

**Exceptional Torture:  
Reading J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* Against the  
Post-9/11 War on Terror and the American State of Exception**

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Pro gradu -tutkielmani tavoitteena on osoittaa, että eteläafrikkalaisen J.M. Coetzeen romaanin *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) tapahtumat voidaan rinnastaa USA:n toimiin terrorisminvastaisessa sodassa, jonka se julisti vuonna 2001, syyskuun 11. päivän terrori-iskujen jälkeen. Esitän, että Coetzeen romaanin Imperiumi ja USA kummatkin käyttävät kansakunnan tuntemaa turvattomuutta ja pelkoa hyväkseen julistaakseen poikkeustilan, joka sallii väkivallan ja kidutuksen käytön vihollisen etsimiseksi ja tuhoamiseksi, sekä antaa mahdollisuuden hallita ja alistaa omia kansalaisia. Lisäksi sekä Coetzeen Imperiumi, että USA edustavat omassa retoriikassaan sivistystä, oikeamielisyyttä ja ylivertaisuutta, kun taas vihollinen kuvataan julmana ja primitiivisenä.

Tutkielmani teoriaosiossa käsittelen ensin sitä, kuinka vuonna 1980 julkaistu eteläafrikkalainen romaani on ylipäänsä mielekäs rinnastaa USA:ssa vuonna 2001 alkunsa saaneisiin tapahtumiin. Poikkeukselliset tapahtumat vaativat vanhempien tekstien uudelleentulkintaa, joka paljastaa tässä tapauksessa esimerkiksi poikkeustilan, valtion hyväksymän kidutuksen ja väkivallankäytön olevan toistuvia ilmiöitä historiassa. USA:n kutsuminen imperiumiksi ei ole välttämättä aivan yksioikoista, joten teoriaosiossa osoitan myös, että se on paitsi sallittavaa, myös suotavaa. Amerikkalaiseen imperialismiin liittyy ekseptionalismin käsite. Se on ideologia, joka antaa USA:lle oikeutuksen toimia maailmalla varsin ylimieliselläkin tavalla, ja se on ollut läsnä amerikkalaisessa diskurssissa aina siitä lähtien, kun puritaanit mantereelle astuivat. Viimeiseksi teoriaosiossani esittelen italialaisen filosofin Giorgio Agambenin poikkeustilateorian. Teoksessaan *State of Exception* (2005) hän väittää, että elämme nykyään globaalissa poikkeustilassa, josta USA:n Patriot Act on hyvä esimerkki.

Tutkielmani analyysiosio jakautuu kolmeen lukuun. Luvussa kolme pyrin näyttämään, että sekä USA:n että Coetzeen romaanin Imperiumin harjoittaman väkivallan ja kidutuksen oikeutus pohjautuu perustavanlaatuisen ”me vastaan he” -ideologiaan. Siinä länsimainen, ja ennen kaikkea amerikkalainen, ylivertaisuus ja erinomaisuus antaa oikeutuksen tiedotusvälineissä ja propagandassa demonisoidun vihollisen tuhoamiseen ja häpäisemiseen. Kappaleessa neljä yhdistän Agambenin poikkeustilakäsitteen ja Donald E. Peasen teorian ”state fantasy of exceptionalism”, jossa kansalaiset pitävät paradoksaalisesti itse yllä poikkeustilaa. Viidennessä luvussa tutkin Foucault'n erittelemiä kidutuksen muotoja (kuulusteleva, spehtaakkelinomainen, terroristinen), sekä sitä, mikä on kidutuksen todellinen motiivi virallisen syyn, tietojen hankinnan, sijaan. Analysoin myös romaanin kidutuskohosten ja Abu Ghraibissa ja Guantánamo Bayssa tapahtuneiden kidutustapausten yhtäläisyyksiä. Lopuksi osoitan, kuinka kappaleissa kolme ja neljä käsittelemäni poikkeustilan ja ekseptionalismin käsitteet sekä sivistynyt/barbaari -dikotomia ovat vaikuttaneet väkivallan, sodan ja kidutuksen sallimiseen demokraattisten arvojen puolustamisen nimissä.

Avainsanat: kidutus, ekseptionalismi, poikkeustila, USA, 9/11, imperialismi

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> , Empire, Exception, and 9/11 .....	9
3. Civilization and Barbarism: Depicting the Self and the Enemy.....	34
4. <i>Necessitas Non Habet Legem</i> – Necessity Has No Law .....	49
5. Exceptional Torture? .....	60
6. Conclusion .....	82
Works Cited.....	87

## 1. Introduction

On 11 September 2001, the world was shocked by the images that filled the airwaves across the globe, images of two commercial aircraft flying into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, followed by another airplane crashing into the Pentagon. “Where were you when the world stopped turning?” Alan Jackson asked in his country-western song published shortly after the attacks. Redfield (55) underlines the impact of these terrorist attacks by stating that it became “part of everyday American cultural life” with all the imagery – photographs and video recordings – embedded deep in the minds of the Americans (and, without a doubt, the rest of the world). He furthermore highlights the importance and historical force of that notorious day by the way the terrorist attacks left their mark on ordinary, everyday language – the event became to be known simply, and shortly, as 9/11 (ibid.). There was, and still is no need for any indication of the year or the place.

9/11 stemmed a host of terms and concepts that have become customary in everyday language: Ground Zero, Homeland, and the War on Terror to name a few. Ground Zero evokes the horrors and destruction caused by the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The term ‘Ground Zero’ thus indicates that the attacks were substantially more destructive than they actually were. It also reminds the population that unlike in 1945, Ground Zero was on American soil: the enemy, *they*, had targeted *us* and struck with deadly precision, destroying a symbolically important landmark (Redfield 63). The introduction of the term ‘Homeland’ is especially interesting because it “implies a sense of native origins, of birthplace and birthright . . . [and] appeals to common bloodlines, ancient loyalties, and often to notions of racial and ethnic homogeneity” (Kaplan 2003, 8). The United States has been traditionally perceived as a melting pot of different cultures where mobility and freedom is everything (the western frontier, manifest destiny, pioneers, etc.). For this reason it is important to point out that

the George W. Bush administration chose to use the term ‘Homeland,’ because it marks a clear departure from the traditional United States (ibid.), further illustrating the huge impact and importance of 9/11.

In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States declared War on Terror that resulted in the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, as well as the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The War on Terror also spawned a network of prisons in which the US detained and interrogated suspected terrorists trumping international treaties on torture and ignoring international law. The best-known examples of these facilities are Camp X-Ray in Guantánamo Bay and the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, latter of which is now closed down. 9/11 and the resulting War on Terror brought with them, as I will argue in my thesis, a state of exception in our time, which not only concerns suspected terrorists abroad, but has extended its grip to American domestic population as well.

Pivotal moments, such as 9/11, which change the landscape of world politics and highlight the power relations between the “West and the rest” call up for reinterpretation of older fiction like Francis Ford Coppola did with his film *Apocalypse Now*, allegorizing Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* with the Vietnam War. *Waiting for the Barbarians*,<sup>1</sup> John Maxwell “J.M.” Coetzee’s third novel, originally published in South Africa in 1980, invites the twenty-first century reader to read it allegorically, to juxtapose the themes of the state of exception and state-sanctioned violence and torture in the novel with the strikingly similar policies carried out by the United States in the aftermath of 9/11.

Coetzee’s novel is situated in an outpost of an Empire in an unspecified time and place. The outpost is run by the novel’s protagonist and narrator, the Magistrate. The peaceful living in the town is disrupted by the arrival of Colonel Joll, an officer of Empire’s Third Bureau, who has come from the capital to secure Empire’s borders from rumored attacks by hostile barbarians. A state of exception has been declared and Joll and his soldiers launch preemptive strikes capturing, incarcerating, interrogating

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to the novel as *WB* or *Barbarians* when not using the full title.

and torturing peaceful fisher folk and nomadic barbarians. A barbarian girl who has survived the violent interrogation is taken in by the Magistrate as his chambermaid and mistress. The Magistrate later decides to take the girl back to her tribe, but upon his return from the expedition, Joll apprehends and imprisons him for fraternizing with the enemy, denying him the right to a trial. The Magistrate manages to break out of his confinement and witnesses a brutal spectacle of torture of captured barbarians in the town square. He tries to stop the torture but ends up being recaptured and is later tortured and humiliated in front of the people he once governed. After his torture and humiliation, the Magistrate is set free to wander the town dishonored and shunned. Time passes as the soldiers continue to scour the desert for the barbarians to no effect. Eventually, Joll's troops disintegrate, pillage and desert the town and abandon the people who stay waiting for the barbarians who, it turns out, never arrive.

Since the novel is written by a South African writer, and first published in 1980, it is necessary to clarify why the novel is relevant in connection with the phenomena of the state of exception, state-sanctioned violence and torture in the War on Terror. By juxtaposing the novel with the US-led War on Terror, I aim to argue that Coetzee's novel cannot be restricted to portraying solely apartheid South Africa, but I see the novel as an allegory to all imperial or colonial violence and torture. I subscribe to Maria Boletsi's (72) view of "literary works as events that perform differently every time they are iterated." Thus, in chapter 2 of my thesis, I will first justify my universally allegorizing reading of *Barbarians* by juxtaposing the opposing critical views on reading the novel: on one side are critics who oppose a generalized or universal reading, and prefer to read the novel specifically as an allegory of apartheid South Africa where it was written; on the other side are those who claim that *Barbarians*, and Coetzee's work in general, invites broader allegorical readings which draw parallels to government sanctioned violence and torture in general, including that carried out by the United States in the post-9/11 War on Terror. In his essay "Legal Illegality: *Waiting for the Barbarians* after September 11,"

Patrick Lenta (72) analyzes the novel by straightforwardly allegorizing it with the post-9/11 War on Terror and the torture especially in Abu Ghraib, and argues that “a contemporary reader of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is likely to be struck by the parallels between the novel and the unfurling narrative that is the War on Terror.” Since Lenta neatly encapsulates the post-9/11 allegory of the novel, I will be referring to his essay throughout my thesis.

In the second part of chapter 2, I will establish the foundation that makes the US War on Terror possible by presenting a brief genealogy of American imperialism starting from the Spanish-American War (1898). In order to parallel Coetzee’s Empire with the United States, it is important to provide the connection between the US and the so-called “old colonial empires,” and determine whether the US can be called an empire in the first place. The US has been characterized as a “case of *imperialism without a major colonial empire*” (Osterhammel, quoted in Young 2001, 42, emphasis in original). Thus, the US and its foreign policies cannot be straightforwardly paralleled with colonial empires such as Great Britain or France. My analysis will, however, show that the US is, in fact, an empire. The only question that remains is what kind of an empire it is, but I hope my thesis will provide the reader with some answers to this question as well.

In discussing American imperialism, I will proceed chronologically, but when relevant to my thesis, I will make the necessary links to contemporary US imperialism and the War on Terror. The chronology of American imperialism will be introduced and concluded by a brief discussion on the fundamental ideology behind it: American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism has been the prominent rhetoric in American cultural ethos from the Puritans’ arrival in the early seventeenth century to the twenty-first century politics and popular media who advocate for the shining beacon of liberty that is the United States.

In the final part of chapter 2, I will examine Giorgio Agamben’s theory of the state of exception. His analysis of the Ancient Roman state of exception called *iustitium* illustrates how the phenomenon

of the state of exception has existed since Ancient Rome, and how easily one can draw parallels between *iustitium* and the state of exception declared by the Bush administration. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how the state of exception and the conflict between the executive and the legislative branches of government have been present in the US since the Civil War, and how the rhetoric of fear and the notion of American exceptionalism have ultimately resulted in a permanent state of exception that is today called the War on Terror. I will supplement Agamben's theory with, for instance, Stephen Morton's ideas of metalepsis through counterinsurgency literature in colonial states of emergency, and with material from critics who I feel supply the necessary tools to link Agamben, post-9/11 War on Terror and *Barbarians* together.

In *Barbarians*, Empire launches a campaign to hunt down the barbarians who have violated its borders. Similarly the US declared War on Terror after 9/11 and embarked on an avenging campaign, invading Afghanistan and later Iraq. The motivation for Empire's (and the US) aggression is, however, more complex than simply revenge. In the first analysis chapter, chapter 3, I will show that the justification of the atrocities performed by these empires lies in a deeper, more profound belief of "us vs. them" ideology and the notion of superiority. In the case of the US, this derives from American exceptionalism. According to Donald E. Pease (7), "American exceptionalism includes a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire." Although Coetzee's Empire is not overtly advertising itself as the shining beacon of civilization, its self-proclaimed superiority to the barbarians is evident. This justifies Empire to use drastic measures to secure its integrity and interests, and in the process it does not hesitate to manipulate the public in order to gain acceptance for its aggressive policies. In the case of the US, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is an example of manipulation by the government and the media, demonizing the enemy and falsifying evidence (supposed weapons of mass destruction) in order to justify aggression to neutralize Saddam



Hussein's regime. In *Barbarians*, Colonel Joll and his men are chasing a similar mirage justifying the atrocities but, like Saddam's WMDs, it never materializes.

In chapter 4, I will return to Agamben's state of exception, and discuss the declaration of state of exception in the novel and in the War on Terror by making use of Donald E. Pease's idea of the state fantasy of exceptionalism. As Pease (33) argues, the state fantasy of exceptionalism persuades the citizens into upholding the state of exception by imagining themselves as the executive power that suspends the law in order to salvage the wounded nation. Thus, the (state fantasy of) exceptionalism creates the state of exception, and the state of exception, in turn, enables the government to implement exceptional measures, such as the torture of those it deems as its enemies. The government justifies the use of violence because the intelligence obtained from torture supposedly eliminates further threats and prevents possible acts of terrorism in the future. Extra-legal measures are also justified, albeit not officially, by depicting the enemy as inferior, barbarous, and irrational.

The final analysis chapter, chapter 5, will consist of analysis of the three distinct means of torture – interrogational, spectacular, and terroristic – as they have been identified by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (first published as *Surveiller et punir* in 1975). I will start by presenting a brief history of torture, then I will discuss the use of the three means of torture in practice, both in the novel and in the War on Terror, and the motivations behind their application. In his essay, Lenta examines the acts of torture carried out by the George W. Bush administration in its War on Terror, and he reads *Waiting for the Barbarians* as an allegory of the United States' use of torture in order to reveal its hidden purposes that the administration did not bring into public light: that both the United States and Coetzee's Empire use torture not for intelligence purposes (interrogational), but ultimately as a spectacular and terroristic means in order to reconstitute and strengthen their imperial images “by marking those who live beyond its boundaries, but whom [they have] the power to subjugate” (Lenta 76). While I agree with Lenta about the true motivation behind the use of torture, I will also apply the

so called “ticking bomb scenario” in my analysis, because it has been, and still is, very relevant to the *official* justification of torture: torture may be used if it helps the torturer to obtain acute, life-saving information.

Furthermore, I will analyze the actual torture scenes in the novel and discuss their resemblance to the torture performed by the United States in Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. The case of Guantánamo Bay is especially significant to the notion of the state of exception because, from a juridical point of view, the detention center is situated in an extra-legal space where international and US laws do not apply. Similarly, in the novel the Magistrate is held prisoner, interrogated and tortured, he demands a fair trial but is told that he is not really a prisoner at all, that there is no record of that anywhere. He only exists in the juridical black hole that laws cannot detect. Moreover, the similarities in the methods of, as well as the motivations for, the torture that the American soldiers inflicted on the Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib and that Joll’s men inflict on the barbarian prisoners and the Magistrate are striking.

In chapter 5, I will incorporate the ideas of the state of exception, exceptionalism, and the civilized/barbarian dichotomies I discuss in chapters 3 and 4, and show how they all have resulted in the acceptance of using torture in “exceptional” circumstances. The government may use the fear caused by terrorism and the unknown, irrational “barbarians” in order to declare and maintain the state of exception. It can invoke the patriotic spirit by creating concepts like Homeland and Ground Zero, and retaliate the violation of the “Virgin Land”<sup>2</sup> by Shock and Awe military campaigns in order to keep the public captivated in the spectacle of violence which, too, is essential in maintaining the state of exception. Furthermore, the state uses torture to turn the uncivilized enemy into “animals” who do not

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<sup>2</sup> Donald E. Pease uses the concept of the Virgin Land to explain the repercussions of 9/11. The concept of the Virgin Land will be discussed in chapter 3.

deserve the same rights as the “civilized.” At the core will always be the question: who are the real barbarians?

## 2. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Empire, Exception, and 9/11

In this chapter I will present the background and the theoretical framework for my thesis. I have divided this chapter into three parts. As stated above, firstly, I will justify my allegorical reading of the novel by presenting various points of view from critics arguing both for the specific and the universal reading of the novel. Secondly, through a brief cross-section of the history of American imperialism, I will demonstrate that the United States can, and, in fact, should be labeled an ‘empire.’ I will also introduce the concept of American exceptionalism which is the underlying ideology behind American imperialism. Finally, I will discuss Giorgio Agamben’s theory of the state of exception, and demonstrate how it can be incorporated into the analysis of both the post-9/11 United States and Coetzee’s Empire.

### *Reading Waiting for the Barbarians as a Post-9/11 Allegory*

Since my aim in this thesis is to analyze the themes of the state of exception and government sanctioned violence and torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians* by allegorizing them with the US post-9/11 War on Terror, it is vital to substantiate that a novel originally published in 1980 can justifiably be read in a twenty-first-century context. My reading of the novel is inspired by postcolonial theory which “has led to new reading of virtually all canonical works” (Bertens 159-160). *Waiting for the Barbarians* may not be considered as canonical, but because the postcolonial approach helps to situate the novel in the twenty-first century context, and, given the fact that postcolonial theory is radically anti-imperialist and anti-colonial in nature (ibid. 160), it serves as a perfect foundation for this thesis.

Robert M. Post locates the novel in “an anonymous country . . . sometime in the past” (67), but most often critics (for instance, Boletsi 75; Nashef 22; Poyner 53) leave both the geographical location

and time period undefined altogether. Coetzee's deliberate ambiguity concerning time and place has not, however, convinced critics that Empire in *Barbarians* can be allegorized with any existing colonial empire, past or present, so while some argue for the generalizability and universality of the novel, others prefer a specific allegory to racially divided apartheid South Africa. Coetzee himself underlines that to naturally see mankind as divisions of races is something he calls the "Discourse of the Cape," based on Western reason, and insists that "[t]here is nothing about blackness or whiteness in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The Magistrate and the girl could as well be Russian and Kirghiz, or Han and Mongol, or Turk and Arab, or Arab and Berber" (Begam and Coetzee 424). However, the dichotomies of black and white, civilized and barbaric seem to be embedded so deeply in the Western mind that it is natural to assume – given Coetzee's background – that the novel is an allegory which, as Post (71) puts it, "reflects people and actions" of apartheid South Africa. David Attwell (2008, 232) argues, furthermore, that by ignoring the effects of South Africa on Coetzee's writing is to "ignore the elephant in the room." It is, indeed, quite impossible to ignore the importance of a writer's background, but Coetzee maintains that apartheid South Africa has to be seen as only one manifestation of a wider colonial or neo-colonial situation (Attwell 1990, 583).

