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## **The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse: Waiting for the Barbarians in the Gaze of the Other**

In this paper J. M. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* is seen as fundamentally disrupting the binary logic that underpins colonial discourse. The binary constructs an image of the civilized, rational and good, and the primitive, irrational and evil on the opposite sides of a fixed border. In this novel, as well as in colonial reality, the binary dissolves into ambivalence, overlap and often complete inversion of the two opposed constructed identities. This paper analyses the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* identifying as the most important themes – the ambivalence and inversion of colonial identity, which are seen as a reflex of the fear of the indigenous other. The analysis focuses on the motifs of vision and surveillance in the novel, and Lacan's psychoanalytic notions of the gaze and the scopic drive. It is observed that these concepts figure prominently in the narrative by establishing ambivalent psychological relationships of power between the main characters, discovering ambivalence within the characters and the inversion of their constructed colonial identities.

*Key words:*

colonial identity,  
othering, colonial  
gaze, male gaze, fear,  
ambivalence

*'And if thou gaze long enough into an abyss,  
the abyss will also gaze into thee'.*

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Colonial ideology rests on the clear boundary separating the Empire and wilderness, the civilized and uncivilized space. In this worldview the rule of reason and civility stretches until the farthest outpost of the Empire, where from the watch-towers guardians of reason wage their constant fight of separating the fragile realm of civilization from its barbaric other. The binary logic of imperialism is crucial for the establishment of the relation of dominance, accommodating "such fundamental binary impulses within imperialism as the impulse to exploit and the impulse to civilize" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 24). In one of the most influential works of postcolonial theory, *Orientalism*, Said showed how systematic discursive crea-

tion of the homogeneous image of the racially inferior Orient as the European “absolute other” has been instrumental for the legitimization of the imperial conquest and for the constitution of the superiority and authority of the West. “The nexus of power and knowledge created the “Oriental” and in a sense obliterated him as a human being.” (Said 2006, 27). Gayatri Spivak introduces the term “othering” to account for the process by which imperial discourse produces its subject others. This is a dialectical process, because “the colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 171). The process of othering as the construction of the culturally and racially inferior subjects, as Ania Loomba states, is instructed by what Abdul JanMohamed termed the ‘Manichean allegory’ which generates a binary opposition between races (Loomba 1998, 105). Furthermore, the power/knowledge that fixes the identities of the two opposed entities feeds on stereotypical images of the other, for it is on the *image* of the dark barbarian other that the Eurocentric cultures have constructed their own fragile sense of civilization and identity (Hamadeh 2005). In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha elaborates the important role of stereotype as the primary point of identification of the colonizer and colonized. He further locates stereotypes within such regimes as scopic (related to the drive to look and to be seen), fetishistic and imaginary. Largely informed by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Bhabha focuses on the ambivalence as central to stereotype: “In the objectification of the scopic drive there is always the threatened return of the look; in the identification of the imaginary relations there is always the alienating other (or mirror) which crucially returns the image to the subject, and in that form of substitution and fixation that is fetishism there is always the trace of loss, absence” (Bhabha 1994, 81). The ambivalent effect of stereotype is that instead of securing the binary order of subjection it proliferates fantasmatic images that terrorize the colonizer. The binary more often than not shows ambivalence, overlap and complete inversion of the constructed identities. The civilized often absorbs all the barbarian demonic qualities. Thus the Manichean ethos erodes into a “Manichean delirium” invested with brutal violence and torture, displaying the shifting boundaries between barbarism and civility.

Ambivalence is a key concept for Bhabha, which he adapted from psychoanalysis into postcolonial theory to denote a complex fluctuation of attraction and repulsion that marks the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Robert Young explains that one of Bhabha’s major contributions to the field was to supplement Said’s Foucauldian analysis of the discursive creation of the Orient, in that he develops the implications of Said’s idea that there is a distinction between a ‘manifest’ and a ‘latent’ Orientalism, “the conscious body of scientific knowledge about the Orient” and “the unconscious positivity of fantasmatic desires” (Young 1995, 153). In Bhabha’s psychoanalytic interpretation the two aspects of Orientalism, and by extension, of any colonial discourse, are functionally inseparable, as colonial discourse operates both as “an instrumental construction of knowledge but also according to ambivalent protocols of fantasy and desire” (Young 1995, 153). Ambivalence at the heart of colonial discourse unsettles the discursive opposition between the colonizer and the colonized and disrupts the assumptions of colonial domination. Therefore, a major paradox of the colonial relationship is that it “gen-

erates the seed of its own destruction” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 13) and a controversial implication of Bhabha’s theory is that colonialism will inevitably be disrupted even without any resistance or rebellion of the colonized.

