

# From novel to screenplay: Adapting Coetzee's "*Waiting for the Barbarians*"

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## Abstract

This research essay will undertake a comparative analysis of J.M. Coetzee's novel and screenplay versions of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. These are analyses of two texts in different media, which involves the intersection of literature and film. Although Coetzee's screenplay was not produced as an actual film, my approach will attempt to read the script as a hypothetical film and compare it with the novel.

The research essay will locate itself theoretically in adaptation studies, which looks at the complex intertextual and intermedial relationships between literature and cinema. Most adaptations of novels tend to be written by a writer different to the author of the novel itself. Because Coetzee has created his own adaptation, we can possibly read the screenplay as an interpretation of his own novel.

## Introduction

J.M. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is situated in an unspecified setting; a frontier town fairly distant from the capital.

The political climate in South Africa and the strong censorship laws influenced the kind of settings writers could use. David Attwell disputes the assumption that Coetzee's use of an 'unspecified' setting was in response to a fear of censorship. He suggests that because Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) was "under embargo at the airport in Johannesburg", it should not be assumed that the "displaced milieu of *Barbarians* was a tactic to evade censors." (Attwell 108) Attwell believes that censorship did not dominate Coetzee's rationale to place the book in an unspecified setting, specifically because when Coetzee started writing the novel, its intended setting was Cape Town. Attwell argues that the familiarity of this setting may have already put the novel in plain sight of the censors, therefore opposing the notion that censorship influenced the setting.

In 1976, the Soweto Uprising took place and a number of black students were killed by security police. In 1977 Stephen Bantu Biko was imprisoned, tortured, and subsequently died while he was being transported to Pretoria prison. The death of Biko is believed to have inspired parts of *Waiting for the Barbarians* that relate to torture and state brutality. Through Biko's death it would appear that Coetzee had been able to identify 'torture' as a major theme.

In the novel Colonel Joll and the soldiers are the antagonists that inflict torture on the barbarian girl, the old man with the young boy and later also the magistrate. Further incidents of torture may have occurred, based on the number of prisoners that were taken, including the barbarian girl. However, in both the screenplay and the novel, very little is said about any other cases of torture.

There was pressure on South African novelists to situate their novels in the discourse of local politics. Coetzee was put under the same kind of pressure when Nadine Gordimer reviewed his novel *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983). Gordimer suggests that Coetzee's characters are not prominent in trying to make history, but rather that they immerse themselves quietly in the story.

Perhaps these pressures were a result of the political turmoil in South Africa. It is hard for a writer to function artistically if that writer is pressurized by the expectations of a politicised society. Coetzee tries to break the rules here. In making his protagonist, the magistrate, an unnamed character, and placing the novel in an unknown setting, Coetzee is able to engage a cosmopolitan readership while still remaining relevant to the South African struggle. Whether done consciously or not, the strategy probably helps *Waiting for the Barbarians* to avoid censorship.

Coetzee is renowned for his novels, essays and memoirs. Film is not exactly a field in which he has made a significant mark. However, cinema has been a strong interest of his. In a collaborative paper by Dovey & Dovey (2010), they quote Michael Fitzgerald on Coetzee: "Cinema has had an immense impact on him. He knows cinema very, very well, respects it, and is full of admiration for it." (57) Coetzee was fascinated with film as a genre. However, his prowess as a screenplay writer was still in its infancy. This is evident in some aspects of the screenplay. However, on the whole, the screenplay is a fair attempt.

The screenplay follows the plot of the novel closely. However, there are some changes that shed some light on the strategy Coetzee uses to make this adaptation effective as a film. This paper will make a comparative analysis of the two texts. The core of this analysis will be rooted in the discourse of adaptation theory.

## Chapter 1: Theories of Adaptation

To analyse how Coetzee adapts the novel into a screenplay, one has to take into consideration how adaptation theory can be used to interrogate these two genres.

I will examine the theoretical perspectives of adaptation theorists Brian McFarlane, Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam. They have written critically on the complex relationship between the novel and film. Because *Waiting for the Barbarians* was never produced as an actual film, it needs to be understood as a hypothetical film.