The decade preceding the novel's publication was a time of revolt in southern Africa: Portuguese colonies collapsed, Mozambique and Angola were in the midst of guerrilla wars, and a civil war in Zimbabwe led to its independence in 1980. As a result of this external unrest and, for instance, the Soweto Uprising<sup>3</sup> in 1976, the South African society became even more totalitarian (Attwell 1993, 73-4). According to Attwell (ibid. 74), Coetzee's Empire is "recognizable partly as the fictionalization of this especially paranoid moment in apartheid discourse" and, furthermore, *Barbarians* can be seen as a straightforward response to the death of the anti-apartheid student activist Stephen Biko in 1977 that

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<sup>3</sup> Sowetan high school students protested against the introduction of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. In the resulting violence from June 16, 1976 to February 28, 1977, the official death toll was 575, significantly lower than many independent estimates (Frueh 75).

really brought the use of torture and detention in the apartheid state to light. Gallagher (282) also identifies a direct link between the torture in the novel and the torture of political prisoners in South Africa. South African writers can understandably be defined through the colonial history of the country and apartheid. Coetzee's novels *Dusklands* (1974) and *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), which preceded *Barbarians*, are concerned with the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer in South Africa. Some of his later novels, most notably *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *Age of Iron* (1990), and *Disgrace* (1999), are, in turn, representations of South Africa under, and in the aftermath of, the apartheid regime. It is thus tempting to read *Barbarians* as an "allegory of the self-critical South African liberal confronted with his own tacit complicity in the systematic denial of basic human rights to the majority of subjects who live under apartheid" (Moses 122). Indeed, Attwell (1993, 73) argues that Coetzee's deliberate refusal of specificity is due to "being painfully conscious of [his] immediate historical location," and, according to Wenzel (69), "Coetzee, like the magistrate, is implicated in an imperial regime that . . . leaves no room beyond being either torturer or tortured." Boletsi (77) argues, furthermore, that while challenging apartheid society's binary divisions, oppositional white South African writers like Coetzee are "inevitably entangled in them..." and the resulting ambivalence "characterizes the position and identity of the protagonists in Coetzee's novels, as well as the position of the author himself."

Even though critics like Attwell (1993, 5) argue that *Barbarians* is specifically describing the end of apartheid society, thus making a clear political statement, Coetzee's novels, argues Boletsi (82), have had their fair share of criticism of being apolitical. He has also been criticized for evasiveness and quietism for not representing the apartheid regime directly in his novels (Moses 115). Coetzee's critics may find support in the fact that *Barbarians* was scrutinized by censors in South Africa, but due to its universality and, according to censors, its lack of popular appeal it passed and was published in South Africa which, according to Morton (2013, 112-113), questions the novel's political effectiveness.

Easton (597), however, argues that the seemingly ambivalent position Coetzee has taken reveals his true commitment of “contestation rather than rigid fixity and unthinking acceptance; arbitrariness and alternative narratives instead of confining literatures and methodologies.” Wenzel (64) adds that even though Coetzee’s Empire in *Barbarians* is not specifically named South Africa, “one may wonder how writing a novel about torture and imperialism could be construed as shirking political responsibility.” Moses (116) argues, furthermore, that by persistently refusing to use any geographic or historical specificity in his novel, Coetzee’s dramatization of imperialism’s paradoxes and moral dilemmas goes beyond South Africa, criticizing imperialism in general.

Coetzee is an exception among white South African writers because he refuses to “provide the solace of truth, of political faith...” but, instead, sees the novel as a rival to historical discourse (Attwell 1993, 15). At the heart of his writing is the demystification of history and the clash of the discourse of the novel and the discourse of history. According to Coetzee, history does not equal reality, and both history and novel are merely forms of discourses, but history usually claims primacy even though it is just “a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other...” (quoted in Attwell 1993, 16). For instance, at the end of *Barbarians*, the Magistrate attempts to write down a history of the outpost but fails to articulate his account of the events. Instead, all that is available for the reader is his subjective, “private monologue” – *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Craps 64). Craps (64-65) argues that “Coetzee’s text manages to engage with history without falsifying it by bearing witness to its own incapacity to recover history, to articulate it in writing.” The Magistrate cannot justifiably write down the history of the events unless he experiences the same violence and torture that the Third Bureau inflicts on the barbarians (ibid. 65). We know this from his private monologue, but he is unable to write the story down for future generations. When Colonel Joll and his soldiers desert the town, having brought violence and torture to the once peaceful border outpost, and leave its inhabitants waiting anxiously for the arrival of the barbarians, the Magistrate attempts to write down his account of the events but,

instead of a truthful account, he writes: “No one who paid a visit to this oasis . . . failed to be struck by the charm of life here . . . This was paradise on earth” (*WB* 168-9). Written history, thus, can be a far cry from reality.

Just like the Magistrate tells Colonel Joll his own version of barbarian history by making up the meaning of the scribes on the wooden slips, so do, insists Coetzee, “the stories we write sometimes begin to write themselves, after which their truth or falsehood is out of our hands and declarations of authorial intent carry no weight. Furthermore, once a book is launched into the world it becomes the property of its readers, who, given half a chance, will twist its meaning in accord with their own preconceptions and desires” (quoted in Szczurek 36). It is thus not surprising that many critics argue for a universal or non-specific reading of *Barbarians*: Barbara Eckstein (178) states that because “[in] all the heterogeneous nation-states occupying the colonized continents . . . the distinction between judicial and non-judicial torture has been ambiguous . . . Coetzee has good reason to write of torturous colonialism and not call it South Africa”; Morton (2013, 108) argues that Coetzee’s “refusal of geographical reference . . . foregrounds the role of the law in the maintenance of colonial sovereignty without tying the narrative to a specific colonial context”; Tegla (91), in turn, sees the novel not simply as an allegory of the South African liberal during apartheid but as “a profound exploration of morality at an individual level, and the inescapability of a moral response”; according to Easton (587-588), Coetzee’s writing has a “lasting type of relevance . . . which goes beyond the immediate present.”

As argued by the critics above, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is not a novel whose allegorization is limited only to apartheid South Africa but, with its ambiguous setting, it enables the reader to find parallels to any regime carrying out atrocities in the name of law during exceptional circumstances. Like the wooden slips the Magistrate pretends to decode for Joll, so does the novel stay open for different interpretations and allegories. Indeed, *Barbarians* is “a novel whose reflection on imperial paranoia, preemptive warfare, torture, and prisoner abuse seems even more topical in this post-9/11 day



and age than when it was first published...” (Craps 59). The reader simply cannot ignore the “striking pertinence to the contemporary world in which strict oppositional thinking in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’ is staging a comeback in political rhetoric and everyday discourse” (Boletsi 94). Patrick Lenta (71) juxtaposes *Barbarians* most straightforwardly with the US-led War on Terror and considers Coetzee’s “exploration of torture . . . in relation to contemporary torture perpetrated by US soldiers.” Similar to Boletsi, he justifies his post-9/11 reading by arguing that a reader today cannot help but being “struck by the parallels between the novel and the unfurling narrative that is the War on Terror” (72). The torture in the novel, and the torture carried out by the US, is inflicted on detainees who are deemed guilty until somehow proven innocent. This attitude is exemplified, on the one hand, by Empire in capturing the fisherfolk who have nothing to do with the barbarians, and, on the other, by the US in detaining “enemy combatants” who have later been proved to have no affiliation whatsoever with any terrorist organization. Indeed, the true purpose of torture, Lenta (73) argues, is ultimately that it “produces the victim’s status as ‘evil barbarian’ and, what amounts to the same thing, the ‘truth’ of the victim’s guilt, on which the Empire’s continued self-realization is contingent. The truth that is produced provides the justification that the Empire needs for its violence against the barbarians. Torture circumvents criminal procedure’s demand for evidence.” Even though the US condemned the torture that took place in Abu Ghraib and characterized it as merely an aberration, Lenta argues that the United States contrives to

conceal that the torture of prisoners is a consequence of the moral register in which the United States articulates its identity and political ambitions. Since the identity that the US administration fashions for the United States is one of unimpeachable moral virtue and civility . . . those who oppose the United States’ interests cannot be defined simply as political adversaries, but must be defined as “evil”. Once the identity of those that the United States designates as its enemies has been constructed as a wholly negative, uncivilized other, torture will appear to the US soldiers who inflict it on Iraqis as morally unobjectionable and even heroic (ibid.).

Indeed, the tradition of American exceptionalism, which will be discussed in the next, and the ends-justify-the-means reasoning are clearly present when these atrocities are being downplayed and understated by the United States. Furthermore, in the end, in the greater scheme of things, the atrocities fall into oblivion just like the Magistrate's suffering and torture do when his torturer tells him that he will not be tried in court because he is actually a free man: "How can you be a prisoner when we have no record of you? . . . We have no record of you. So you must be a free man" (WB 137). As stated above, history does not equal reality.

### *American Exceptionalism and Imperialism*

In a presidential election debate with John McCain in 2008, Barack Obama declared his intention to reinstate the "sense of America being that shining beacon on a hill" (Söderlind 1). Thus, he demonstrated that he would continue the long tradition of advocating American exceptionalism, a belief which, according to Pease (9), states that "America is 'distinctive' (meaning merely different), or 'unique' (meaning anomalous), or 'exemplary' (meaning a model for other nations to follow), or that it is 'exempt' from the laws of historical progress (meaning that it is an 'exception' to the laws and rules governing the development of other nations)." Even though the term American exceptionalism did not emerge until the 1920s (ibid. 10), the origin of the idea can be traced back to the sermon John Winthrop delivered to the Puritans embarking on their Christian mission, their "perilous but emancipatory 'errand to the wilderness'" in 1630 (Söderlind 3-4). The Puritans believed God had given them a "fresh start" and they were "reenacting the story of Exodus," destined to find in America "a New Israel, a *New Canaan*" (Lundén 84, emphasis in original). For the Puritans, America was a blank canvas on which the blueprint of a utopian society could be drawn.

In the Puritans' Christian mission Söderlind (4) sees the origin of a "coherent narrative stretching from the 'city on a hill' in the seventeenth century, through the Declaration of Independence in the eighteenth, Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth, *Pax Americana* in the twentieth, and the War on Terror in the . . . twenty-first century." Throughout history, the concept of American exceptionalism has been flexible (exemplified by the different meanings associated with it, as noted above), and when the geopolitical environment and circumstances have changed, American exceptionalism has been redesigned accordingly (Pease 9). In the Cold War era, the Soviet Empire was considered a major threat to the American way of life, and American exceptionalism enabled US imperialism to act as a "nation-preserving measure," preventing the Soviet Empire from annihilating the American way of life and ideals (Pease 20-21). Americans "wanted to believe that the United States was the perfection of a national ideal rather than a rapacious imperialist power . . . [and] they could not articulate criticism of U.S. imperialism without feeling as if they had spoken on behalf of the imperial enemy..." (ibid. 22). In the development of American exceptionalism, Pease (24) sees the establishment of the National Security State in 1950 as the pivotal moment which altered the "structure of [Americans'] national desire." What Pease (ibid.) calls the "fantasy of America [*sic*] exceptionalism," enabled Americans to see themselves as exceptional to whom the rules reserved for the rest of the world did not apply. As exceptionalism represented the US as an ideal nation, it "elevated its exemplarity into the proof of the state's power of imperial rule" (ibid. 34). With the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, however, the US lost its archenemy and the state fantasy advocating for American supremacy and exceptionalism had lost its sturdy foundation (ibid.). It can be even argued that in today's globalized world it is impossible to claim an exceptional national status, but the post-9/11 events show "the rumor of the death of exceptionalism to be highly exaggerated . . . [as] the resurgence of religion in political rhetoric is equally shared by almost all poles in the political spectrum" (Söderlind 4). In his speech to the nation on 11 September 2001, George W. Bush invoked the spirit of American exceptionalism and referred to

the US “as the ‘brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world’ and promised that ‘no one will keep that light from shining’” (ibid. 7). Before I go on to examine American exceptionalism in the post-9/11 era, it is in order to present a brief genealogy of American imperialism, the palpable result and embodiment of the abovementioned ideals.

Despite the connection between American exceptionalism and US imperialism Pease provides above, because of the United States’ history of anti-colonialism and the American Revolution, it has been questioned whether the term “empire” applies in connection with the US in the first place (Tomes 532). Thus, before comparing the United States with Coetzee’s Empire in *Barbarians*, it is important to demonstrate that the US can be justifiably called an empire. Suri (524-525) refuses to label the United States an empire because it juxtaposes the US with, for instance, the British Empire or the French colonial empire which “cannot capture the complexities of American influence in a wider global area...” Enloe (134) asks, figuratively, if by comparing the US with the earlier empires “we risk comparing an orange with apples . . . [or] a new apple with a host of earlier apples?” Suri argues, furthermore, that such important figures for American overseas expansion as Elihu Root and Theodore Roosevelt, albeit “acting on behalf of American self-interest [were] also in pursuit of a strong image of anti-empire – a world of free societies associated with the United States” and that many “influential foreign policy figures in the United States have lamented the nation’s penchant for *excessive idealism*, not *imperialism*” (524-525, emphasis added).

According to Tyrrell (544-545), however, empire is not a single monolithic concept, and he prefers to call it a “historically changing social formation,” insisting, furthermore, that the United States is undeniably an empire because it has occupied countries, changed their regimes and exerted its power directly or indirectly over other people. McCoy, Scarano and Johnson (28) state, accordingly, that despite the differences between the US and the so called historical empires, a plethora of contemporary analysts from both sides agree that empire is the best word to characterize the United

States' role and status in the world today, although its role is often euphemized by using phrases such as "leadership" or "American geopolitical leadership" (Schueller 171), or by using terms like "'World Power' not 'American Empire,' . . . 'global power' not 'imperialism'" (Kaplan 1993, 13). Looking past this rhetoric and doubletalk we should not be asking whether the United States *is* an empire but, rather, *what kind* of an empire it is (Dawson 1; Tyrrell 544-545). I will approach this question by providing a brief cross-section of the development of American imperialism starting from the Spanish-American War in 1898 and, when relevant to the scope of my thesis, establishing links between the United States' imperial past and the present.

The period following the Spanish-American War, Young (2001, 42) argues, was the "high point of general jingoistic [American] imperialism . . . [and] the period in which the United States shifted its policy from the acquisition and assimilation of contiguous territory through a militarized form of settler expansion, to one of direct acquisition and control of colonies overseas on the European model." The Spanish-American War gave American imperialists the opportunity to establish an overseas empire when the United States acquired former Spanish colonies, particularly Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines (Daalder and Lindsay 4; Young 2001, 42). Tyrrell (54) and Kaplan (1993, 12-13) point out that the period from 1898 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914 is often considered merely an "aberration" by those who do not wish to label the US an empire. However, Daalder and Lindsay (5) argue that under president Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine<sup>4</sup> the US claimed its role as the world police for the first time in history, and although Roosevelt declared that the US had no desire for further land acquisition in the western hemisphere, by the same token "he insisted that the United States could not stand idly by while Latin American nations mismanaged their economies and

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<sup>4</sup> Introduced in 1823, The Monroe Doctrine was intended to prevent European imperial powers from intervening in the newly independent Latin American colonies and to ensure that the US could exert its own power in the western hemisphere.

political affairs.” Accordingly, the US conducted five military occupations in Latin America between 1904 and 1934 (ibid.).

Unlike its European counterparts, the United States governed its island colonies by relying heavily on private subcontractors and local administrations that had relatively free hands to operate in the colonies (McCoy, Scarano and Johnson 7). American imperialism did not rely on strong civil service but was “held together” by the army and the navy, supplemented by missionaries, nongovernmental organizations, such as YMCA, and other volunteers (Tyrrell 543). Elihu Root was responsible for formalizing “this system of ad hoc imperial rule by re-organizing key elements of the U.S. government and establishing a complex of public-private linkages...” (McCoy, Scarano and Johnson 25). Innovations in colonial government – including policing, drug prohibition, surveillance through security agencies, and restricted immigration – later traveled back to the US and transformed the government “from a small bureaucracy with weak domestic capacities and limited hemispheric reach into an expanded, empowered apparatus launched on a path to global power” (ibid. 7, 17). Tomes (536) sees a clear connection between “the colonial policing and the birth of the twentieth-century national security state” which is relevant to the concept of the state of exception discussed in the final part of this chapter. Furthermore, there is no question that the empire also profoundly affected national defense and the organization of the military and “traces of this lasting institutional imprint have been evident, in the aftermath of 9/11, during Washington’s recent misadventures in the Middle East” (McCoy, Scarano & Johnson 7, 17).

Woodrow Wilson took office as President of the United States in 1913. He believed in American exceptionalism, insisting the US had a moral obligation to engage in world affairs. Interestingly, Daalder and Lindsay (6) argue that his request for a declaration of war against Germany was not based on securing American interests abroad but on making the world safe for democracy. The United States adopted the role of the “world police,” on a mission to democratize the globe. The US

believed (and believes) so firmly on the universality of its values that, for instance, after the Second World War, the US “did not stop and ask if liberty and democracy were what German and Japanese people wanted” (Huntington 1982, 244). As Ignatieff (14) puts it, “America teaches the meaning of liberty to the world; it does not learn from others.” In Wilsonian spirit, Suri (526-527) states that the US has been developing democratic polity and has been a “positive revolutionary force,” for instance in China in the late 1800s. Pursuing his ends-justify-the-means approach, Suri (527) insists that the US “often allied itself with anti-democratic ‘strongmen,’ but the presence of American institutions and ideas inevitably contributed to domestic resistance against these leaders” and that today the US “might ally itself formally with the degenerate royal family that rules Saudi Arabia, but images (and sounds) of American freedom inspire resistance among local businesspeople, youths, and especially women.” However, Chomsky (2012, 231) states, somewhat cynically, that from the American point of view, “[o]f all the ‘threats’ to world order, one of the most persistent is democracy, unless it is under imperial control...” In other words: global democracy, which the US has so vehemently advocated, works only if the US has the final say on who wins the elections.

