trauma and disability.

The characters of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) are mostly anonymous and represent a class. The Magistrate who is the flawed, unnamed protagonist and the first-person narrator is an employee of the Empire and encounters a crisis of conscience and identity while facing the torture of people. He is typically an epitome of conscience. He may not be always successful in comprehending the full extent of the power dynamics at play or his role in them. His efforts are genuine. He is in total contrast to the character of Colonel Joll, who never takes effort to understand, redress or atone. He is the high-ranking Empire man who is positioned at the remote outpost to thwart a supposed 'barbarian' revolt. He employs the extreme method of torture to gain information and only succeeds in producing more conflict and anxiety than what was existed before his arrival. He is ultimately defeated after being evaded in the desert. He is regarded as the representative of imperialism or the empire that colonizes. Another important character is the 'barbarian' girl who witnessed her father's murder. She becomes traumatized especially at the hands of Colonel Joll. She is abandoned by her people and therefore, becomes disabled. The Magistrate sympathizes with her, takes into his home, tenders her wounds, and seeks to understand her. All his efforts become in vain. His lack of understanding has an impact on his depiction of her character. He eventually helps her to return to her people. Apart from her obvious disabilities perceived by the Magistrate, she displays native wisdom, acquired intelligence and spontaneous wit. She is truly portrayed as a symbol of the colonised.

5. CONFLICTING REALITY IN WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS

J.M. Coetzee first undertook the task of describing the reality of South Africa in *WB* through the experience of torture, sufferings, and struggles of the native South Africans as the 'barbarians' in the hands of the white authority as the 'Empire'. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is presented in the context of the historical meaning of the Western notion of 'civilization' and the decline of the idea in the era of apartheid ideology in South Africa. The apartheid conception of racial separation is the fulfillment of many of these precepts. Hence, J.M. Coetzee has approached the South African situation more allegorically, as the embodiment of a more universal phenomenon of imperialism and the crisis of civilized values. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is set in an unrecognized time or place. It is the personal narrative of the country Magistrate who was posted to

the frontier market town on the edge of a lake and a desert but cut off from the central political and military impulses of the Empire to which he belonged. Besides, he was shut out by an impenetrable barrier of cultural misunderstanding from the 'barbarians' against whom he was defending the Empire.

The Empire considered the native South Africans as the 'barbarians'. They also invaded the town and arrested the barbarians for lying drunk in the gutter. Then the Empire imprisoned and tortured them and left a girl with partially blinded eyes. They also imprisoned the Magistrate for, "treasonously consorting with the enemy" (WB 85). J. M. Coetzee thus seeks to explore how the Empire seeks to rationalize and justify themselves historically. In the beginning of the novel *Colonel Joll*, a representative of the Empire, arrived spreading fear among the settlers by telling them that the natives present a great threat. Colonel Joll's arrival disrupted the peaceful colony and created an atmosphere of suspicion and conflict. The settlers and the natives, who had coexisted peacefully before, now found themselves pitted against each other. While the Empire deemed the natives as 'barbarous', in fact it is the Empire that became increasingly barbarous as the novel progresses, losing all regard for human dignity, spirit, and respect. The quality believed to be most odious in the barbarians-savagery in its many forms, is amply displayed by the actions and attitudes of the Empire's men.

The portrayal of the barbarians in J. M. Coetzee's fiction was based on the concept and designated as the 'Other' by the symbolic order of the Empire. In other words, the 'Other', the barbarians, revealed ultimately the repressed desires of the position as rulers and the unconscious 'self' of the Empire. It is the unconscious 'self' of the colonizer that projected the meaning of the barbarians. The nature of the 'Empire' or the 'self' is barbaric and reflected in the nature of the South Africans. So, the 'Empire' is the real 'Other', because of their barbaric quality. On the contrary, the white authority became 'self' to the South Africans or the 'Other' and they moved the native 'Others' towards freedom with the quality of violence. Therefore, 'barbarians' is not a fixed ontological presence of unitary category, but a narcissistic construct projected by the Empire in terms of counter-transference. In WB, the colonial subject is waiting for the 'Other' to emerge in the subject, for the actualization of the repressed desires in the sovereign subject of the state. Thus, the 'Other', the barbarian that Colonel Joll pursued relentlessly, seems to exist more in his own unconscious than in the native context. The hysterical reaction of Colonel Joll toward the barbarians implied that the uncanny