Adaptation theorists are critical of the notion that film adaptations should be judged on how closely they mimic the novel. Brian McFarlane's critique is directed specifically at those in the field of literature, because literature has often been perceived as a superior form of art. He says, "The attitude of literary people to film adaptations of literary works is almost always to the detriment of the film, only grudgingly conceding what film may have achieved" (McFarlane 5). Film as a genre needs to be considered as a work that is autonomous from the source. There is a habitual tendency to rate a film adaptation on the grounds of its ability to closely resemble the source novel. This is known by adaptation theorists as "fidelity criticism". Linda Hutcheon says that fidelity criticism can be understood as "thwarted expectations on the part of a fan desiring fidelity to a beloved adapted text or on the part of someone teaching literature and therefore needing proximity to the text and perhaps some entertainment value to do so". (Hutcheon 3)

McFarlane humorously disputes this notion that fidelity is a valid criterion on which to judge a film. He says, "Fidelity is obviously very desirable in marriage; but in film adaptations I suspect playing around is more effective." ( 6) McFarlane promotes the idea of moving away from the original text. Therefore, trying to be true to the original text does not necessarily mean that the film adaptation will be a success. Film has different challenges it has to overcome in order to achieve its aim of recouping the extensive costs involved in making the film, while still maintaining the essence of the novel.

In the screenplay Coetzee adds a comical scene where the magistrate has to preside over a dispute between two farmers. This is one of the few scenes where he takes complete liberties against the notion of fidelity. The clerk of the court brings the case to the magistrate's attention:

**Clerk:** *This one (indicates Farmer One) says that one (indicates Farmer Two) has stolen a pig from him. That one (indicates Farmer Two) says that the pig keeps breaking into his garden and now he is not going to give it back till he is paid compensation. (J.M.Coetzee 111)*

The scene is so random that it almost seems as if Coetzee is making a desperate attempt to show that he can, in accordance with Brian McFarlane, 'play around' with the primary text. The attempt does not do enough to give the screenplay autonomy. However, Coetzee does achieve the end of giving the audience a snapshot of what kind of grievances the magistrate had to deal with in this capacity. This kind of dispute demonstrates that the town was peaceful and that the magistrate had a rather docile existence. There was no clear threat from any barbarians, and the relaxed atmosphere in the court room is evidence that there was no paranoia amongst the people in the town. This entirely random scene is therefore able to give the audience a sense of how peaceful the town was before Joll had arrived.

Furthermore, film has to compress in a very short time, what the novel gets to do through many hours of reading. Film has at its disposal the visual elements of setting, camera angles and lighting, which it must use to amalgamate much of the intricate details and descriptive language that are the tools of the novel.

Coetzee shows a great understanding of this need to adapt when he writes the screenplay adaptation of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. McFarlane says, "It is difficult for those of us trained in literature to accept: to approach the narrative mode which expends itself in, say, two hours and find in its complexity and subtlety in their own way as striking as those a novel may develop over several hundred pages and seven or eight hours of reading time." (169) Based

on this complexity it is evident that a different approach is needed when doing a comparative study of the two genres or attempting to adapt one into the other. Adaptation theory therefore attempts to provide a platform to accommodate an understanding or study of these two genres. Coetzee's choice to start his screenplay adaptation rather with a prelude to the first meeting between the Magistrate and Jol is evidence of his own understanding of the complexities involved in bringing a story to life on the screen, as opposed to how he starts the novel.

Even though McFarlane promotes 'playing around' in film, fidelity to the primary text cannot be completely discarded. There should be a balance that is reached where fidelity and 'playing around' works together to achieve the objectives of the film – which should be to demonstrate the purpose of making an artwork of substance and for it to be a financial success, especially because of the amount of investment that goes into cinematic productions. McFarlane says that film makers should try to be bold when producing adaptations, but also not forgetting to maintain a connection to the original text. (9)

Coetzee, as the author of the novel is perhaps reluctant to alter his own novel substantially. He is also often loyal even to the narrative he uses in the novel. The perception that film adaptations of novels are better if they closely resemble the original text or novel, is a point that is disputed by adaptation theorists. To what extent does Coetzee then play around with his own novel when he presents his screenplay adaptation? I will explore how Coetzee uses camera angles, changes or maintains narrative voice, adds and deletes scenes to make his adaptation a more viable screenplay adaptation.

Having read William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, I recall waiting with great anticipation to see the 1990 film adaptation. After watching it I left the cinema feeling incomplete because the film did not meet my expectations. We all may have this expectation of what we hope will make the adaptation a satisfactory one, at least in our opinion. This expectation means that within ourselves we already have a 'theory of adaptation'. As Linda Hutcheon says, "Anyone who has ever experienced an adaptation has a theory of adaptation." (XI)

However, the theory of adaptation has become much more complex than merely satisfying the expectations of fidelity to the primary text.