After the First World War, Wilson championed for the creation of the League of Nations envisaged in the Treaty of Versailles, but to his great dismay the Senate at home rejected the treaty (Daalder and Lindsay 6-7). The rejection has been commonly interpreted as a triumph for isolationism, but Daalder and Lindsay (7) point out that the internationalists and imperialists in the Senate, both Republican and Democrat, opposed the treaty as well, not because they objected to the US involvement in world affairs, but because they felt that being part of the League of Nations could hinder the US to act freely and unilaterally abroad, and that the treaty would undermine the Constitution and strip Congress of its power to declare war.

By the beginning of the 1930’s the isolationist sentiment took over the US again because of the Great Depression and the looming of the Second World War in Europe, and the US retreated from the

international stage for a short period of time only to reappear after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 (Daalder and Lindsay 8). After the war the US had established its place as the superpower that had not only prevailed, but become even stronger and wealthier, unlike the other major world powers.

After the Second World War, under President Harry S. Truman, the United States entered the world stage to advance American values and interests but now it preferred to act (at least nominally) with the consent of multilateral institutions, and thus, for instance, the United Nations, the IMF and the World Bank were created (Daalder and Lindsay 8-9). Chomsky (2003, 29), however, trumps the importance of the UN by arguing that it has been used by the United States to push its agenda, and whenever the UN has failed to go along, the US has dismissed it and acted unilaterally. In relation to the IMF, Bush (199) argues that today “IMF liberalization policies have resulted in unemployment, hyperinflation, recession and state collapse...” and that globalization “operates predominantly in American and wider Western capitalist interests.” Here we can see a link to the abovementioned nature of American imperialism as an amalgam of governmental and private agents and interests which today is especially well represented by countless private contractors operating in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this model, Bush (197) argues, the exploitative endeavors of multinational corporations are made possible by the US military power. Rowe (2007, 44) sees “a dialectical relationship between cultural or free-trade imperialism and military imperialism . . . [which] encourages, rather than diminishes, military conflicts in the place of international diplomacy.” Chomsky (2012, 189) adds that after a US Supreme Court ruling in 2010, which allowed corporations unrestricted spending on elections, “corporate managers can in effect buy elections directly, bypassing more complex indirect means.”

The Truman approach to international affairs was picked up by Dwight D. Eisenhower (elected in 1953), and it ultimately lasted roughly for the next fifty years (Daalder and Lindsay 10). In the Cold War period, the US had extensive interests abroad which it had to defend (ibid.) and, indeed, in the post-1945 period the United States have covertly or directly influenced the regimes opposing its



interests and political philosophy in, for instance, Latin America (Nicaragua, Bolivia, Chile), the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Israel) and South East Asia (the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam), and, according to Lazarus (38), the aftermath of 9/11 must also be situated into this context.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the US gained more freedom to act as it wished – an opportunity that Bill Clinton, according to his critics, did not seize. However, Clinton’s critics found what they had been looking for in George W. Bush (Daalder and Lindsay 12). Rowe (2007, 42) argues that the US has revived traditional imperialism by exerting its “unchallenged power in the most flagrantly militaristic manner,” unwitnessed since the peak of the British Empire. On a similar note, Hunt (207) states that especially the post-9/11 military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have revived the discussion of the United States empire. Instead of an empire, the United States has been characterized a hegemon, but, as Aravamundan (23) points out, “[h]egemony requires consent, but lately consent is increasingly absent” and she labels the US “a rogue state” instead. Daalder and Lindsay (12-13) describe George W. Bush’s United States as “unbound,” meaning that the US maximized its freedom to act by “shed[ding] the constraints imposed by friends, allies, and international institutions” and “us[ing] its strength to change the status quo in the world,” as well as to act, not preemptively, but *preventively*. Chomsky (2003, 12-14) characterizes preventive war as “the use of military force to eliminate an imagined or invented threat...” and sees preventive warfare as a part of United States “imperial grand strategy” which aims to prevent any challenge to the prestige of the United States. A prime example of preventive warfare is the 2003 invasion of Iraq, also known as Operation Iraqi Freedom, whose formal motive was neutralizing Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction which, it turned out, never existed.

Interestingly, the aftermath of 9/11 has shown that “questions of ‘empire’ are more urgent than ever as advocates of the ‘new American empire’ exhort the US to learn from European imperialism...” (Loomba 1), and “while *colonialism* is virtually over today, *imperialism* continues apace as Western

Nations such as America are still engaged in imperial acts, securing wealth and power through the continuing economic exploitation of other nations” (McLeod 8, emphasis in original). McCoy, Scarano and Johnson (33) see the United States as “the American imperial state, which fused, in these formative colonial decades, public and private institutions, foreign and domestic elites, realpolitik and Christian moralism, and hard and soft power to become a uniquely adaptable array for global governance.” Dawson and Schueller (1) warn that in the aftermath of 9/11 “[t]he passage of the USA Patriot Act, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the prolonged detention of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and, most important, the unilateral invasion of Iraq in 2003 suggest that a new kind of imperialism – though of a particularly insidious kind, requiring disciplining at home and abroad through the inculcation of an imperial culture – might be at hand.” It may be a unique empire, unlike its historical predecessors, but nevertheless, there is no question whether the United States should be called an empire. The history of US imperialism has resulted in an unscrupulous state which does not shy away from using even the most questionable means in order to protect its integrity. State of exception, which I will be discussing shortly, is arguably one of the embodiments and results of US imperialism.

As stated above, American imperialism has its ideological roots in American exceptionalism. Madsen (15) argues that “George W. Bush’s image of the ‘empire of evil’ . . . is entirely consonant with the ideology of American exceptionalism that posits the United States as a nation uniquely able, and charged with the mission, to oppose this kind of transcendental political evil.” Söderlind (6) cleverly parallels the Puritans’ errand into the wilderness of the New World, encouraged by Winthrop’s sermon, with the US endeavors in the Middle East: “The wilderness into which light has to be thrown at all costs is now the Old World, more specifically the Middle East, the cradle of both Western and Eastern civilization, and liberal democracy – and market capitalism – the new gospel to be spread, the new product to be exported whether the recipient wants it or not.” As Madsen (26) puts it, “exporting America to ‘un-America.’” This gospel is justified and fueled through generalizations in the mass

media and popular culture and the world seems to have been divided into “us” and “them.” According to Dittmar (108-109), these generalizations state that “[t]hey’ are barbaric, evil, uncivilized, and bent on destroying ‘us,’ while ‘we’ have God, justice, patrimony, civilization, and now freedom and democracy on our side . . . Our task, according to this discourse, is to stave off the barbarians at the gate.” The barbarian “other” generates fear which is used to control the US domestic population (Takacs 2) in order to maintain the state of exception. The enemy is dehumanized by this rhetoric of fear and

[p]opular culture has largely legitimated [war as a] response to terrorism by constructing terrorists as criminal psychopaths impervious to reasoning and therefore requiring extermination. On TV, military dramas (*JAG*, *Over There*, *The Unit*), political thrillers (*24*, *The Agency*, *Threat Matrix*, *The Grid*), crime dramas (*Crossing Jordan*, *Missing*, the *Law and Order* franchises), and forensic programs (*Bones*, the *CSI* franchises) have played an important role in clarifying the moral stakes of the war on terrorism. Relying on reflective standards of realism, these genres are loathe to exceed or challenge the established bounds of discourse and so usually enforce the Bush administration’s depiction of the war on terrorism as a “monumental struggle between good and evil” (ibid.)

The most recent example of popular culture’s insidious influence is the critically acclaimed *Showtime* hit series *Homeland*, which superficially might seem to give us the story from the perspective of the “other” as well, but it ultimately bundles all the Muslims together and presents them as irrational, evil, and not to be trusted. On the other hand, the actions of the US (as horrific as they may be) are justified in the name of greater good. These dichotomies of “us” and “them,” “good” and “evil,” “civilized” and “barbaric” will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 3. In the final part of this chapter below, I will outline Agamben’s theory of the state of exception which, as already mentioned above, has manifested itself in the actions of the US government during the War on Terror.

### *States of Exception*

In his book *State of Exception* (2005), Giorgio Agamben outlines the genealogy of the phenomenon, starting from ancient Rome, to the states of exception in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, all the way to the present day by providing examples from France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Britain, and, finally, the United States. Agamben (2) argues that “modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system.” This might not seem like something that democratic countries would impose on their citizens, and the description may remind us of Nazi Germany or Stalin’s Soviet Union, but Agamben (ibid.) insists that, even though not technically declared, a voluntarily created and permanent state of exception has become a vital practice among even the democratic states today. He claims, furthermore, that the George W. Bush administration was determined to make the state of exception the rule and thus making “the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) . . . impossible” (22). I will unravel Agamben’s theory by analyzing *iustitium*, the “archetypal state of exception” (Bellina viii) of ancient Rome, and parallel it with the American post-9/11 state of exception as well as with Coetzee’s Empire. Although critics have questioned how Roman law can be applied in a present day context, Gregory (2004, 63) points out that Agamben draws the parallel deliberately, in order to illustrate that his argument is about the metaphysics of power. In other words, Agamben is concerned with the fundamental, underlying nature of power.

In ancient Rome, *iustitium* (meaning literally “standstill or “suspension of the law”) was declared when a war, civil or foreign, or an uprising was threatening the state. *Iustitium* was a state of exception which the emperor could implement when he felt the need for it (Humphreys 682). Similarly,

according to Lenta (80), “the United States uses law as an instrument of power that it can apply and suspend at will.” Agamben uses *iustitium* as a model for his theory of the state of exception and he specifies four different features of *iustitium* that also characterize the modern state of exception. Firstly, the state of exception is “not a dictatorship . . . but a space devoid of law . . . in which all legal determinations . . . are deactivated” (Agamben 50). The state of exception is not a “‘state of law,’ but a space without law” (ibid. 51). Secondly, the space devoid of law is “so essential to the juridical order that it must seek in every way to assure itself a relation with it,” even if “the juridical void at issue in the state of exception seems absolutely unthinkable for the law” (ibid.). Nevertheless, this juridical void “has a decisive strategic relevance for the juridical order and must not be allowed to slip at any cost” (ibid.). Thirdly, because the acts committed during *iustitium* (or a state of exception) are “situated in an absolute non-place with respect to the law,” they “escape all legal definition” (ibid.), and thus “cannot be legally judged” (Bellina ix). Finally, the suspension of law releases

a force or a mystical element . . . that both the ruling power and its adversaries . . . seek to appropriate. Force of law that is separate from the law . . . without application, and, more generally, the idea of a sort of ‘degree zero’ of the law – all these are fictions through which law attempts to encompass its own absence and to appropriate the state of exception, or at least to assure itself a relation with it (Agamben 51).

Since my thesis is concerned with the US post-9/11 War on Terror and the state of exception (and not the least because the US is usually “considered to be the cradle of democracy” not a platform for a state of exception [Agamben 19]), I will try to simplify Agamben’s train of thought above by paralleling it to the “dialectic between the president [of the United States] and the Congress” (ibid.). In what follows, “the law” equals “Congress,” since it normally should have the last word in legislative issues, and the “adversary” of the law and the juridical order, the power, equals “the President.” During the post-9/11 state of exception the President of the United States has trumped the Constitution as the Commander in Chief and appealed to extraordinary circumstances in order to gain the support of Congress. In a state of exception, the law and lawlessness are being considered by both parties above,

each of them trying to think what is best for the nation even though the actions might be unconstitutional. The legislative branch (Congress), in a face saving act, justifies this lawlessness by recognizing and appealing also to the extraordinary circumstances because it knows that the actions it appropriates happen in a “space devoid of law.” Bellina (ix) juxtaposes Agamben’s theory with the War on Terror by stating that the “juridical tension inherent in the state of exception necessitates a constant . . . interaction between order and the suspension of order that can be used to justify every conceivable abuse of power . . . epitomized by the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks...” Indeed, as Moses (119) argues, “the law [Congress] does not delimit the use of power [the President]; rather, power ultimately defines the meaning of the law and circumscribes the realm in which it applies.”

According to Agamben (19), this bizarre power struggle in American government is ultimately about the conflict over who has the authority in an emergency situation (such as the aftermath of 9/11).

At the core of this conflict is the Constitution’s Article 1 which

establishes that “[t]he Privilege of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it” but does not specify which authority has the jurisdiction to decide the suspension (even though prevailing opinion and the context of the passage itself lead one to assume that the clause is directed at Congress and not the president). The second point of conflict lies in the relation between another passage of Article 1 (which declares that the power to declare war and to raise and support the army and navy rests with Congress) and Article 2 which states that “[t]he President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States” (ibid. 20).

According to Agamben, this tradition of conflict between the executive and the legislative branches in the US is perfectly exemplified by Lincoln’s mobilization of the army in the Civil War, after which he “acted as an absolute dictator” (20): he “authorized the General in Chief of the Army to suspend the writ of habeas corpus whenever he deemed it necessary along military lines between Washington and Philadelphia...” and “authorized the arrest and detention in military prisons of persons suspected of ‘disloyal and treasonable practice’” (ibid.). Agamben (ibid.) reveals the paradox that characterizes extraordinary measures in democratic states by stating that the decisions above were “based on the

conviction that even fundamental law could be violated if the very existence of the union and the juridical order were at stake” (ibid.). Agamben admits, however, that “in a wartime situation the conflict between the president and Congress is essentially theoretical” and “although Congress was perfectly aware that constitutional jurisdictions had been transgressed, it could do nothing but ratify the actions of the president” (ibid. 20-21). Curiously, arguably one of the most admired actions of any president in the history of the US, the Emancipation Proclamation, which was done on Lincoln’s sole authority, is, according to Agamben (21), a perfect example of presidential abuse of power in exceptional circumstances.

Agamben then moves on to list some further examples of executive abuse of power in the US. According to him (21), Woodrow Wilson adopted broader powers than Lincoln, but instead of overlooking Congress he preferred its full approval. During the First World War in 1917-1918, Congress approved, for instance, the Espionage Act and the Overman Act which “not only prohibited disloyal activities” but “granted the president complete control over the administration” and “even made it a crime to ‘willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States’” (ibid.). If we apply Agamben’s theory to *Barbarians*, we see that the Magistrate experiences the power of the state of exception when he challenges the legitimacy of Empire’s Third Bureau because, according to Morton (109), “to challenge the legitimacy of the empire’s sovereign power in the fictional world of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is tantamount to treason.”

The discourse of war is a fundamental tool in the executive’s rhetoric whenever the nation faces dire straits because “the sovereign power of the president is essentially grounded in the emergency linked to a state of war” (Agamben 21). Agamben (21-22) illustrates this by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s use of “the metaphor of war” when he extended his presidential powers to battle the Great Depression, reminding us that the New Deal gave the president “unlimited power to regulate and control every

aspect of the economic life of the country” and stresses the “parallelism between military and economic emergencies...” During the Second World War the president again claimed emergency sovereign powers and Agamben (22) argues, rightly, that the internment of Japanese Americans during the war, not the least because of its racial motivation, was the “most spectacular human rights violation.” In the light of the tradition of the metaphor of war, the fact that after 9/11 George W. Bush constantly referred to himself as the Commander in Chief should thus come as no surprise, because it enabled him to “justify the power of the president to order tortuous acts regardless of contrary domestic U.S. laws or international law... (Passavant 148). The title of the Commander in Chief also allowed him to operate in the territory of “the state of exception, a shadow world where legal norm is suspended, and the suspended form of detention without trial is the norm” (Aravamudan 30). Bearing in mind the internment of Japanese Americans, the creation of an extra-legal space in Guantánamo Bay, where detainees are held indefinitely and “where bare life reaches its maximum indeterminacy” (ibid. 4), is not surprising either. Indeed, it is the “*locus par excellence* of this new state of exception” that is the War on Terror (Gregory 2006, 406). What is more, Agamben (4) boldly juxtaposes the situation of the Jews in Nazi concentration camps with that of the detainees at Guantánamo Bay by arguing that both are entirely without a “legal identity.” Again, if we examine the status of the Magistrate in *Barbarians*, we find it is similar to the detainees in Guantánamo Bay (Morton 2013, 109-110). Even though the Magistrate rants Joll that history will be the judge of the atrocities the Third Bureau brought to the outpost, calling Joll “an obscene torturer,” Joll calmly and sarcastically dismisses him as “the One Just Man” and remarks that the whole affair of torture and violence is in the end “too trivial” to be put in the history books (*WB* 125). Time will tell if the stories of the detainees in Guantánamo Bay, too, become too trivial for history books.

Agamben’s theory mainly concerns European nation states and the United States, and he only briefly mentions colonial states of exception, which, according to Morton (2013, 5), risks overlooking



the violence and oppression experienced by colonized subjects. A colonial subject would most certainly disagree with the exceptionality of the colonial government's atrocious practices, since the violence that the colonizer has inflicted on the colonized, for instance in Africa, is not exceptional at all, but an essential, candid tool of governing and fundamental to the so-called civilizing mission (ibid. 9). Indeed, as Lenta (72) argues, "torture is inherent in the whole imperialist configuration." Even though my focus in this thesis is on the post-9/11 War on Terror and not on European colonial violence, the parallels between the US rhetoric in the War on Terror and the rhetoric of the European colonizers during states of exception are so strong that it is fruitful to make use of them in order to further highlight the arguably universal applicability of the state of exception (not the least since *Waiting for the Barbarians*, as discussed in chapter 2, invites universal allegorical readings).

In the tradition of the civilizing mission, the barbarian "other" in the discourse of the War on Terror, as well as in the discourse of Empire in *Barbarians*, is depicted as an irrational, dehumanized terrorist who is the cause of the war, and the imperialism which has caused the "terrorism" is forgotten or ignored (Morton 2013, 20). Since 9/11, Morton (2013, 20, 31) argues, this "rhetorical manipulation of causes and effects," called metalepsis, is being used by the US and British governments in order to justify the War on Terror by using very similar rhetoric and metaphors that were used in the states of emergency in former European colonies. By presenting examples of metalepsis in counterinsurgency literature written to demonize the Irish, Indians, South Africans, Kenyans, Algerians, Palestinians, and ultimately the enemies of the United States in the War on Terror, Morton demonstrates that metalepsis has been used throughout the colonial world in order to frame "the seditionist and the revolutionary as dangerous individuals" and the "opposition to colonial rule is presented as the cause of repressive emergency measures rather than a revolutionary political response to a repressive and exploitative colonial sovereignty" (ibid. 84). Like the US, the "colonial regimes have used the law as a technique of power to produce states of exception, and . . . the literary prose of counter-insurgency has produced

narratives and stereotypes that often reinforce those laws and states of exception” (ibid. 210). Especially since 9/11 the western media has been promoting Islamophobic stereotypes such as the infamous cartoon about Muhammad (ibid. 211) or, for instance, the depiction of Muslims in films and TV shows such as *Homeland*, as already mentioned above.

