

COLONIALISM AND BLASPHEMED RACIALIZATION IN JOHN MAXWELL COETZEE'S *WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS*

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Abstract

This research investigates the postcolonial concept of colonialism and blasphemed racialization in *Waiting for the Barbarians* by John Maxwell Coetzee. It analyzes the fractured relation between Blacks and Whites during colonization. In fact, colonial era has favored the domination of Whites over Blacks resulting in the blasphemy of Africans' race and culture. Coetzee intends to demonstrate that colonialism with its discourse and heritage has settled a clear distinction between both races. In so doing, this situation has occasioned Blacks' misrepresentation in both their culture and race at the profit of Whites. Standing on postcolonial theory, the study reaches the point that John Maxwell Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is a narrative of colonialism and blasphemed racialization.

Keywords: black, blasphemy, colonialism, culture, discourse, domination, race, white.

Résumé

Cette étude analyse le concept post colonial du colonialisme et de la racialization blasphémée dans en *Attendant les Barbares* par John Maxwell Coetzee. Elle explore la relation fracturée entre les Noirs et les Blancs lors de la colonisation. En fait, la période coloniale a favorisé la domination des Blancs sur les Noirs, aboutissant au blasphème de la race et de la culture des Africains. Coetzee entend démontrer que le colonialisme avec son discours et héritage a établi une nette distinction entre les deux races. Ce faisant, cette situation a occasionné une fausse représentation des Noirs à la fois dans la culture et la race au profit des Blancs. Se basant, sur la théorie postcoloniale du traumatisme, l'étude montre qu'en *Attendant les Barbares* de John Maxwell Coetzee est un récit du colonialisme et de la racialisation blasphémée.

Mots- clés : Blanc, blasphème, colonialisme, culture, discours, domination, noirs, race.

INTRODUCTION

Novels about colonization have always treated Africa as dark and savage continent. Africans are reduced to primitive, mysterious creatures which in Coetzee's opinion is racist stereotyping. Colonialism and blasphemed racialization are the key aspects analyzed through Coetzee's fictions. Coetzee's novels allow to examine racial blasphemy occasioned by colonialism. The study emphasizes how colonial period with its discourse has contributed to blaspheme against African race and culture so as to create a gulf between both races. In fact, colonialism can be perceived through colonial acts, apparatuses and discourse held by Europeans.

These acts perpetrated bring about trouble. They also create differences between Africans on the one hand and colonizers on the other hand. Colonialism occasions distinction between the races. This discrepancy caused blasphemed racialization which is perceivable throughout Coetzee's novels under study. The South African writer succeeds in creating characters that undergo this ideology. To make things clear, it is useful to elucidate the key terms around which our analysis evolves.

Colonialism is the process of one country taking full or partial political control of another country and occupying it with settlers for the purposes of profiting from its resources and economy. It can simply be defined as the control of a dominant country over a vulnerable one. From these definitions, it turns out that the idea which lies behind, is that of exploitation and domination. In this process, the colonizers forcibly attempt to subjugate the indigenous populations by imposing their religion, language, cultural and political practices on them.

As for blasphemy, it is the misrepresentation of race based on the categorization of races. As illustration, the white race is considered as the superior, the most important one. Hence, it is given priority. Thus, colonialism through its discourse and heritage has engendered racial blasphemy.

Colonialism is also defined by C. Parsons (2011, p. 118) as the "domination of one group of people by another". From this quote, one can perceive an idea of domination. Thus, its practices infuse with that of blasphemous racialization. It makes use of colonial discourse "to create the idea of the inferiority of the colonial subject and to exercise hegemonic control over them". (B. Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 78). Such cultural ideologies are sustained by imperial force.

From the above quotations, it is clear that colonialism is the fact that one group of people has a total control over another one in order to create a complex of inferiority and be able to exercise their hegemonic power and civilizing mission. The idea of domination and subjugation are given predominance. Other thinkers also define colonialism. For instance, M. W. Doyle contends that the Empire also makes use of force to maintain the colony. Thus, M. W. Doyle (1986, p. 45) puts it as follows:

Empire, then, is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire

Colonization sometimes gives rise to the use of force to reach one's goal. The imperial power in establishing dominance and maintaining supremacy over colonies uses all means. Imperialism and colonization go together. In both cases, there is an idea of domination.

In the novels of J. M. Coetzee, imperialism, colonialism and their blasphemous racializations take place during the periods of colonization, Apartheid and even post-Apartheid of South Africa. In these systems, colonial discourses give westerners the power to "transplant the civilization they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find themselves". (J. A. Hobson, 2005, p. 7). With the colonial discourse, westerners go further to "claim the right to take as booty other people's lives, other people's lands". (N. Gordimer, 2003, p. 42).

Our main preoccupation rests on racial blasphemy. The question underlying the work is as follows: How does colonialism through its manifestations bring about the blasphemy of racialization? How does Coetzee succeed in showing it in his fictions?