presence of 'barbarianism' resided in the very colonial unconscious of the state and in the very symbolic order in the civilized 'self' that is supposed to eradicate it. Therefore, it is not the absence of the barbarian, but the presence of the barbarian in the colonial unconscious of the Empire, which generated the tale of torture as observed by the Magistrate: There is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. Their dreams are the consequence of too much ease. (WB 9)

In addition, "Coetzee's Empires depend upon the operation of the imperialist Manichean opposition, whereby it can identify itself as justified by identifying the 'barbarians' as the enemy". (Jolly 15) Colonel Joll's practices of inquisition and torture may be seen as an attempt to coerce the natives into assuming the identity of "barbarian" and "enemy" (WB 85) that the Empire required them to assert its existence. Jolly purported, to be concerned with discovering "the truth" (Jolly 15), the prisoner's guilt is a foregone conclusion for him. The scene of torture is first expressed through the experience of a young boy and an old man. The prison is "simply a store room attached to the granary" without any windows and the "two prisoners lie bound on the floor" giving "smell of old urine". (WB 2) "One is an old man, the other a boy". (WB 3) "The boys face is puffy and bruised; one eye is swollen shut" (ibid). The description of the prison and the deplorable condition of the prisoners with their stink of sweat and urine reveal that the narrative deals with some gloomy episode. As it is anticipated, it helps to come across the description of the torture: "The grey beard is caked with blood. The lips are crushed and drawn back; the teeth are broken. One eye is rolled back; the other eye-socket is a bloody hole". (WB 7) Though a detailed description of how an old prisoner was tortured to death is not given, the sentences are potent and forceful enough to drive home the brutality of the torture. Colonialist truth, the Empire, as represented by Colonel Joll and Mandel, believed itself to be the quester and upholder of truth. It runs the business of constructing its own version of truth by manipulating its written code and power. The report that the interrogator namely Joll submits to the Magistrate regarding the death of an old prisoner during the interrogation throws ample light on the manipulation of power and the written code. The report reads as: "During the course of the interrogation contradictions became apparent in the prisoners' testimony. Confronted with these contradictions, the prisoners became enraged and attacked the investigating officer. A

scuffle ensued during which the prisoner fell heavily against the wall. Efforts to revive him were unsuccessful” (WB 6).

6. INTRA RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Intra-racial relationship between the Magistrate and Colonel Joll probes into the question of identity only to the Magistrate. The relationship between them is contradictory as Joll represents the authority and the power exercised over the natives and the Magistrate who out-posted from the white community, represents the well-wisher of the native Africans. It is clearly reflected in the words of the Magistrate who introduces himself,

“I am a country Magistrate, a responsible official in the service of the Empire, serving out my days on this lazy frontier, waiting to retire. I collect the tithes and taxes, administer the communal lands, see that the garrison is provided for, supervise the junior officers who are the only officers we have here, keep an eye on trade, preside over the law-court twice a week. For the rest I watch the sun rise and set, eat and sleep and am content. When I pass away, I hope to merit three lines of small print in the Imperial gazette. I have not asked for more than a quiet life in quiet times” (WB 8).