In postcolonial discourse, Lacan’s psychoanalytic notion of the gaze has been crucial for the dialectical process of identification between the colonizer and the colonized. Following Lacan, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin state that “the other is crucial to the subject because the subject exists in its gaze” (1998, 170). However, the gaze does not solely emanate from the subject landing on and constituting the object. Rather, it is a relationship between the viewer and the viewed and, as Lacan put it, “we are not primarily conscious subjects viewing the world, but rather, we are always-already ‘beings that are looked at’” (as cited in Homer 2005, 124), or in Žižek’s formulation: “When I look at an object, the object is always already gazing at me, and from a point at which I cannot see it” (as cited in Homer 2005, 125). The act of being-looked-at Sartre calls the “alienation of myself” involving the “alienation of the world which I organize”. He furthers: “Being seen constitutes me as a defenseless being and in so far as I am the object of values ... I am enslaved” (Sartre 1956, 267). In the colonial context the gaze has been understood as a state of anxiety and displacement that the colonizer experiences once he realizes that the object of his colonial gaze is gazing back at him, objectifying him and stripping him of his fixed identity.

This paper analyses John Maxwell Coetzee’s second CNA<sup>1</sup> prize winning novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which has been acknowledged as “a novel about a man of conscience seeking to disentangle himself from, and oppose an imperial regime” (Head 2009, 48). The novel has also been considered as an anti-imperialist allegory of the oppressor and the oppressed, which “could be read both as the indictment of the atrocities that were keeping apartheid in place at the time of its publication and as a universally relevant, time-and-place-transcending narrative of human suffering and moral choice” (Attridge 2004, 42). The novel is set in undetermined time in an unspecified frontier settlement with a nameless aging magistrate of the settlement as the main protagonist and the narrator, posing the question of torture. This paper examines the ambivalence of colonial identities as allegorically presented in the novel in its main characters, the Magistrate, Colonel Joll, and the barbarian girl. The ambivalence is presumed to be directly related to the fear of the indigenous other and the terror of colonial imagination fuelled by the stereotypical images of the other. Further, the motif of vision and, by extension, gaze, the scopic drive and surveillance are seen to pervade the narrative, structuring the relationships between the characters (and the Empire) and juxtaposing the values they represent. The pervasiveness of the gaze is presumed to have the main function of revealing the deep ambivalences within the characters and the inversion of the constructed colonial identities.

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<sup>1</sup> Central News Agency Literary Award, a major literary award in South Africa until 1996. The award recognized literary works in both the English language and Afrikaans. Coetzee’s first novel to receive this prize was *In the Heart of the Country* in 1997.

The novel's central character, Magistrate, lives a peaceful life until the arrival of the Empire's special forces called the Third Bureau, and the declaration of the state of emergency due to reports from the capital that the nomadic tribes are preparing to attack. The Third Bureau led by sinister Colonel Joll launches an expedition into the barbarian territory beyond the border, captures and brings back a group of indigenous people. They submit the prisoners to brutal torture aimed at receiving the desired 'truth', the confirmation of the barbarian impending campaign. After the forces leave for the capital to prepare a larger military expedition, the Magistrate begins an enigmatically intimate relationship with one of the torture victims, a barbarian girl who has been blinded and maimed by her torturers, lingering in the settlement unable to leave.

The frontier settlement is a walled colonial town, the farthest outpost of the Empire, surrounded by a valley in which, beyond the eye's sight, dwell the nomadic barbarians, the threat to the stability of the Empire. It could be argued that in much the same way as the gaze is seen to structure the relationships between the characters, a closely related notion of surveillance structures the spatial organization of the novel. Surveillance is an important strategy in the practical and discursive constitution of the imperial dominance. It is suggestive of the knowledge and power over colonial space, securing stability. A viewer with an elevated vantage point has the power to understand and objectify what he sees, thus "for the viewer sight confers power; for the observed visibility is powerlessness" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 226). However, such stability is a contradiction in its own terms, for the imperial gaze is always-already reversed. As Bhabha put it, "the displacing gaze of the disciplined where the observer becomes observed and partial rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from its essence" (Bhabha 1994, 89)