As the blasphemous racialization takes place in the country, women endure it doubly. In addition to falling under imperialism and colonialism as their countrymen, they fall under colonial patriarchy. Coetzee's portrayal of South African Women in such a context is in perfect line with the stance risen by B. Ashcroft et al. (1998, pp. 103-104) when they write that colonialism operated differently for women and for men for, they endure double colonization that results from being subjected "both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women".

Strikingly, as colonization and Apartheid take an end in South Africa, and the country enters post-Apartheid period, colonial institutions remain in the colonized territory. The new

leaders of South Africa footstep colonizers in western hegemony. In this vein, to corroborate C. K. Awuyah (1998, p. 206), the “African collaborators, and the church, government, and monarchies of Europe” are “institutions and organizations” that are “authors of African graves”. It is this situation that makes A. Césaire (2000, p. 27) writes that Africa is

hardly in a ‘postcolonial’ moment. The official apparatus might have been removed, but the political, economic, and cultural links established by colonial domination still remain with some alterations.

Inheriting colonial institutions, the new leaders of South Africa make use of them to govern the territory. Colonial heritage still goes on in other forms by new leaders who are the Africans themselves. Unmistakably, to echo R. O. Kamada (2010, p. 18),

while educated in the culture of the colonial authority ..., how does one adequately represent the [post-apartheid] without always extending the reach of the cultural authority of the colonizing power.

The inherited institutions lead the new leaders to keep on depicting western culture as being the centre while blaspheming against the traditional cultures. Colonization in Africa occasions tensions between people creating racial discrimination. This distinction is perceivable in South African writings, particularly in Coetzee’s fiction *Waiting for the Barbarians*. This plight resulting from colonial period contributes to race blasphemy.

The theoretical framework used in this work leans on post colonial approach which analyzes the key concepts along with the trends of Ashcroft et al and Young. Ashcroft (1996, p. 2) uses this concept of post-colonial to “cover all the cultures affected by the imperial power from the moment of colonization to the present day”. From all these ideas mentioned above, it turns out that colonization and the distinction made on race are interrelated. Coetzee has succeeded in demonstrating it clearly in his fiction *Waiting for The Barbarians*.

This study is organized in two main sections with two subheadings each. The first section is about colonial acts and cultural blasphemy. The second section deals with colonial apparatuses and cultural distortion. These sections put together show that Africans are blasphemed by colonizers and this is pertinent in Coetzee’s narrative under study.

1. COLONIAL ACTS AND CULTURAL BLASPHEMIES

Thus, colonial acts are the transnational force of imperialism which leads westerners to undertake colonialism in South Africa. Undoubtedly, one of the major factors of colonialism is

imperialism. In fact, colonialism is a form of imperialism used by colonizers. And this can be proved through the work of many postcolonialist thinkers. As E. Said (1994, p. 9) contends:

‘Imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distance territory; ‘colonialism,’ which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distance territory.

In so doing, colonialism and imperialism are interrelated because the former is the direct consequence of the latter. It follows from this situation that migration makes westerners settle in South Africa. Therefore, B. Ashcroft et al., (1998, p. 124) writes in the following lines: “European imperialism is grounded on this diaspora of ordinary travelers, explorers, missionaries, fortune hunters and settlers over many centuries”.

As the westerners migrate and settle in South Africa, they undertake a politics of racialization in order to blaspheme the local cultures and hegemonize the imported culture. They simply denigrate the Africans’ culture and value their own culture through land misrepresentation. The discourse they hold is done with the sole purpose to fulfill their civilizing mission through imperial power and territorial dispossession.

1-1- Symbolism of Imperial and Territorial Dispossession

In *Culture and Imperialism*, E. Said lets us know that in imperialism the main battle is over the land. E. Said (1994, p. 7) then writes:

Imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distance that is lived on and owned by others. For all kinds of reasons, it attracts some people and often involves untold misery for others.

J. M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* is a typical novel representing such imperialism and the dispossession of peasants’ territory as lived in South Africa.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the setting consists of a peasantry territory called the town or capital and a nomadic territory named as the frontier. The town is the territory in which is settled the Third Bureau. The Third Bureau is the shadowy governmental organization which oversees outposts of the unnamed Empire. It is the most important and powerful division of the civil guard. It is also a secret service which serves the purpose of the British Empire. As for the frontier, it is used for an outpost or the fort. What is being brought into discussion with J. M. Coetzee’s portrayal of the setting with such a combination is that the term town used to call the peasantry territory derives from the presence of the Third bureau in this territory. Town is a

discourse opposed to peasantry territory that shows the civilizing mission of westerners on the colonized land. The peasants are dispossessed of their territory. The territory on which peasantry activities are practiced is now full of western culture.

