

Chapter 1

Waiting for the Barbarians: A Protest against Imperialism

This study deals with politics of irony used by J.M. Coetzee in his novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Irony is a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency in which apparently straight-forward statement or event is undermined by its context. By the term 'politics of irony,' we mean counter politics contended by the post-colonial writers and novelists. Coetzee has used vivacious perspectives and irony against colonial attitude about backward people and their attribution to people as barbarians.

Waiting for the Barbarians is one of the best novels written by John Maxwell Coetzee. He has borrowed the title of this novel from C.P. Cavafy's poem "Waiting for the Barbarians." The novel is a protest against imperialism. It is a protest against imperialistic politics. It fights back the imperial attempt, its policy, its vision and its ill-intentional network and activities. Written in 1980 AD, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is a novel that wrestles against imperial design, its plan and its quest for finding out enemies and its existence. It hints that for fear of its existence, the colonial empire is in search of its enemies; and it is because of this search for its enemies, it is inventing its own downfall.

Waiting for the Barbarians is an irony on imperial politics. Finding barbarians, making effort to educate them and making them civilized is the politics of the imperial nations. Imperial nations do all these activities for their existence.

The novel refutes the fact that there are barbarians. Barbarians exist only in the mind of imperial people. It is an invented concept. As it is a concept invented by an imperial ruler and believed by those imperial nations, it lies only in the mind of imperial people. Ironically, the people of imperial countries are barbarians as they are involved in uncivilized activities.

The so-called civilized nations are involved in barbarian activities. It is imperial nations that are in search of barbarians; it is imperial nations that distinguish among us and create the concept of US and THEM/others; it is these nations that torture the others. The others are naïve; they do no harm to the imperial people. The others, the so-called barbarians are not barbarians as such. It is an irony that the imperials are the civilized and that the others are barbarians.

Waiting for the barbarians is retaliation against imperial brutal attack on the poor and underprivileged. It is a verbal counter-attack against imperial dominance. It is a verbal vengeance of the representative other against imperial barbarity, it is brutality and the torture that it has inflicted to the poor and underprivileged.

Waiting for the Barbarians is the battle against imperial torture inflicted by imperial states or colonial states. It is a battle against age-long suppression caused by them on the colonial people. It represents corporal as well as mental and moral torture on the colonial people by the colonizers. J.M. Coetzee makes an attempt to withstand the aggression set forth by the imperial states.

The imperial states have tortured the naïve people. They have tortured the gullible people in the name of barbarians. They have encroached the lands of those gullible and naïve people. Many of the Africans have become the victim of imperial expansionism.

In the novel Coetzee presents victimized naïve people who are attributed barbarians by the imperial people. They have been imprisoned by Colonel Joll. They have been tortured. They have been beaten mercilessly. They have been beaten until scars and bruises have been made.

An episode of the novel depicts that people of the desert and mountains have been caught up, arrested and detained in prison, thinking that they are barbarians. A

father and his son are caught. One of the detainees is a woman. Four of the barbarians are beaten publicly in the open square. Children are called to beat them. The scene presents the society of so-called civilized people who teach degenerating attitude about the others.

The novel presents representative behavior during Holocaust of the empire. With reference to Coetzee's South African origin, it presents the scene during the Holocaust in South Africa, white European colonialism and apartheid. Like the fictional unnamed locale and empire in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Cape Coast of South Africa was settled under the direction of the Dutch East India Company, which then blossomed into expansion of the Cape Coast Colony at the expense of local Khoikhoi pastorals.

These colonial attacks and land grabs led to later conflicts among Voortrekkers, the whites from the Cape Coast who travelled with wagons and animals and Xhosa people. The whites pushed themselves further north until new frontier led to border conflicts. And there was similar confrontation of these White with Zulu of South Africa in the 19th century.

We can have this reference from Gregory O'Dea's lecture series. He states: "Though lacking the obvious political centralization of the Empire in Coetzee's novel, the White Boers or Afrikaners, adopting a semi-nomadic farming lifestyle while stealing land resources from other people, formed Boar Republics in the 19th century to escape British rule in the Cape Colony" (2). These lines of Gregory O'Dea express the background of Holocaust and land-encroachment in South Africa.

Needless to say, the white South Africans, represented by the Empire in the Coetzee's novel, are the ones involved in oppressing 'barbarians' who have been

pushed gradually further and further into inhospitable land, representing the Khoikhoi, Xhosa, Zulu and other South African people.

Such inhumane activities and a number of problems that South Africa is facing is the result of colonial rule and its oppression. Be it the problem of race, or the problem of class conflict or that of politics colonial rule has exerted a great influence. This theme of colonization is focused by Coetzee. The rumor is spread in the town that the native of this frontier land is preparing for the revolt against the empire. So the empire sends Colonel Joll vesting emergency power to know the truth.

At the behest of and the authority vested by the colonial rule, he begins capturing the naïve people attributing them barbarians. Under investigation he performs several inhuman activities.

Samuel Durrant, comparing the goals of South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the works of Coetzee opines; "There is a question on how a nation will be able to mourn and move into the future when the past continues to influence the relationships in the present. Coetzee speaks of the present situation in South Africa as a result of colonialism and the oppressive relationships it creates" (Durant 98). What Samuel Durrant means is the past has the effect at the present. Because of colonial effect in South Africa, the present political situation is aggravated.

The novel unravels an imaginary unnamed empire. We are given no recognizable sense of when or where the story takes place. There is no clear sign of where to locate the novel's event along the axes of time and space. So the novel's setting is a historical, extra-geographical. The novel sets example of Roman-Britain, Spanish-Mexico or Belgian-Congo or nineteenth century North American plains where the story has been taking place.

The major character in the novel is the Magistrate who is nameless and dwells in a nameless settlement. He is the agent of the Empire and meets Colonel Joll as the story of the novel unfolds; they talk about different things. The story takes us to the prison where no sophisticated buildings are made for prisoners. There is a small hut for sleeping and the prisoners have to work as a punishment for their crime.

The novel focuses on depiction of Empire and its search for barbarians and its central character, the Magistrate, who is also the narrator in the novel. Since the novel was published during apartheid and Coetzee himself opposed the institution, the novel can be interpreted as Coetzee's critical self-reflection on apartheid and its dehumanization.

Large part of the novel focuses on description of sexual obsession of imperial characters, a barbarian woman character, sexual attempt made by the Magistrate. It tries to depict how the women of so-called barbarian society have been sexually exploited. It presents barbarity of imperial people.

To tell in short, the novel is a vehement protest against imperialism, its violent activities, its exploitation and its institutionalization. The novel fights back the barbarity of the so-called civilized nations.

It was written by a most prominent South African novelist, essayist, translator, critic and professor of literature and linguistics. Born in 1940 in a Boer family, he was educated in the University of Cape Town. He accomplished his Ph. D. from the University of Texas in 1969. He has written nine works of fiction, each of which has been awarded, at least, one major literary prize. *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) won the South Africa's most prestigious literary award, the CAN Prize as well as the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize and James Tait Black Memorial Prize. He was the first novelist to be twice awarded the Booker Prize, the British Commonwealth's most

distinguished award for fiction for *Life and Times of Michael K.* (1983) and *Disgrace* (1999).

Waiting for the Barbarians is Coetzee's third work of fiction. It takes its title from a poem written 100 years ago in 1904 by the Greek writer Constantine Cavafy. The poem has the title "Waiting for the Barbarians." Cavafy's poem deals with the theme of futility. It is futile to wait for the advent of barbarians. No barbarians are arriving even after great search for them. There are no barbarians as such.

So far as the theme the novel invents, it is similar to the theme of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and so it is like that of title poem from which it derives the name. *Waiting for the Barbarians* has some parallels with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in that the former focuses on a frontier town of an unnamed empire supposedly preparing for barbarian invasion that never comes. Much like *Godot*, the people of the town, partly due to propaganda and misinformation from the empire, fear an invasion by the united people of the desert and mountains. For this reason, Colonel Joll is vested the responsibility to capture the barbarians beyond the border. He captures, investigates and tortures some people of the deserts and mountains attributing them barbarians.

The so-called barbarians do not harm the imperial people. It is the empire and its people that are harming, torturing and exploiting the so-called barbarians. At the later part, after the Magistrate is really able to understand the heart of the so-called barbarians, he is enlightened and comes to know that there are no barbarians. This concept is made only in the imperial states.

This study deals with the irony that the novel employs to satire and ridicule the imperial politics and its colonial policy to rule the people in different countries in the

world. This study analyzes irony presented in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a means of protest against the imperial rule and colonial policy.

