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## CULTURE AND POLITICS IN J M COETZEE'S *WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS*

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### ABSTRACT :

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines culture as, "the customs, belief, art, way of life and organization of particular country or group".<sup>1</sup>*

**KEY WORDS :** *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary , Cultural study .*

### INTRODUCTION

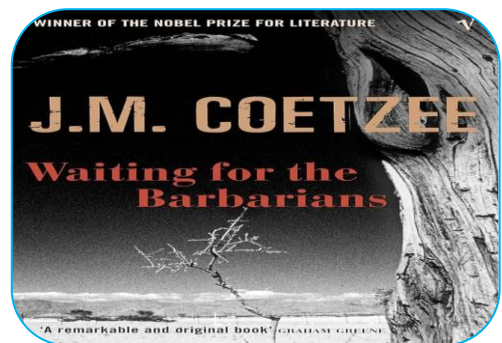
"Cultural study is a field of theoretically, politically and empirically engaged cultural analyses that was initially developed by British academics in late 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, and has been subsequently taken up and transformed by scholars from many disciplines around the world."<sup>2</sup>

The present paper critically analyses cultural and political aspects in the *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a famous novel by J M Coetzee.

Common literature idealizes apparent reality while ideal literature is an attempt of realizing the ideal. Keeping this in view, Coetzee's writing is Criticism of life under the condition fixed literary truth and literary beauty. As a socio-literary visionary, he visualizes the picture of classless society. He is a humanist in the term's true sense. This can be specifically experienced in text like *Waiting for the Barbarians*. His meditation on cultural disintegration is especially commendable; therefore the present research paper focuses on culture and politics as prominent elements of the novel.

*Waiting for the Barbarian* is a novel published in 1980s and it was included in the Penguins Great Books of the 20th century. It own James Tait Black Memorial Prize and Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize for fiction. It is a story of the natives called barbarians that are captured by Colonel Joll, the leader of Special Forces who wants to torture them and kill some of them. However, the Magistrates questions the legitimacy of imperialism and nurses a crippled and partly blinded girl who is a victim if the torture. The magistrate wants to prevent the further capture of the captives but he himself is tortured. Torturing the natives presents cultural of the whites whereas the Magistrate's approach to prevent torture presents humanism.

Colonel Joll is a symbol of brutality while the Magistrate is symbol of humanity. Both are the servants of the Empire. The colonel defends imperialism while the Magistrate supports barbarians. This is the cultural differences between them. Torture is the major theme of the novel. The Colonel thinks that the barbarians are preparing for mutiny, so he leads expedition in search of the barbarians and arrests a group of barbarians in chains. The Magistrate is against their arrest because he thinks that they are harmless human beings. Still the prisoner's are tortured. The Colonel says, "First, I get lies, you



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see- this is what happens-first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure then the truth."3

The novel also deals with politics. Politics is the major human activity. Irvin Howe remarks that, "Why should we suppose that it's a virtue in a novel such as *waiting for the Barbarians* that it not deal in politics? Of course, it deals in politics. What is Colonel Joll but the representation of one kind of politics and the Magistrate another."4

Thus the novel present cultural differences between the natives called barbarians and Colonel Joll, representative of imperialism.

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- 4) <http://www.nytimes.com> 25th Dec 2014.