Beyond the connotation of town, the Third Bureau reveals how peasants are made victims of imperialism. During a meeting, the Magistrate introduces Colonel Joll as follows ““Colonel Joll is from the Third Bureau.”” He keeps on describing the 3rd Bureau in these lines ““The Third Bureau is the most important division of the Civil Guard nowadays We must make good impression on him””. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 5). Colonel Joll is then portrayed as an imperial force. He informs the peasantry community that from the Empire, the British have recourse to their army to take the control of the traditional territory. The territory is now owned by them and any act on it is conducted in perfect line with imperial principles and norms.

The Magistrate gives further information about imperialism that makes the peasants lose their territory when describing officer Mandel as follows:

His insignia says that he is a warrant officer. Warrant Officer in the Third Bureau: What does that mean? At a guess, five years of kicking and beating people, contempt for the regular police and for due process of law; a detestation of smooth patrician talk like mine. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 105).

At first, the Magistrate makes use of the insignia to reveal British imperialism. The description of Mandel’s tunic to bear a lilac-blue with an insignia is for the Magistrate to say that the tunic is the British army uniform. Through the insignia, he unveils Mandel as being the army of the Empire that appropriates the peasantry territory.

Then, the Magistrate employs the warrant officer to emphasize the predominance of the imperial army over the peasantry land. By qualifying Mandel as a warrant officer in addition to revealing his tunic to originate from British army, the Magistrate brings forth an insistence. He insists that Mandel belongs to nowhere but to the imperial army. This army occupies the peasantry territory. This state of fact reaches the peak when he mentions the Third Bureau as the working place of Mandel. Through the Third Bureau, the Magistrate announces that there is a detachment from the Empire army in the town to which Mandel belongs.

The Magistrate’s presentation of Mandel also reveals the dispossession of the peasantry territory and the occupation of the Empire of their territory. As the Magistrate presents Mandel, his own presentation as being an Empire discloses. When he compares Mandel’s talk as being patrician like his, he brings forth his existence on the territory as an Empire. He also unravels

that he stands as an Empire on the territory of the indigenous people. Besides the presentation, the name Magistrate well indicates an imperial territorial occupation. As he self-portrays himself: “I am a country magistrate, a responsible official in the service of the Empire. Serving out my days on this lazy frontier”. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 13).

This short quotation shows that the Empire possesses the entire territory. The protagonist’s role as a Magistrate is to ensure that the wealth of the territory belongs to the Empire as he well puts it: “I collect the tithes, and taxes, administer the communal lands”. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 13). The economic domination is revealed through taxes. The peasants pay taxes for British people. This form of domination is known as an entire enslavement.

Moreover, Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* is featured by British imperialism that dispossesses South Africans of their territory. Though its setting is mostly post-Apartheid, it cannot be denied that the novel bears sequels of Apartheid. Racial blasphemy is also shown through imperial settlement and indigenous dislocation.

1-2- Imperial Settlement and Indigenous Dislocation

This section throws light on British contact with the indigenous inhabitants in South Africa. The settlement has certainly occasioned the movement of people in favour of colonizers. Aware of this situation, some colonial thinkers try to investigate on this concept.

Dislocation as defined by B. Ashcroft et al. (1998, p. 73) is any “displacement that occurs as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with this event”. In line with this, imperial settlement as mentioned in this title is an imperial occupation that dislocates the indigenous in South Africa.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the eye-catching imperial occupation that gives rise to dislocation is the Third Bureau of the Civil Guard. As the state apparatus is settled in the town, the brigade headquarters conscript the peasants. In this context, dislocation takes the sense of domestication. The existence of the brigade headquarters displaces the population from their position of peasants to a new position of conscripts. The Magistrate narrates this imperial conscription in the following terms: “When they were first quartered on the town these soldiers, strangers to our ways, conscripts from all over the Empire, and were welcomed coolly”. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 174). From the Magistrate’s words, it comes out that the peasants are

dislocated. Their new activities are linked to the army. From their positions of peasants, they are conscripted as officers, garrison and sentries.

Next to the Third Bureau, the striking imperial occupation that brings about dislocation is the construction of the barracks in the frontier. Before the construction of the imperial barracks, the indigenous populations do not go to prison. As the Magistrate reports to Colonel Joll in his function as an imperial civil officer of the peasantry community:

‘We do not have facilities for prisoners,’ ... ‘there is not much crime here and the penalty is usually a fine or compulsory labour. This hut is simply a storeroom attached to the granary, as you can see. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 6).

The point risen by the Magistrate is that traditionally the peasantry territory does not possess prisons and does not know imprisonment. But with the advent of the imperial barracks, the indigenes experience imprisonment. They are displaced from their traditional positions as nomads and fisherfolk to a position of imperial prisoners in the barracks. As the barracks is built, the indigenes or the aboriginal people that Colonel Joll captures “are returned not to the yard but to the main barracks hall”. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 31).