With the glimpse of the novel, the present study pre-supposes irony replete in it on the political network of the empire. The empire calls pastorals, nomads and desert dwellers as barbarians and the empire itself is involved in barbarous and inhumane activities. So, attributing the pastorals and nomads is ironical. It satirizes international colonial politics of empire and its inhumane activities.

Review of Literature

Different critics have different views about *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Many of the critics interpret the novel as protest against imperialism. Some of the views of the critics are presented below:

Susan Van Zanten Gallagher, under the title "Torture and the novel: J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," opines:

One of the horrifying realities of the twentieth century is widespread existence of state approved torture despite the effort of UNO to check it... one of the writer who has wrestled with these issues is J.M. Coetzee, a South African novelist, linguist and critic...Coetzee objects to realistic depiction of torture. It depicts realities of colonial rule of the twentieth century. (11)

The point of Gallagher is that the novel depicts the horrifying realities of torture and that the torture is approved by the states in the world. In the novel, Coetzee fights back the issues of such tortures.

Laila Lalami, the author of *The Moor's Account*, writes:

Waiting for the Barbarians was written in 1980, during the apartheid regime which tore South Africa into Black and White, but what it says

about torture prevailing in the world remains true today. If the state wants to stand up to barbarity, it cannot validate it by any means by unlashes it on its own prisoners...The book begins in an unnamed Empire. An old the Magistrate spends his day adjudicating small cases...(12)

From the above lines, we can infer that Lalami thinks the incidence of torture highlighted in the novel refers to the torture caused during apartheid regime in South Africa. But the torture, she says, still remains true today.

Mahmut Mutman in his essay with the title “An Analysis on Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*” expresses:

Waiting for the Barbarians says about human psyche and criticizes imperialism. By locating its concern on the issues about morality and violence and exploring limits of human cruelty *Waiting for the Barbarians* challenges humanity and imperialism in several ways. Presenting a psychoanalytic discussion of *Waiting for the Barbarians* this study focuses on the impact of fear in human psyche and imperialisms self-destructive power. (1)

Mutman opines that owing to the impact of fear, an empire adopts the means of violence and cruelty. It adopts these means to such an extent that these means lead to destruction of the self. This fact of reflexive self and criticism of ruthless inhuman activities of an empire is carried out by *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

Boletsi deals with the terms ‘Barbarian’ and ‘Other’ as in the following excerpt:

The term barbarian entails a collective construction of the other in a way that helps define the civilized subject itself by specifying its

negative limits. In this construction, the other is supposedly invalidated because it can never speak back and question its construction. The barbarian thus appears as an objected outsider, which, according to Judith Butler, is always inside the subject “as its own founding repudiation. (68)

In this statement, Boletsi expresses his views about ‘barbarian’ and ‘other’ with the support of Judith Butler’s statement about them. As that of Judith Butler, Boletsi says that the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* makes use of the term barbarians to refer to collective mental construct, that is, belief of the other to refer to the people or citizens of civilized nations themselves. The others cannot speak back the mental construct. So, they are attributed as barbarians. Otherwise, it is so-called civilized people who ought to be called barbarians as it is the construct founded by them and it lies in their mind.

Nadine Gordimer, in his review with the title “*Waiting for the Barbarians* by J.M. Coetzee,” comments:

The novel allegorically represents humanity and human relationship with animal instinct and behaviors. In the same way *Waiting for the Barbarians* is also an allegorical fable. Some critics widely regard it as modern classic. The Magistrate, the protagonist talks with friend by a fall, in status, from victimizer to victim for his reason. The Magistrate is unable to act on his moral knowledge. (28)

The above excerpt by Gordimer tells us that *Waiting for the Barbarians* presents us a moral lesson that human being too cannot be void of animal instinct and behavior.

The Magistrate’s fall in his status from victimizer to victim and his inability to act on his moral knowledge verifies this fact.

Michael Valdez Moses, one of the critics, points out the binary opposition that the novel maintains. He expresses his statement in the following words:

The Magistrate in the novel wants to maintain a clear distinction between civilization and Barbarism. The Magistrate intends to represent for posterity both the enlightened hope at which his civilization aimed and its failure to fulfill those hopes. The Magistrate wishes to maintain a clear, even absolute distinction between civilization and barbarism, while reversing the customary roles that the empire and the nomadic people have historically assumed. (118)

The paragraph given above which expresses Moses views on the major character of the novel. He talks about the style of the novel that it has balanced presentation. The novel maintains binary opposition in the statement of the Magistrate.

Different opinions presented above about *Waiting for the Barbarians* tell us the fact that torture prevails in imperial states, that in the name of barbarity the so-called civilized nations adopt means of torture and inhuman activities on naïve and innocent poor people. The novel fights back these ruthless inhumane activities inflicted on the innocent pastoral nomads. It vehemently protests the colonial land encroachment and imperial barbarous torture prevalent during 20th century.

Many critics have analyzed this novel from different perspectives – racial, feminist, linguistic, historicist and psychoanalytic. The approach of present research differs from those previous approaches. The present research will deal with politics of irony.

Organization of the Study

This study concentrates on analysis of J.M. Coetzee's Politics of irony and subversive politics against colonial one imposed by imperial states. It will be dealt in

the forth coming chapter.

The first chapter deals with the thematic aspect of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and includes literature review to corroborate the ideas put forward in the chapter. The second chapter deals with irony and politics of irony. The third chapter analyzes the use of irony and politics of irony and conclusion of this study which is mentioned in the fourth chapter.

Chapter 2

Politics of Irony

Irony is a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance. In various forms, irony appears in many kinds of literature, from the tragedy of Sophocles through the novels of Jane Austen and Henry James to the contemporary writers but is especially important in satirical purpose, as in Voltaire and Swift. At its simplest, in verbal irony, it involves a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant.

Wayne Booth, a great figure in the field of irony and its political significance stands different in the matter of application of irony. He opines: “Irony has been located and explicated in literature, the visual arts, music, dance, theatre, museum displays, conversation, and philosophical argumentation” (I). Hence, he makes clear that the use of irony pervades all sorts of discourse.

He further takes irony that appears to have become a problematic mode of expression at the end of the twentieth century. Wayne says that some commentators have written about irony in a deliberately and controversially unsystematic and ironized way.

In his book, he further explains the concept of irony concerning its political nature and its use in the socio-cultural domains. LaCapra says: “there is nothing intrinsically subversive about ironic skepticism or about any such self-questioning internally dialogized” (quoted in Broth 119). What La Capra means is an irony does not subvert itself skeptically. It subverts the established culture, society, its norms and values or doctrines.

There is no actual relationship between irony and contemporary politics. About it the view of Nicholas is, “There is no necessary relationship between irony and

radical politics or even radical formal innovation” (65). Undoubtedly, Nicholas verifies the fact that there is no relation between irony and radical contemporary politics; and neither is there relationship between irony and radical innovation.

Booth Wayne further tells us that the major players in the ironic game are indeed the interpreter and the ironist. The interpreter may or may not be the intended addressee of the ironist’s utterance, but s/he is the one who attributes irony and then interprets it. That is, s/he is the cause of ironic expression and gives meaning to it. In other words, the interpreter is the one who decides whether the utterance is ironic or not, and then what particular ironic meaning it might have. This process occurs regardless of the intentions of the ironist. This is why, irony is “risky business” (Frix176): there is no guarantee that the interpreter will get the irony in the same way as it was intended. In fact, ‘get’ may be an inaccurate and even inappropriate verb: ‘make’ would be much more precise.

In the same way, the person usually called the “ironist,” though, is the one who intends to set up an ironic relation between the said and the unsaid, but may not always succeed in communicating that intention. Wayne Booth says:

From the point of view of the interpreter, irony is an interpretive and intentional move; it is the making or inferring of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated, together with an attitude towards both the said and the unsaid. The move is usually triggered by conflicting textual or contextual evidence or by markers which are socially agreed upon. (11)

As Booth makes the sense of irony clear, from the viewpoint of the interpreter, irony is an interpretive move in addition to intentional one. In addition to the intentional

meaning thought of by the ironist, the irony involves interpretive meaning which may be slightly different from person to person from what is stated and intended.

Furthermore, he highlights the position of the interpreter. The interpreter is an agent who performs act, attributes both meanings and motives; and does so in a particular situation and context, for a particular purpose, and with particular meaning. Attributing irony involves then both semantic and evaluative inferences. Irony's appraising edge is never absent and, indeed, is what makes irony work differently from other forms which it might structurally seem to resemble to metaphor, allegory, and puns.

