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**The empire speaks out: The discourse of the body in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians***

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**Abstract**

J.M. Coetzee has been commonly regarded as an important postcolonial writer, the success of whom brought him not only the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003 but also a wide international recognition and high reputation. The problematic of the 1980 novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, is also postcolonial: it deals with the Empire (the centre) vs. the Barbarians (the periphery), civilization vs. wilderness, the One vs. the Other, authoritarianism, violence, evil, repression, torture, to name just a handful of issues at stake. Yet, what seems to be particularly attention-grabbing in the novel is the presentation of the body as a text; thus, it will not be a mistake to compare the process of reading of the (tortured) body to the process of reading of the text that, in turn, leads to the process of uncovering its past, constructing, or reconstructing, its own history and its very own version of the truth.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to disclose the discourse of the body, as stimulated by the Empire (imagined or real), and presented in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980, henceforth abbreviated to *WB*), where the body is treated as a text, the site of both the revelation of truth and an evidence of "truth procedures," thus explaining and constructing the (tragic) past.

**Key words:** *postcolonial literature, discourse, body, torture, pain*