The barracks as narrated by the Magistrate is an invention that comes into existence because of the settlement of the Empire in the traditional territory. With the existence of the barracks hall, the Empire dislocates the aboriginal people from their position of nomads and fisherfolk to a position of prisoner.

The fort in the frontier is a great imperial occupation that fosters the dislocation of the indigenous community. As British imperialism brings about the existence of the fort in the traditional territory, this imperial settlement displaces the nomads and the fisherfolk in the mountains of the desert. In the Magistrate’s conversation with Colonel Joll about the latter’s searching for the truth concerning the existence of barbaric people, the former informs him that the nomads and the fisherfolk “keep well away from the fort” (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 6).

The message of the Magistrate for Colonel Joll is clear. He makes it be known that the fort dislocates the indigenous people far from their traditional land. From their traditional territory, the existence of the fort forces the aboriginal people to retreat far in the mountains of the desert. They retreat in the mountain of the desert where life is even insupportable for the Empire. They dislocate the indigenes to have a total control over their territory. In this condition, the imperial power dominates and exploit the aboriginal people.

The dislocation of the nomads and the fisherfolk by imperial fort as presented by the Magistrate is in perfect line with the displacement of the Shona community by British settlers displayed by the grandmother of the female protagonist Tambu in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. In her history lessons counted to her granddaughter, the first story reads:

We lived up in Chipinge, where the soil is ripe and your grandfather was a rich man in the currency of those days, having many fat herd of cattle, large fields and four wives who worked hard to produce bountiful harvests. (T. Dangarembga, 1988: 18).

From the first, the second story relates:

Wizards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land. On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for the people. At last the people came upon the grey, sandy soil of the homestead, so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it. There they built a home. (T. Dangarembga, 1988, p. 18).

The fort in the aforementioned context of wizardry occupation resonates with Robert J. C. Young's (2003, p. 105) stance that follows:

Colonization of common land through privatisation ... works in the same direction against the interests of local people, making their lives literally unsustainable by taking away their means of livelihood

The occupation of peasantry territory by the fort is not in the interest of the indigenous people. On the contrary, its presence makes their lives unsustainable by displacing them in the mountains of the desert. With the occupation of their territory, they are far from their means of livelihood. Another key aspect that is part of dislocation is the inn.

Definitely, the inn is the best occupation of the Empire in the frontier that dislocates the indigenes. The best act of dislocation brought by this imperial construction is the sexual objectification of indigenous women by the soldiers of the imperial army. The Magistrate proves this by receiving Colonel Joll from the brigade headquarter in this locality that he mentions as follows: "He is quartered here at the inn because this is the best accommodation the town provides" (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 5). The sexual objectification of women practiced by the imperial force becomes clearer when he addresses women in the inn as "girls entertain men-friends". (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 31).

Obviously, the inn symbolizes an imperial structure that aims at turning women into sexual object or thing. It is a locality in which the soldiers of the imperial army sleep with women. The Magistrate not only visits several times "Mai the cook" in the inn (J. M. Coetzee,

1980, p. 170) but also the officers sexually abuse the nomadic girl made blind by the torture of Colonel Joll in this imperial inn. As the girl and her parents are made prisoners, the soldiers make use of her sexually in the inn. The girl puts it as follows:

I used to sleep at the inn for a time while my feet were getting better. There was a man who took care of me. He has gone now. He kept horses there were other men. I did not have a choice. That was how it had to be. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 73).

The fact that the girl sleeps in the inn while in reality she is a prisoner shows that the inn dislocates the aboriginal women from their traditional womanhood virtues to imperial prostitution. It also shows that before sex, barriers can be broken, there are no more slaves, rich, poor, blacks or whites. Sex transcends human made barriers. The fact of making love is a positive aspect in human relations. Thus, it reduces stress and brings about good health. It also favours harmony, unity, peace and reinforces relationships between partners.

. The aboriginal women have no choice because they are forced to do so without means of defense. They are sexually objectified by the army of the Empire in the inn. They are dislocated from their indigenous traditional womanhood to sexual objects. Here again the acts perpetrated by imperial power resulting in land dispossession and dislocation are given credence.

In fact, as imperialism is patriarchal, by transcending national borders as well as by conscripting the peasants for their imperial acts, the Empire does not allow the soldiers to bring with them their wives. This is the case of Colonel Joll, Warrant Officer Mandel and the Magistrate. They are all present on the outpost without their wives but make use of the indigenous women to satisfy their sexual needs in the inn. It is in this context that sexual objectification is an imperial act brought by the occupation of the inn in the traditional community.

2- COLONIAL APPARATUSES AND CULTURAL DISTORTION

The dominant theoretical perspective used in this dissertation are post-colonial theory. However, we can quote the Marxist thinker L. Althusser for his definition of state symbols. For L. Althusser (2001, p. 1477), the legal standing of “the police, the military, the prison system, and government” makes them be state apparatus. Althusser (2001, p. 1489) adds that they are repressive because they “function by violence”. This criticism of the state apparatus as repressive mechanism in the interest of the capitalist ruling class is not different from

postcolonial criticism. In the realm of postcolonial studies, the ruling class stands for colonizers while the ruled class represents the colonized.