As we have seen, the similarities in the rhetoric behind the concepts of colonialist metalepsis and civilizing mission as well as American exceptionalism are quite apparent. The dichotomy of us/them, civilization/barbarism is the reasoning behind the justification of the state of exception. As Gregory puts it:

The juridical and the cultural operate together, and the racializations that they jointly license have been given a particular force by President Bush’s declaration of the ‘war on terror’ as a war of ‘Civilization’ against the barbarians at the gates (and within the gates). This invocation of an *indivisible* global civilization works to make the exception – understood as a zone of indistinction between the law and its suspension – *invisible* by conjuring a shape-shifting, nomadic enemy who inhabits the shadows beyond the human (2006, 410, emphasis in original).

Just like Empire in *Barbarians*, the United States scours the desert for the specters which they may never find, but that is beside the point here because ultimately the barbarians were never meant to be found and the reason for their existence is providing the necessary fuel to keep the state of exception running. An empire always needs its “other.” In *Barbarians*, and in the War on Terror, “[t]he Manichean economy of colonialism – the discrimination between evil barbarians and good citizens of the Empire that is without real moral basis – is sustained through the violence of constructing and imposing categories (civilized/barbarian, good/evil, friend/enemy) on a reality that resists such categorization” (Lenta 74).

But how is it possible that even a democratically elected government can declare and uphold such a deceptive state of exception? Pease (25) explains the psychological reasoning of the masses in his discussion on the establishment of the US National Security State in 1950, which, he argues, changed American politics even more than the Homeland Security after 9/11. He notes that

[a]t the site of the state's declaration of exceptions to its constituting laws, the vast majority of U.S. citizens did not seek relief from these illegal suspensions of their constitutive bonds . . . because the state fantasy of exceptionalism took hold of their psyches at the site of these exceptions. Rather than protesting against the state's abrogation of its rules, U.S. citizens fantasized themselves as the sovereign power that had suspended the law in the name of securing the nation (Pease 33).

For an individual citizen, as Diken and Laustsen (447) point out, the state of exception can be troubling and even dangerous because it makes it harder for the citizens to make the distinction between enemies and friends, not to mention that the state starts to perceive its citizens as potential enemies. In *Barbarians*, when Joll arrives to the outpost, he almost immediately suspects the Magistrate's "political and cultural loyalty . . . since he is closer to the frontier people than to the capital . . . [and], unable to profit from the local knowledge of the magistrate he despises and ignores, Joll proceeds to put into practice a policy that will create the very dangers he fears..." (Kerr 25). Taking over the administration and declaring a state of exception, as Castillo (79) figuratively puts it, Joll is "blinded," he is "the emblem of the estrangement of knowledge and law, of law and justice," whereas the Magistrate "whose eyes are open to the sun, espouses the humanistic values of knowledge and justice, but he no longer represents Law . . . he is powerless."

Agamben's theory of the state of exception is captivating because it is bold enough to argue for the similarities between authoritarian and liberal democratic states during the state of exception, and, even more importantly, because it maintains that today the state of exception has, in fact, become the rule (Gregory 2006, 406). Indeed, Matteucci (17) urges us to see the forest from the trees, prompting us to "concern ourselves with the past and present continuities between dictatorship and democracy." Mazover (30) states that, unsurprisingly, our "age of the War on Terror and Enduring Freedom, of renditions and Guantánamo, sees extraordinary interest in [Agamben's] ideas." Dawson and Schueller (2) argue, in turn, that in the new US imperialism, embodied, for instance, in "the extrajudicial zone at Camp X-Ray [in Guantánamo Bay]" and in "the National Security Agency's illegal wiretapping

program, the rule of law has been suspended in the name of sovereign power in more and more sites both at home and abroad.” But even though this new imperialism has “permeated the US cultural imaginary,” and regardless of Pease’s abovementioned pessimistic depiction of the psychology behind the state fantasy of exceptionalism which sustains the state of exception, “it has also generated unprecedented levels of resistance” (ibid.). Similarly, reading *Waiting for the Barbarians* reminds us of “what is likely to occur if agents of state are authorized to engage in torture” (Lenta 82); if our enemies are dehumanized and demonized, and the state of exception becomes the rule. This demonization will be discussed in the next chapter, in which I will analyze the dichotomy of the “civilized” and the “barbaric,” and how it is used by Coetzee’s Empire in the novel and in the War on Terror, fueled by the notion of American exceptionalism, in order to justify the aggression and the state of exception.

### 3. Civilization and Barbarism: Depicting the Self and the Enemy

Lenta (73) acknowledges and briefly discusses the exceptionalist idealism which gives the United States the “moral virtue” to wage its War on Terror, but he does not discuss that aspect in any greater detail. The concept of American exceptionalism has been such an important factor in shaping US foreign policy, as already stated above, that if we want to understand the motivation behind the atrocities carried out during the War on Terror, we need to examine the exceptionalist idealism inherent to the United States. Furthermore, because Coetzee’s novel is indeed titled *Waiting for the Barbarians*, it categorically follows, that if one is labeled ‘barbarian,’ the other must be, or at least considers him or herself, ‘civilized’ or ‘superior’ to the ‘barbarian.’ Foucault (2003, 195) identifies the barbarian as someone “who can be understood, characterized and defined only in relation to civilization, and by the fact that he exists outside it.” Accordingly, to Boletsi (68), “the notion of the barbarian operates as the constitutive outside of civilization and feeds the superiority of the civilized.” She traces the etymology of the word *barbarian* to Ancient Greek in which it imitated the “incomprehensible mumblings” of foreign people (“bar-bar”), signifying, on the one hand, the lack of understanding by the ‘civilized’ and, on the other hand, even more importantly, the unwillingness to understand and communicate with the inferior, ‘barbarian’ Other (ibid.).

In *Barbarians*, the people inhabiting the outpost are no strangers to the barbarians as they have been trading with them all their lives, but, nevertheless, they perceive them expressly as barbarians. As Franklin (5) puts it: “The townspeople [are] not physically cruel to the barbarians, but they fe[e]l superior to them, and they trea[t] them as inferiors.” As opposed to settlers and their mission to inhabit and civilize the frontier, the barbarians are mere “pastoralists, nomads, tent-dwellers” (*WB* 16); the imprisoned old man and the boy are, in turn, described merely as “simple people” (*WB* 4). The people of Empire are the “men of the future. . .” the barbarians “the men of the past” (*WB* 79). The fisherfolk,

the Magistrate observes, as they have been captured inside the walls of civilization for interrogation, “are happy here; indeed unless we chase them away they may stay with us forever, so little does it seem to have taken them out of a state of nature” (*WB* 20). Such is the lure of civilization and progress that it practically enchants the “aboriginal”<sup>5</sup> (*WB* 19) savages. The townspeople are not, however, too happy about the ways of these aboriginals: “We stand watching them eat as though they are strange animals . . . [t]heir habits are frank and filthy . . . their animal shamelessness, their volatile tempers . . . Then altogether, we lose sympathy with them. The filth, the smell, the noise of their quarrelling and coughing become too much . . . kitchen staff . . . begin to toss them their food from the doorway as if they were indeed animals” (*WB* 19-21). If even the Magistrate, who is used to the presence of these aboriginals, is repulsed by the habits of them, one could easily imagine what Colonel Joll thinks of their ways. It is important to acknowledge that these “strange animals” in question are actually the aboriginal fisherfolk, *not* the barbarians who are posing a threat to Empire, but men like Joll do not distinguish between the fishing people and the barbarians, whose cultures are notably different and who even speak different languages – languages that Joll’s men cannot understand in the first place. For Joll “[p]risoners are prisoners” (*WB* 23), there is no variety of others, there is just one Other.

According to Lenta (74), the novel “charts the alteration in the Magistrate’s status from servant of the Empire and administrator of its laws to its adversary” and he characterizes the Magistrate as a liberal man of conscience. Kerr (25), for his part, positions Joll and the Magistrate at odds because the former sees the latter as a “culture traitor” who is running a “scruffy liberal regime” and is closer to the frontier than to the capital. Much to Joll’s dismay, the Magistrate wants to explore the frontier instead of policing it. Castillo (79) separates the two characters by stating that Joll is blinded (as metaphorically represented by his sunglasses) and embodies the “estrangement of knowledge and law,

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<sup>5</sup> Coetzee uses this term, commonly associated with the indigenous peoples of Australia, perhaps in order to further universalize the geography of Empire.

of law and justice,” whereas the Magistrate has his “eyes . . . open to the sun, espous[ing] the humanistic values of knowledge and justice.” Describing the Magistrate simply as a liberal man of conscience, however, is a gross oversimplification, and many critics have addressed the more complicated position of the Magistrate, on the one hand, as “the One Just Man” (*WB* 125), and, on the other, as the “jackal of Empire in sheep’s clothing” (*WB* 79). His understanding of the barbarian culture and, for instance, his fascination about the barbarian girl, his obsession to “decipher” her, are representations of his Eurocentric or Western attitudes towards the Other because, albeit well-meaning, his attitudes nevertheless “depend on the barbarism/civilization opposition and therefore reproduce, rather than repudiate, the hegemonic discourse of history within which this opposition functions” (Boletsi 69). As liberal as he may appear, he reveals his true colors by telling the girl jokingly (earlier they have taken in a wild fox cub) that the townspeople “will say [he] keep[s] two wild animals in [his] rooms, a fox and a girl,” and then lets the reader know the rather unsurprising reception of his joke: “She does not see the joke, or does not like it” (*WB* 37).

His obsession to decipher the scars caused by the torture on the girl’s body is ultimately about redeeming himself and relieving his own guilt because he initially turned a blind eye on the torture. His obsession is not about truly wishing to understand the Other. Urquhart (6) juxtaposes the Magistrate’s attempt to plead for the barbarians with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa, and argues that he is actually motivated by the justification of his involvement in Imperial atrocities and his wish to “heal himself” rather than the barbarians. The Magistrate finally acknowledges that his attempt to decipher, to seek entry to the girl, is merely another form of torture: “The girl lies in my bed, but there is no good reason why it should be a bed. I behave in some ways like a lover – I undress her, I bathe her, I stroke her, I sleep beside her – but I might equally well tie her to a chair and beat her, it would be no less intimate” (*WB* 46). The Magistrate and Colonel Joll are, according to Nashef (25), “two sides of the same coin, the cruel and benevolent colonizer,” and “no

matter how humane a colonialist is, a colonialist is still a part of an oppressive system.” Even though the Magistrate initially denied his responsibility for the atrocities perpetrated by the Third Bureau, he now realizes that the very rule of law he symbolizes in fact allows for the declaration of the state of exception which, in turn, results to the torture of the barbarians (Boehmer and Morton 13). After he has witnessed the grim power of Empire – first through the torture of the barbarians and, finally, through his own torture – he realizes that his liberal ways are merely a charade, that he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing: “For I was not, as I liked to think, the indulgent pleasure-loving opposite of the cold rigid Colonel. I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow” (*WB* 148).

When these harsh winds start to blow in the form of an allegedly imminent barbarian invasion, the townspeople are petrified. It has been rumored that the barbarians have started arming themselves and Empire should “take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war” (*WB* 9). The Magistrate himself does not believe the rumors. Instead, he declares in his monologue: “Show me a barbarian army and I will believe” (*ibid.*). These rumors spread in Empire once in every generation and apparently the people have forgotten that the threat has never materialized before. Nevertheless, the people are in terror: “There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters” (*ibid.*). Terror, according to Young (2010, 307), “works as both an individual and collective emotion subjecting all to a charged state of fear, an overpowering sense of imminent danger – extreme anxiety, danger so near that it overwhelms and paralyzes you.” The Magistrate wonders to himself if the children of the town are still allowed to play in the nearby ruins “or do their parents keep them at home with stories of barbarians lurking in the hollows?” (*WB* 110). Fear of the unknown and the feelings of terror are powerful emotions that the powers that be can manipulate for their purposes.



Terror becomes easily associated with terrorism and produces the effect of terror; and to live in terror is to live in fear – in fear of the terrorist, the unknown, the unfamiliar, who, it seems, acts randomly, even irrationally (Young 2010, 308).

This same fear of terrorism, the unknown, enabled the Bush administration to wage its War on Terror. In his 1933 inaugural speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt famously declared that the only thing Americans have to fear is fear itself. That sentiment seems to have fallen into oblivion. The fear and terror after 9/11 was maintained in the US in a rather Orwellian way as “the country was subjected to a baffling succession of color-coded alerts [and] local authorities busied themselves devising new emergency measures intended to secure residents, visitors, and assets from the threat of terrorist actions” (Ware 101). The state thrives on fear. The state needs its citizens to be afraid of something unknown, the barbarians at the gates. Fear enables the state to police its own citizens and effectively maintain the state of exception.

In *Barbarians*, after having witnessed the Third Bureau torturing the captured barbarians and fisherfolk, the Magistrate becomes totally disillusioned with the carnage that Colonel Joll and his men have brought with them to the once peaceful frontier town. He claims he is not afraid of the barbarian invasion but, instead, muses about the barbarians destroying Empire whose representatives he has named the “new barbarians.” Nevertheless, he is frightful about what would follow the barbarian invasion: “Do I really look forward to the triumph of the barbarian way: intellectual torpor, slovenliness, tolerance of disease and death? If we were to disappear would the barbarians spend their afternoons excavating our ruins?” (*WB* 56). With this, he reveals that for him the barbarians are indeed barbarians. He hates men like Joll, the new barbarians, who only wish to destroy and rule with fear and violence, but despite the fundamental differences in their philosophies, they initially “managed to behave towards each other like *civilized* people,” and being *civilized* is something that, in the end, brings them together, because the Magistrate has always “believed in *civilized* behaviour” (*WB* 25,

emphasis added). His sympathies certainly do not lie with Empire, but at the same token, he has little faith in the barbarians, for they too will be the ruin of civilization as he knows it. The barbarians do not savor civilization; they will not excavate the ruins of civilization in order to obtain invaluable information about the past. The “civilized” (Western) misconception about barbarians has always been that they have no civilization and despise it; they do not cultivate the land, but plunder it (Foucault 2003, 195). As the Magistrate tells us: the barbarians will not “preserve our census rolls and our grain-merchants’ ledgers in glass cases, or devote themselves to deciphering the script of our love-letters” (*WB* 56). They will not do that because they are *uncivilized* – after all, they are the barbarians.

If we now shift the focus more on the United States, and how the dichotomy of civilized/barbarian has been used in connection with the War on Terror, we find that the oppositional rhetoric which divides the world roughly in the West and the rest still prevails. In his influential work *The Clash of the Civilizations*, Samuel P. Huntington (1996, 29) divides the post-Cold War world into seven or eight major civilizations and predicts that local conflicts which could escalate into more serious wars between states will occur between different civilizations. In the West, Huntington argues, the collapse of communism in the early 1990’s was considered the proof that Western values and liberal democracy were ideal and universal and that the rest of the world should unconditionally embrace them (*ibid.* 183-184). The world has been divided at the macro level into the West and the rest, and what the West sees as universalism of its values, the rest of the world may see as imperialism (*ibid.* 184). According to Huntington, “[t]he dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance [and] *Islamic intolerance*...” (*ibid.* 183, emphasis added). In addition, he concludes his book by confidently predicting that a possible global war is most likely to be fought between Muslims and non-Muslims (*ibid.* 312). Dawson and Schueller (18) criticize Huntington for participating in American imperialism because his book, which influenced a great deal of neoconservatives, “formulates clear and absolute cultural distinctions between East and West and

articulates the need for the West to make its values prevail...” In this light, *Clash of the Civilizations* can be considered a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy which has contributed to widening the gap between the Western and the Muslim civilizations. Muslims are the “barbarians” (even though Huntington has awarded them a civilization of their own) who in their intolerance of Western liberal values will sooner or later, inexorably, cause a conflict which escalates into a war. According to Foucault (2003, 195), “the barbarian’s relationship with . . . civilization . . . is one of hostility and permanent warfare . . . The barbarian is always the man who stalks the frontiers of States . . . [and he makes] his entrance in to history . . . by penetrating a civilization, setting it ablaze and destroying it.” Hartley (141) sees this “political applicability of the barbarian” resonating in the rhetoric that has been used to justify the War on Terror and the democratizing mission of the United States.

As seen above, Huntington’s Orientalism seems questionable at best, but there is another author who has influenced the American neo-conservatives perhaps even more. Raphael Patai’s *The Arab Mind* (1973) has become the “Bible of the neocons on the Arab world” (Dawson and Schueller 18), and as disturbingly Orientalist as the book is (for starters Patai blatantly bundles over 200 million people together as simply “Arabs”), what makes things even more disturbing is the fact that it was republished in 2002 and has since been used by the neo-conservatives as the ultimate guide to the Arab mind (Schueller 172-173). It features an introduction by a former US army colonel Norvell De Atkine, now the head of Middle East studies in Fort Bragg, and the book is characterized as essential reading by the US military (ibid.). Condemned by the majority of scholars within Middle East studies, the popularity of the book among neo-conservatives (along with *The Clash of the Civilizations*) says, according to Schueller (172), “more about the hierarchical binaries necessary for imperialism’s functioning than any interest in ‘the Arabs.’” There is a clear correspondence between Patai’s generalizations and the George W. Bush administration’s insistence on the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, the Al Qaeda, Iraq and Saddam Hussein (North Korea aside), as one unified enemy of the United States and the free world, all

of them acting and scheming in perfect unison. At the eve of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Saddam Hussein was identified with all of Iraq, and Iraq's (and the whole region's) civilization was undermined, by perceiving it to the public as simply "a desert place 'out there' . . . destined for the exercise of US power..." (Said, quoted in Leroux, 424).

Indeed, when it comes to the rhetoric justifying the War on Terror (and whatever atrocities may come along with it) there seems to be a great divide between the civilized and the barbarians, the virtuously rational and the murderously irrational. What "we" do is considered righteous and civilized, what "they" do is considered barbarous and uncivilized. If *we* have been guilty of doing something which undeniably is wrong – even barbarous, certainly uncivilized – in the worst case scenario it is characterized merely as "aberrational" (as exemplified later in chapter 5. by the response of the American media and politicians to the Abu Ghraib photos), whereas *they* constantly operate in a barbarously irrational and violent manner.