## The barbarian within

Ann Laura Stoler has presented in *Race and Education of Desire* an articulation of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* in the context of postcolonial theory. She argues that "if Foucault has led us to the power of discourse, it was Freud that has, albeit indirectly, turned us towards the power of fantasy, to imagined terror, to perceived assaults on the European self that made up the anxious world in which European colonials lived" (Stoler 1995, 169). For both Foucault and Freud the construction of the "enemy within" was constitutive for the affirmation of the bourgeois self and, placed within a broader perspective of postcolonial critique, for the conferral of European status, highlighting the issues of racism in a clearer perspective. Stoler shows that Foucauldian and Freudian models, despite the reversed starting assumptions (as to sexual desire being the cause or effect), display a surprising convergence in that both were concerned with conflictual divisions that animated the "internal enemy". "For Foucault, the cultural conventions of racism emerge out of social bodies at war with themselves", whereas "for Freud, cultural conventions arise out of the psychological contortions of the individual at war with his own subliminal desires" (Stoler 1995, 169). In other words, Foucault located the "enemy with-

in” in the defense of society, while Freud traced it to the defense of the self (Stoler, 1995, 193).

In a recent publication *The Colonial Art of Demonizing Others*, Esther Lezra analyses archival documents and forms of expressive culture from the period of the consolidation of the imperial rule. She finds them haunted by monstrous and demonic images of Black freedom-seeking agency and radical resistance. Projecting their own sadistic acts of material violence on those they conquered, Europeans created an exculpatory vision of themselves, rationalizing their brutality as a measure of self-defense and the defense of the civilized norms. Lezra argues that just as Europeans needed the colonies for raw materials, labour force and markets, haunting phobias and fantasies of monstrous alterity which emerged out of the ordeal of conquest became the raw material from which European culture and interior was constructed (Lezra 2014, 1). In the Foreword to Lezra’s book, George Lipsitz evokes Slavoj Žižek’s frequent citation of Hegel’s idea that evil is often constructed by the very gaze that perceives the external object as evil.<sup>2</sup>

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* the pattern of the border formation between the self and the (internal) enemy, and the subsequent inversion of the two entities is most dramatically presented. One could argue that the fear of the barbarian returned gaze sets the novel into action, giving rise to anxiety and panic. But it is the emergency forces sent from the capital who inspire anxiety, since it is they who bring the news of the imminent barbarian attack. The Magistrate reflects upon the tranquility of the old days lost with the arrival of the Third Bureau and the fear of being watched: “But this year a curtain has fallen all along the frontier. From our ramparts we stare out over the wastes. For all we know, keener eyes than ours stare back” (Coetzee 2004, 41).

Nobody in the settlement has ever seen the nomadic barbarians, the only indigenous people they have met being the groups of nomads who visit the settlement in winter to trade, and the humble and emaciated fisherfolk. When a drift of fisherfolk, taking refuge from the bushfire the military has set arrive in town, the people eagerly gather around them asking if it was the barbarians that chased them out, “making fierce faces, stretching their imaginary bows” (Coetzee 2004, 136). Clearly, as there is no evidence of the existence of the fierce barbarians, exaggerated stereotypical images compensate for the lack of real ones and haunt the colonial psyche. In the grip of the terror of colonial imagination it is to the barbarian girl that the Magistrate whispers in a moment of intimacy: “Nothing is worse than what we can imagine” (Coetzee 2004, 34). These words hauntingly reverberate throughout the novel, reoccurring in various formulations and in varied tone.

In a less personal tone the Magistrate locates the pattern of terror sweeping through the settlement expressing his disbelief that the barbarians are going to attack: “In private I observed that once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians. There is no woman living on the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip

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<sup>2</sup> See George Lipsitz’s text “Decolonizing the Work of Art in an Age of Mass Destruction”.

her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with the visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to their curtains, raping their daughters.” (Coetzee 1994, 9). Reflecting on the essence of the Empire’s existence, the Magistrate says that one thing preoccupies its mind, “how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation.” (Coetzee 2004, 146).

In one of the novel’s most striking scenes of torture a group of captured indigenous people are brought back from the second military campaign, tied to one another with loops of wire running through their flesh. With a piece of charcoal the capitalized word ENEMY is written on their backs and in the ordeal that ensues soldiers hit them with sticks until the blood washes away the inscription. Apparently, the enemy must first be constructed, made visible and then symbolically exterminated. In this sadistic ritual of collective exorcism, Coetzee gives the clearest indication that the savage barbarian is the Empire, the barbarian that lurks within. In such an overt explication of the inversion of the imperial identity, the motif of vision plays a cathartic role.