Thus, what Althusser terms state apparatus takes the connotation of colonial apparatus in postcolonial theory. With the colonial apparatus, westerners deprive the indigenes of their cultures and advantages in order to ensure their subjection to their ruling ideology. Such an act is known as cultural blasphemy for, H. K. Bhabha (1994, p. 225) argues that blasphemy “is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation”.

Referring to H. K. Bhabha in the context of colonization, it is the indigenous cultures and identities which are blasphemed in terms of race. In other words, the blasphemy of colonial racialization results in cultural distortion.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, colonial institutions resort to their function of repressive apparatus to distort the cultures of the indigenes. The repressive nature of the imperial army also distorts the identities of peasants, nomads and fisherfolk. Above that, the barrack in the frontier makes the nomads and fisherfolk lose their identity and culture. The indigenous cultural loss is occasioned by the imperial power. The imperial army distorts the identity of the indigenous people. In this line of reflection, Coetzee’s narration of blasphemy of racialization turns to identity and cultural distortions contrary to its form of displacement in the previous section. The next part deals with barbarians’ dehumanizing through imperial army and identity distortion.

2-1-Dehumanizing the Barbarian: Imperial Army and Identity Distortion

Imperial army means the army possessed by the colonizers. It is the repressive state apparatus they used to impose their domination. As for identity distortion, it is the fact of denigrating, misrepresenting the indigenous culture. Both situations tend to disgrace and subjugate black people and take them as barbarians.

About this identity distortion, H. K. Bhabha (1994, p. 226) contends that blasphemy is “a transgressive act of cultural translation”. Since in this section of the dissertation blasphemy takes to context of distorted identity, it can therefore be said that distorting the identities of the indigenes consists in translating their original identity, with translation connoting Robert J. C.

Young's (2003, p. 138) stance of false "representation". The local communities are deprived of human right, identities and cultural values by colonialism in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In the novel, the indigenes' identities which are, as Wa Thiong'o Ngugi (1993, p. 77) puts it, their conception of their "rightful place in history, in the universe of the natural and human" are dispossessed and misrepresented as barbaric by the imperial army. This conception held by the colonizers tends to distort blacks' identities.

The distorted identities of these indigenous communities are legible through the title of the novel *Barbarians*. The name Barbarians in the title *Waiting for the Barbarians* is what is used to call the indigenes. The indigenous people are considered as barbarians by the British Empire. Throughout the novel, Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel, to borrow from J. A. Hobson (2005, p. 222), "indoctrinated with the intellectual and moral grandeur of Imperialism", are the holders of the idea of the indigenes being Barbarians. By making the indigenes bear the name of such colonial discourse, J. M. Coetzee emphasizes the fact that the imperial army distorts the identity of the indigenes or the aboriginal people. With such a denomination, the communities that are attached to land and its different activities are systematically designated by the imperial soldiers as Barbarians. The title Barbarians given to the indigenes testify colonizers willingness to keep colonized under their control.

From the foregoing, the indigenes are forced into a new identity that does not reflect their true identity. In the history of the tradition, they are not Barbarians in the sense of being barbaric. They are rather land owners or farmers who identify themselves with the land and its different activities. But the imperial force translates them to be Barbarians. In this sense, J. M. Coetzee's portrayal complies with B. Ashcroft et al.'s (2004, p. 102) standpoint in "Radical Otherness and Hybridity" to reveal that "imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the Self. This Otherness ... always contains a trace of ambivalence or anxiety". Such a distorted identity of the indigenes revealed by the title of the novel is confirmed throughout the content of the novel.

The indigenes whose distorted identity is eye catching are the fisherfolk. They are referred to as the Barbarians by the imperial army. Such an imperial act of the soldiers is an identity translation. The distortion of the fisherfolk as the Barbarians discloses when, in reacting against Colonel Joll's first captives, the Magistrate then complains:

‘Did no one tell him these prisoners are useless to him? Did no one tell him the difference between fishermen with nets and wild nomad horsemen with bows? Did no one tell him they don’t even speak the same language?’

One of the soldiers explains ‘When they saw us coming they tried to hide in the reeds. They saw horsemen coming so they tried to hide. So the officer, the Excellency, ordered us to take them in. Because they were hiding.’

I could curse with vexation. A policeman! The reasoning of a policeman! ‘Did the Excellency say why he wanted them brought back here? Did he say why he could not ask them his question out there?’

‘None of us could speak their language, sir.’

Of course not! These river people are aboriginal, older even than the nomads. They live in settlements of two or three families along the banks of the river, fishing and trapping for most of the year, paddling to the remote southern shores of the lake in the autumn to catch redworms and dry them, building flimsy reed shelters, groaning with cold through the winter, dressing in skins. Living in fear of everyone, skulking in the reeds, what can they possibly know of a great barbarian enterprise against the Empire? (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, pp. 25–26).