Another rhetorical way of justifying the cause and actions of one's own troops in a war – especially if the enemy engages in guerrilla warfare or uses so called terrorism because it is significantly weaker materially and in numbers – is to claim that the enemy's acts are cowardly and treacherous. In a 2005 speech to the nation, George W. Bush was seeking justification for the war in Iraq (and the War on Terror as a whole), calling the nation to arms against the "new enemy [who] teaches that innocent individuals can be sacrificed to serve a political vision" (quoted in Houen 113). Houen (*ibid.*), however, points out that Bush was doing the same thing himself: he was preparing the nation for future sacrifice and loss of lives in order to promote *his* political vision. *Their* sacrifice is cowardly and barbarous whereas *ours* is a noble sacrifice. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, we learn this attitude from the conversation the Magistrate has with a sentry. The barbarians had come in the night without anyone noticing and flooded the fields, something they could do again and again if they wished, with only a few men armed only with spades (*WB* 110). What is more, according to the sentry,

the cowardly barbarians “never stand up for a fight, . . . their way is to creep up behind you and stick a knife in your back” (*WB* 108). What could be more dishonorable than that?

In *The Language of Empire* (2005), Lila Rajiva examines how the Western mainstream media has portrayed the US-led War on Terror and depicted the enemy. According to Rajiva (78), the ideology of Western liberalism demands that official reports and newscasts embellish, or leave out altogether, the atrocities perpetrated by the US. Instead, we hear about “the cowardliness of the mujahideen who fight from behind the mosques . . . [not about] the cowardliness of pilots invulnerable at tens of thousands of feet raining destruction on unprotected cities” (*ibid.*). She argues, furthermore, that the propaganda of the “civilized” is determined to make the enemy as barbarous and monstrous as possible. Religion, she states, is the perfect vehicle to convey this image to the public:

Exaggerating the role of religious fanaticism in terrorism fulfills the need to have the enemy defined as evil by his very nature. It fulfills the need to provide an impetus that cannot also function as a reason. It provides the enemy with intention but robs him of rational motive. It defines him as irrational, atavistic, and tribal, so that his motiveless malignancy can foreclose even the possibility of negotiating with him. The individual motives of the actors are erased or made fungible and a generic terrorism is created, unyielding and eternal, uncaused and ahistoric. Ultimately, defining the terrorist’s irrationality in terms of religion prevents him from evading responsibility. To consider someone truly mad would, after all, absolve him of motivation and thus accountability. So, paradoxically, the terrorist is constructed as both culpable and irrational, both coldly calculating and psychopathically savage. This is to understand the enemy not as human like us, but monstrous (Rajiva 93).

In addition, all Muslims are lumped together in accordance with the division of civilizations as formulated by Huntington, and the discourse of civilized/barbarian is encouraged by claiming that there exists an inherent “lack of civility in Arab society” (*ibid.* 94). The history of the West as a brutal colonizer and, for instance, the fact that both world wars originated in Europe are categorically ignored, but the Muslims are seen as mad, in fact too mad to be healed, so they must be purged. This purging, according to Rajiva (95), has manifested itself through Shock and Awe military operations, for instance in Vietnam, where the US “destroyed villages to save them from Communism,” and in Iraq, where the US “destroy[s] cities to cure them of Islam.” The West sees the chanting of “Allahu Akbar” as

something irrational and barbarous, fanatically religious, because it is often associated with warfare and Jihad, but what the West fails to see is the fact that the Christian prayer, especially in American society, is categorically used when soldiers are preparing for battle and, for instance, before Congress proceedings (ibid.). Indeed, Chomsky (2002, 21) claims that the US and the Western world do not oppose religious fundamentalism as such, and that the US, in fact, “is one of the most extreme religious fundamentalist cultures in the world; not the state, but the popular culture.” The Christian rites that surround white westerners in everyday life have been domesticated and are no longer acknowledged, but the rites and practices of the Other seem irrational and dangerous, in other words, barbarous (Rajiva 95).

What the West sees as irrational terrorism, is in fact, according to Rajiva (95-96), rational behavior because there is no other way for the terrorist to be heard. Like the dead soldier on horseback, riding lifelessly back to the outpost, sent as a message to Empire by the barbarians in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Rajiva (96) sees the filmed beheading of Nicholas Berg in 2004 as “an act of communication . . . creat[ing] a new relationship with the weak and the powerful.” She maintains that terrorists *should* be negotiated with (contrary to what is usually encouraged) because “through negotiation alone we permit reason to cut into the dance of death and reclaim our own humanity that stands by hypnotized” (ibid.). “Otherwise,” she argues, “we condemn not him [the terrorist] but us to the abyss. But it seems that it is precisely what we want. We covet the abyss. It is we who are monstrous in our unreason” (ibid.). It is the same unreason and the amnesia for one’s own past that rationalized the arguably disproportionate revenge (warfare in Afghanistan, invasion of Iraq, detaining unlawful combatants, etc.) for an act of terror which caught the United States off-guard and left the nation in disbelief on 11 September 2001. The emergence of the Homeland Security State, i.e. the state of exception, is, according to Pease (155), a direct outcome of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that dramatically altered the Americans’ belief in what he calls the “inviolability of the Virgin Land.”

Before moving on to further discuss the concept of the state of exception in chapter 4, it is in order to examine why the 9/11 terrorist attacks turned out to be such a unique, political-landscape-altering event that we are still to this day experiencing the repercussions.

The terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 changed the geopolitical scene as we had known it. The attacks were “something quite new in world affairs, not in their scale and character, but in the target” because it was the first time since 1812 that the United States’ national territory<sup>6</sup> had been violated or even threatened (Chomsky 2002, 11). The World Trade Center had been the target of a terrorist attack already in 1993, but the scale of destruction of the 1993 attack was completely different, claiming only six lives, as opposed to almost 3,000 in 2001. Thus, when Chomsky argues that the target itself was novel, he means that the target was the US mainland which had not experienced such large-scale devastation (other than resulting from a natural disaster) since 1812. McClintock (93) dramatically describes 9/11 as a “spectacularly memorialized day [when] the most powerful state in the world was brought to a catastrophic halt by the murderous temerity of nineteen young men with weapons no grander than box cutters and the will to die.” The myth of the Virgin Land – a new Eden drawn on a blank page by the Puritan settlers and the pioneers, inviolate because it was inhabited by people who in their fantasy considered themselves “radically innocent” – was dismantled on 9/11 (Pease, 158-159). Because of the unprecedented violation of the Virgin Land, the myth could no longer be sustained, and the Bush administration’s “symbolic response to 9/11 replaced Virgin Land . . . with Ground Zero . . . and the Homeland as the governing metaphors through which [people could] come to terms with the attack” (ibid., 157-158). Ground Zero, the newly blank canvas, was the foundation of the state of exception which would be necessary in order to defend the Homeland. The resulting spectacular Shock and Awe military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq were designed to turn these

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<sup>6</sup> Chomsky purposefully does not use the often-made Pearl Harbor analogy because, according to him, Hawaii at the time was not a US territory but rather a colony (2002, 11).

new metaphors, Ground Zero and Homeland, into new existing historical facts (ibid. 158). Because the myth of the Virgin Land had been made obsolete by the terrorist attacks, the Bush administration had to fill the void by introducing the myth of the Homeland.

Because of their unprecedented nature, the 9/11 attacks, according to Pease (161-162), “evoked the nation-founding violence out of whose exclusion the Virgin Land had been organized”; they brought back the violent past of the United States including the annihilation of Native Americans, the carpet bombings in Dresden during the Second World War, as well as the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When a myth as important to American exceptionalism as Virgin Land begins to unravel, revealing the suppressed uncivilized history of the “radically innocent,” it is crucial for the state to replace that myth and “mask its history of violence” (ibid. 169). The Bush administration’s solution was to turn the American population into spectators captivated by a Shock and Awe spectacle designed to obliterate the “terrorizing powers that posed a threat to the Homeland” and turn their land into “a blank page onto which to inscribe a different political order” (ibid. 171-172). Indeed, according to Pease (172), the aptly named Operation Infinite Justice and Operation Iraqi Freedom “restaged the colonial settlers’ conquest of Indians and the acquisition of their homelands.” The violated Virgin Land, now replaced by Ground Zero, demanded a spectacle and destruction of *any* homeland to compensate for the loss of the United States’ “virginity” (ibid. 178).

In the final pages of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Magistrate writes about the outpost, describing it as an “oasis” (*WB* 168) whose charm of life no visitor failed to be struck by, that it “was paradise on earth” (*WB* 167-168). He describes it as if it was, indeed, the Garden of Eden, the pure and inviolable Virgin Land. The reality, we have learnt before, however, is quite different. Situated in the desert outskirts of Empire, the living conditions at the outpost were harsh and the surrounding nature unforgivingly rough. The Magistrate also chooses not to describe the terror the townspeople felt when they were waiting for the barbarians, and how the arrival of the Third Bureau and Joll resulted into



despicable atrocities. The citizens of Empire believe in their own version of the Virgin Land myth, inhabiting a land which they cannot recall having ever been penetrated by an enemy. As the Magistrate points out, the rumors about a barbarian invasion occur once in every generation, but because the people forget or are simply unaware of the past, they see Empire as virtuous and untouched by evil and react to any violation of their land as severely as one reacts to the violation of the mythological Virgin Land. Empire needs to protect its borders and seek out possible intruders. Thus, Empire is able to declare a state of exception, overriding the rule of law represented by the Magistrate, with the full cooperation from the terrified citizens. Even the Magistrate, who wishes the reader to believe he is a man of conscience who first and foremost believes in the rule of law and justice, does not at first question Joll's authority (or protest his interrogational methods). Instead he states that Joll is in town "under emergency powers, that is enough" (*WB* 1) because Empire, the Virgin Land, has been violated. That is enough reason for the people to justify the declaration of the state of exception and the arrival of the Third Bureau who will, it is promised, seek and destroy the enemy and avenge the violation.

Later on, when the Magistrate becomes more and more disillusioned and appalled by the evildoings of Joll and his men, he begins to wish for the barbarian invasion even though he earlier has insisted that the barbarians will not attack. Nevertheless, he wishes the barbarians would attack because it would reveal Empire's violent past (the same way 9/11 did to the United States, as stated above). Because Empire is surrounded by indigenous peoples like the fisherfolk and the barbarians, and given the attitude the citizens of Empire have towards them, it is safe to assume that the land now in possession of Empire has once been the land of the indigenous peoples. If Empire is concerned about the revelation of its violent colonial past, its only option is to wage war on the barbarians, relying on its superiority in technology and manpower, displaying prisoners of war in a macabre public spectacle of torture (even encouraging people to participate in the torture) in order to captivate the population. As we have seen above, that is the only way a government can sustain the state of exception – it has to

keep the people preoccupied, it has to awe them with violent spectacles, to make people feel they are in charge. In the novel, once the army ceases to be victorious and starts disintegrating, the people lose faith in Empire and turn against the soldiers who show their real colors by pillaging the town. It is, ultimately, the people who have the power to dismantle the state of exception and the military spectacle. The state, therefore, has to keep its population preoccupied and captivated by its violent spectacles, and to make them feel superior and in the end restore their fantasy of being “innocent victims.”

After 9/11, when the public realized that the Virgin Land was indeed so vulnerable to such an attack, it quickly turned over the power to the executive. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the introduction of the Homeland Security Act in 2002, and the resulting state of exception, the Bush administration could use the newly invented metaphor of the Homeland to evoke “the image of a vulnerable population that had become internally estranged from its ‘country of origin’ and dependent on the protection of the state” (Pease, 169-170). The people were turned into a political minority (the rule of law replaced by the state of exception, legislative replaced by the executive) and the state extended the violation of its enemies’ rights to its own citizens’ civil rights which they exchanged “for the enjoyment of the state’s spectacular violations of the rights of other sovereign states” (ibid. 171). Thus, the sense of superiority of the American population is restored by a spectacle of military supremacy over inferior peoples. 9/11 regenerated national myths of righteousness and heroism that Americans had been estranged from after the Vietnam War, and the US became “a patriotic fiction” for its citizens once again (ibid. 166). Foucault (2003, 100) terms this kind of phenomenon as “reactivation” of old mythology. Once the old mythological sentiments have been brought back to life, the state has to keep the population captivated by “spectacles of violence” because it is the only way the state of exception can be maintained (Pease 179). As Simons observes, every cloud has a silver lining: “For most Americans the 9/11 bombings were a tragedy; for neoconservatives

bent on invading Iraq [already before 9/11] they were also an opportunity. . . [and the] administration's rhetoric fueled and channeled the fury already aroused by the attack themselves" (183). The attacks, as we know, resulted in military occupations and the detention of thousands of innocent "enemy combatants" and the torture of innocent men and women in the name of the War on Terror. The fear of the barbarians, the irrational terrorists, the subhuman "enemies of freedom" (Pease, 167) gave the Bush administration what it needed to subjugate its own people and to continue its imperialist endeavors.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the declaration of the state of exception in the novel and in the War on Terror by applying Agamben's theory and supplementing it with Pease's idea of the state fantasy of exceptionalism because, as Pease (33) argues, and as already stated above, such a fantasy persuades the citizens into upholding the state of exception by imagining themselves as the executive power who suspends the law in order to salvage the wounded nation. Thus, the (state fantasy of) exceptionalism creates the state of exception, and the state of exception, in turn, enables the government to implement exceptional measures, such as the torture of those it deems as its enemies. The government justifies the use of violence because the intelligence obtained from torture supposedly eliminates further threats and prevents possible acts of terrorism in the future. Extra-legal measures are also justified, albeit not officially, by depicting the enemy as inferior, barbarous, and irrational.

The ignorant division of civilized/barbarian, the fear of the unknown Other, and the abovementioned violation of the Virgin Land enable the US, and Coetzee's Empire to declare the state of exception.

#### 4. *Necessitas Non Habet Legem* – Necessity Has No Law

In his essay, Lenta connects the states of exception in the War on Terror and in *Waiting for the Barbarians* by showing the similarities between the torture and atrocities done, on the one hand, in the name of the War on Terror and, on the other, the violence and torture perpetrated by colonial and (historical) imperial powers for instance in French Algeria and apartheid South Africa. He acknowledges the paradoxical situation of “legal illegality” during a state of exception, as formulated by Agamben in *State of Exception*, but does not apply Agamben’s theory in any greater detail. While I subscribe to Lenta’s argument for the continuation of colonial violence in the postcolonial, globalized world, because of the scope of this thesis, and in accordance with the theoretical framework I have presented thus far, I will analyze the state of exception in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and in the post-9/11 War on Terror by applying Agamben’s theory and Pease’s concepts of state fantasies and the Virgin Land.

On the very first page of the novel, Coetzee lays out the exceptional nature of the situation in which the Magistrate and the rest of the inhabitants of the frontier town find themselves. The Magistrate describes his first meeting with Colonel Joll: “We do not discuss the reason for his being here. He is here under the emergency powers, that is enough. Instead we talk about hunting. He tells me about the last great drive he rode in, when thousands of deer, pigs, bears were slain, so many that a mountain of carcasses had to be left to rot” (*WB* 1). Right from the beginning Joll is introduced to the reader as a menacing, blood-thirsty figure, a warrior whose Imperial escapades leave behind mountains of dead corpses. He has traveled to the outskirts of Empire to seek and destroy the barbarians who have (allegedly) violated the borders of Empire. By asserting its aggressiveness and power, Empire is trying to produce a permanent state of exception in which, as Agamben (22) argues, “the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) becomes

impossible.” According to Pease (193) “the Bush administration drew upon the generalized anxiety and panic generated by this historic catastrophe to declare a state of permanent emergency domestically through the initiation of a Global War on Terror . . . [establishing] an alliance between national security and the aggressive drives of the U.S. people so as to incriminate dissent as a minor form of treason and to eliminate any loyalty that was more cosmopolitan than the defense of the homeland.” The nation’s consent to the War on Terror and the state of exception was persuaded by regulating “the knowledges produced” about the administration’s policies through legislation such as the Patriot Act and Campus Watch, resulting to a situation where critics of the state could easily become enemies of the state (ibid.).

Coetzee’s Empire, too, uses propaganda to induce fear and unrest in the frontier. The Magistrate is well aware of this. Note that the rumors about the imminent barbarian invasion had originated from the capital, not from the frontier:

But last year stories began to reach us *from the capital* of unrest among the barbarians. Traders travelling safe routes had been attacked and plundered. Stock thefts had increased in scale and audacity. A party of census officials had disappeared and been found buried in shallow graves. Shots had been fired at a provincial governor during a tour of inspection. There had been clashes with border patrols. The barbarian tribes were arming, the rumour went; the Empire should take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war. Of this unrest *I myself saw nothing* (WB 8-9, emphasis added).

The Magistrate makes clear that he does not believe the invasion is about to occur because he is familiar with the barbarians’ culture and knows how they operate, something which will turn against him as the events unravel and the Third Bureau tightens its grip on the town. The Imperial “persuasion” has not affected his state of mind, and the Magistrate eventually becomes the enemy of the state. But even though he wishes to criticize it, he, like the other townspeople, is too intimidated by Empire to actually do so and indulges in self-censorship: “I write an angry letter to the Third Bureau, unsleeping guardian of the Empire, denouncing the incompetence of one of its agents. ‘Why do you not send people with experience of the frontier to investigate frontier unrest?’ I write. Wisely I tear up the letter”

(*WB* 21). The Magistrate represents the law, legality and justice (i.e. the legislative); the lawlessness, (legal) illegality and injustice produced by the state of exception (i.e. the sovereign executive), in turn, is embodied by Colonel Joll of the Third Bureau. And when harsh winds blow, justice and legality bow under the weight of lawlessness and exception.

The Magistrate's reluctance to criticize Empire is understandable. In a state of exception, even a democratic state is able to "persuade" the people, as exemplified by the means used by the Bush administration in its War on Terror: issued shortly after 9/11, the Patriot Act of 2001 enabled the administration to apprehend any alien (or, as already stated above, a US citizen) suspected of endangering the Homeland, erasing "any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being" (Agamben 3). Interestingly, Passavant (169-170) points out – proving Agamben's argument that exception has indeed already become the rule – that the Patriot Act and the policies of the Bush administration are, in fact, not exceptional at all since, he argues, they are a continuation of a national security state apparatus constructed through legislation such as the National Security Act of 1947 and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996.

The citizens of Coetzee's Empire also find themselves in this predicament. In addition, the people (as are US citizens) are subjected to the rhetoric which produces the fear of the unknown and, it seems, imaginary enemy. This rhetoric of fear and intimidation produces a docile population which lines up behind (or, more accurately, in front of) its leaders to face the barbarous enemy who threat to end civilized life as they know it. The Magistrate describes the atmosphere and attitude in the frontier over the news of the rumoured barbarian unrest: "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. Commerce is at an end. Since the news arrived from the capital that whatever might be necessary to safeguard the Empire would be done, *regardless of cost*, we have returned to an age of raids and

armed vigilance. There is nothing to do but keep our swords bright, watch and wait” (*WB* 41, emphasis added).