The use and interpretation of irony always takes place in a definite discursive community. The discursive community encompasses "those strangely enabling constraints of discursive context and foregrounds the particularities" not only of space and time, "but of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice (not to mention nationality), religion, age, profession, and all the other micro-political groupings" in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society (Hutcheon 92). Hutcheon means that the use and interpretation of irony takes place in a deconstructive community. The community possesses assumptions or standards of deconstructive context and by these means, foregrounds, that is, tries to establish different norms and values by means of irony. Such a community can ironies any aspect such as class and gender, race and ethnicity and the like.

It is the overlapping of discursive communities in general by the complex design of "shared knowledge, belief, values, and communicative strategies" that makes the politics of irony possible to happen (Hutcheon 91). What we can understand by this statement is that politics of irony takes place when two deconstructive communities come into contact in the process of amalgamation of

culture and collide against each other. It happens if the communities are discursive and if they have different norms and values, cultures and ideologies. This statement is further testified by Hutcheon in his own opinion:

This means that the politics of irony does not happen, merely as prate states or communities , in “an amiable environment or social context” but itself comes into being in “contact zones” of the “social space where different ideologies and cultures meet, dash, grapple with each other often in context of highly asymmetrical relation of power” (93).

As Hutcheon believes the above quotation described in Hutcheon tells us that politics of irony does not merely take place as talkative states or communities who prattle in an amiable situation. Rather it takes place when two different communities with different social norms and values, different cultures, communities with diverse ideologies come into contact and strike against each other in terms of their ideologies and their norms and values.

In ironic discourse, the political meaning, in the whole communicative processes, is not only altered and distorted but also made possible by those different micro political power relation. Each of us differently belong to the power relation and from the basis of the expectations, assumptions, and preconceptions that we bring to the complex processing of discourse: of language in use. Irony, therefore, rarely “involves a simple decoding of a single inverted message; it is more often a semantically complex process of relating, differentiating and combining said and unsaid meaning; and doing so with evaluating edge” (Hutcheon 89). He means that in an ironic text, the political meaning is not merely changed or made unnatural but also created by micro-political power relation—such a power relation to which each of us

belong to and which are different from one another in terms of our expectations, assumptions and preconceptions of appropriateness of the values of our communities.

Irony is presented in the socio-historical and socio-economic aspects and it is used and interpreted in certain context. In this context, Hutcheon remarks:

Irony is one discursive strategy that cannot be understood apart from its embodiment in context and also has trouble in escaping from the power relations evoked by its evaluative edge. The paradoxically enabling constraints that are operative in all discourses obviously function here as well, But it is not only a question of who may use irony (and where, when, how), but who may interpret it. Whether viewed as an isolated or as the articulation of the human situation, irony involves the particularities of times, of space, of immediate social situation and of general culture. (90-91)

Hutcheon means that the meaning of irony is not only determined by the user, but also by the context of time, the people involved, the power relation of the community and culture of the place such factors play an important role in governing its meaning. So, there is no doubt that the constraints, that is, limitations that are operative in all the discourses also apply here. In addition to these, the meaning of an irony is also governed by the interpreter in isolation or human situation in relation to time, place and contemporary social situation and culture.

The function of ironic meaning gets its political edge out of the ironist's intentional and the interpreter's interpretative move with a certain attitude towards both the said and the unsaid meanings of irony in certain discursive situation.

In other words, irony is a complex intentional act on the part of both the interpreter and the ironist-one that has both semantic and evaluative dimensions

between intentions and interpretations, which are directed by conflicting textual or contextual evidences. Irony turns to be political in “the intentional transmission of both information and evaluative attitude other than what is explicitly expressed” (11). With this statement, Hutcheon wants to clarify that an irony becomes political with evaluative attitude of the ironist, his intentional meaning and conflicting textual or contextual concepts of both the ironist and the interpreter.

The interpretation of irony requires linguistic as well as cultural and ideological competence of both the ironist and the audience or addressee. In this regard, Christine Kerbrat Orecchioni says, “The interpretation of irony brings into play, besides their linguistic competence, the cultural and ideological competences of ironist and audience” (qtd. in Muecke 40-41). So, reading or interpreting irony is at once reading or interpreting life itself where we read character and value, thereby referring to our deepest convictions. It is because of its very nature of foregrounding the politics of human agency in this that irony has become an important discursive strategy. Its discursiveness comes from the interpreter and the ironist as the agents who perform the act of attributing both meanings and motives, and do so in particular situation and context for a particular purpose, and with particular means. Such an attributing irony involves both semantic and evaluative inferences.

Similarly, the semantic dimension of irony happens because of such a discursive communicative process in which irony itself comes into being in relation among its meanings, intentions and interpretations. Irony explicitly sets up a relationship between ironist and audience, that is, political in nature as irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority.

The social, historical and cultural aspects in which an irony is used play an important role in its semantic and syntactic dimension. Hutcheon remarks in this

regard saying, “The semantic and the syntactic dimensions of irony cannot be separated from social, historical and cultural aspects of its context of deployment and attribution” (16-17). The semantic as well as syntactic dimension of irony depends upon its social, historical and cultural aspects in which it is used and attributed.

In such a context, the interpreters’ interpretation depends not only on the attitude of the ironist and the interpreter but also on the norms and values and ideologies of the societies in which they live. In this context, Hutcheon says, the interpretation is not simply a matter of the “subjective attitude of either interpreter or ironist, but [is] a function of the culture, language, and social context [where] both participants interest with each other and with the text itself” (91). So, Hutcheon’s statement verifies the fact that not only the individual attitude of the ironist and the interpreter plays an important role in governing meaning of the irony but also their social context, language and culture.

In this light, the political meaning of irony is not only substitution of the identity and position of both the ironist and the audience but is a matter of interpretation as much as of its use as Hutcheon argues:

In the space between the said and unsaid, it needs both to happen.

Ironic meaning is inclusive and relational: the said and the unsaid co-exist in the interpreter, and each has meaning in relation to the other because they literally interact to create the real ironic meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said. [It] is the complex inclusive, relational and differential nature of ironic meaning making. [So] it is [impossible] to treat the semantics of irony separately from its conditions of use and reception. (13)

Hutcheon means that the meaning of an irony depends on said and unsaid of the ironist. It also depends on real context on what might have already happened, the interpreter and his socio-cultural aspect. The ironic meaning may not be just opposite to what is said. It depends on condition of use and how it is accepted.

Thus, the context for the construction of irony is always crucial to interpreting its meaning and politics. This point further clarifies that the politics of “irony is a relational strategy in the sense that it operates not only between said and unsaid meanings, but also between people: ironist, interpreters, and targets” (Hutcheon 58). Here Hutcheon tells that the three aspects—interpreter, meaning of the irony and politics —play a crucial role in its construction.

Irony, being relational discursive strategy, has its trans-ideological functions. By the term trans-ideological function, we mean the function beyond the ideology of a society. It deals with what the ironist thinks anomalous in the other society, person, culture and ideologies. About it Hutcheon says, “The trans-ideological nature of it politics means that irony can be used either to undercut or to reinforce both conservative and radical positions” (27). So, Hutcheon means that irony undermines, degenerates, denigrates the society, person, culture and ideologies. To put it more explicitly, irony can be provocative when its politics is conservative or authoritarian as easily as when its politics is oppositional or subversive.

It depends on who is using and attributing it and at whose expense it is seen to be. The politics of irony is different from the irony that would work more in a negative way and the irony that might function constructively. Hutcheon’s assumption regarding it is: “The politics of irony, in this sense, at once forces a distinction between irony that might function constructively to articulate new oppositional position[s]”, and “irony that would work in a more negative and negativizing way”

where the ironist would stand outside of system in a position of power (16-17). In this way, from Hutcheon's statement, we could find that the politics of irony is different from constructive irony and destructive and negative irony.

Negative irony is used by persons in power. The use of irony from the position of power, especially by the dominant authority, generates irony's conservative political function. Hutcheon stipulates that such an elitist use makes the irony as a weapon for "negating," thereby becoming "largely destructive" (27). We have come to know that negative irony is used by people in dominant authority and it is destructive as well. In this context, the notion of irony as a negation appears to be held by almost everyone who has been on the receiving end of an ironic attack or by those for whom the serious or the solemn and the univocal are the ideal. Obviously, the last group includes not only the humorless but those elites whose political commitments lead them to desire for didactic purpose and an unambiguous discourse of engagement.

The totalitarian regime uses irony in order to materialize dangers in the protective cover of repressive irony. The conservative function of irony, therefore, is controlled by the repressive irony.