The aboriginal people to whom Colonel Joll refers as Barbarians are fisherfolk. Their activity has nothing to do with organizing attacks against the imperial army. By hiding from Colonel Joll’s army because of fear, he takes them for Barbarians. In so doing, he captures them and brings them into the barrack in the fort. In this condition, Colonel Joll is an imperial soldier who translates the community from their traditional identity into barbaric identity. By being given this identity, the nomads are designated and categorized as savage race in the universe of human. They are tagged with the label of dangerous creatures. As such, they are excluded from mankind.

Next to the fisherfolk, the nomads are also disgraced and their identity is distorted by the imperial army. A community traditionally identified as nomad is now viewed as Barbarian. The Magistrate whose role is to control the frontier reveals:

I last saw them five days ago (if I can claim ever to have seen them, if I ever did more than pass my gaze over their surface absently, with reluctance). What they have undergone in these five days I do not know. Now herded by their guards they stand in a hopeless little knot in the corner of the yard, nomads and fisherfolk together, sick, famished, damaged, terrified. It would be best if this obscure chapter in the history of the world were terminated at once, if these ugly people were obliterated from the face of the earth and we swore to make a new start, to run an empire in which there would be no more injustice, no more pain. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 34).

The nomads are found in this passage to be captured together with the fisherfolk by Colonel Joll. They are sick, famished, damaged and terrified because they are considered as Barbarians therefore treated as such. By treating them as Barbarians, Colonel Joll and his

soldiers locate these indigenes at the lower scale of humankind. Moreover, the imperial army's act of distorting the identity of the indigenous community does not stop at the level of the nomads. The soldiers also distort the traditional identity of the peasants.

The traditional community identified as peasants are seized by the imperial power and force into the army. As the British Empire conquers the peasantry territory, the local inhabitants are captured and forced to become soldiers. This makes them be identified as conscripts instead of being identified as peasants. The Magistrate puts it well when he refers to the peasants as follows: "When they were first quartered on the town these soldiers, strangers to our ways, conscripts from all over the Empire, were welcomed coolly". (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 174).

The Magistrate voices that the peasants are conscripted into the imperial army. They are translated into this conscription. It is with the advent of the imperial army in their traditional community that they have become conscripts. Being conscripts means that they are enlisted compulsorily, especially in the armed forces. Hence, they cannot occupy the first rank in the imperial army. In this perspective, they are rather relegated to the second position, then making them second-class men or subalterns. Like that, they echo F. Fanon's (1967, p. 149) stance when he upholds that with colonization, it is not that "the Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior".

In addition, the conscripts disclose the imperial army and distort the peasants' identity. Garrison reveals this aspect as well. Instead of being indigenes' identity, the peasants are referred to as the soldiers of the garrisons. They are no longer identified as peasants and farmers who love land and farms. They are rather identified as warrior, warmongering willing to fight. Such an act of the army makes colonization be taken as an enterprise whose desire is not, to quote from A. Césaire, (2000, p. 32) "to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law". Rather, colonization is an enterprise which consists in imposing domination and violence upon the indigenes.

Definitely, J. M. Coetzee's choice of portraying the peasants as being Barbarians is to convey that the imperial army distorts the traditional identity of the indigenes. The term "sentry" is illustrative of their shifting identities that consists in moving from peasantry to soldierly identity. The indigenes are then forced to use guns instead of practicing land activities. The indigenes people are taught to use violent methods against their fellow human beings.

Like *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Youth* is well informed with a South Africa being replete with an imperial army that destabilizes the identity of the natives of the country. As the country undergoes endless revolutionary movements such as PAC's march along the De Waal Drive occasioned by the carnage of Sharpeville, the imperial army proceeds by defense force to conscript the inhabitants mostly "Afrikaners" (J. M. Coetzee, 2002, p. 40). This makes them lose their identity as civilian Afrikaners to become conscripts. The British army conscripts the civilians into imperial soldiers as the narrator presents it through the case of John in these lines:

There is the matter of the Defence Force. When he left school they were conscripting only one white boy in three for military training. He was lucky enough not to be balloted. Now all that is changing. There are new rules. At any time, he can find a callup notice in his letterbox: You are required to present yourself at the Castle at 9 a.m. on such-and-such a date. Bring only toilet items. Voortrekkerhoogte, somewhere in the Transvaal, is the training camp he has heard the most about. It is where they send conscripts from the Cape, far from home, to break them. In a week he could find himself behind barbed wire in Voortrekkerhoogte, sharing a tent with thuggish Afrikaners, eating bully-beef out of cans, listening to Johnnie Ray on Springbok Radio. He would not be able to endure it; he would slash his wrists. There is only one course open: to flee. (J. M. Coetzee, 2002, pp. 39–40).