Having seen the barbarian within, the Magistrate renounces his allegiance to the Empire and subsequently his barbarism: “Let it at the very least be said ... that in this farthest outpost of the empire of light there existed one man who in his heart was not a barbarian.” (Coetzee 2004, 114). Due to his moral choice to oppose the vicious regime of blind brutality, the Magistrate undergoes a ruthless physical and mental torture. It reaches a climax when during the public spectacle of ritual torture of the imprisoned indigenous people, seeing Colonel Joll raise a hammer to smash their spines, in a cathartic urge, words failing him, he screams “no” five times. The magistrate urges the crowd: “You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast!”, and in his narration of the event adds: “‘Look!’ I shout. (..) ‘Look!’ I shout. (..) ‘Look at these men!’ I recommence ‘Men!’” (Coetzee 2004, 117). An immediate blow is delivered across his face, “I am blind!” the Magistrate shouts. The importance of vision in such a moment is reinforced by the blow which temporarily blinds the Magistrate, symbolically denying him the faculty of understanding that it is the Empire who is the savage primitive, its barbarian other, alienated from itself.

## **The Magistrate and the Colonel**

The two male protagonists’ encounters from the onset of the novel involve the act of looking, the Magistrate stares into the black lenses (Coetzee 2004, 120), or they stare into each other’s eyes (Coetzee 2004, 162). Their encounters are filled with tension and suspense that culminates in the Magistrate’s accusations: “You are the enemy, Colonel!”, “You are an obscene torturer! You deserve to hang!” (Coetzee 2004, 125).

There are not many things the reader knows about the Colonel's physical appearance except his sunglasses that he wears even in the dark. The importance of this detail easily catches the eye of the reader as the novel's opening lines contain the Magistrate's descriptive bewilderment at the Colonel's sunglasses, the two characters gazing at each other at the moment of their first encounter. The description of the sunglasses is immediately followed by a resonant rhetorical question: "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." (Coetzee 2004, 1). During their first encounter, the Magistrate and the Colonel, both loyal servants of the Empire, avoiding the real reason for the arrival of the emergency powers, engage in a seemingly casual conversation about hunting. But as the conversation continues, it becomes clear that there is a great divide between the two men. The Colonel mentions thousands of slain deer, bears and pigs and a "mountain of carcasses that had to be left to rot" (Coetzee 2004, 1). The Magistrate informs him of the native ways of hunting, of the wonderful experience of fishing by night in a native boat as they "beat drums over the water to drive the fish towards the nets they have laid" (Coetzee 2004:1). The image of gratuitous slaying and savagery is contrasted with that of delicate native practices respectful of the nature, and from the onset of the novel the reader gradually becomes suspicious of the meaning of the word *barbarian*. Throughout the novel the Colonel never takes off his sunglasses, which only enhances his merciless appearance. Only at the end of the novel, during his last and brief encounter with the Magistrate does he show his unshielded eyes. He returns to the settlement in panic, starved and vanquished, after the barbarians have chased his troops out from the mountains. He has lost almost all his men in the cold in the mountains and the military campaign has finally failed in all but one aspect- the colonel realizes that he has been defeated by the 'primitive' tactics of the barbarians defending their invaded land, forcing them out, not harming anyone. He is scarred and defeated, he is "no stronger than a child" and he sobs (Coetzee 2004, 161). The Colonel has changed beyond recognition, and at this point the symbolism of his dark sunglasses becomes most evident.

## The Colonel and the girl

The motif of blindness figures prominently in the novel establishing a relation between Colonel Joll and the barbarian girl. The symbolic blindness of the Colonel is juxtaposed to the girl's actual blindness that results from the torture to which she is submitted. Colonel Joll is a representative of the imperial power, the blind brutality. The reader can easily imagine the Colonel as a demonic predator equipped to sustain the blazing sun in the wilderness so as to be able to locate and exterminate barbarians efficiently. The field of his vision is dark and circular thus shaped by the round sunglasses. The barbarian girl's vision is permanently impaired and obscured by a round opaque blur. The field of her vision is also circular, but in a different way, since she sees only the little off the rim of the blur. In a way, the Colonel's vision converges into the center of his dark circle while the girl's eye sight diverges from the round blur. This could be an indication of the Colonel's nar-

row black-and-white vision centered at the enemy, juxtaposed to the wide and open one of the barbarian girl's in which there is no center-periphery, or self-enemy polarity. More importantly, this opposition suggests that the two visions, when confronted in the gaze, constitute an inversion of each other, the yin-yang of the colonial conscious. The girl epitomizes the barbarian that reverses the look of surveillance from the wilderness, blurring the Empire's borders, dislocating its identity. Therefore, the brutal retribution is the girl's blindness, preventing her to look, not her death, because as much as the Empire fears its other, its existence depends on the existence of the other.