Bakhtin, in this context, says, "It is the repressive cultures' affirmative and the destructive political functions of irony to force the marginal be complicit with the system." (qtd. in Hutcheon 27). In the 'affirming and negating use', irony functions, in Culler's words, as the "ultimate form of recuperation and naturalization": "We reduce the strange or incongruous, or even attitudes with which we differ, by calling them ironic and making them confirm rather than abuse our expectations" (qtd. in Hutcheon 28). About the negative irony, Bakhtin says it has repressive and destructive political function and forces the marginal be complicit with the system. The repressive irony is

used by the authority in power. It makes the marginal people do whatever is expected from them. It is used in affirming and negating the activities of the marginalized people.

Another radical trans-ideological political function of irony is to use it in a positive and constructively progressive way wherein it is used as a powerful tool or even as a weapon in the fight against a dominant authority by demystifying or subverting the repression. Oppositional theorists like feminists, post-colonialists, and other marginals use this function of irony where, as Culler reminds, “the forces of oppression are subverted by the boundless powers of irony that no prison can contain” (qtd. in Hutcheon 28). Here now, we come to know that constructive irony is used in a most positive way as a powerful tool to fight against dominant authority. It is used by feminists, post-colonialists other marginal communities.

In such a constructive use, the irony is not in authoritative use. In such a use, as Basely reminds, irony is not taken as “authoritative because its meanings are inherent than unambiguous” (qtd. in Hutcheon 29). Hutcheon explains that the constructive use of irony is not an authoritative use as its meanings are inherent than being ambiguous.

The recourse to irony’s multifocal instability is exploited by the oppositional theories at the expense of necessarily univocal social commitments in which irony not only works to point to the complexities of historical and social reality but also has the power to change that reality. So, the subversive function is the “mode of the unsaid, the unheard, the unseen relishing them power in its verbal and structural forms” (4). Hutcheon means there is no doubt that irony is instable and multifocal. Despite it, it has univocal social commitment: irony not only works to point out the foibles of historical and social reality but also has capacity to change social reality. Irony, in this

light, is a discursive strategy operating at the level of language, which has intrinsically subversive, self-questioning, and internally dialogized mode that can and does function tactically in the service of a wide range of political positions, legitimating or undercutting a wide variety of interests as Hutcheon reminds us:

Irony is often connected to the view that it is a self-critical, self-knowing, self-reflexive mode that has the power to challenge to the hierarchy of the every 'sites' of discourse, whether semantic or pragmatic – a hierarchy based in social relations of dominance and overturn, is said to have 'politically transformative power.(30)

As Hutcheon says, this function of irony is self-critical, self-knowing and self-reflexive and has power to challenge every discourse. It is said to have politically transformative power.

Such a subversive political function of irony has established ironic discourse as, in Terdiman's words, a "counter discourse" (qtd. in Hutcheon 184). In Terdimen's words, irony has subversive political function. He calls the subversive political function as the function of counter discourse. So, it is argumentation against pre-established discourse. In this view, irony's intimacy with the dominant discourse it contests is its strength to relativize the authority and stability in part by appropriating its power. This intimacy is what makes irony potentially an effective strategy of compositionality since the ironized discourse can point to difference to avoid both imperial and simply oppositional single voicing.

The text having irony allows two existences. One, the literal existence and the other, ironized or intended existence. In this regard, Hutcheon states: "The ironized language can allow 'alternatives of being' through the 'alternatives of saying'(31). Hucheon means irony allows two existences: one, the existence of saying, and the

other, the existence of self or being. In such alternatives, the marginalized can be heard by the center, and yet to keep their critical distance and thus derange and undercut the authority. This function of irony, therefore, is “radical and democratizing” (38) as it gives a room for alternative reactions.

Irony involves social interaction as an inquiring mode to avoid the single and dogmatic. It becomes as Bakhtin says, “a special kind of substitute for silence” wherein the irony’s working as self-protective suggests that irony can be interpreted as a kind of defense mechanism" (qtd. in Hutcheon 35). Thus the irony’s politics is not only relational but also counter discursive:

This is a function of irony that ‘does not reject or refute or turn upside-down: no evasiveness or lack of courage on conviction, but admission that there are times when we cannot be sure, not so much because we don’t know enough as because uncertainty is intrinsic of the essence. When such a provisional position is seen as valuable, it is often called demystifying. For some, this provision actually becomes the essence of true art, over which irony rules as a kind of divine protector. [Such a] function of irony has specifically been called “counter discursive’ in its ability to contest dominant habits of mind and expression. (51-52)

The counter discursive function of irony, which rests on irony’s denial over certainties by unmasking the world as an ambiguous and instable is frequently exploited in oppositional theories. Such a function of irony lies in the realization of the power that lies in its potential to destabilize with critical ends and ideological contradictions so as not to let the marginal resolve into the coherent and potentially oppressive dogma.

It is the irony’s politics that gives, in Fixx’s words, a “survival skill, a tool for knowledge acknowledging complexity, a means of exposing or subverting oppressive

hegemonic ideologies, and an art for affirming life in the face of objective troubles” (qtd. in Hutcheon 26). Fixx calls irony’s politics as a survival skill, a tool for knowledge accepting the fact that the world is full of complexities. He further says it is a means of exposing or subverting oppressive hegemonic ideologies and an art for affirming life in the face of troubles.

Irony becomes a political method when it deconstructs and de-centers the dominant discourses on the premise that the single vision produces more illusions than the double vision. While irony has often been used as a weapon of dominant cultures to keep the subservient in their place, it has been reversed as something that springs from recognition of the socially constructed self as arbitrary, and that demands revision of values and conventions.

This is the irony, for instance, that feminist theorists and other marginals see as working to deprived, In the words of J. Butler, “hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities” (qtd. in Hutcheon 32). So, what J.M. Butler means is if irony is used discursively or rather counter discursively against hegemonic culture and its critics, it is said to be irony’s politics. They are said to be able to use irony as a particularly potent means of critique or resistance to patriarchal social restrictions or even essentialist claims to truth. Irony, therefore, is seen as both empowering and empleasuring.

And it is often the trans-ideological nature of irony itself that is exploited in order to recode into positive terms what the patriarchal discourse reads as a negative, in which silencing of women’s voice is transformed into the willed silence of the ironic and traditional feminine manner. In this sense, Butler attributes irony as:

‘Noose of a loosening bond that binds us to the single and the singular track, to a paranoid obsession with certitude and fixed and single destinations.’ Irony

can be this kind of general reflexive mode, one that has the potential to reflect and model the recognition that all conceptualizations are limited, that what is socially maintained as truth is often politically motivated. (qtd. In Hutcheon, 33)

Butler, as said in the paragraph above, describes irony as a noose of a loosening bond that binds us to a single track. Further, he tells that an irony can depict socially maintained truth which is often motivated by political situation of a country.

The irony also embodies trans-ideological identity of changing meaning. It is also used as a rhetorical figure that gives alternative meanings. Tittler says: “The irony contains trans-ideological identity of “protean polymorphism.” (qtd. in Hutcheon 33). In Tattler’s words, it is exploited as the rhetorical figure of the dialogic nature whose function is to project an alternative through which any element of the irony may be shown as contingent, thereby subjecting the whole configuration of power relationship to the erosive dialectical power of alterity.

In this way, the dialectical power of alterity arises from the said and the unsaid. The unsaid is related to the repressed, marginalized; it is not just unsaid, but unsayable within the hegemonic homogenous discourse. But irony is a matter of unspoken understandings, which can obviously cut across professional lines. So, just as the uncanny is never ‘surmounted,’ the repressed is similarly related to the said in dialectic uncanny fashion; it can be seen as the once constitution and disruptive of any discursive structure of controlling intention. Discursive irony, therefore, can also be linked with the questions of writing alternative histories and unearthing repressed memory.

Chapter 3

Ironizcal Perspectives in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

As a post-colonial writer, Coetzee has written the novel expressing post-colonial experience related to colonialism. To destabilize the discourse that support colonialism, he writes his novel. And *Waiting for the Barbarians* is written in an ironic manner. *Waiting for the Barbarians* presents ruthless and inhumane treatment of colonizers to the colonized people.

Before the end of colonization, South African politicians vowed to establish civilization in Africa but it reached near or to barbarism. Coetzee ironizes the situation through characterization of the Magistrate. His behavior and activities are worse. In this regard, he says: "My plane is to follow this track till we have skirted the lake to the south, then to strike out north-east across the desert towards the valleys of the Randes where the northern nomads winter" (63). This ironizes the situation of South Africa after decolonization from British regime. Most of state mechanisms of post-colonial Africa were influenced by colonial values. Coetzee ironizes the situation that colonizers had created in Africa.