John is conscripted by the army for the Defence Force. Like him, most of South African citizens are conscripts. John who is a university student is conscripted by the army to wage war. From his identity of university student, John becomes a conscript. As such, instead of studying at university, he finds himself in the training camp of the Transvaal being trained to use guns to kill mankind. Like John, many other citizens are conscripted by the army. The word conscripts used by the narrator in the form of plural shows it well. This part has been much more concerned with how the British have contributed to pervert the culture of the indigenous people. It is of paramount importance to note that this is done owing to the bad treatment of the peasants that they consider as Barbarians.

Once again, their position of empowerment is mentioned in this part. Coetzee does not fail to show it throughout its fiction with the bad treatment that is inflicted on the indigenous people. They are made captives and treated as savage, uncivilized and barbarians. In this trend, some peasants and nomads are made prisoners, captives. The fact of being made captives contributes to the loss of their identity.

2-2- Prison and Loss of Identity

This part makes us understand how prison has favored the loss of identity. In the previous section, their identity is distorted because the indigenous people are considered less than human.

This fact has not taken an end. On the contrary, it has been worsening by making them prisoners. The indigenous people in the frontier are imprisoned. They are treated like savage, uncivilized without culture and identity. Being in prison makes them lost their identity and culture. F. Fanon describes identity and attacks colonialism for making the colonized identities get lost in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). In fact, Fanon dynamic critiques of the deep effects of racism and colonization on the psyches of the colonized people is revealed. The color of the skin shows how colonized people are judged and culturally identified on the basis of the skin color.

Like Fanon, Homi. K. Bhabha (1994, p. 51) retakes this stance in his book *The Location of Culture* and sharply criticizes it by writing: “Identity is never a priori, nor a finished product”. But, standing on Ngugi’s (1993, p. 77) perception of identity as one own conception of his/her place in the universe of human, it rises that even if identity is not fixed, to change an individual’s identity to another one is to distort his/her identity. It is identity distortion in such a context of being forced into taking a new identity that J. M. Coetzee seems to be concerned with and tries to show in his novel under study. By portraying the imperial prison in such a way, the novelist underlines its impact upon identity which undergoes perpetual construction. This change is likely to make people lose their identity. It is worth mentioning that Coetzee’s writing presents and illustrates cultural identities in diverse forms accordingly.

For instance, In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the identities through which the indigenes mirror themselves in the universe of the tradition is lost. The imperial prison makes the traditional identity be lost to the detriment of Western identity. The indigenes whose loss of identity is mostly obvious are the nomads. From their nomad’s identity, they are hunted, captured and jailed by the army. The Magistrate’s words are of note when he makes the potential reader know the way the nomads are made prisoners by the Empire. The text reads:

‘These are the only prisoners we have taken for a long time,’ ... ‘a coincidence: normally we would not have any barbarians at all to show you. This so-called banditry does not amount too much. They steal a few sheep or cut out a pack-animal from a train. Sometimes we raid them in return. They are mainly destitute tribespeople with tiny flocks of their own living along the river. It becomes a way of life. The old man says they were coming to see the doctor. Perhaps that is the truth. No one would have brought an old man and a sick boy along on a raiding party’. (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 8).

The sheep, pack-animal and flocks that are the captives are evocative of the nomadic traits. They move from one place to another for food. Such people are captured by the soldiers and made prisoners. The imperial soldiers turn the traditional indigenes into prisoners. Communities who move from one place to another with their flock are enclosed in barracks.

By being jailed by the imperial army, the nomads are forced into a new identity which is prison. The imperial force identifies them as prisoners. Their traditional identity is effaced at the benefit of an imposed identity. They are deprived of their freedom of movement. In this context, the barrack is an imperial institution that translates the indigenous inhabitants. The barrack in such a context clearly agrees with J. A. Hobson's (2005, p. 211) standpoint when he contends:

Imperialism is based upon a persistent misrepresentation of facts and forces, chiefly through a most refined process of selection, exaggeration, and attenuation, directed by interested cliques and persons so as to distort the fact of history.

The barrack makes the Empire stand as the clique and refined race who efface the nomads in the universe of mankind to place them in the universe of uncivilized species. The fact of making the nomads prisoners is to deny them human quality and distort their identity. Entering in the barrack makes their nomadic identity be cleaned so clean like a black board to leave the place for the identity of prisoners constructed for them by the Empire. The dominant idea is that imperialism is the misrepresentation of facts and forces. This blasphemy which is part of colonial discourse leads to the loss of identity.