Adaptation theory can be used to interrogate the 'fidelity' of the screenplay to the novel, and to assess whether the screenplay is an autonomous text. Linda Hutcheon suggests that each genre has at its disposal the ability to achieve some things better than the other. (Hutcheon 24) It is therefore unreasonable to expect a film adaptation to be completely 'faithful' to the novel. This would be impossible because of the time constraints placed on film adaptations. Added to this, cinematic productions have to use different tools to those available to novel writers. Furthermore, film producers have to consider financial obligations because great investments are put into film productions.

Robert Stam tries to move away from what he terms the "subjective question of the quality of adaptations" which he does not find particularly interesting. He says that he is more interested in "the theoretical status of adaptation" and the "analytical interest of adaptations". (Stam 4) Like many of his contemporaries, Stam is of the opinion that a film adaptation should be evaluated by what it achieves as an autonomous genre and not against its ability to be faithful to the novel. However, he does make it clear that he will not "correct erroneous evaluations of specific adaptations, but [he wishes] to deconstruct the unstated doxa which subtly construct the subaltern status of adaptation (and the filmic image) vis-à-vis novels (and the literary world), and then to point to alternative perspectives." (Stam 4) He suggests that film adaptations could be seen as part of an "evolutionary process", whereby 'mutations' actually help the primary text to survive. He challenges the fact that adaptations are perceived to be parasitical on the novel. Stam proposes that filmic adaptations "adapt to changing environments and changing tastes, as well as to a medium, with its distinct industrial demands, commercial pressures, censorship taboos, and aesthetic norms." (Stam 4) Because the film adaptation is able to gain relevance in its time, the novel will then continue to live through the 'hybrid' which the adaptation becomes.

Stam looks at eight reasons why cinema is viewed with hostility:

1. There is the notion that the older the arts are the better arts. (4)
2. There is the perception that cinema is in direct competition with novels- known as Iconophobia.
3. Based on the Bible, specifically the second commandment, there is the forbidding of worshipping idols and this has led to a subliminal bias against visual images.
4. The Bible and other 'religions of the book' beliefs are manifested in words, thus logophilia gives novels preference over films.
5. "Unlike film, literature is seen as channelled on a higher, more cerebral, trans-sensual and out of body plane." (6)
6. "Myth of facility" is the misconception that films are easy to make and by nature pleasurable.
7. Class prejudice invokes the idea that novels are of a higher art form. Adaptations are "dumbed down" versions of the novel.
8. "A final source of hostility to adaptation is the charge of parasitism - they burrow into the body of the source text and steal its vitality." (7)

Stam's assessment of the possible hostilities against film adaptations tends to lean towards the notion that film is viewed as a less prestigious genre, while the novel generally suffers after it has been adapted into a film. However, Stam argues that if fidelity is what is needed to do justice to the novel then this justice is impossible to reach. He argues, "Complete originality is neither possible nor even desirable. And if 'originality' in literature is downplayed, then often, the 'offense' in 'betraying' that originality, for example through an 'unfaithful' adaptation, is that much less grave." (10) He calls for a new way of thinking about "the literary as an unstable open-ended configuration" (10). The field of literature has to be open to change and this will give the newer genres a chance to supplement the older genres.

In what Stam terms 'reception theory' he says that people in different fields of study had started to question the hierarchical state in



the field of literature that gives greater status to certain genres and less to others, of which film adaptations form part of the lesser. Stam says, "For Giles Deleuze cinema is itself a philosophical instrument, a generator of concepts which renders thought in audiovisual terms, not in language but in blocks of movement. In the cinema, thought-in-movement meets the image-in movement." (10) Stam makes a call for film to be looked at as an independent art-form that is able to deliver a work of art that can only find true value if it is understood autonomously from the primary text.

It is clear that all the adaptation theorists we will be looking at are calling for an alternative way to perceive adaptations.

## Chapter 2: The screenplay, an alternative beginning?

In this analysis of the relationship between the novel and the screenplay of *Waiting for the Barbarians* it is important to look at the two texts' respective beginnings.