The polarity that exists between the Magistrate and Joll is reflected in the argument about the torture which is exercised over the barbarians. The Magistrate affirms that he too emerges only from the Empire, but the situation of South Africa makes him turn against the Empire. Joll imprisons the barbarians to find out the truth. He uses strategies to extract the truth from the barbarians. In the process, Joll accuses the Magistrate not cooperating, and the Magistrate himself seems to get some sort of satisfaction out of ending his false friendship with the Third Bureau: “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” (WB 85). Hence, the Magistrate himself is imprisoned and tortured. The Magistrate is cleansed through violence just like the barbarians who realize the truth. Plainly speaking, the marks on him literally write him guilty, but being guilty, he is also innocent and free from having to condone the acts of Empire. “A bestial life is turning me into a beast” (WB 87), yet the torture performed on his body proved that he was human. Though being reduced to the level of an inanimate object, a body in pain, the Magistrate is once and for all able to “assert [his] distance from Colonel Joll” (WB 48). The Magistrate contemplates over the role of Empire in history and is seen himself as “the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, [Joll] the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow” (WB 148). Here,

there are two opposing sides of the colonial rule and both are necessary for the success of the Empire. The Magistrate represents a conservative view of colonial rule where the relationship with the natives was maintained for trading purposes, whereas Joll and Mandel represent a more radical view of the Empire's demonstration of power on its subjects. According to the Magistrate, "one thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era" (WB 146). Gradually, his notion of identity is shifted until he can no longer associate himself with the unitary identity of the Empire. Isolated from this unitary identity, his own identity becomes increasingly connected with the barbarian girl. Identifying with her becomes a form of escape from the identity he possesses as an Afrikaner.

7. INTER-RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Inter-racial relationship between the Empire and the 'barbarians', and, the Magistrate and the 'barbarians' show the communication between the bipolar entities such as oppression and repression, center and margin, high and low, self and other, singularity and hybridity. Especially, the bond of human relationship between the Empire and the 'barbarians' is also the contradictory one, like the relationship between the Empire and the Magistrate. The Empire's relationship with the native South Africans, is considered as the capitalistic approach, which opposes and replace the natives as 'Others', in their own place. Colonel Joll and his men had come from the capital to defend the Empire against the perceived threat posed by the native inhabitants of the frontier area. The Empire considered the native people as 'enemies' to be tortured. The barbarians became an enemy because they refused to give to the white a few things from their small shop without payment. Therefore, they experienced imprisonment and torture in the public square from the hands of Colonel Joll and Mandel. Thus, torture in the context of the novel becomes, above all, a means of writing what the Empire wanted to write or engrave on its subjects. The power of the Empire to write establishes its supremacy over those who lack this skill. Ahmad has rightly said "The power and skill of the Empire, its art, lie in its capacity to generate and then interpret its own signs" (WB 148). Coetzee avails himself of the novel's nonspecific milieu to suggest a form of ethical universalism. There is a difference, however, between universalism, which implies a humanist conception of a transcendent moral consciousness and a strategic refusal of specificity, a refusal that is the result of being painfully conscious of one's immediate historical location. The milieu of Barbarians is the result of just such a refusal. It is the

fault of the Empire. The Empire has created the time of history. The Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. "Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history" (WB 146).

Coetzee's Empire does not represent all empires; its critical force is to provide a strategic, timely disconfirmation. In Coetzee's fiction the barbarians were constituted and designated as the 'Other' by the symbolic order of the empire. In other words, the 'Other' the barbarian, revealed ultimately the repressed desires of the state and the unconscious self of the empire. It is the unconscious self of the colonial subject that projects the meaning of the barbarians; it states the narratives' desires according to the state's unconscious. Therefore, 'barbarian' is not a fixed ontological presence of unitary category, but a narcissistic construct projected by the empire in terms of counter-transference. The colonial subject is waiting for the 'Other' to emerge in the subject, for the actualization of the repressed desires in the sovereign subject of the state. In the colonial context, counter-transference is transformed into a discourse strategy which the colonizer acted out as the sovereign subject's repressed desires through the subaltern body. This dialect between civilization and barbarianism does not signify the inter-subjective relationship between the 'self' and the 'Other', but exposed the intra-subjective relationship of the colonial subject to its own unconscious: barbarianism lurks at the very center of civilization. Propaganda rumors, and gossips all contribute to the signification of the barbarians. Dreams, hysterias, fantasies, and phantoms generated by the colonial unconscious revealed the repressed desires of the sovereign subject of the empire rather than the nature of the natives. Eventually, the word 'barbarian' becomes a self-reflexive concept and it designates that barbarianism is not at all related to the native people, but perpetuated by and residing in the colonial unconscious of the state and over-determined by the repressed desires of the empire. Oyono, Ferdinand (1929-2010) another south African writer describes the same in *The Old Man and the Medal* (1969) which reinforces the truth that colonialism perpetuates cultural imperialism by setting up 'whiteness' and its values as a superior quality that deserves emulation.