Regarding the post-colonial situation, the Magistrate says: "We make out against the dull grey-brown of the empty landscape – a strip of darker grey. From nearer we see that it stretches east and west for miles. There are even - the stunted black shapes of trees. We are lucky, our guide says; there is bound to be water here." (67). How lucky they are. They are in the condition in which the place where water pervaded has turned into stretch of coral reef – a vapid grey-brown empty landscape. And that reluctant landscape stretched for miles. The invigorating trees that they saw in the past have been smirched with the soot produced by the industries. And they look stunted.

The novel presents an anecdote of ruthless behavior towards forcefully attributed barbarians: “I am speaking of a situation in which I am probing for the truth in which I have to exert pressure to find it. First I get lies, you see – this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth” (5). This is what Colonel is telling about the behavior he does to the so-called barbarians. He exerts pressure, he gives physical torture to such an extent that the body of a person breaks and the person submits because of fear of further torture. And the colonel thinks that he obtains the truth. What a funny truth! And he gives torture to innocent person like the sick boy, his father – the old man and to the blind girl. They are the only barbarians they found. What a truth!

And these barbarians are created by the colonizers because, in their mind, there dwells Barbarians. The following lines tell the story about how barbarians are created:

Of this unrest, I myself saw nothing. In private I observed that once in every generation, without fail, 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 the visions of barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters. (9)

The above paragraph tells how a rumor is created about barbarians. The episode of barbarians is presented hysterically in such a manner as to make man and woman dream of the barbarians, their terrifying image of grappling ankle of a woman from

under the bed, carousing in home, breaking plates, setting fire to the curtains or raping the daughter of a so-called civilized people.

So, the novel subverts psychological trauma created by the so-called civilized people against so-called barbarians. It is an irony on man-made or false belief of barbarians. Those who attribute others barbarians are apt and deserve to be called barbarians. As C.P. Cavafy has put forward in his poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians," this novel, too, contends the statement that there are barbarians. If there are barbarians, they are the so-called civilized ones because they deal with others in barbarous manner.

The novel presents the Magistrate in ironical manner. The circumstances presented in the novel show how politician and social reformers create hurdle in public life in the name of freedom. People fight for liberation from colonial power which is one of the difficult periods of African life. The situation is: "They protect one's eyes against the glare of the sun,' he says. 'You would find them useful out here in the desert. They save one from squinting all the time. One has fewer headaches. Look. He touches the corners of his eyes lightly" (1). After long run freedom struggle, colonized people succeeded to liberate South Africa from colonial power but people cannot get enjoyment in their life; again they are captured by barbarism.

The Magistrate speaks of the situation: "I tell him about the great flocks of geese and ducks that descend on the lake every year in their migrations and about native ways of trapping them" (1). Both Joll and The Magistrate both use the language which ironizes their values of life. They are the freedom fighter though they cannot do anything what they speak. The Magistrate says: "I turn to Joll. ' He has probably never seen anything like it before.' I gesture. 'I mean the eyeglasses. He must think you are a blind man.' but Joll does not smile back. Before prisoners, it appears one

maintains a certain front" (3). The condition of free people and prisoners is not so different. All are engaged in same problems. The people who are outside the prison are inflicted by similar tortures as those who are in prisons. In this regard, The Magistrate states:

These are the only prisoners we have taken for a long time,' I say. A coincidence; normally we would not have any barbarians at all to show you. That so-called banditry does not amount much. They steal a few sheep or cut out of pack animal from a train. This old man says he was going to visit a doctor; his son was sick. Now you see, "They are not probably the one whom you think they are. (4)

Above lines show the barbarians of South Africa that ironizes the slogan of freedom set during the time of independence war and other freedom movements. The so-called barbarians are not barbarians as such. They are caught and imprisoned.

The situation of prisoners is worse. The novel narrates: "The prisoner became uncontrollable and attacked the visiting officer. I was called in to help subdue him. By the time I came in the struggle had ended. The prisoner was unconscious and was bleeding from the nose" (6). This is the example of torture incurred to the inmates of the prison.

The Country Magistrate cannot establish peace and harmony though he is appointed to maintain peace and harmony in the nation. In this regard, the Magistrate speaks: "I am a country the 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" (8). As said earlier, the Country Magistrate, as he is responsible, is ironized the most.

This novel shows reflection of social and political irony which satires the contemporary political change of South Africa. The problem of communal clash remains same in the community. The Magistrate describes the situation: "There had been clashes with border patrols. The barbarian tribes were arming against the empire; the rumors went; the empire should take cautionary measures, for there would certainly be war" (8-9). Communal spirit and colonial legacy go side by side in south Africa that create problems in the nation and the situation reaches near to the disaster.

The Magistrate justifies the situation of the country: "Colonel, you are the specialist, see what you can make of them !- if I had gone on a hunting trip for a few days, as I should have done , a visit up- river perhaps , and come back and without reading it , or after skimming over it" (9). This is the statement expressed by the Magistrate and shows the attitude of the authority of empire and their game play on so-called barbarian people. He has caught two persons –A sick boy and his old father. It is a fine example of irony.

Some people, having animal instinct, create problem to establish political stability and harmony in society. We can quote the situation from the text: "There had been clashes with the border patrols. The barbarian tribes were arming, the rumour went; the Empire should take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war" (8-9). Colonial legacy and inferiority complex create problems in social life. Political conflict has been created because of apartheid system.

Black physical complex is badly projected and ironizes the colonial treatment. This situation is exemplified from the text: "The body lies on his back, naked, asleep, breathing fast and shallow. His skin glistens with sweat. For, the first time the bandage is off his arm" (10). Here, Coetzee ironizes both physical and mental

situation of people and local people which are projected as uncivilized. The colonial people degenerate others in terms of race which is depicted and ironized in the novel.

The empire puts war and freedom fighting in the same basket and the novel also ironizes the freedom fighting which African people fight for social justices. Joll explains the situation: "There is a scrabbling sound and the young sentry stumbles against me. 'Sorry, sir,' he says. I smell his run-sodden breath, ' the prisoner called me and I was trying to help him.' from the darkness comes a sort of laughter" (13).

Colonial legacy creates problems in the life of African people and that backed them from civilization to barbarism.

The Magistrate describes the colonial situation: "They avert their eyes from the glare , all save one , who looks sternly ahead through a strip of smoked glass glued to a stick which he hold up before his eyes in imitation of his leader. How far will this absurd affectation spread?" (14). Coetzee ironizes by using metaphor which makes common people's life more absurd than previous. The following lines show the situation :

The timbers we uncover are dry and powdery. Many have been held together only by the surrounding sand and, once exposed, crumble.

Others snap off at the lightest pressure. How old the wood is I do not know. The barbarians, who are pastoralists, nomads' tent- dwellers, make no reference on their legends to permanent settlement near the lake. They might have lived for more than thousands of years. (16)

Above lines introduce the environment of south Africa which ironizes the dream of politician who claims to change if they get victory in time. Coetzee satires powerful politician who always searches for space only and struggles for that. The

comparison ironizes the ongoing political situation of South Africa. Politician only thinks to collect property.

The situation of greedy politics is described in the novel such as: "They drink thirstily, while the crowd grows suffocating around them that they can no longer see. Impatiently, the The Magistrate waits for the guard who now pushes his way through the crowd and crosses the barracks yard" (18). It ironizes the security situation of post-colonial Africa and people's situation which the Magistrate further describes that he has sent a guard to search and he finds the little corpse under its mother's clothes. She will not yield it up; they have to tear it away from her. After this, she squats alone all day with her face covered, refusing to eat.

In the novel, Coetzee ironizes the colonial authorities like this: "All the next day the colonel spends sleeping in his room at the inn, and the staff has to tiptoe about their duties. He tries to pay no attention to the new batch of prisoner in yard. It is a pity that all the doors of the barracks block as well the stairway leading up to his apartment open on to the yard (23). These lines ironize the situation of people whose life is no different from the life of prisoner.

Like an emperor, The Magistrate dominates people and no sign of mercy works in his life which Joll describes: "Another day and another night I spend away from the empire of pain. I fall asleep in the girl's arms. In the morning, she is again lying on the floor she laughs at my dismay" (24). People get traumatic because they cannot get anything except pain and torture. Coetzee gives an example of a blind girl and ironizes the system: "A few days later I see her crossing the square, walking slowly and awkwardly with two sticks, the sheepskin coat trailing behind her in the dust" (27). It shows the funny situation which directly ironizes the political leader whose work is no different from objective fewer boys.