In the screenplay, Coetzee makes a distinct effort to introduce the audience to the character of the protagonist, the Magistrate, through a series of images. Very little emphasis is initially placed on the antagonist Colonel Joll. Coetzee's acknowledgement of the different strategies needed in film, as opposed to writing a novel, is evident when he starts with a visual description of the magistrate's study. In the novel he decides to focus rather on the physical attributes of Joll, seen through the eyes of the Magistrate. So why does Coetzee decide to start the screenplay differently? The screenplay starts:

*A spacious room furnished in rather dark, ornate style. On one wall a pair of heavy damask hangings, purple, with gold borders in a style suggesting China. On another wall, antelope horns (hunting trophies) and below them framed parchment maps. No pictures. In the near corner of the room narrow staircases leading down (to the entrance and the kitchen) and up (to the flat roof). A fireplace. The room dominated by a large desk. Over the desk, suspended from the ceiling, a bronze oil-lamp, oriental style. (J.M.Coetzee 97)*

The manner in which the study is being described in the screenplay suggests that there is a camera panning across the room showing various ornaments, entrances to rooms and features which could possibly be expected to have some significance later in the film. Even though the description of the study in the screenplay mimics the kind of descriptive writing usually found in a novel, the written narrative in the screenplay needs to be understood in terms of it being a screenplay and not a novel. In other words, what is written will need to be expressed audio-visually. Furthermore, as a reminder, even though a

film version of the novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* has to date never been produced, the screenplay has to be viewed as virtual film.

If we understand this movement from written narrative to visualisation, it becomes clear that different techniques are needed to make the screenplay effective. In film the written narrative is replaced and is illustrated through a series of visual signs. Through these visual signs we learn things about the character of the magistrate. So what do we learn about the magistrate as the camera is panning across the room? The magistrate loves collecting things that are old but are of value. The room is furnished in a “rather dark, ornate style” and there are “heavy damask hangings, purple, with gold borders.” By visualising these objects we can assume that the magistrate enjoyed elaborate things. He probably manages to either buy or barter to receive these things from travelling merchants. The screenplay proceeds, “The room is dominated by a large desk,” and this is important because by using the word “dominated”, it makes the desk the most prominent object in the room. If you add the ‘domination’ of the desk to the fact that he has old maps in the room, one can assume that this part of the screenplay tries to portray the magistrate as an educated man who has an expensive taste for exotic ornaments. These are possibly status symbols because until the arrival of Joll, the magistrate is the most powerful man in the town.

These images at the start of the screenplay tell us about the character of the magistrate which is not presented at the beginning of the novel. Stam's notion of ‘betraying’ the original text to the benefit of the adaptation shows the power that film has, to incorporate, in a very short period, what the novel does over many hours of reading. (10) The start of the screenplay is a deviation from the novel and is a good example of how fidelity criticism is inadequate in assessing this adaptation. In the visual description of the magistrate's study, besides learning that he has elaborate taste, we see that he loves hunting (indicated by the hunting trophies) and that he is a learned man. Coetzee thus manages to compress details of the magistrate's character in a concise manner. However, it does require a degree of memory recall for the audience who is not familiar with the novel. Because they don't know what to expect next, this would be less

effective as a tool for introducing the character of the magistrate if the audience was not familiar with the primary text. The opening of the screenplay is prompted by visual directives without voice or other audio narratives being specified. The beginning is aimed at enhancing our understanding of the setting in which the Magistrate finds himself. By starting the screenplay in a different way and point in time, the writer is able to transcend the conventional order of time and space as they originally take place in the novel.

The opening of the screenplay also gives us a description of the magistrate's physical appearance.

*He is a man in his middle years, with close-cropped greying hair. He is dressed in white: loose trousers, a smock open at the neck and loosely gathered at the waist in Russian fashion. On his feet, sandals.*

*From outside, a bugle call. He continues to write unhurriedly. Then he lays his pen aside, rises, crosses the room, and peers out of one of the windows.*

*From second-floor height, a view of the desert. The cloud of dust approaches the settlement at a steady pace.*

*The figures of men on horseback are intermittently visible.*

*Without haste the magistrate dons a jacket of vaguely military cut, which clashes with his linen outfit and sandals. He makes his way down the stairs. (J.M.Coetzee 98)*

The screenplay description of the magistrate consists of a very detailed visual element. We are shown his age, the style of his hair and his dress code. These elements are not very clearly illustrated in the novel. This is largely due to the narrative strategy Coetzee uses in the novel. In making the magistrate his first person narrator, the magistrate's own characteristics are largely unveiled introspectively. When the magistrate has his first dream in the novel he says, "I am aware of my bulk, my shadowiness, therefore I am not surprised that the children melt away on either side as I approach." (J.M.Coetzee 10) The reader is left to interpret that the magistrate is a fairly large man that looms like a 'shadow' over people. The fact that he looms over children, who

would be small in comparative size, may be a point of contestation to this assumption, but the point is more importantly, that the screenplay illustrates that being able to witness his physical features visually eliminates the suggestive self-interpretive style of the first person narrative found in the novel.