The contradictory relationship of the barbarians with the Empire drives them to take refuge in the humanistic and imperialistic inter-racial relationship with the Magistrate, which also unfortunately turns out to be one of torture, violence and sexuality.

Coetzee's Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (WB), as a representative of the white community, like a brother, makes all efforts to enable the natives of South Africa to get their own freedom. Nevertheless, he too exploits them as an authority of power forgetting that he is ruled as well. It follows the Empire's declaration of the state of exception, the paradigmatic situation, in which sovereign power abandons subjects, reduces them to bare life, equipped with 'emergency power'. The Magistrate, however, who, until the point of time, has kept order in the settlement, represents a clearer vision of the destructive impact that the imperial invasion has on the native culture. The Magistrate does not want the natives to get very close to civilization because it will destroy their own culture and human potential. He is able to see the direct cause or effect of the relationship of the colony on the 'barbarians', and the negative impact of the imposed civilization of the Empire on them. This destruction is mitigated in WB by the introduction of the Afrikaner, but the Magistrate, though sympathetically fell in love with the captured native girl and exercised a kind of violence to possess her. However, his guilt of violating the trust makes him reflective over his action and he begins to realize that the barbarous qualities attributed to the natives are created by the Empire to justify their invasion of the alien culture. To enforce the ethical code on the natives, the invading Empire has to name them barbarians. It is the insight into the rationale for imperialism that ultimately leads to the Magistrate's imprisonment.

The Magistrate, apart from Joll and his men, however, has acknowledged the inadequacy of the imperial values and practices in which he has been steeped and educated. He finds that the barbarians exceed the terms, categories and definitions in which the Empire tried to enclose them. The failure of the Magistrate's interpretive endeavours with regard to the barbarian girl reveals the colonial 'Other's' resistance to the Empire's self-affirmatory endeavour to impose an identity upon him or her. As he might try, the Magistrate cannot decipher the girl's torture marks: "her abused body stubbornly refuses to be translated into language. The Magistrate openly challenges the Empire's hermeneutic authority by shouting the word "No" during grotesque spectacle of imperial power that is Joll's public display and torture of his prisoners" (WB 126). His 'No!' denounced the Empire's denial of the prisoners' humanity and denaturalized or defamiliarized the distinctions and categories upon which the Empire is founded. The Magistrate challenges the authority. The question that surfaces at this point is that of the status of liberal values in a situation that simply has no room for them anymore. The outpost is, of course, always fundamentally illiberal. Thus, the Magistrate remembers

lecturing a soldier, without belief, on the rule of law and recalled feeling afterwards “the shame of office” (WB 152). On the occasion, he also tries to console himself by elevating his role to that of the witness to suffering, a role sanctified with an air of tragedy and pursued, as one has seen, by the literature of liberal dissent in South Africa:

“When some men suffer unjustly, I said to myself, it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it.”

But the specious consolation of this thought could not comfort me” (WB 152). Under the Magistrate’s *laissez-faire* brand of colonial humanism, liberal values appear equivocal at best; thus, in the new order they can have even less currency. Indeed, they appear thoroughly anachronistic in Joll’s reign, though this fact is also laced with the irony that such values might have a new, interim relevance in the terrorism of the imperial crisis. The Magistrate’s final turning point, when Joll brandished hammer to bludgeon the prisoners, the Magistrate is outraged at the treatment, screaming that even an animal would not receive this kind of torture. The indignities inflicted on the prisoners constitute a complete breakdown of the moral fibers of the torturers. All the brutality that is committed is in pursuit of elusive evidence against the enigmatic Barbarians and increasingly obsequious prisoners, hinting at a deeply troubled regime unable to distinguish right from wrong, or at least the justifiable from the unjust. The Magistrate questions one of the torturers on how he can go on with his normal life. Yet for all of his sensitivity he fails to understand the barbarian girl he adopts out of a mixture of compassion and lust.