The cost of safeguarding Empire becomes greater than the people could initially imagine as the officials of the Third Bureau of the Civil Guard – the “guardians of the State, specialists in the obscurer motions of sedition, devotees of truth, doctors of interrogation” (*WB* 9), men who have nothing but “contempt for the regular police and for due process of law [and] a detestation of smooth patrician talk like [the Magistrate’s]” (*WB* 85) – are sent to the frontier to the expense of people’s individual freedom. The men of the Third Bureau perpetrate gross violations of mental and physical immunity through torture which the Magistrate and the captured barbarians and fisherfolk most painfully experience. In a state of emergency, the atrocities done by the state are easily overlooked, tolerated, or considered as merely aberrational, as the people – as argued by Pease above – become dependent on the state when they feel vulnerable; or they can become the state in their fantasies in order to recover from the trauma caused by a violation of the Virgin Land. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the townspeople’s willingness to turn a blind eye to the atrocities carried out under their noses is evident. When the Magistrate queries a guard (who is not part of the Third Bureau but has been stationed at the outpost already before their arrival) about the torture of the barbarian girl, his reply reflects the tendency of evading responsibility in extraordinary times when extraordinary and shocking measures are being implemented:

‘I do not know, sir! Most of the time *I was not there.*’ He appeals to his friend but his friend is *mute*. ‘Sometimes there was screaming, I think they beat her, but *I was not there*. When I came off duty *I would go away . . .* Sir there were many prisoners to take care of, some of them sick! I knew that her feet were broken but *I knew nothing* about her being blind till long afterwards. *There was nothing I could do*, I did not want to become involved in a matter I did not understand’ (*WB* 39, emphasis added).

The overriding motivation for ignoring the torturous acts is the desire to not get involved. Also the Imperial indoctrination has led the guard to believe that a simple act of sadistic torture is something

sophisticated and serves a purpose that a simple soldier is unable to understand. Another example comes from another resident of the town, the quartermaster's wife, who the Magistrate runs up to after he has already been released from captivity. The woman bemoans the Magistrate's tragic ordeal by simply understating: "We heard that you had such a hard time" (*WB* 139), even though he had been publicly tortured and humiliated right under their noses. Life is going on as if nothing has happened and the Magistrate joins the performance of casual conversation as they "pretend that the voice she hears is not the voice of the man who swung from the tree shouting for mercy loud enough to waken the dead . . . To her, I realize, I disappeared and then reappeared, and in between was not part of the world" (*WB* 139-140). Life goes on in the "town of three thousand souls in which the noise of life, the noise that all these souls make on a warm summer evening, does not cease because somewhere someone is crying" (*WB* 5).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the position of the Magistrate as the righteous liberal humanist, the "One Just Man," is questionable. Coetzee makes sure to emphasize this problematic position of a seemingly humanist and liberal individual in the midst of an authoritarian state of exception in many instances. For example, the fact that the Magistrate turns a blind eye to the atrocities carried out in his former jurisdiction is present in various passages. At the beginning of the novel, as he meets Joll for the first time, he does not dare to address the elephant in the room, the fact that Joll has come to the frontier because a state of exception has been issued and that he is there to wage war on the barbarians. Instead, he gentlemanly evades the whole unpleasant matter: "We do not discuss the reason for his being here. He is here under the emergency powers, that is enough" (*WB* 1). Shortly after that, once Joll has initiated his interrogations, he claims that he has been oblivious to the torture: "Of the screaming which people afterwards claim to have heard from the granary, I hear nothing" (*WB* 5). However, a while later he admits that he "would like to be able to stop [his] ears to the noises coming from the yard below, which has now, it appears, become permanently a prison yard" (*WB* 22). Here he



reveals that he is aware of the torture, but *he would prefer not to hear it*, not to be aware of it. At the same time, however, he is uncertain about how he should react to the sounds of torture. Should he acknowledge or ignore them: “I sit in my rooms with the windows shut, in the stifling warmth of a windless evening, trying to read, *straining my ears to hear or not to hear the sounds of violence*. Finally at midnight the interrogations cease, there is no more banging of doors or tramping of feet, the yard is silent in the moonlight, and I am at liberty to sleep” (*WB* 23-24, emphasis added). When the sounds of torture stop, it liberates him from his moral dilemma about how he should react to the torture and he is finally able to sleep soundly: out of sight, out of mind.

After the interrogations and the torture have ceased for the time being, and Joll has departed to search for the barbarians, the Magistrate tries to eradicate the evidence of any atrocities having taken place in the town and orders the soldiers to clean up the interim torture chamber: “‘Go in there and clean up that room!’ I shout. ‘I want everything cleaned up! Soap and water! I want everything as it was before!’” (*WB* 26). Later he goes to the room to confirm that the memories of all the horrifying things performed inside its walls have been erased: “I kneel down to examine the floor. It is clean, it is swept daily, it is like the floor of any room” (*WB* 38). Before the Magistrate experiences the sinister power of the Third Bureau himself he simply “does what is rather common and, to a considerable extent, understandable: he retreats. For the rest of [the] first part [of the novel] – that is, until Joll departs – he will live in a continuous state of non-participation, of turning a blind eye to what is happening right in his proximity, in the area under his own administration” (Tegla 70).

Blindness is a recurring theme in the novel: turning a blind eye (as examined above); blindness for the truth; blindness for decency and humanness; blindness of seeing the Other as he or she is, free from the warped presentation by the state in order to serve its purpose. As the Magistrate first lays his eyes on Colonel Joll, he examines him curiously, intrigued by his sunglasses:

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 it if he wanted to hide blind eyes. But he is not blind. The discs are dark, they look opaque from the outside, but he can see through them. He tells me they are a new invention. “They protect one’s eyes against the glare of the sun,” he says. “You would find them useful out here in the desert. They save one from squinting all the time. One has fewer headaches . . . At home everyone wears them” (*WB* 1).

Joll’s sunglasses symbolize blinders which enable him to perform his atrocious acts without the slightest “headache.” As the Magistrate points out, he is not blind, he can see, he is not blind to the terrible things he does, but he is not disturbed by what he sees – to him those things are not terrible if they are aimed at the enemy Other. The Magistrate would understand “if he wanted to hide blind eyes,” if Joll was too ignorant to understand that his own actions were atrocious, but he is not blind, he understands what he does but he does not care – he has willingly blinded himself. The captured indigenous boy, interrogated and beaten by Joll’s men, is fixated on Joll’s glasses. The Magistrate tells Joll that the boy “has probably never seen anything like it before . . . He must think you are a blind man” (*WB* 3). Surely someone who is beaten and tortured thinks his torturer is insane, “blind,” but Joll is not – he merely does not want the sun to shine in his eyes, does not want to squint. And because these “blinders” prevent “headaches,” everyone living in the capital, at the center of Empire, wears them because they do not want to see what is going on in the provinces. To people like the Magistrate, who have had relations with the indigenous peoples for ages, Joll’s sunglasses represent something totally new, a new age, a new way of seeing the world. And not even the farthest corner of Empire is immune to the change that this new age brings with it. The blindness that Joll has brought with him, we have seen, is contagious, affecting the townspeople who suddenly become blinded, ignoring the atrocities taking place inside the walls, induced by the “truth” spread by the state.

Mandel, the man who later becomes the Magistrate’s torturer, is perceived by the Magistrate as someone who embodies the new Empire:

He is a good-looking man, with regular white teeth and lovely blue eyes. But vain, I think. I picture him sitting up in bed beside a girl, flexing his muscles for her, feeding on her

admiration. The kind of man who drives his body like a *machine*, I imagine, ignorant that it has its own rhythms. When he looks at me, as he will in a moment, he will look from behind that handsome *immobile* face and through those clear eyes *as an actor looks from behind a mask* (*WB* 84, emphasis added).

Mandel represents the new way of Empire: handsome, muscular, physical but expressionless (a machine) and, in the Magistrate's opinion, insincere – an actor behind a mask who is doing what he is told to do. However, in his clear blue eyes, “windows of his soul...” (*WB* 137), the Magistrate sees the essence of new Empire: “I look into his clear blue eyes, as clear as if there were crystal lenses slipped over his eyeballs. He looks back at me. I have no idea what he sees . . . But when I look at him I see simply the clear blue eyes...” (*WB* 129). Blue eyes represent, on the one hand, the coldness and the lack of empathy and humanity that Mandel exudes in his torturous acts. On the other hand, the blue eyes represent innocence and sincerity: like Joll's sunglasses which prevent him from seeing anything morally wrong in his wrongdoings, Mandel's blue eyes signify his sincerity and belief in Empire's cause because it is the worldview he has grown up with; he sees the enemies of Empire as treasonous enemies of state who may be disciplined with impunity, with no remorse. According to Warner (80), “[e]motional distancing prevails even outside the pressure cooker of war. It is choosing to turn a blind eye to protect ourselves from the pain of seeing others suffer. It is dismissing the customs and traditions of another culture with the notion that the way we do is better.” This tendency can be seen in the young officer, with whom the Magistrate has a conversation about the barbarians, who sincerely asks: “Tell me, sir, in confidence . . . what are these barbarians dissatisfied about? What do they want from us?” (*WB* 54). It is inherently the same question George W. Bush posed after 9/11: “Why do they hate us, when we're so good?” (Chomsky 2003b, 83). “We” are so good that our cause and our perseverance are always just and the state will be defended at any cost, by any legal, illegal or extra-legal means necessary, for necessity knows no law – *Necessitas non habet legem*. When the existence of “civilization” is in jeopardy, “[a]ll concerns of ethics, of human rights, of due process, of constitutional

hierarchies, and of the division of governmental power [are] subordinated to [an] urgent eschatological mission” (Pease 177) which, we are lead to believe, will enable us to live another carefree day.

The September 11 terrorist attacks were an event “so novel and so explosive that they soon became, in a jolting twist, one of the most thoroughly familiar and long-lingering after-images of contemporary history” (Gregory 2004, 24). As mentioned above, this was not the first time the United States had been affected by an act of terrorism, and, for instance, the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995 as well as the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 had already “raised the issue of [the] nation’s preparedness for terrorism events” (Bullock and Haddow et al. 8), but after 9/11 the threat of terrorism had become “too palpable to ignore” (Chomsky 2003, 217). Indeed, after 9/11, with the introduction of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, terrorism became the major focus in emergency management in the United States, embodied by the creation of the Department of Homeland Security which comprises of more than 179,000 federal employees from 22 federal agencies (Bullock and Haddow et al. 9-11).

The incredible and graphic images of the high-jacked airplanes flying into the World Trade Center skyscrapers, turning them from well-known landmarks into a pile of grey dust, produced a “sensation of spellbound fear amongst the public” (Boehmer and Morton 12). The shocked nation turned to their leaders in the time of crisis and sought, on the one hand, comfort and, on the other, retribution. The George W. Bush administration responded by launching its War on Terror and declaring a state of exception which established military commissions to “try any non-US citizen believed to be a member or former member of Al-Qaeda or otherwise engaged in ‘acts of international terrorism’” (Farrell 121). According to Chomsky (2003, 26), the administration has been strongly criticized for exploiting the national tragedy of unprecedented proportions in order to extend its “grand strategy . . . to domestic US law,” including using 9/11 as an excuse to discipline its own citizens, and

reserving the right to declare people, even US citizens, enemy combatants and unlawfully imprisoning them indefinitely without granting them a trial.

In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq and the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, it has become more and more evident that the Bush administration was taking advantage of the national emergency, purposely shifting the focus away from the atrocities done in the name of defending American interests, its exceptionalist values and its imperial enterprise: “The public talk from the Pentagon and the White House, when contrasted with what was really going on, amounted to strategic deception. The target of all the duplicity and double-talk was not, of course, Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, but the American press corps, and the American people” (Hersh 15). According to Pease (190-191), after 9/11 the Bush administration fought “for the hearts that preoccupied the minds of the American people” and it exploited and harnessed their collective mourning and anger to gain support for the War on Terror. Indeed, many US citizens felt the war was justified (ibid.). The Manichean mentality of “us-versus-them” or “with-us-or-against-us” was encouraged and, as Simons (190) observes, “the Republicans proved themselves masterful at rendering as treasonable, or at least unpatriotic, any criticism that cut to the heart of their own overblown rhetoric.” Dawson and Schueller (19) argue accordingly that 9/11 gave the neo-conservatives an excuse to act unilaterally in their military campaigns overseas, and, also, to suppress domestic civil liberties and protests. The Bush administration subsequently renewed the state of exception annually in order to create a permanent state of exception in which exception becomes the rule (Gregory 2010, 58).

The sovereign, even dictatorial, mentality introduced by the Bush administration in the wake of 9/11 has, indeed, been a cause for great concern for many, and the “distinction between rule and exception has taken on new urgency as we witness a state of exception becoming the rule in a country that has always prided itself on its principled adherence to the rule of law” (Söderlind 3). Hartley (147), states somewhat idealistically (quoting Judith Butler) that the aftermath of 9/11 was “a missed

opportunity for the United States to ‘redefine itself as part of a global community’” and by “[a]ssuming an aggressive militaristic stance, the US government attempted to collapse the finely wrought distinction of self-interest and common good in the name of an all-embracing international cause but . . . this strategy of force misread individualism as autonomy.” This approach, characterized by retributive military aggression, entails that the United States has no desire to discuss the reasons for, and/or condition of, terrorism, and there is no willingness to understand the unfamiliar, the unknown, the Other (ibid.). Surely this reaction and approach should come as no surprise because, as we have seen, when “governments claim danger, the deepening of masculinized authority typically follows” (Enloe 141), and even though Hartley sees 9/11 as a missed opportunity for the United States to (re)claim a more humanist role on the world stage of international politics, Morton (2008, 184) trumps the idealistic reveries by stating that the aftermath of 9/11 and “the so-called war on terror is really a defence of imperial sovereignty.” Indeed, according to Pease (180-181), the War on Terror, paradoxically, became the exception “to the exceptionalist norms that [the US] had propagated across the planet . . . in a world in which two of the constitutive norms of American exceptionalism – rule of law, free markets – had become the planetary norm.”

The state of exception, as we have seen, is a product of carefully orchestrated rhetoric and actions which live off of the citizens’ fears and insecurities and which ultimately subordinates them and persuades them to hand over the power to the state. As Pease (179) argued already in the previous chapter, the state needs to maintain “spectacles of violence . . . erected at the site of Ground Zero” in order to captivate the people and to subjugate them. *Panem et circenses* – bread and circuses, as they said in Ancient Rome. In the next chapter, I will analyze what I feel is the strongest argument in Lenta’s essay, the spectacular qualities of (and the real motivation behind) the state-sanctioned torture and violence in the War on Terror and as they are perpetrated by Empire in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

## 5. Exceptional Torture?

As stated earlier, in his essay Lenta uses *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a tool for identifying the true, underlying motivation for the use of torture in the War on Terror (72). In the wake of 9/11, the Bush administration and its allies, including many other democratic governments, justified the use of questionable interrogation methods by limiting the definition of torture and by appealing to the “ticking bomb” scenario which, simply put, suggests that torturing a suspected terrorist can be justified if torture is used to extract information which will lead to sparing the lives of the innocent (Farrell 8-9). Lenta (81) argues, however, that the real motivation for the United States’ (and Coetzee’s Empire’s) use of torture is to restore its superpower status after the humiliating terrorist attacks and to paralyze and vanquish its enemy by the spectacle of torture as witnessed, for instance, by the images of subjugated prisoners from Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib (and by the public torture scenes in the novel). By making use of Foucault’s three-fold formulation of torture – interrogational, spectacular, and terroristic – Lenta shows how the sovereign power (the United States/Empire) can restore its power and reverse a national tragedy and humiliation such as 9/11. In the novel, these three categories overlap and their aim, according to Lenta (74), is “to produce the ‘truth’ necessary to sustain the determinate meanings and categories on which [Empire] relies.”

I subscribe, for the most part, to Lenta’s Foucauldian views on the underlying spectacular and terroristic motivations for the use of torture by Coetzee’s Empire and the United States, and I will examine them at the end of this chapter, but before that, I feel, it is necessary to address the *official* justification for using torture – the so called “ticking bomb” scenario. Since torture is today considered widely unethical and various international treaties ban its use, I will begin this chapter with a brief history of torture and its prohibition, after which I will go on to discuss how democratic nations, such as the United States, can justify the use of torture in “ticking bomb” situations (given the treaties that

expressly prohibit all types of torture). Curiously, Lenta does not discuss the “ticking bomb” scenario in his essay, but it requires closer examination because, on the one hand, it is, indeed, the scenario which has been widely used by governments and academics in their arguments for the justification of torture (Bellamy 141), and, on the other hand, as will be shown below, it is actually not a valid justification at all because there is no evidence for its efficiency and usefulness in extracting potentially life-saving information.

According to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, torture is defined as

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining for him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions (quoted in Farrell 3).

Furthermore, the European Court of Human Rights, along with many scholars, has argued for distinguishing torture from other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment by stating that, rather than by the inflicted pain or suffering, torture can be characterized by the powerlessness of the victim and the purposefulness of the act (ibid. 4-5). The practice of torture, according to Foucault (1991, 39), “is of ancient origin: it goes back at least as far as the Inquisition . . . and probably to the torture of slaves,” and it was still used in the eighteenth century to extract confessions, which then had priority over other evidence in court proceedings, and because a confession saved the investigators’ time, it was preferred over other methods. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, in the wake of the French Revolution (1789-1799), torture was started to be considered “a survival of the barbarities of another age” (ibid. 39).

The spectacular torture that preceded public executions was now seen as equally, if not more, savage than the crime itself, and there was concern that the spectacle might “accustom the spectators to



a ferocity from which one wished to divert them, to show them the frequency of crime, to make the executioner resemble a criminal, judges murderers, to reverse roles at the last moment, to make the tortured criminal an object of pity or admiration” (ibid. 9). The Magistrate in *Barbarians* shares this concern by asking the reader if “spectacles of cruelty corrupt the hearts of the innocent?” (*WB* 118). This corruption of the hearts of the innocent is perfectly manifested in the scene where the captured barbarians are being publicly tortured. Joll urges the crowd to participate and the soldiers offer the people their canes. A girl, “giggling and hiding her face” (*WB* 116), is being encouraged by her friends to take part: “A soldier puts a cane in her hand and leads her to the place. She stands confused, embarrassed, one hand still over her face. Shouts, jokes, obscene advice are hurled at her” (ibid.). Another example is when Mandel humiliates the Magistrate by making him jump back and forth over a rope the other end of which is being held up by the cook’s little grandson. Mandel is not satisfied with the Magistrate’s performance and tells the boy to tell him he should do better next time. The boy shyly and innocently “smiles and looks away” (*WB* 127).

