

The Interpretation of Coeteez's Waiting for the Barbarians

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Abstract

Waiting for the Barbarians is an allegorical novel of the South African white novelist J. M.Coeteez, by describing the imaginary enemy of the Empire, the Barbarians, who attempt to attack the border towns, the colonists' atrocities are exposed, Hunting of natural creatures, torture of "barbarians", and destruction of the quiet life of border towns, however, due to the rebellion of the colonized, the colonists finally wait for the disillusion of the hegemonic dream. This paper analyzes the novel based on post-colonial theory, aims to reveal the atrocities of imperial colonial rule and the reasons for its failure.

Keywords

Waiting for the barbarians; violence, resistance.

1. Introduction

Waiting for the Barbarians describes a military operation that took place on the border of the Empire and the panic and riots that followed. The old chief executive of the border sent the girl back to her tribe because he sympathized with a captured alien girl. When he returned, he was regarded as an enemy by the military chief of the empire, and he was detained and tortured. A few months later, the imperial army fled after know that the barbarian was about to attack, the detained chief executive was released and continued to exercise his powers in the border town, they have been waiting for the arrival of the barbarians, but they have not waited. Through the allegorical writing of power, this novel criticizes the barbaric nature of Western civilization, and carries out a deep reflection on the ethnic and cultural issues in the process of human history, which shows the victory of justice and humanity. This paper further analyzes the violent acts of the empire and the various damages it has caused to the border towns; hopes that people can have a deep understanding and grasp of the empire colonial violent rule described in the novel.

2. Colonists'Atrocities Against Nature

The power relations of colonialism revealed in Waiting for the Barbarians exist in all fields and levels of society, colonists can never satisfy their desire, which causes the people to cannot form an equal and mutually beneficial dialogue relationship of mutual respect, mutual understanding, and harmonious development. Under the framework of colonial rule, in order to achieve equal exchanges between people, it is impossible for people to live in harmony with nature. As long as there is the idea of colonial rule, people in nature and colonies will never be able to escape the fate of being plundered and crushed.

In the eyes of the colonists, the people of the colonies are no different from the animals of nature, they are barbaric, primitive, inferior, ignorant and dirty, and they need to be domesticated by colonists to move toward civilization. Edward Waefie Said opposed Western orientalism, under the Western cognition violence, the relationship between the West and the East has been

distorted, in the eyes of West, the East is always in a position of surrender and subordination, and is the object of conquest. The atrocities and conquests of the colonists were first manifested in the kill of animals and the massive destruction of nature.

At the beginning of the novel, the Colonists brutally shot animals, colonel Joel, the executor of the imperial power, talked the experience of driving and hunting, there were thousands of deer, pigs and bears killed at the time, the bodies of animals can't be cleaned up, so they have to be rotted, and in contrast to this, "twenty years ago, antelopes and hares were so many, people had to patrol with the hounds at night to prevent these animals from licking young crops," and now the hunter must ride on horses for more than an hour to start hunting. The massive hunting of animals is not only a destruction of the natural environment, but also shows the cruelty and ruthlessness of the colonists, they pursue supreme power control and kill their opposites. In the small town under the jurisdiction of the old chief executive, when the early spring arrives, there will be a large group of people going to the hunt, and then come back with fruitful results: the bird is tied to the feet, one by one on the long pole, those living are put into the wooden cage. This shows that the atrocities of the colonists are the loss of humanity, the trampling of civilization, and the complete "barbarians."

Not only for animals, but the colonialists' arrogance is also manifested in the destruction of the natural environment, in the eyes of the colonists, except for the empire itself, everything else is wild and inferior, and should be under its transformation and control. In order to prevent the invasion of the "barbarians", the colonists set up protective lines and burned the shrubs on the banks of the river, and cause the soil to be wind-eroded and desertified. The town used to be an oasis, it is a rich and beautiful land by the lake, even in the winter, there is rich pastures, nowadays, the lake is changing, this is a simple and clear sign. The deliberate felling and hunting of the colonists will inevitably be punished by nature, this self-centered colonial mentality will inevitably lead to the ultimate destruction of the dream of the empire.

3. Tortures to the Colonized

According to Said's theory, orientalism is a set of rules that the western colonists imagined in favor of colonial rule, attempts to internalize into a colonial thinking in the minds of the colonists: namely the colonized were born inferior and backward, they should surrender to the colonists and accept the slavery and domestication of the colonists, if they do not follow their rules, they will be tortured.

In the torture room, the relationship between the torturer and the victim represents the relationship between the colonists and the colonized; the executor controls the discourse right, the tortured person is deprived of his right to speak under torture, they are forced to accept all kinds of unnecessary charges imposed by the empire and becomes the blank carrier for the empire to realize their colonial rule. A living body can produce just thinking only when it is intact, when its head is pinched, its throat is inserted into a pipe and a pint of salt water is poured into it, it coughs incessantly, it can't vomit and it is repeatedly whipped, it will soon forget everything and become blank. It can be seen that the body of the colonized person can be changed into a text that can be written at will, the empire of power imposes its own words on the other.