The relaxed disposition of the magistrate, and perhaps also the atmosphere in the town, becomes apparent when the 'bugle calls'. The magistrate is not rushed at all. He takes his time to complete writing even after a bugle call, which usually was a signal for an emergency that required his immediate attention. The writer says 'without haste' he puts on his military jacket 'which clashes with his linen outfit and sandals'. These gestures if brought to life on the screen will illustrate how peaceful and uneventful the town was. The novel cannot do the same as a result of the restrictive nature of the written text in comparison with the impactful influence of the visual.

The magistrate's dress-code also suggests that there was an air of informality about his character, and as its figure-head, also the town. The visual of the cloud of dust approaching is taken from a particular vantage point. What purpose could there be for showing this visual of Joll's approach from this particular angle? The long shot of his party approaching the settlement has two basic purposes here. Firstly, it gives the viewer a better grasp of the setting. In just this one shot, clarity is given with regards to the type of weather conditions that the people in the town generally experience, and the landscape they are surrounded by. Secondly, because the screenplay does not have a first person narrator, it uses this long shot as a replacement for the magistrate's eyes. In this case it is likely that the view is that of the magistrate himself looking out. The fact that it is an elevated view demonstrates his power because he looks down on the oncoming party. It is also significant because at that particular moment, as I have mentioned, the magistrate is the most powerful man in the town.

In contrast, at the beginning of the novel, Coetzee introduces the reader immediately to the protagonist and antagonist. The magistrate, as the protagonist and first person narrator, describes the antagonist Colonel Joll. He says, "I have never seen anything like it: two little discs of glass suspended in front of his eyes in loops of wire. Is he

blind? I could understand if he wanted to hide blind eyes. But he is not blind." The magistrate narrates in great detail what he sees, and this is an advantage the novel has over film. Film has to deal with the constraints of time. The novel as a genre has the luxury of time and many pages to unravel characters, plot and setting.

Coetzee manages, in those few opening lines, to show that there will be a difference between the two characters. The magistrate has never seen sunglasses before. This already, by virtue of the magistrate's ignorance or the metaphoric implication of "blindness", suggests that they will have a different understanding of the modern world, which Joll represents. Because the writer uses the magistrate as the narrator, the reader is inclined to sympathise with him, and perhaps assume that the magistrate will be a central character, possibly a hero. The fact that the story is told from the perspective of the magistrate allows him to be accepted easily as a protagonist.

Eyes and the ability to see is a strong theme that comes across in the novel. This is evident from the first sentence when the magistrate talks about Joll's sunglasses. Later in the novel the magistrate assumes that the barbarian girl is blind, while she asserts that she is not. This presents a debate surrounding what is 'seen' and what is not.

Robert Pippin says, "We meet him [Joll] immediately as a man who insists on seeing but in effect rejects being seen as a like-minded other. He hides his eyes, whereas the young barbarian girl is almost blind; she can see but can barely see..." (Pippin 35) In response to the magistrate's inquiry into whether or not she is blind, the barbarian girl insists that she is not blind and that she can see. On the other hand, Joll is blind to the atrocities of the Empire. He does not see what effect colonial pursuits are having on the native people. He sees an enemy where there is none. The barbarian girl has the least effective sight, yet she sees the truth of the empire clearer than any other character.

So what is the importance of the eyes in the novel and how does the screenplay manage to convey the importance of this theme? In the novel Joll is unwilling or perhaps incapable of seeing the faults of the empire, the system which he is servant to. The magistrate himself initially struggles to see this. His inability to see whether or not the barbarian girl was blind is symbolic of his gradual eye-opening experience.

The barbarian girl can barely see as a result her torture inflicted by Joll, but when she is questioned by the magistrate about her sight she is adamant that she “can see”. Both the novel and the screenplay follow the development of the magistrate very closely, which ultimately brings him to the point where he defies the empire and the system it represents.

The Magistrate is fascinated by these glasses that cover Joll's eyes. Joll covers his eyes, and by doing so, removes himself from the commonality of the frontier town, clearly differentiating himself from every other character in the novel. The screenplay remains faithful to this part of the novel, not deviating from the manner in which this idea is expressed. However, the screenplay uses a different technique. It uses scene selection to show Joll's unwillingness to ‘see’.