South Africa is like a blind girl who is ruled by the Magistrate according to his desire. This desire of the Magistrate is exhibited like: "I seat her, fill the basin, role the drawers above her knees. Now that the two feet are together in the water I can see that the left is turned further inward than the right, that when she stands she must stand on the outer edges of her feet" (31). She has no right to work freely because she is hunted by somebody else like Africa is hunted by the Magistrate. Coetzee describes, the situation: "She shakes her head. On the edge of oblivion it comes back to me that my fingers, running over her buttocks, have felt a phantom criss-cross of bridges under the skin. Nothing is worse than what we can imagine,' I mumble "(43). These statements express what the Magistrate feels touching girl, her body. He can feel criss-cross on the body. But, at the bottom, he cannot understand it. In the same way, it is difficult to understand Africa and the people in South Africa were not ready to be subjugated.

There is vast difference between appearance and reality. The situation of the girl is different which the Magistrate reports that she herself is oblivious of swings of mood. Days have begun to settle in to a routine with which she seems content. In the morning after he has left she comes to sweep and dust the apartment. The Magistrate feels confused about the situation and examines the ongoing situation and circumstance which he describes: "I kneel down to examine the floor. It is clean, it is swept daily, it is like the floor of any room. Above the fire place on the wall and ceiling there is soot. There I also mark the size of my hand where soot has been rubbed into the wall" (38). Due to colonial legacy, the normal way of African people and their nature have been changed which is reflected in the following lines: "A generation ago there were antelope and hares in such numbers that watchmen with

dogs had to patrol the fields by night to protect the young wheat. But under pressure from the settlement, particularly from dogs running wild and hunting in packs" (41). These lines show the fearful situation of South Africa. People cannot feel secure in their land. They patrolled their field and save life and property from thieves.

State authority cannot do anything for people. The Magistrate exploits people: "He chews again, a single scythe of the jaws, and stops. In the clear silence of the morning, I find an obscure sentiment lurking at the edge of my consciousness" (42). The situation becomes more difficult than colonial period because politician appears as the post- colonial leader.

There is everywhere insecurity due to which people are facing many problems. The following lines further clarify the situation:

I hear in my head in the subterranean murmur that has begun to take the place of conversation. 'Does no one move you? ; and with a shift of horror I be hold the answer that has been waiting all the time offer itself to me in the image of a face masked by two black glassy insect eyes from which there comes no reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me. (47)

Above lines show situation of South Africa which is worse than colonial regime. People are facing various problems due to political instability and dishonest behavior of political leader. There is no difference between common people's life with prisoners' life. So Coetzee brings the references of jail to satire the contemporary situation.

There is tussle between new values and old beliefs in South Africa. Colonial legacy and traditional barbarism appears once at a time. Spreading settlement in barren land becomes the hot issue: "They want an end to the spread of settlements

across their land. They want their land back, finally. They want to be free to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture as they used to. 'it is not too late to put a stop to the lecture" (54). Coetzee subverts the colonial belief and attempt. He expresses his assumption against colonialism.

Due to unstable situation of nation, rule of law become weak. Low rank police hold the power and control over people who fight against colonialism. The Magistrate portrays the situation: "After these conversation relations with the common soldiers become more strained. Leaving my apartment for the court-house in the morning, I pass one of the rare inspection parades" (58). Situation of court house is worse during this time because people get various difficulties while entering courthouse. No commitment of staffs to maintain law.

Waiting for the Barbarians shatters the so-called civilized people with the showers of irony on them. The Magistrate is ironized on his behavior which he calls civilized. The following lines divulge the deed of the Magistrate: "I reinsert myself into time and space: into a bed, a tent, a night, a body pointing west and east. Though, I lie sprawled on her with the weight of a bed ox, the girl is sleep, her arms clasped slackly around my back" (69). The Magistrate who calls himself civilized is confided with his barbarous act of abusing girls. It can also be taken as symbolic irony on the situation of Africa because there is no option of development and security. People face various problems in South Africa. There is no option of development and progress.

The novel presents structural irony which takes the form of a discrepancy between appearance and reality. There is discrepancy between the Magistrate's statements. Here is an example:

We are fortunate to have the excellent maps of the region provided by yourself.'

Those maps are based on little but hearsay, Colonel. I have patched them together from travellers' accounts over a period of ten or twenty years. I have never set foot myself where you plan to go. I am simply warning you. (13)

These are the lines that present discrepancy between what the Magistrate thinks about himself and what he has done. He says that Colonel Joll is inept. This is why, he is providing him guidance. It means, he is thinking himself efficient. And again in the above lines he himself says that the map provided by him is not factual; it is based on hearsay and the experience of the travellers; he has not been to the places.

The novel further presents the situation of structural irony: "She is going, she is almost gone. This is the last time to look on her clearly face to face, too the monition of my heart, to try to understand who she really is: hereafter, I know" (79). Here the Magistrate expresses his feeling towards the barbarian girl. She is about to live now. Outwardly, it is difficult to know her but for an unknown reason, he begins missing her. And thinking that this is the last moment the Magistrate is with her, he feels it would have been better if he would not part from her.

The novel revolves around politics of irony on which this study concentrates. As described in the second chapter, by the term politics of irony, we mean subversive irony adopted to contend irony that bore irony of negation for suppression. It is the positive irony meant for constructive purpose used by many of the intellectuals and writers like feminists and post-colonial writers.

There is example of subversive irony against colonial attitude of imperial countries. The novel presents the fact that the colonial attitudes are created attitude

and fake. The colonial people have created fake rumours like there are barbarian people and they are preparing for invasion on empire. The following lines present this fact:

Last year stories began to reach us from the capital of unrest among the barbarians. Traders travelling safe routes had been attacked and plundered. Stock thefts had increased in scale and audacity. A party of census officials had disappeared and been found buried in shallow graves. Shots had been fired at a provincial governor during a tour of inspection. (8)

The above lines describe the situation of terror for empire and it is based on a story. It may be a made story –a story created by people like the Magistrate.

We can find how the stories have been created. Coetzee presents the example like: “The barbarians you are chasing will smell you coming and vanish into the desert while you are still a day’s march away. They have lived here all their lives, they know the land. You and I are strangers – You even more than I. I earnestly advise you not to go” (12). This excerpt is uttered by the Magistrate who seems, at least, supporting the existence of barbarians in the beginning of the novel. He tells Colonel Joll about barbarians and about their stories.

The beginning part of the novel, puts forward the notion of barbarity which is created, rumoured and believed by the colonial people and their supporters. The latter part of the novel divulges the fact that there are no barbarians. This fact is presented through the Magistrate, the major character and narrator of the novel. He realizes the colonial barbarity and its so-called civilization. It ironizes the colonial civilization which is described in the following lines: "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, and I am a free man. Who would not smile? But what a dangerous joy!" (85). These lines describe the awakening of the Magistrate from his previous position. Previously, he believed that there are barbarians but now he has come to know that there are no barbarians. This is why, he has broken his ties with the empire and now he is a free man. But his freedom is in danger in the same way as the so-called barbarians are in danger; he knows this fact.

In the name of barbarians they segregate people. These colonial people regard barbarians as others. The others are tortured in the name of barbarians. They are segregated and humiliated for not being colonial and the supporters of colony.

There is no symptom of joy on people though they feel happy because they fight for happiness. The following lines further clarify the situation: "I stare all day at the empty walls, unable to believe that the imprint of all the pain and degradation they have enclosed will not materialize under an intent enough gaze; or shut eyes, trying to attune my hearing to that infinitely faint level at which the cries of all who suffered here must still beat from wall to wall" (87). These lines show the situation of people who neither feel happy nor become ready to struggle against the ruler.

Latest political developments create problem among people. The novel presents the fact in the following words:

All the latest talk is about the fire along the river. Five days ago it was just a darker smudge against the haze in the north-west. Since then it has eaten its way slowly down the river-course, sometimes dying down but always reviving, and clearly visible now from the town as a brown shroud over the delta where the river enters the lake. (89)

These lines express irony on colonial expansion and encroachment which took place during the twentieth century. There was dispute regarding Volta River; the frontier of

the empire and the pastoral nomads who were the native of the land. Because of encroachment, the river sometimes died and sometimes revived. There is no reformation in system though politician claimed some reform and reorganization. In this regard, The Magistrate states, "The careful reorganization of my office from clutter and dustiness to this vacuous neatness, the slow swagger which he uses to cross the room, and the measured insolence with which he examines me" (90). Coetzee projects the ongoing political situation which ironizes the behavior of political leader.