8. LITERARY DEVICES TO PORTRAY RELATIONSHIPS

The imagery, archetypes and situations which Coetzee used to form his allegory are fairly obvious: the Empire stands for the Eurocentric power which ruled South Africa; the barbarians represent the black people of South Africa; the Magistrate, the Afrikaner, as evidenced by the ritual ablutions that he performs, his time in the desert and his near crucifixion, is a Christ figure; and the Empire’s officials are as much prisoners of the repressive system of laws as are the barbarians. Similarly, the relationship between Joll and the Magistrate symbolizes imperialism and the contradiction. The relationship among the ‘barbarians’ symbolizes the ‘collectiveness’. The relationship of the Empire, the Magistrate and the ‘barbarians’ symbolizes the violation, torture, and oppression and repression.

Even at the end of the novel, when all the struggles get over resulting in a failure to engage the barbarians successfully, the army abandons the town and leaves the freed Magistrate to resume his official functions. The Magistrate and the remaining inhabitants of the outpost anxiously await the arrival of the barbarians. The Magistrate, who earlier has already compared himself to “a storyteller losing the thread of his story” (WB 170), still feels “stupid like a man who loses his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere” (WB 170). The town returns to the state in which it was in the beginning, namely a state of ‘waiting for the barbarians. Thus, WB gestures towards ‘the coming community’, which is based on the idea of an essential commonality between members of humanity, affirming difference rather than identity.

This novel does not describe an edifying story of conversation, self-sacrifice, humiliation and the resignation of power. Undoubtedly, the Magistrate goes beyond in his identification with the victim, but he reintegrates his former role of the ruler now almost mechanically like a puppet. He accomplishes the same gestures against a revealed horizon of meaninglessness. The events, the violent rule of Colonel Joll, may seem to be erased but they have avoided the whole structure of its apparent meaning. It is ironical that the Magistrate, who challenges the legitimacy of the law, when back in power, sentences a deserter in the name of the same law he has learnt to distrust, and of which he understands the violent secret.

Gallagher writes that Coetzee succeeds in solving the moral issue of representing violence through his use of textual strategies that create a reality of “moral vacuum that allows torture to exist in the contemporary world” (278). The final impact of the novel is paradoxical. An allegory typically universalizes a story but here it particularizes the tale. It succeeds as an extended meditation on the moral obligations of an individual, especially an official, who is uncomfortable about his nation’s legal system and opposes the techniques used by his government. The events succeed in convincing that the Empire makes a mistake in torturing these victims. The story is so divorced from reality and has so few characters that resemble the fellow human beings that it has very little general applicability to the broader world. The moral contact of the novel leads to the ethical relation to and with the ‘Other’, which is impossible in a setting where ideological and political cleavage deepen the ontological gap already existing between ‘self’ and ‘Other’. According to Kossew (1996), the novel depicts a post-colonial situation in that it represents “the complexity of the issue involved in resistance and

the ambivalence and paradoxes involved in the colonizer or colonized relationships” (97). The South Africans certainly want to get into partnership with the whites. When the white authoritative people deny, they enter the bottom level of the power structure. They revolt against the authority because of the non-cooperation of the hierarchical power structure to have a good relationship with one another. The violence means the natives’ struggle for freedom and also for social existence. The white authority at the top of the hierarchical social structure deny any kind of social relationship with ‘Others’ and even with the Afrikaners. They always believe in the ruler-ruled structure and also in the violence safeguarding their ruling position. Their ethical principle is not to take care of the needs of their subjects, but to oppress the colonized ‘Others’ by their ruling attitudes. Therefore, their role is reversed by considering them as the barbarians, instead of considering the native South Africans as the barbarians. The Magistrate, the Afrikaner may serve as the mouthpiece of Coetzee who empathizes with the sufferers. At the same time, he enforces the law of his parent race. However, the Magistrate discovers that there is nothing outside of history, nothing is outside of ‘Empire’ and therefore nothing is uncontaminated rapport with the ‘Other’. Even to seek utter debasement, to relinquish all attributes of power, is no guarantee that there could be something like a ‘pure relationship’ on an ethical basis.