**Scene 110: Ext. Town Square.Day**

*The Magistrate is marched across the square to a large tree. A small crowd begins to gather. Small boys One and Two begin to scramble up the tree. Guard One tosses the end of a rope up. One of the children catches it, loops it over a branch, drops the end. Guard makes a noose.*

**Scene 111: Ext. Town Square.Day**

*Exterior view of the second floor of Administration Building. A half-open window, At which Joll is obscurely visible, watching.*

**Scene 112: Ext. Town Square.Day**

*Mandel: Anything you want to say?*

**Scene 113: Ext. Town Square.Day**

*Window of second floor of Administration Building. Joll watching as before.*

**Scene 114: Ext. Town Square.Day**

*(A description of the Magistrate's circumstances before his mock execution)*

**Scene 115: Ext. Town Square. Day**

*At the large tree. After a while the Magistrate is lowered to the ground. The bag is removed. His face is purple, he is only half conscious.*

**Scene 116: Ext. Town Square. Day**

*Exterior of the second floor of Administration Building. Joll has vanished from the window. (J.M.Coetzee 185)*

The importance of what Joll sees, does not see, and refuses to see, is illustrated differently in the screenplay. The novel does not include the presence of Joll at the magistrate's mock execution. Coetzee understands the difficulty in trying to transplant meaning from the novel to film. Stam's 'reception theory' sheds some light on how Coetzee tries to use 'blocks of movement' to show what Joll actually sees and hides. The novel is also able to use the description of the sunglasses effectively. Therefore, the film has to use the faculties available to the genre to affect its own meaning.

Scene 110 describes how the magistrate is being taken towards the tree for what would become his mock execution. All the shots here take place in the town square. This indicates that all the shots were taken from the same vantage point because Coetzee does not indicate any camera angles. However, on three occasions the shot quickly moves from the magistrate's ordeal and we see a shot of the second floor window. Just after the magistrate is taken to the tree there is a shot of Joll standing 'obscurely visible' but he is 'watching'. Mandel becomes the antagonistic voice of Joll. This is evident when he asks the magistrate if he has anything to say, then the camera immediately shifts to Joll watching from the window. Once the magistrate is lowered to the ground there is another shot of the window, only this time Joll has disappeared. Coetzee uses these 'blocks of movement' to convey what Joll sees, and what he refuses to see. At the end of both the screenplay and the novel Joll is seen for the first time without his sunglasses after the search for the barbarians had left the town in ruins. Joll for the first time manages to see the effects of his duty in service to the Empire. Both the novel and the screenplay use the absence of the sunglasses to show that Joll finally sees the reality and consequences of his actions.



## Conclusion

The screenplay adaptation of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is largely 'faithful' to the novel. However, Coetzee shows a sound knowledge of what is required to write a successful film adaptation. Premised upon McFarlane's notion of 'playing around' he is able to add some additional scenes and is often brave enough to alter his own. Surely, if Coetzee had written a screenplay for another author's novel, he may have been inclined to 'play around' a bit more with the novel.

The contrasting beginning of the screenplay, as opposed to the novel demonstrates Coetzee's ability to cinematically visualise what he intends to bring across differently in the film. He also demonstrates this ability with his sparse, yet important, use of camera angles and shot transitions. Nonetheless, this rarity gives the cinematographer room to express his artistic ability more freely.

With the constraints of time placed on the screenplay Coetzee has to develop the characters differently from the novel. In the screenplay he stipulates clearly how the magistrate, Joll and the other soldiers are dressed and this eliminates an extension of the verbal narrative and thus saving time to focus on encapsulating other parts of the novel he wants to include in the screenplay.

The character of the barbarian girl is given more agency. Once again this is a strategy used to limit time spent on unravelling characterization. However, it more importantly adds a dimension to the screenplay that is not evident in the novel. It adds a strong female voice which has become essential in contemporary cinematic productions. Coetzee understands the demands placed on films to be a financial success and the inclusion of the stronger female voice will go a long way to achieve this end.

Coetzee is able to use adaptation theory practises to compress most of the aesthetic meaning of the novel and develop it into a functional film adaptation. With the prospect of *Waiting for the Barbarians* finally going into production, the opportunity will finally be there to test our own ability to do an analytical comparison between the actual film and novel.

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