The colonizers are terrified with the thinking that there will be barbarian invasion. This is why, the authorities of the empire say they have to be cautious before the barbarians would invade them. In fact, there are no barbarians to invade them. It was only the rumour. But the people of the empire are afraid and begin operation of searching barbarians. The following lines justify the situation, "We were also surprised by the hastiness of the preparations. We did not see why we could not wait for the spring thaw. It was only after our return that we understood that his purpose has been to warn the barbarians of the coming campaign" (91). These lines tell the fact that the empire had made hasty preparation against barbarian attack because of fear that has traumatized colonial authorities. The existence of such situation also shows the verbal irony. The verbal irony is a disparity of expression and intention: when a speaker says one thing but means another, or when a literal meaning is contrary to its intended effect.

There are several examples of verbal irony which is distinguished from situational irony or dramatic irony in that it is produced intentionally by speakers. In fact, sarcasm is made by literary writers in order to correct the social evils and political errors.

There are examples of situational irony. The situational irony presents two different contradictory situations which are also presented in the novel: "I hold the door open and stand for a moment in the doorway listening to the last twittering of the birds in the trees under the great violent sky while the child crosses the yard with his tray" (94). These lines contain situational irony. There is discrepancy between two different situations. The birds are twittering. The nature is invigorating but at the same time, it is in the threat of rumbling the cosmos of South Africa.

Description of blind girls ironizes the situation which The Magistrate portrays, "My hands run up and down her legs from ankle to knee, back and forth, squeezing, stroking, moulding. Her legs are short and sturdy, her calves strong...I wake up in the dark. The lamp is out, there is smell of burnt wick. I get up and open the curtains... 'You are getting cold,' I say, but she hears nothing." (32). These lines clarify the fact that the Magistrate tries to understand the blind girl as far as possible. But his attempt is futile. It indicates analogy between colonial effort to understand the colonizers at all cost employing means of torture as Colonel Joll is doing or soft measures that the Magistrate has employed. The intension of both of them is vile and malicious. And it is an irony on their effort.

The tone of verbal irony is reflected in these lines as, "There is only a scullery maid in the kitchen. She gives a start when the two of us walk in, in fact even seems about to run away. What stories have people been telling about me? (97). These lines express about the rumour on relation between the Magistrate and scullery girl in which there is the situation of verbal irony. In the same way, it can be found in the expressions. "When people demand right for freedom, The Magistrate orders to suppress them. In this regard, he says, "I tiptoe across the gravel to the trough where the soldiers wash. The water is not clean but I cannot afford to unstop the

pipe."(100).These lines also contain verbal irony. Whatever is said, there is just opposite of it.

Tone of irony found in these lines create fallacy among audience. There is an example: "The bed is made up. When I slip my hand between the sheets I imagine I can feel the faint afterglow of her warmth. Nothing would please me more than to curl up in her bed, lay my head on her pillow" (101). This excerpt presents an irony on vested interest and desire of the Magistrate towards the blind girl. Again the blind girl represents a naïve state the people of which are not able to retort even if there is interference on sovereignty of the state. It ironizes the Magistrate, his effort and the political leaders like him.

There are examples of irony concerning its political nature and its use in the socio-cultural domains which shows the disgrace of people. In this regard the Magistrate states, "She lies naked, her oiled skin glowing a vegetal gold in the firelight. There are moments – I feel the onset of one now – when the desire I feel for her, usually so obscure, flickers into a shape I can recognize" (43). The excerpt describes the socio-cultural disgraceful situation. It also hints the alluring things of the colonized countries that create vested interest on the colonial people.

As explained in the previous chapter the meaning of the irony not only depends on the ironizer and his/her intension, but also the interpreter. The interpreter may, or may not, be the intended addressee of the ironist's utterances, whether the utterance is ironic or not, and then what particular ironic meaning it might have. In this regard, The Magistrate uses expression is relevant: "I unpick his fingers from my arm and slide away from him. You see how easy it would be for me to run away and seek shelter with the barbarians,' I murmur. Why do you think I came back?" (111). Here the covert addressee is created that cause difficulty in interpreting meaning of

the irony as there may arise confusion to whom the Magistrate refers to. The narrator sees the long horseman in the path which signifies disconnection of situation of people which he says: "I can see a long file of horsemen who, amid flying banners, pass through the gateway and make their way to the center of the square where they dismount. There is a cloud of dust over the whole square, but I see that they are smiling" (112). These lines refer to the effort made by the colonial people to search the barbarians. They have gone to the desert in search of them.

The following lines further justify an unstable political situation as:

If comrades like these exist, what a pity I do not know them! For me ,
at this moment , striding away from the crowd, what has become
important above all is that I should neither be contaminated by the
atrocities that is about to be committed nor poison myself with impotent
hatred of its perpetrators. I cannot save the prisoners, therefore let me
save myself. (114)

The above lines are expressed by the Magistrate who vows to align to neither the empire nor to the barbarians. He has assumed himself to be neutral when he would go into barbarian land. This shows the pitiable situation of locals who become victimized by unstable political situation.

When the Magistrate accuses the army of triggering conflicts, being itself the enemy rather than the barbarians he becomes imprisoned. The Magistrate uses treacherous behavior to all people including little girl: "I watch the face of a little girl who stands in the front rank of the crowd gripping her mother's clothes. Her eyes are round, her thumb is in her mouth: silent, terrified, and curious" (115). These lines express how terrifying expression of the Magistrate is when he happens to grapple the hand of the little girl. This is ironic expression to the so-called civilized ones who

make stories of fearful hands of the barbarians that grapple the ankle of a woman from under the bed.

People face various problems in life though they are waiting for good day. Joll describes the difficult situation in this way, "As the numbness wear off, the pain begins to come in spasms a minute or two apart so intense that I can no longer lie still. At the height of the spasm, I trot around the room, holding my face whining like a dog; in the blessed valleys between the peaks" (119). These lines describe the situation of unrest and turmoil in South Africa. Intermittently, they have peace and solace when the colonel whimpers like a dog. About Colonel Joll, the Magistrate remarks saying Colonel Joll sits behind the desk in his office. There are no books or file; the room is starkly empty save for a vase of fresh flowers. The narrator becomes confused and unknown about the upcoming situation. He reaches near to the warrant officer. In this regard, he says, "I reach over in to the chest and pick out a second slip, the warrant officer, who sits behind Joll with alive notebook open on his knee, stares hard at me, his pencil poised about the paper" (121). He has not got any clear message form the Magistrate's office and says he is waiting for him to prosecute him. These are the expressions presented by the Magistrate when he leaves the company of empire and has annexed himself with the barbarians after going to leave the barbarian girl to her land.

The narrator is victimized in the conflict after being independent. There is wound in his body, "The wound on my cheek, never washed or dressed, is swollen and inflamed. A crust like a fat caterpillar has formed on it. My left eye is a mere slit, my nose a shapeless throbbing lump" (125). This is also the expression of the Magistrate who reveals the painful situation that he had to confront with when submitting himself to the barbarians in his attempt to escort barbarian girl. To tell in

short, knowing the barbarians is to accept pain. This is subversive irony on colonial attitude about barbarians.

There is gap of understanding among white and black people; they cannot live in peaceful manner. There is suspicion and uncertainty which narrator describes: "I am trying very hard to understand your feelings towards me,' I say. I cannot help mumbling: my voice is unsteady, I am afraid and the sweat is dripping from me" (129). This excerpt describes the feeling and internal monologue of the Magistrate. He is obsessed with the thinking related to Mandel and sees that he is one of the torturers. The narrator observes his face which is full of fear and horror.

There are different criminal activities done by the so-called civilized ones. The narrator memorizes the event of rape. He narrates: "Three weeks ago a little girl was raped. Her friends, playing in the irrigation ditches, did not miss her till she came back to them bleeding, speechless" (134). This is an irony on colonial rule. The colonial rule is full of foibles, immoralities and drawbacks.

The Colonial people forget their duties and they are very near to barbarian which narrator states: "Among the small garrison that has been left behind there is more drunkenness than I have ever known before, more arrogance towards the townspeople" (135). The colonizers involve in many anti-social activities like drinking alcohol, raping and vandalizing things and call themselves civilized.

Colonizers have compelled the local people for being refugee in their own land and shifted from rural area to urban. It indicates the actual behavior of the so-called civilized colonizers. It further justifies their activities: "There has been a drift of refugees to the town, Fisher folk from the tiny settlements dotted along the river and the northern lakeshore, speaking a language no one understand" (136). This is colonial expression about the nomadic people. Coetzee wants to put forward these expressions

in retort against colonial expression. In fact, colonial people have encroached the land of so-called barbarians.