The post-colonial theory thinks that the colonists are "others of the colonial land" and are the constructed objects, because they have no power, no self-awareness, and no ability to think and rule. In the eyes of the colonists, the colonized can be arbitrarily trampled and abused like animals. In "Waiting for the Barbarians", in order to put a legal coat on its own atrocities, the empire launched a war against the "barbarians. The imperialist colonists, represented by Joel, tortured the local people; force them to say a series of crimes imagined by the colonists, the atrocities of the empire were clear and the bloody scene was creepy. The old man's body was

placed next to the boy to intimidate and poked into the boy's body with a knife and turned inside his body, eventually the boy was forced to admit that he and his family not only stolen, but also planned to launch an armed attack on the empire, for this reason, a batch of "barbarians" were arrested, tortured and beaten, resulting in death. One of the fathers and daughters, his father was killed, his daughter's ribs were cut off, and his eyes were blind. The atrocities of the empire prove that they use every means to conquer the colonial people in order to achieve the purpose of colonial rule. All this shows that the empire is a true "barbarian" under the cover of civilization, and all its atrocities have the fall of human nature, the inherent wildness, and the endless desire for conquest, which is the nature of its barbaric plunder.

Coetzee presented Colonel Joel's report on the death of prisoners and what the old chief executive had heard and witnessed in the prison to the reader in a grim tone, let the readers judge for themselves; when describing the corpse of prisoners, Coetzee presented the situation of prisoners in simple and clear language, rather than the imagination and the description with gorgeous rhetoric. One example is the description of the torture of the old chief executive. When describing the sentences, Coetzee did not describe how Joel, Medel or his staff executed the sentence, nor did he describe the prison chamber and the instruments of torture, instead, Coetzee took the old chief executive as the subject of the sentence, reflect the experience of the prisoner through his sensory and psychological changes.

4. Ruin of the Dream of Colonial Rule

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee describes the trauma brought to the colonial people by colonial rule, which shows us the barbaric behavior of the "civilized man", it does not only desecrates and harms civilization, but also reflects the colonial self-denial. Any construction based on imagination cannot withstand the test of history, and ultimately cannot escape the fate of failure. The "other" constructed by the colonists from a one-way perspective is a manifestation of western control desire and self-centeredness, and it is a naked hegemonic act. In the war with the "barbarians", the colonists felt the strong resistance from the colonial people; they did not retreat in the face of torture, they used the power of justice to defeat the colonists, the empire lost not only humanity and conscience, but also the ruin of the dream for building the whole empire.

The chief executive of the novel has not seen any barbaric acts of barbarians, but has witnessed many times the torture and murder of "civilized people" against unarmed people. What he sees is that "civilized people" plunder other people's property, give short measure and dominate the market. Empire destroyed the local ecological environment and the tranquility of the town, in this narrative; we can see that the boundaries between civilization and barbarism became blurred and eventually subverted. As the chief executive said, "It's all the evils made by the empire, the Empire does not allow people to live their own lives in a way that conforms to the times of the day, but rather creates big rise and fall to make people remember its existence, the Empire searches for its enemies everywhere, in fact, the enemy is the empire itself. The so-called barbarian threat to the Empire is constructed by the Empire.

We can't find any evidence that the barbarians attempted to attack the town, people speculated only through the empire's one-sided statement. A soldier told the chief executive why the pursuit of the barbarians failed, "we were trapped in the mountains and frozen, we were starving to death in the desert, why didn't anyone tell us what was going on? We were not beaten, they let us walk into the desert and disappear." From this we can see that the real situation is not that the "barbarians" defeated the imperial army, but the Empire itself defeated itself, they are defeated by hypocrisy, ignorance and arrogance and arrogance. As Said pointed out when he discussed the formation process of orientalism in the Western world in *Orientalism*, "authority is neither mysterious nor natural, it is artificially constituted, radiated,

disseminated, and persuasive, it has status, it establishes standards of interest and value". The Empire imposed its will on others according to its own values, this imperial authority based on fictional facts and distorted truth could not stand the test of facts and eventually failed.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee shows us a panorama of imperial hypocrisy, arrogance and self-centeredness through vivid language and profound description. Whether Colonel Joel's sunglasses on his nose or the fictional fact that "barbarians" attempted to attack the town, it is not difficult to see that the empire has always placed itself in a high position of gaze, the colonized people are the "others" constructed by the empire, and they are inferior, ignorant and barbarous. They need to be conquered and domesticated to break away from savagery and move towards civilization. But as the lie of the Empire was exposed, its colonial mentality was exposed. At the end of the novel, the empire abandoned its outpost, and most of the residents fled to the capital. The military operations ended with the defeat of the Empire. The "barbarians" that the empire waited for did not appear at last and what waited the Empire were the judgment of justice and the ruin of the dream of colonial rule.

5. Conclusion

Waiting for the Barbarians criticizes the barbaric nature of western civilization through the allegorical writing for power, and reflects deeply on the racial and cultural issues in the course of human history, it shows the victory of justice and humanity. Coetzee subverted the dualistic opposition between barbarism and civilization by revealing the crimes of hegemonic empires and calmly analyzing the causes of such crimes, his ultimate goal was to show the ideal empire he held in mind.

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