## **The Magistrate and the girl**

The most complex relationship in the novel is the one between the Magistrate and the barbarian girl. It is a relationship of domination, in its two principal manifestations, colonial and male. In this allegorical novel, the girl figures as the "double absolute other" at once subjected to both the colonial and the male gaze. One could argue that two most important aspects in this avenue of interpretation are the Magistrate's search for his role in the ideological opposition of the civilized and the barbarian, and, on the other hand, his complete objectification of the barbarian girl. The Magistrate undergoes a complete split of character from a respectable officer to a brutalized torture victim incarcerated and treated like an animal. The transformation from a loyal servant to, as he terms it, a "go-between, a jackal of the Empire in sheep's clothing" (Coetzee 2004, 79) is a process wrought with self-doubt and relentless questioning of his true identity. On numerous occasions throughout the novel he feels troubled by what the blind girl sees him as, apparently the girl's sight figuring as the location of his identity. Gazing at the girl's eyes the Magistrate is reluctant to believe that looking at him, she sees nothing, "only a blur, a blank" (Coetzee 2004, 33) and with horror he beholds the answer to his question, because from her eyes "there comes no reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me" (Coetzee 2004, 47). The Magistrate's obsession with his reflection in her eyes is reminiscent of Lacan's Mirror stage and the recognition of the seemingly superior body of the self outside the self in the reflective surface. This superior body is misrecognized as ideal ego, which re-introjected as an ego ideal gives rise to further identification with others (Mulvey 1988, 836). The Magistrate's blurred double image cast back at him from the girl's eyes gives no satisfaction as he continually fails to recognize his ideal ego. In the darkness of his prison cell the same question keeps haunting him "What does she see? The protecting wings of a guardian albatross or the black shape of a coward crow afraid to strike while its prey yet breathes?" (Coetzee 2004, 89).

The other aspect of their relationship is the Magistrate's striking objectification of the girl. It could be argued that this pattern of objectification fits well into the concept of the male gaze, a particular articulation of the Lacanian gaze, introduced by Laura Mulvey to account for the objectification of the female figure in film. Building on Freud, Mulvey focuses on scopophilia, defined as the "pleasure in taking other people as objects subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze"



(Mulvey 1999, 835). She argues that the female figure displayed for the enjoyment of men, always threatens to evoke the original castration anxiety (Mulvey 1999, 840). The ambivalence of the female figure and the castration anxiety is resolved by the two modes of the scopophilic drive, voyeurism and fetishistic looking. Voyeurism is associated with sadism and is “preoccupied with the reenactment of the original trauma” (Mulvey 1999, 840). To counterbalance the trauma, the woman is to be investigated, demystified, punished or saved as the guilty object. Voyeurism further demands a story set in linear time. In contrast, fetishistic scopophilia can exist outside linear time focusing only on the physical beauty of the female figure, transforming it into a fetish, thereby diminishing its danger. Continuing the argument from above that the male gaze structures the Magistrate’s domination, abundant evidence in the novel is found to demonstrate that both modes of the scopophilic drive could be found in the Magistrate. The girl’s maimed body seems to enhance the symbolic threat of castration that gives rise to the Magistrate’s anxiety. He deals with this anxiety either by attempting to devalue and demystify the girl, or reverting to fetishism in his recurrent dreams of her. To the Magistrate the girl is a *body* that he keeps in his bed and has the look of *something* that knows itself being watched (Coetzee 2004, 36). He feels responsible for the yielding passive body that he washes, strokes, rubs with oil until it glistens in the firelight (Coetzee 2004, 32), but also confesses that it seems all the same if he lies down beside her or fold her in a sheet and bury her in the snow (Coetzee 2004, 47). Watching her unsteady bent figure supporting itself on sticks, with repulsion he says: “My mouth form an ugly word. I am surprised by it but do not resist: she is ugly, ugly.” (Coetzee 2004, 50). At the same time he is perplexed by the nature of his desire for her and dauntingly curious to *see* the scars left on her body. In various wordings he reiterates the request that she show him how she has been tortured, but in the silent intimacy they share, he receives no answer. Finally, he informs the reader that until the marks on her body are deciphered and understood, he cannot let go of her (Coetzee 2004, 33) and in the end returns the girl to her people in the mountains. But try as he might, he does not manage to demystify the girl, as she remains a mystery with “no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry” (Coetzee 2004, 46). The Magistrate is obsessed with the story of her torture set in linear time, but frustrated and failing to deal with his anxiety, he reverts to the other avenue of escape, the fetishistic scopophilia, which, existing out of linear time, is best presented in his dreams. In fact, the Magistrate first meets the girl in what is later to become the recurrent dream that foreshadows their actual encounter. In his dreams the girl is a delicate child or a hooded girl, and in one of them she is dressed in her best with a round cap embroidered in gold (Coetzee 2004, 120). He watches the enigmatic girl from a distance while she builds sand or snow castles driven by the urge to see her face. But she dissolves or becomes featureless as he approaches. When he once manages to peer under her hood, her face is blank, “it is the face of an embryo or a tiny whale” (Coetzee 2004, 120). Marais argues that these dreams mediate the Magistrate’s relationship with the barbarian girl, which implies that “the Magistrate is never in control of his actions” (Marais 2009, 28). Marais’s claim supports the above treatment of the relationship between the two characters, which seems to os-