Because torture could corrupt the hearts of the innocent (among the other unwanted effects given above), the publicity of the punishment then shifted to the trial, and because modern justice found punishing shameful, the body was no longer touched – at least in public – and the corporal punishment was replaced by the deprivation of individual liberties and the suspension of rights (Foucault 1991, 9-11). As we can see, this development is well in line with the abovementioned distinction between physically inflicted pain through torture and the psychological aspect, the sense of total powerlessness of the victim and the deprivation of his or her individual freedom. In *Barbarians*, the Magistrate encapsulates the essence of individual freedom by telling us about his ordeals in incarceration: “I look forward with craving to exercise times, when I can feel the wind on my face and the earth under my soles, see other faces and hear human speech. After two days of solitude my lips feel slack and useless, my own speech seems strange to me. Truly, man was not made to live alone! I

build my day unreasonably around the hours when I am fed. I guzzle my food like a dog. A bestial life is turning me into a beast” (*WB* 87). Simply by confining him, excluding him from the surrounding civilization and depriving him of his freedom, Empire is able to dehumanize the Magistrate and turn him into an animal driven by the most primitive survival instinct:

I realize how tiny I have allowed them to make my world, how I daily become more like a beast or a simple machine . . . Then I respond with movements of vertiginous terror in which I rush around the cell jerking my arms about, pulling my beard, stamping my feet, doing anything to surprise myself, to remind myself of a world beyond that is various and rich . . . My requests for clean clothes are ignored. I have nothing to wear but what I brought with me. Each exercise day, under the eye of the guard, I wash one item, a shirt or a pair of drawers, with ash and cold water, and take it back to my cell to dry . . . In my nostrils there is always the mouldy smell of clothing that does not see the sun . . . *No one beats me, no one starves me, no one spits on me* . . . I remember smiling when the door first closed behind me and the key turned in the lock. It seemed no great infliction to move from the solitariness of everyday existence to the solitude of a cell when I could bring with me a world of thoughts and memories. But now I begin to comprehend how rudimentary freedom is. What freedom has been left to me? The freedom to eat or go hungry; to keep my silence or gabble to myself or beat on the door or scream. If I was the object of an injustice, a minor injustice, when they locked me in here, I am now no more than a pile of blood, bone and meat that is unhappy (*WB* 93, emphasis added).

As witnessed by the Magistrate here, physical torture certainly is not needed in order to turn an individual’s life a living hell. Using Agamben’s terminology, the Magistrate has been reduced to bare life: he has lost his individual dignity and his status as a human being. The severity and effect of psychological torture is articulated well by a former Guantánamo detainee, Ruhai Ahmed, who tells about his experiences in an interview concerning the use of music as a means of torture: “I can bear being beaten up, it’s not a problem. Once you accept that you’re going to go into the interrogation room and be beaten up, it’s fine. You can prepare yourself mentally. But when you’re being psychologically tortured, you can’t” (quoted in Worthington).

In the United States in the 1950’s and 1960’s the state funded research for interrogational torture based on behavioral sciences which used methods including hypnosis, electroshock therapy and the administration of LSD (Rajiva 163-164). The development of interrogational methods went on throughout the twentieth century, and the Bush administration had all this knowledge available to be

used in the War on Terror, and they adopted an approach called “no-touch torture,” which includes “disorienting techniques and self-inflicted pain to make the subject responsible for his own suffering...” (Rajiva 164). Attacking its critics and human rights activists, the administration argued that by claiming that “keeping people awake and in binds” was an act of torture, the critics were “doing a disservice to the victims of *real* torture” (Hersh 19, emphasis added). Paradoxically, in *Barbarians* the Magistrate initially shares this attitude as he compares his incarceration to that of the captured barbarians as he asks: “How can I regard myself as a victim of persecution when my sufferings are so petty?” (WB 93); but at the same time he realizes that his sufferings “are all the more degrading for their pettiness” (ibid.).

As much as the George W. Bush administration liked to downplay the no-touch techniques, claiming that torture requires physical, violent contact, McCoy (quoted in Gregory 2006, 417) argues that they create “a synergy of physical and psychological trauma whose sum is a hammer-blow to the fundamentals of personal identity.” The no-touch techniques that the US used in Abu Ghraib included using military dogs to intimidate the detainees, keeping detainees undressed and photographing them in degrading positions, for instance in stimulated sexual positions, and improper use of isolation violating the Geneva Conventions (Strasser 112-114). Also in Camp X-Ray in Guantánamo Bay dogs were used for intimidation, and one detainee was reported to have been held in isolation in a light-flooded cell for a period of over three months (Rajiva 150). Furthermore, the personnel in Guantánamo used “sleep deprivation, exposure to extremes of cold and heat, and placing prisoners in ‘stress positions’ for agonizing lengths of time” (Hersh 14).

Having redefined torture as “no-touch torture” or “torture lite” by using stress positions and sleep deprivation as legitimately justified and standard means of torture, or better yet, not torture at all, the administration further declared that “for an act to constitute torture . . . it must inflict pain that is difficult to endure [and that physical] pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to the

pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death” (ibid. 5). As will be shown later on in this chapter, in connection with spectacular and terroristic torture, it became known, as the Abu Ghraib torture scandal began to unfold, that all these criteria were met in the techniques used by the guards. It became clear that the refined and “civilized” no-touch policy had been supplemented with actual physical violence and savage torture.

Even though Foucault argues, as mentioned above, that perceiving spectacular and physical torture as inhuman and savage resulted in the prohibition of torture in eighteenth-century Europe, Castresana (119) states interestingly that even though the

absolute prohibition of torture today is generally grounded in the fundamental value of human dignity . . . [t]orture did not begin to be eradicated as a consequence of moral or political principles . . . or because it was considered an evil itself, but mainly for practical or instrumental reasons when the English model of criminal process began to be imported into continental European law, evolving from the inquisitorial to the accusatorial system.

The English model, already formulated in the mid-1600’s, argued that a defendant could not be forced to incriminate him- or herself and that the confession could not be compelled (ibid. 120). The French Revolution turned torture into a political issue for the first time, and torture was started to be seen as inhuman and undignified. This transformation, states Castresana (120-121), is best exemplified by the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the United States which establishes that “every human being is endowed with certain inalienable rights and, more importantly, that government exists to guarantee these . . . rights to life, liberty, and personal integrity.” It is well worth emphasizing that in the Declaration “[n]o room has been left for torture” (ibid. 121).

However, this gentlemanly and idealistic view about warfare was destroyed in the aftermath of the Second World War when the totality and brutality of modern warfare became evident, spurring a newly-found interest in universal basic human rights (ibid.). The Cold War, however, and the division of the world into two camps and the tensions that came with it, made it increasingly possible for

governments to ignore or even abuse the universal social contract formulated in the Geneva Conventions (ibid.).

Be as it may, practically every nation in the world today considers torture a crime against humanity, universally immoral and, in the legal point of view, “torture affects the basic pillars of the legal structure of democratic states, its very essence” (ibid. 122). Indeed, according to Bellamy (126), there are not many governments who are not part of at least one convention prohibiting torture. The interest in the issue is shared by most governments and there is an astonishing amount of treaties and conventions established since the end of the Second World War, all of which advocate for the absolute prohibition of torture.<sup>7</sup> If there is such an overwhelming consensus among governments on the prohibition, why is it then that even democracies today, such as the US, have carried out acts of torture which are unquestionably illegal? If “[b]oth the European and American Conventions on Human Rights prohibit derogation [from the prohibition of torture] even in times of war and public emergency, and even when those emergencies threaten the survival of the state” (ibid.), how can the United States justify its “stance on torture which is the opposite of the rest of the democratic international community...” (Castresana 127)?

Bellamy (127) neatly identifies the two strategies by which the US has justified its “use of forceful interrogation techniques,” also known as torture, in the War on Terror. First, it has claimed that

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<sup>7</sup> Article 5 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. Common article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions insists that all those not taking an active part in hostilities be treated humanely. The article goes on to prohibit specifically “violence to life and person, in particular, murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture” and “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment of any kind”. Both torture and inhumane treatment were expressly forbidden in the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted in 1984 and came into force in 1987, and to which the US is a signatory. Torture is also prohibited by regional human rights treaties such as the European Convention on Human rights, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987, entered into force 1989), the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1969), the American Convention on Human Rights (1969) and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture (1985). Torture is also prohibited in the Genocide Convention (1948), the Supplementary Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, entered into force 1976), and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973) (Bellamy 126).

the presidential, executive authority over military operations overrules the international law. This is just another case of the executive ruling over the legislative, the sovereign trumping the rule of law, as explained by Agamben in his theory of the state of exception, and as demonstrated above in chapters 2 and 4. In addition, Bellamy (*ibid.*) argues that “individual interrogators who use torture may not be violating the prohibition because theirs is an act of national self-defence.” This is interesting since, as seen above, the US has agreed to not use torture “even in times of war and public emergency, and even when those emergencies threaten the survival of the state” (Bellamy 126).

As already discussed in chapter 3, the 9/11 terrorist attacks traumatized the American public so overwhelmingly because of their unprecedented nature that it enabled the government to declare the state of exception. In this emergency, signed treaties are completely ignored and necessity overcomes the rule of law. The second strategy, according to Bellamy (127), and as already discussed in this chapter above, is to “offer a very narrow interpretation of what counts as torture.” The US certainly is not the first western democracy that has been using torture for intelligence purposes. For instance, torture has been used in states of emergencies by the French in Algeria and by the United Kingdom against the IRA. It is significant, however, that France’s use of torture was constituted a war crime by the French courts, and in 1979 the UK prohibited the use of interrogational torture, creating a precedent dictating that the “contemporary US claim that certain acts designed to cause physical and/or mental pain for the purpose of extracting information do not constitute torture” is not valid (*ibid.* 129).

Another way to justify extraordinary measures and the torture of the enemy is to make the captured combatant equal to a soldier in the battlefield. After having witnessed the public spectacle of torture and humiliation on the captured barbarians, the Magistrate, indeed, asks whether it is “worse to beat a man’s feet to pulp than to kill him in combat?” (WB 118). Bellamy (129-130) answers this question by identifying four moral arguments for the separation of the two: firstly, the ultimate objective of torture is to “force its victim into colluding against himself” by making the victim

experience powerlessness but at the same time being “actively complicit in his own violation” which “not only violates [the] victim’s agency and autonomy but actively perverts them”; secondly, torture is “violence aimed at defenceless people and therefore violates the principle of non-combatant immunity” and “unlike a soldier on a battlefield, the victim of torture does not pose a threat to the torturer” (there is also the case of the “ticking bomb” terrorist in which it can be argued that the victim is not a non-combatant and poses a direct threat to innocent people, but this situation will be discussed below); thirdly, torture is simply “wrong because it violates fundamental principles of humanity” and torture violates “the most basic of human rights that derive from a person’s very humanity;” finally, the rule-utilitarian argument “emphasizes the role of reciprocity and importance of moral consistency” and that “the greater good is achieved by observing a rule prohibiting torture” because, on the one hand, history has shown that torture is often used for “pernicious reasons” such as silencing government opposition, and, on the other hand, if we use torture, who is to say that torture will not be used against us in the future? However, 9/11 gave the Bush administration the excuse to “take the gloves off” and, according to Bellamy (131), “torturing suspected terrorists [became] a legitimate means of extracting information vital for the protection of US citizens.” The logic of the state of emergency makes the exception the rule and “ticking bomb rationale is used to represent ordinary circumstances as extraordinary” (Farrell 11). As the War on Terror escalated in the form of the invasion of Iraq, the soldiers responsible for interrogations were using more and more harsh techniques to the point where it was believed by some that “all the wraps on torture were off” (Whitney xx).

According to Foucault (1991, 40), “interrogation under torture” may be considered as “a torture of the truth.” In the beginning of *Barbarians* the Magistrate tries to persuade the captured old barbarian man to tell the truth to Colonel Joll: “Father, do you see this gentleman? This gentleman is visiting us from the capital. He visits all the forts along the frontier. His work is to find out the truth. That is all he does. He finds out the truth. If you do not speak to me you will have to speak to him. Do you

understand?” (WB 3). A bit later he tries to convince the boy, who has been captured with the old man, that Joll is after the truth only, and once the boy tells what has happened, his suffering will end: “Listen: you must tell the officer the truth. That is all he wants to hear from you – the truth. Once he is sure you are telling the truth he will not hurt you. But you must tell him everything you know. You must answer every question he asks truthfully. If there is pain, do not lose heart” (WB 7). Pain seems to be inherent in the Third Bureau’s interrogation methods, even if the suspected individual speaks the truth. Joll has come to the outpost to gather information about the alleged barbarian invasion. He is using torture in order to extract information from his captives in a situation which dictates severe methods. The truth about the barbarian invasion has to be recovered by any means necessary because the existence of Empire, so it seems, is in jeopardy – the situation resembles the “ticking bomb” situation. The boy and the old man are supposedly withholding information about the barbarian army and its whereabouts and Joll is using torture to “probe for the truth” (WB 5). In his experience he has to “exert pressure to find it” because first he always gets lies, “first lies, then pressure, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth” (ibid.). From his conversation with Joll, the Magistrate bears away that Joll believes that “[p]ain is truth; all else is subject to doubt” (ibid.).

Thus, we are told, in order to extract the truth, truth which has the power to save the lives of thousands of innocent people, one has to be prepared to use even violent and morally questionable, despicable methods. According to Bellamy (132), the use of torture is most often justified by appealing to act-utilitarianism. The act-utilitarian view, as presented originally by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), relies on coldly calculated cost-benefit analysis in which torture may be used if the analysis shows that more lives can be saved by using torture than by not using it (ibid.). Bellamy states, furthermore, that in order to use torture, two criteria must be met: Firstly, “it must be clear that the *purpose* behind the mistreatment of prisoners is the acquisition of information likely to save civilians,” and, secondly, the torturer must “be sure that the victim *has* the information needed to save lives” (132-133, emphasis in



the original). Bellamy (133) points out, however, that the problem with Bentham's act-utilitarianism is that it lacks certain guidelines: how many lives must be in danger to make torture accepted; is one enough (as simple cost-benefit analysis would suggest); how can it be proven that the suspect has the life-saving information which justifies his or her torture?

One of the most common sources for finding support for the justification of torturing suspected terrorist in "ticking bomb" scenarios is the case of 1995 in which the Philippines police, through torturing a suspect for over 67 days, obtained the evidence for a plot to hijack eleven commercial aircraft and to fly a private plane loaded with explosives into the CIA headquarters (Bellamy 136). This may seem like a classic case of recovering vital information through torture, but Bellamy (138) points out that it was not the 67 days of interrogation and torture by the police that prevented the plot from being carried out, but the coincidence of finding documents concerning the plot from the suspect's home after a fire. Indeed, as Bellamy (*ibid.*) puts it: "Given that it took 67 days of torture to extract the information, it seems highly unlikely that torture would have prevented the atrocity had the threat been imminent."

The rationale of the "ticking bomb" situation is also questioned by the Magistrate in *Barbarians* and he becomes more and more aware that the methods Joll is using in his interrogations are not producing any crucial information for Empire which is allegedly in imminent jeopardy. After Joll is through the first round of interrogating the barbarian boy, the Magistrate learns what the boy has "confessed" to. The Magistrate still cannot believe that the nomadic barbarians pose any kind of threat to the powerful Empire and questions the boy about the interrogation:

They tell me you have made a confession. They say you have admitted that you and the old man and the other men from your clan have stolen sheep and horses. You have said that the men of your clan are arming themselves, that in the spring you are all going to join in a great war on the Empire. Are you telling the truth? Do you understand what this confession of yours will mean? Do you understand? . . . It means that the soldiers are going to ride out against your people. There is going to be killing. Kinsmen of yours are going to die, perhaps even your parents, your brothers and sisters. Do you really want that? (*WB* 11).

Of course that is not what the boy wants, but the tortured boy will tell his torturer whatever it is he wishes to hear. The Magistrate confronts Joll and questions his campaign to go seek and destroy the barbarians because it is built on the “confession” of the tortured boy: “I try to dissuade him. ‘With no disrespect, Colonel,’ I say, ‘you are not a professional soldier, you have never had to campaign in these inhospitable parts. You will have no guide except a child who is terrified of you, who will say whatever comes into his head to please you, who is anyhow unfit to travel’” (*WB* 12). Later, the Magistrate tells us about Joll’s interrogation of the fisherfolk about barbarian activity:

The next day the Colonel begins his interrogations. Once I thought him lazy, little more than a bureaucrat with vicious tastes. Now I see how mistaken I was. In his quest for the truth he is tireless. The questioning starts in the early morning and is still going on when I return after dark. He has enlisted the aid of a hunter who has shot pigs up and down the river all his life and knows a hundred words of the fisherfolk’s language. One by one the fisherfolk are taken into the room where the Colonel has established himself, to be asked whether they have seen movements of strange horsemen. Even the child is questioned: “Have strangers visited your father during the night?” (I guess, of course, at what passes in that room, at the fear, the bewilderment, the abasement.) (*WB* 23).

Joll will interrogate anyone including children even if he has no knowledge of their culture or language. He is confident that by inflicting pain in the subject he will arrive at the truth – the truth which will save Empire, the truth he and Empire wish to hear. So why not succumb to the torturers’ will, as the Magistrate chooses to do when he later finds himself on the receiving end of the imperial torture machine: “Let them know they are working on flesh and blood! Declare your terror, scream when the pain comes! They thrive on stubborn silence: it confirms to them that every soul is a lock they must patiently pick . . . So I shouted and screamed and said whatever came into my head. Insidious rationale!” (*WB* 141).

The inefficiency of torture as a means for extracting vital, life-saving information is well documented in the War on Terror as well. According to Bellamy (142), none of the “instances of torture that have emerged since the US embarked on the war on terror have come close to the ticking

bomb scenario.” The International Committee of the Red Cross has actually reported that 70-90 percent of the Iraqis arrested and imprisoned at Abu Ghraib were innocent (Rajiva 47). According to Gregory (2010, 79), the numbers were even higher: 85-90 percent. Furthermore, some of the top US commanders in Iraq later admitted that the interrogations had produced hardly any useful intelligence about the Iraqi insurgency (Danner 42). Moreover, Hersh (2) concludes that very little useful information was extracted at Guantánamo Bay and that more than half of the people did not belong there in the first place. One major shortcoming of using torture in interrogations, as argued by Foucault already above, is that the interrogator sees torture as a shortcut which produces the desired information (Bellamy 142), or, rather, misinformation. As Lenta puts it, “[p]rolonged torture forces victims to try to comprehend the torturer’s interests and present themselves in a way that is most likely to satisfy their torturers. After a time, the victim will say what he/she thinks the torturer wants to hear” (75).