Additionally, the army hunts, captures and incarcerates the fisherfolk. The soldiers hunt, capture and imprison the fisherfolk. Colonel Joll hunts captures and detains some fisherfolk among whom the old man, his grandson known as the boy, his daughter who is referred as the blind girl, the baby and his mother. From the first-person narrative perspective, the reader discovers this confinement as prisoners as follows:

Today, only for days after the departure of the expedition, the first of the Colonel's prisoners arrive. From my window, I watch them cross the square between their mounted guards, dusty, exhausted, cringing already from the spectators who crowd about them, the skipping children, the barking dogs. In the shade of the barracks wall the guards dismount; at once the prisoners squat down to rest, save for a little boy who stands on one leg, his arm on his mother's shoulder, staring back curiously at the onlookers. Someone brings a bucket of water and a ladle. They drink thirstily, while the crowd grows and presses in so tight around them that I can no longer see. Impatiently, I wait for the guard who now pushes his way through the crowd and crosses the barracks yard.

'How do you explain this?' I shout at him. He bows his head, fumbles at his pockets. 'These are fishing people! How can you bring them back here?' (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, pp. 24–25).

This passage is about fisherfolk who are imprisoned by Colonel Joll on account of their Barbarian identity. An entire family of fisherfolk is jailed at the same time. These "aborigines, older even than the nomads" (J. M. Coetzee, 1980, p. 26) as the Magistrate identifies them. From the moment of being jailed, they are identified as prisoners rather than fisherfolk. In this

context, the Empire constructs a new identity for the traditional community in order to dominate and be able to accomplish their civilizing mission.

In fact, having experienced life in the imperial barrack, the aborigines are lost forever. They can no longer become normal fisherfolk. Their loss of identity perfectly fits a lost identity of the normal Negro as perceived by F. Fanon (1967, p. 143) when he writes: “A normal Negro child, having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white”. The family members who never consider themselves as Barbarians become Barbarians. They are made prisoners by Colonel Joll who belongs to the imperial power.

It is worth mentioning that Colonel Joll makes the fisherfolk live a difficult life in the barrack. Thus, they no longer live if consideration is given to Mbembe’s view. They no longer stay alive. As A. Mbembe (2001, p. 27) contends: “Living together is not existing together, loss subject ... does not exist but only lives”. What is being brought into light is that from life in the barrack, the aboriginal girl bears a new identity as a blind girl. Blind becomes an attribute that no longer leaves her identity as girl. She is marked as a girl who no longer has a sight. The torture inflicted on her in jail by Colonel Joll breaks her eye forever. In this condition, she lives but does not exist. She no longer exists as a normal aboriginal girl in the community. Her father who is the old man among them is lost forever. Life in prison causes his physical death.

Besides, the boy whose grandfather is the dead old man is systematically considered as orphan. His grandfather is lost forever. In effect, since in the traditional community, to corroborate Molefi Kate Asante (2007, p. 142), it is the “community that elevates the individual”, the death of his grandfather prevents him from being elevated in the community. He is restricted to the colonial community with no ancestral torchbearer. Likewise, the mother of this boy from the fisherfolk loses her baby in the barrack. Life in prison brings her to lose her identity of mother. She bears the identity of motherless. Considering that in African tradition, as Ogunديpe-Leslie (1984, p. 501) puts it, “a childless woman is considered a monstrosity”, the loss of her baby sinks her into monstrous women in the eye of the community.

CONCLUSION

Through *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee intends to show racial discrepancy that still exists between Blacks and Whites. This novel focuses on colonialism and its effects on the indigenous people. In so doing, colonialism has blasphemed against the black race in South Africa. Westerners, in order to hierarchize the white race in the country, have undertaken

colonialism to denigrate black race. The South African novelist shows this in his novels at first through his portrayal of the blasphemy of black culture by western colonial acts. Then, he reinforces it with his depiction of colonial discourse that denigrates black race. From racial blasphemy, the novelist moves on to show that Blacks in South Africa keep on being marginalized owing to colonial apparatuses and cultural distortion.

J. M. Coetzee has achieved colonial acts that blaspheme against black people's culture in South Africa through their land dispossession and their dislocation by British transnational acts and imperial apparatuses. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, J. M. Coetzee portrays land dispossession through his representation of British Empire's Third Bureau, army, barracks and magistrate in South Africa. With these apparatuses, the British Empire dispossesses the peasantry of their lands and dislocates them in the mountain.

To show racial blasphemy through colonialism J. M. Coetzee depicts imperial power and prison that dehumanize the barbarians and contribute to their loss of identity. The novelist achieved this ideology by portraying the Empire who disgraces the nomads, the fisherfolk and the peasants as Barbarians in his novel entitled *Waiting for the Barbarians*. As results of this work, Coetzee has succeeded in showing racial blasphemy during colonization through colonial acts and cultural blasphemies. In this part, we have territorial dispossession and imperial settlement which bring about indigenous dislocation. In addition, colonial apparatuses have much contributed to the distortion of the indigenous people's culture and identity. Another important aspect which contributes to Africans blasphemy is the fact that they are taken as barbarians and put in jail. By these acts, they lost their identity at the profit of their colonizers. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* really features and deals with colonialism and racial blasphemy.

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Inter-textual