cillate between identification and objectification, arguably, two sides of the same coin.

## Conclusion

This paper has presented how J.M. Coetzee's allegorical novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* fundamentally disrupts the ideological binary that underpins colonial discourse. The binary constructs an image of the civilized and the savage on the opposite sides of a fixed border. In this novel, as well as in colonial reality, the binary dissolves into ambivalence and often complete inversion of the constructed identities. The stability and the integrity of the Empire is secured by building walls that separate the civilized and uncivilized space, and from the watchtowers, gazing into the wilderness, the guardians of progress strive to preserve the purity of superior virtues. Surveillance is therefore instrumental for the discursive and practical constitution of the imperial dominance, and in the novel set in a walled settlement on the periphery of the Empire, it is seen as structuring the novel's spatial organization. However, as it has been suggested, such stability is a contradiction in its own terms, as in the dialectical process of identification, the controlling and curious gaze is always-already reversed. The present analysis has identified the ambivalence and inversion of the colonial identity as the most important themes of the novel, which are further seen as reflexes of the fear of the indigenous other and the terror of colonial imagination. The pervasiveness of the motif of vision, and by extension, blindness, has been interpreted through the psychoanalytic notions of the gaze and the scopophilic drives. It has been observed that these concepts figure prominently in the narrative establishing the deeply ambivalent relationships of power and domination between the allegorical characters, the Magistrate, the Colonel, the barbarian girl and the Empire, exposing the contradictory aspects and instability of their identities. In the same way that surveillance organizes the colonial space, it has been demonstrated that the ambivalent relationships between the characters are structured by the colonial and male gaze, the intricate and dialectical relationship of domination and objectification. Driven by an unconscious urge to examine and gaze at each other, the characters are dislocated, their identities rearticulated, displaying the shifting boundary between stability and instability, between barbarism and civility. The intricacy of the gaze lies in the deceptive position of power as it always implies misrecognition and the alienation from the self. Finally, the waiting in the novel could be seen as an "anticipation of the imperialist self-prophecy, a form of justification that is also self-negation" (Head 2009, 49).

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**Андријана Аничих**

## **Амбивалентност колонијалног дискурса: чекајући варваре – у очима другог**

У овом раду се Куцијев роман Чекајући Варваре посматра у контексту подривања бинарне логике која лежи у основи колонијалног дискурса. Бинарност у колонијалном дискурсу ствара слику цивилизованог, рационалног и доброг, са једне стране, и примитивног, ирационалног и злог на супротним странама јасно утврђене границе. У овом роману, као и у стварном животу, бинарност се трансформише у амбивалентност, преклапања и често потпуну инверзију два супротстављена есенцијализована идентитета. Као основне теме романа у анализи се издвајају амбивалентност и инверзија колонијалног идентитета, који се даље посматрају као резултат колонијалне параноје и страха од другости. Анализа се фокусира на мотиве посматрања и надзора кроз појмове погледа (the gaze) и скопофилије из психоаналитичке теорије. У раду се закључује да учестало појављивање ових мотива у наративу, који успостављају амбивалентне односе моћи између главних ликова романа, има за циљ да укаже на двосмислену природу ликова и замену њихових конструисаних колонијалних идентитета.

### *Кључне речи:*

колонијални  
идентитет, другост,  
колонијални поглед,  
страх,  
амбивалентност