The narrator feels difficult to observe the situation because he would never imagine what now people are facing. In this regard, he says, "I hesitate before I pass through. There is something I would like to know. I look into Mandel's face, at the clear eyes, windows of his soul, at the mouth from which his spirit utters itself" (137). He finds himself in difficult situation and talks to the divine entity whatever he thought about the problem.

The Magistrate neglects his duties and people face various problems such as insecurity, hunger, disease etc. In this regard, narrator states: ". . . so sing for my keep and if I am still hungry in the evening, if I wait at the barracks gate for the whistle that casks the dogs and slip in quietly enough, I can usually wheedle out of the maids the leftovers from the soldiers 'supper" (139). These lines show how Coetzee uses narratives to describe the ironical situation people faces in Africa. There are some misconceptions about the uses of irony. Irony is often misused by people in everyday situations, where it can be used to describe bad luck or an unrelated coincidence.

He further ironizes the situation of South Africa with the following words: "Looking past me, looking through me, declining in every way to see me, he swaggers off. As he passes the last hut he rips off moreover the doorway. The strings of beads with which it is decorated, red and black berries, dried melon-seeds, break and cascade everywhere" (152). Here, he ironizes socio-economic condition of the country. Many of the places are still replete with huts that are decorated with dried melon seeds, black berries and cascade.

Coetzee ironizes the deteriorating situation of South Africa ensued after the political change that occurred few years ago, in the name of freedom. In this novel,

Coetzee highlights the corrupted nature of the Magistrate who always manipulates people in the name of democracy and freedom. The verbal irony is reflected in this novel though nameless the Magistrate. The Magistrate describes the gallop past and satire the present and says, "A hundred yards from him there is a thud of hooves behind and three armored soldiers gallop past, racing towards the reed-brakes into which the other horseman has now disappeared" (153). The authorities of the empire have gone to the desert in search of the so-called barbarians. The Magistrate exploits the people creating rumour of existence of barbarians.

The novel ironizes the situation in which the narrator is confused about the contemporary changing environment. A young man follows him for meal: "A young man dashes out waving his arms and shouting: the sheep scatter into the dark, and with a roar the crowd closes in. Almost at once the first shots crack out" (155). The narrator describes the event at the last day of colonial search for barbarian people. The winter is falling and the so-called civilized colonizers have declared cessation of their search. In the name of barbarian search, they have looted various things, including women. There is roar, screams and protest against them by the so-called barbarians. The Magistrate discussed about the solution of the problem and says, "I have urged my fellow-citizens to cultivate their kitchen gardens, to plant root vegetables that will withstand the winter frosts.' Above all we must find ways of surviving the winter, I tell them" (158). All these narratives reflect the situation which ironize political situation of South Africa. The Magistrate advises everybody to grow root vegetables that can survive winter while new wells are being built. Nothing remains for people waiting new circumstances.

One of the narrators of novel speaks about the situation: "He sees me too: the door is slammed shut, I hear the click of the bolt inside. Peering through the glass, I

can make him out sitting in the dim far corner, rigidly averting his face" (159).

Everything is closed to vanish which has been established before revolution. The narrator ironizes the situation in this way: "We froze in the mountains! We starved in the desert! Why did no one tell us it would be like that? We were not beaten they led us out in to the desert and then they vanished!"(161). These lines describe their effort to search the barbarians. They search the mountains and the deserts, but eventually can find hardly any barbarians. The colonial people are treated well and the ones whom they meet and call barbarians treat them well and disappear. This is irony on the existence of so-called barbarians.

People forget everything except to save their life. The situation is described like this: "They help me climb into the pit. Standing chest-deep I scratch away the earth around the side of a jawbone embedded in the wall. 'Here is the skull,' I say. But no, the skull has already been dug up. They show it to me" (162). Describing situation of Africa after the end of colonization is itself a irony because people cannot leave legacy of colonizer. In this regard, Joll says, "I lather her things; then I put the soap aside, embrace her hips, rub my face in her belly. I can smell the soap; feel the warmth of the water, the pressure of her hands. From the depths of that memory I reach out to touch myself" (163). These are the expressions of Colonel Joll who tells something about his motherland.

The situation of women further ironizes the situation of the country. Here is an example: "The baby begins to whimper. She eases herself away from me and gets up. Big and naked, she walks back and forth across the patch of moonlight with the baby over her shoulder patting it, crooning" (166). The woman who becomes victim of communal conflict expresses her feeling that ironizes the ongoing situation. In this regard, she says that she is terrified; she is terrified to think what is going to happen

with them. She tries to hope for the best and live from day to day. But sometimes all of a sudden, she finds herself imagining what might happen and she is paralyzed with fear.

The following statements further justify the subversive political irony presented in the novel:

It seems right that, as a gesture to the people who inhabited the ruins in the desert, it is wise of us to do like them. We too ought to set down a record of settlements; we too ought to make a record to be left for posterity buried under the walls of our town; and to write such a history no one would seem to be better fitted than our last the Magistrate. (168)

Above lines show political irony on South Africa which is different from what history mentions. It is different from reality and appearance. The scene is like a dream which is described as: "This is not the scene I dreamed of like much else nowadays I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on long a road that my lead nowhere" (170). It shows how Coetzee projects ironical narratives to show the ongoing political situation of South Africa.

To tell in short, this chapter deals with subversive attack by J.M. Coetzee against colonial attitude towards so-called civilized colonizers. The novel attacks on the colonial attribution to nomadic herdsman as barbarians. The colonizers want to prove barbarism on the colonized. This mission Coetzee ironizes the colonizers who are themselves barbarians. The barbarism, the colonizers are searching for is created by western power structure and imposed culturally on others. But their brutal treatment on the so-called barbarian people ironically make themselves barbarians.

This chapter analyzes the colonial attitude through different perspectives of irony. It classifies and analyzes irony under verbal irony, situational irony and subversive political irony—the politics of irony to contend the so-called colonial attitudes towards the colonized people.

Chapter 4

Ironizing Political Situation of South Africa in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Through various narratives, Coetzee projects the contemporary political situation and ironizes the political leaders and the Magistrate who encouraged people during the time of revolution to fight against the colonizer. After the end of the colonial regime in South Africa, people dream to get freedom and security. After decolonization, from colonizer, they find nothing except insecurity, communal conflict and corruption. The situation is very near to barbarism which Coetzee ironizes by projecting various narratives related to political instability and fear. There is no linear plot in narratives because characters and narrator cannot get constancy in life.

Coetzee is familiar with the situation of South Africa. Critics inevitably accept that *Waiting for the Barbarians* is arrogant, cruel, austere, honest, precise, ironic, bleak, abstemious, ethereal, spare, dry, controlled, elegant, cold, chilly and perhaps unexpectedly, humorous. It is words of irk, words that suggest a certain reticence and even silence, that are used to describe ironical situation of South Africa. Characters and plots revolve around the uncertainty. They are found in uncommunicative mode and only speak the outer reality. It is as if we are waiting for the moment when Coetzee finally lets down his guard and announces unambiguously his intentions which help to establish irony in narratives. Famously reserved in social situations, we fondly imagine that it is to us that he will suddenly warm, perhaps partake of a few glasses of wine, and just tell us simply and with a few loud guffaws exactly what the joke is that we all seem to vaguely glimpse in the novel.

There is projection of verbal and situational irony both of which break the consistency of novel while narrator speaks about the situation of their locality. It is constantly on the edge of some sort of revelation that never quite seems to come over the information which ironizes the whole system of communication and power exercise. Coetzee's work seems filled with characters who cannot see or talk and who are constantly being interrogated by well-meaning white men to divulge their inner meaning. Characters have had his tongue removed and in the finale of the novel, his drowned mouth finally produces an enigmatic speech. There is no consistency what that speech by character is telling; it is impossible to know. It is difficult therefore not to imagine that Coetzee sees his own autobiographical project as fundamentally doomed yet in some way essential in the novel. We read, so to speak, a sequence of sentences that have been scored through: they form no statement because they have been cancelled, yet we read them all the same. So, Coetzee's fictionalized reminiscences in the understanding that their truth is under an ironic erasure. In the novel, we find various needless gossip about ongoing political situation which delineates the skepticism and confusion of the situation. By creating confusion and skepticism, Coetzee ironizes the situation because before the decolonization there was slogan of transparency. Here, we find uncomfortable silence in the novel which ironizes the issue of freedom of speech.

In short, Coetzee projects verbal and situational and political irony in this novel by taking references of various confusing narratives of post-colonial Africa and urges to reform the situation of nation rather force to reach near to barbarism.

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