Even the literary devices employed in his novels like narration, imagery and allegory add to the perspectives of human relationships and its insistence of ethical code for harmonious life. Most of the novels of Coetzee are set in the background of Cape Town or Cape Province of South Africa. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is presented in the first-person narration of the Afrikaner protagonists and explored the life and the situation of the people in apartheid South Africa. The first-person narration in Coetzee’s *WB* gives a vivid picture of an unknown frontier of South Africa. The first-person narration by the character the Magistrate unravels the story of the past, but not of apartheid South Africa. The novel is surely a tale of imperial vicissitudes and anxiety. The perspectives of its first-person narrator may be said to be anti-historiogenetic; there are no origins, and, accordingly, no fulfilment in the present. Coetzee’s narrator is never identified by name as it is in the case of the Magistrate of an imperial settlement in “an indeterminate time and place” (Voegelin 3).

WB is narrated by the Magistrate belonging to the white community. His narration gives the reader a deep personal insight into the main character’s most private thoughts.

Using the narrator as the primary character of the novel, Coetzee allows the reader to understand and appreciate the Magistrate's actions and opinions by delving beyond his apparent thoughts, to his most intimate contemplation and reflections, the reader is able to discern the Magistrate through his internal thoughts and emotions which are resonant of some of the most fundamental human experiences including aging, morality, sexuality, love, death, and self-actualization. Furthermore, the Magistrate narrates not only his conscious ideas, but also his subconscious thoughts of dreams. The dreams give the reader an opportunity to become as familiar with the Magistrate as he is with himself. Coetzee creates the Magistrate to be a reflective individual and puts the Magistrate in a narrative situation that deprives him of the distance from his experience necessary for his reflection to make coherent sense of it. Eventually, the Magistrate fails from his position as an interpreter, because of his ignorance of the language of the barbarians. As a result, the Magistrate's understanding comes in pieces and is always subject to revision.

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* portrays allegorically pain and complacency chronicling the effects of imperialism and torture on nations, cultures and individuals. Several critics and readers tend to extend the idea of a general allegory and read the novel as a historical representation of South Africa, Coetzee's native country, and the apartheid that segregate members of the nation as a residual effect of European imperialism. The novel is an allegory that much is plain from the generic terms used to describe places, people and events. It is a story within a story. It is as much about Rome and its barbarian invaders as it is about modern-day warfare and scare tactics.

Use of images plays a prominent role in WB that is imagery for the barbaric quality of the white authority and the violent attitude of the native people. This novel is approximately set in an unknown imaginary frontier, which is not present in the map of South Africa. Coetzee starts depicting with the image of Joll's dark glasses, which foreshadow the girl's blinding at his hand. The blind eyes of the barbarian girl are portrayed as "white" (WB 26) while Joll is portrayed as "dark" (WB 1). It is an example for the subtle reversal of colonial stereotypes, which Coetzee employs all through the novel, culminating the Magistrate's realization that the notion of barbarian is flexible and stands for the actions of the members of the Empire as well. Coetzee's decision to put the Magistrate's story in his own land literally by the end of the novel provides yet another level upon which issues of torture and writing are to be understood.

9. CONCLUSION

Waiting for the Barbarians thus portrays a post-colonial scenario that highlights the problems of resistance as well as the ambiguity and contradictions surrounding the interactions between the colonizer and colonized, man and woman and the oppressor and the oppressed. The ethical code that the people of South Africa arrive at and accept in the process of understanding one another give them an opportunity to create the power structure. They use violence only to revolt against the authority and have a good relationship with one another. For them, the violence means the natives' struggle for freedom and also for social existence. Finally, the role to consider the white oppressors as barbarians is reversed. At last, discernment arises that there could not be something like a 'pure relationship' on an ethical basis.

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