In the light of the facts presented above, it seems that there is neither moral nor pragmatic justification for interrogational torture. But still, torture is being used. The motivation for it, thus, must be something else besides interrogation. Does the real function of torture lie in crushing the enemy psychologically and physically? As Foucault (1991, 49) puts it, to make the enemy feel the power “of the sovereign beating down upon the body of his adversary and mastering it”? By capturing innocent men, women and children, the US and Coetzee’s Empire alike fulfill their own prophecies in which “one [cannot] be the object of suspicion and be completely innocent” (Foucault 1991, 42). Torture thus turns into a tool producing the truth which the two empires in question need in order to sustain their campaigns against their Others as they turn into “empire[s] of pain” (*WB* 24). As Bellamy (142) puts it, “torture may be initially reserved for extreme and exceptional cases but as the practice becomes normalized, the threshold for its use drops from the need to extract information necessary to save lives to the desire to extract expedient information.” The incarceration and isolation makes even the Magistrate question the reality, question his own truth: “I walked into that cell a sane man sure of the

rightness of my cause . . . but after two months among the cockroaches with nothing to see but four walls . . . I am much less sure of myself” (*WB* 104-105). The Magistrate “learns through confinement, humiliation, and torture the simple existential truth that the body sets clear limits to what can be endured or claimed on behalf of ideas or principles” (Attwell 83). According to Lenta, “Joll seems to be denying what cannot plausibly be denied: the possibility that the accused might comply fully with his tormentor’s demand for information prior to the infliction of extreme pain. This would suggest that Joll is labouring under an illusion, but if, for Joll, the truth is what the Empire requires to be true, as is indeed the case, then his process is perfectly designed” (75).

According to Agamben’s theory, in a state of exception the exception becomes the rule and the extraordinary becomes the ordinary. In the twilight of the state of exception, the boundaries become blurred and, indeed, as Rajiva puts it, “[t]he justification for our torture is the enemy’s terror, we are told, while carefully hidden from view is the truth that torture is only another word for terror and that torture is the necessary adjunct of a war provoked from the beginning with state terror” (78). The post-9/11 rationale of the US with its War on Terror and the detainment facilities in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, “throughout the shadowy, global gulag of secret interrogation prisons, ‘black sites,’ torture ships, and offshore internment camps now known to straddle the world” (McClintock 88), has been to revive the tradition of colonial spectacular and terroristic violence and torture in order to ascertain its imperial superpower status – similar to the rationale of Coetzee’s Empire in its desperate will to eradicate the barbarian enemy.

The final part of this chapter deals with the spectacular and terroristic nature of the torture and violence perpetrated by the US in the War on Terror and by Coetzee’s Empire in the novel, revealing the true motivation for the atrocities: “Torture produces the victim’s status as ‘evil barbarian’ and, what amounts to the same thing, the ‘truth’ of the victim’s guilt, on which the Empire’s continued self-realization is contingent. The truth that is produced provides the justification that the Empire needs for

its violence against the barbarians” (Lenta 75). Given the scope of this thesis, and because they best illustrate the spectacular nature of torture in the War on Terror and in Coetzee’s novel, I will concentrate mainly on the Abu Ghraib torture scandal and the guards’ private photographs, and the scenes of public torture of the captured barbarians in the town square and the public torture and humiliation of the Magistrate.

Lenta (75-76) sees *Barbarians* as a dramatization of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* in a colonial setting in which spectacular torture is used to expose the truth and to restore the power of the injured sovereign, the imperial colonizer, in this case Empire and the United States; but the truth revealed in torture is not a piece of potentially life-saving information the sovereign needs in the battle against the enemy. As we have seen above in this chapter, torture is not about that – it is about the truth according to the sovereign which he imposes on the enemy. The Magistrate explains this Imperial procedure of using torture to create a desirable truth: “They did not come to force the story out of me of what I had said to the barbarians and what the barbarians had said to me. So I had no chance to throw the high-sounding words I had ready in their faces. They came to my cell to show me the meaning of humanity, and in the space of an hour they showed me a great deal” (*WB* 126). The “interrogators” have no interest whatsoever in the potential intelligence which their captive (once a member of their civilization but now a barbarian in their eyes) may withhold; instead, their intention is to show the “barbarian,” the one they consider subhuman, the meaning of humanity. The barbarian is thus ironically given a “lesson in humanity” (*WB* 127) by the inhuman new barbarians who teach the backwards Other the nature of civilization.

As we have seen Pease arguing above, the state of exception is the result of the population’s will to exchange their civil liberties for the protection of the state in a situation following a traumatic, unprecedented experience such as 9/11. In order to prevail, the state of exception is dependent on the participation of the public who ultimately have the power to dismantle it (Pease 179). Therefore, the

state has to do everything in its power to keep the public captivated by the violent spectacle carried out in the name of defending the Homeland (ibid.). In his argument Pease echoes Foucault (1991, 57-59) who states that in a spectacle arranged by the sovereign against the enemy of the state the “main character [is] the people” who not only must witness the spectacle but have to in some extent participate in it as well, and that the vengeance of the spectators inconspicuously becomes part of the sovereign’s vengeance. Lenta (76) makes use of this idea of “spectacular manifestation of power” by linking together the torture scenes in the novel and the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. This interplay by the sovereign and the public spectators is straightforwardly exemplified in the novel by the scene in which a group of barbarians are being displayed in the town square. According to Lenta (76), the townspeople initially hesitate because this spectacle also arouses fear and terror among them (as it is meant to), but take part eventually because “the ritual demands” it. This spectacular ritual, on the one hand, “forces the crowd to experience the potency of the Empire’s power so that its members will experience themselves as subject to the Empire,” and, on the other, it “makes real for them the barbarian threat, and the Empire’s power to vanquish it” (Lenta 76).

The scene described above functions as a perfect example of sovereign power first creating its enemy and then vanquishing it. First, by literally writing the word “ENEMY” (*WB* 115) on the backs of the captured barbarians, Colonel Joll materializes the enemy and presents it to the public; then, by beating their backs until the word is no longer visible, he metaphorically vanquishes the enemy right under the gaze of the public. Lenta (77) points out that prisoners at Abu Ghraib testified that after the guards had beaten them, they wrote something (they could not see themselves what) on their bodies, something that, according to Lenta, had to be similar to that which is written on the backs of the barbarians. If they did, indeed, write the equivalent of the word “enemy” on the prisoners’ backs (which is easy to imagine), the guards at Abu Ghraib were doing just the same as Joll – by scribing on the bodies they established and reaffirmed the status of the prisoners as the subhuman, barbarian enemy

who must feel the power of Empire (that is, the US) and could be tortured with impunity, without remorse.

Spectacular torture is designed to consolidate the public's view of the tortured as the enemy of the state, but its other fundamental purpose is to turn the tortured individual into an animal who does not deserve the same rights as the civilized do, and who can thus justifiably be treated like an animal. When Joll and the guards at Abu Ghraib "brand" their prisoners, they might as well be branding cattle, signifying once and for all that it is their undisputed property. It has been already pointed out in chapter 3 that the dehumanization of the enemy Other is well present in the imperial/colonial discourse and rhetoric (and in the rhetoric used by the US in the War on Terror), and the justification of torture is partly the result of these attitudes and prejudices which excuse the inhuman treatment of human beings. In the novel, the Magistrate witnesses the torturous spectacle in the town square and when he sees that Joll is about to crush the captured barbarians' feet with a hammer, he desperately tries to plead for the public's sympathy for the captives:

"You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast!" . . . "Look!" I shout. I point to the four prisoners who lie docilely on the earth, their lips to the pole, their hands clasped to their faces like monkeys' paws, oblivious of the hammer, ignorant of what is going on behind them, relieved that the offending mark has been beaten from their backs, hoping that the punishment is at an end . . . "Look at these men!" I recommence. "*Men!*" . . . I hear the blow coming and turn to meet it. It catches me full across the face. "I am blind!" I think, staggering back into the blackness that instantly falls (*WB* 117, emphasis in original).

The magistrate is the only one, it seems, who sees the barbarians as human beings. But if he as the "One Just Man" (*WB* 125) sees what others do not see, that the barbarians are not a threat, he now realizes that *he* has in fact become the blind one: not because he has denounced his beliefs, but because in the new Empire run by the "new barbarians" there is no right or wrong; there exists only the truth and that is the truth according to Empire which dictates that one is either with Empire or against it. If one does not see or recognize that truth, he is considered the enemy, an animal among men.

Furthermore, Coetzee presents us with examples of what torture does to a human being: after having been tortured, the barbarian girl “was no longer fully human, sister to all of us” (*WB* 88); after his ordeals, the Magistrate realizes that Empire does not even award him the dignity of dying graciously, but his destiny is to die “like a dog in a corner” (*WB* 128); When Mandel tortures him by hanging him from a tree “like a great old moth with its wings pinched together, roaring, shouting,” the onlookers laugh and mockingly say that the Magistrate is “calling his barbarian friends” (*WB* 133) because to them his animal-like growling and roaring resembles the language of the barbarians.

The unraveling of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal made it clear that the US, too, had undeniably been using torture methods aimed to dehumanize and humiliate the prisoners, similar to the methods used by the Third Bureau in *Barbarians*. In his sworn statement, one former detainee testified about the methods used in the prison: “[They made] me sit down like a dog, and they would hold the string from the bag [over my head] and they made me bark like a dog and they were laughing at me” (quoted in Danner 22). Levi Strauss (88) points out the importance of hooding the victims, something that Mandel does to the Magistrate in the novel as well: “Hooding dehumanizes [the victims], making them anonymous and thing-like. They become just bodies. You can do anything you want to them.” In addition, Reserve Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, in charge of 16 US prisons in Iraq, testified that his superior Major General Geoffrey Miller told her that the detainees “are like dogs, and if you allow them to believe at any point they are more than a dog then you’ve lost control of them” (quoted in Warner 80).

Lenta (77) acknowledges that “it might appear that a central feature of Foucault’s account of spectacular torture – publicity – is absent” in the torture which took place at Abu Ghraib, but he justifies the use of Foucault, whose theory is founded on the public torture and execution spectacles of the eighteenth century, by stating that “technology . . . enables the delayed publication of the acts of torture.” Lenta continues:



By photographing the scene and distributing the photographs to friends and family, the guards provide those emotionally close to them with “recreational snaps” in which they purport to engage in patriotic fun. The transmission of the photographs assumes that their recipients constitute an interpretative community that will view with a mixture of amusement and pride their depiction of the “enemies” of the United States, whose status is inscribed on their bodies and whose cringing subjection confirms their less than human status. The difference between such acts of torture and spectacular torture as Foucault describes it is that in Foucault’s account torture is inflicted by a sovereign to secure support, whereas at Abu Ghraib the guards, emotionally vulnerable and far from home, engineer a spectacle of torture in order to secure for themselves the emotional support and encouragement of those in a position to offer it to them (ibid.).

This would indicate that the spectacularity of the torture in the beginning was quite restricted, given the fact that the subsequent leakage of the photos was accidental. Lenta’s argument that the guards documented the torture for their own personal reasons is partly true, but he overlooks the fact that there is evidence that the photographs were taken in order to intimidate and extort the prisoners to becoming informants for the US and to gather information about the Iraqi insurgency: “It was thought that some prisoners would do anything – including spying on their associates – to avoid dissemination of the shameful photos to family and friends” (Hersh 39). Gray (49-50) emphasizes that the torture methods used by the US – as depicted in the photographs – which include the victim’s dehumanization (and also demasculinization) are all the more abhorrent because “leading naked Iraqi males around on dog leashes and covering their heads with women’s underwear look like techniques designed specifically in order to attack the prisoners’ identity and values.” This further supports the argument for the *systematic* use of photography as a means of torture and that the photographs were not simply taken by the guards for their own personal reasons, as Lenta suggests. Contrary to what the Bush administration wanted everyone to believe, Abu Ghraib had not been an aberration, and many powerful people had known but had either turned a blind eye to the atrocities or had even encouraged them (Rajiva 14).

The photographs caused a major international scandal and Levi Strauss (95) paraphrases George W. Bush’s political strategist Karl Rove’s concern that “the consequences of these images were so great that it would take decades for the U.S. to recover from them.” Matlin (60) argues, however, that

the photographs, which he describes as “images of barbarity and inhumanity,” reflect, unlike most politicians and media would like to admit, the United States’ domestic policies in terms of, for instance, the world’s largest prison system. Even though the Abu Ghraib torture scandal is the first of its kind, Schueller (180) argues, that for Americans torture is “an open secret” which “has continued to be practiced under US directives overseas in countries such as Bolivia, Guatemala, and Chile, and at home in our vast network of prisons.” In addition, she argues that “[b]oth at home and abroad, limited spectacularity has always been part of torture, [and] that torture cannot fulfil its purpose without being . . . something at once closeted and exhibited” (ibid.).

The dismissive reaction to the photographs by the Bush administration and the American media paradoxically supports the view that the spectacularity of the torture carried out at Abu Ghraib adds up to more than the guards simply showing the photos to their friends and families. It is a phenomenon which needs to be downplayed because it is more common than the public thinks. Before the scandal, torture was not commonly associated with the US by the rest of the world. It is perhaps not surprising that the right-wing pundit Rush Limbaugh undermined the scandal and paralleled the torture with “fraternity hazing” (Rajiva 27), but even the liberal media in the US distanced themselves from the controversy by stating that the atrocities were only alleged, and were more concerned with the image of the US and were careful not to draw any foregone conclusions (ibid. 21). Later when the scandal had really broken out, Gregory argues (2010, 61), the public was bombarded with the torture images so much so that it diverted the attention away from the policies behind the torture: “Critical attention was focused on acts isolated as a series of stills and frames rather than on the apparatus.” Gregory (2010, 77-78) argues that the Bush administration’s rhetoric, which had instilled the inferiority and barbarity of the enemy in the nation’s consciousness ever since 9/11, was to blame for the atrocities, not the individual soldiers:

Is it any wonder that American forces subjected their Iraqi captives to brutal and dehumanizing treatment? They had been told repeatedly that this was a war against Evil incarnate, so that they were not fighting enemies so much as casting out demons. The fate of those imprisoned at Abu Ghraib was not decided by a few “rotten apples” at the bottom of the barrel: it was the fruit of a vast poison orchard assiduously cultivated by the President and his under-gardeners.

Meanwhile the Bush administration was more concerned about investigating how it was possible that the photographs had been leaked to the media, how the chain of command could have been breached (ibid.). The fact that the actual apparatus allowing the use of torture was not initially questioned by the administration would further suggest that torture was not an aberration but business as usual, and that the photographs were used systematically as a means of spectacular and terroristic torture.

However, according to Gray (54), the Bush administration had no reason to be concerned about the public’s reaction to the torture itself, because the American people had in fact not reacted “with massive revulsion to evidence of systematic abuse,” as people, for instance, in Europe had, but viewed “Iraq and its people . . . with a mix of bafflement and hatred, and a mood of despair about the war ha[d] set in.” In other words, as argued already above, the state has to maintain the spectacle in order to captivate the public. When it fails to do so, the public becomes disillusioned, and the public became disillusioned because it saw in the photos that perhaps the war in Iraq is a lost cause if the US troops have to rely on such barbaric, un-American actions in order to beat the enemy. But, interestingly, according to Gray (55), the public was not disillusioned even by the withdrawal of troops from Iraq because it saw the withdrawal not as a humiliating defeat, as the rest of the world did, but “as a reward for a job well done.” The state fantasy argued by Pease in chapter 3 is surely at work here, producing the truth the US empire needs in order to prevail. Thus, as such, the Abu Ghraib scandal did not really hurt the US internally, or externally, for that matter, unless a blow to its image does not count.

The fact that Lenta largely ignores the role of the Abu Ghraib images in a *state-organized* torture spectacle is interesting, especially as he quotes Judith Butler towards the end of his essay and acknowledges the meaning of photographs taken of the detainees at Guantánamo Bay: “According to

Butler, the fact that the US Department of Defense published the first photographs of the shackled bodies of Guantanamo detainees suggests that they were released ‘to make known that a certain vanquishing had taken place, the reversal of national humiliation, a sign of successful vindication’”

(81). The function of the sovereign spectacle, according to Foucault (1991, 49), is to

bring into play . . . the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign [and] the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of measure, but of imbalance and excess . . . an emphatic affirmation of power and of its intrinsic superiority. And this superiority is not simply that of right, but that of the physical strength of the sovereign beating down upon the body of his adversary and mastering it . . . The ceremony of punishment, then, is an exercise of terror.

In the end, the images from Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo are meant to tell the enemies of the United States just what they are according to the truth of the US empire: terrorists, barbarians, animals, the uncivilized Other. Furthermore, they are being told what they will be met with if they challenge the US. The spectacle of public torture and execution in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, too, is designed to put the lawbreakers and dissidents in their place, and to cause terror and fear of the sovereign among the subjects. Similarly the Third Bureau’s display of power in the town square in *Barbarians* and the torture of the dissident Magistrate is an attempt of Empire to instill fear and to assert its power in the state of exception it has itself created.

## 6. Conclusion

In the course of my thesis, I have, on the one hand, tried to establish a logical connection between the notions of American exceptionalism, binary thinking of civilized/barbaric, and the state of exception with government sanctioned violence and torture. On the other hand, I have aimed to demonstrate that a text like Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* can be read allegorically with the events that have been taking place in the War on Terror following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, twenty-one years after the book's original publication. Such an allegory is by no means unproblematic, but I wish I have succeeded in showing that the underlying nature of the state of exception, government sanctioned violence and torture is inherently the same in both apartheid South Africa and the War on Terror. To support my claim, I have made use of Agamben's theory in order to show that the state of exception is an age-old means for the sovereign to govern the population. Furthermore, the evolution of torture, as outlined by Foucault, also seems to support the claim that things have not changed that much in 200-300 years: the true, underlying motivation for torture has always been the sovereign's need to control the population. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, as Lenta has pointed out above, can, indeed, be read as a fictionalization of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, and if torture in its essence has not changed to this day, *Barbarians* can be read as an allegory to the War on Terror as well because the novel captures the essence of what despicable acts governments may rely on in exceptional circumstances. Agamben's theory of the state of exception, at its core, deals with the metaphysics of power – it is not restricted to any particular government or time period but concerns the *essence of power*.

I have aimed to show how the US and Coetzee's Empire depict their enemies: uncivilized, unhuman, barbaric, and irrational. I have also wished to show how they depict themselves as exceptional and entitled to treat who they consider inferior as horribly as they please. I have discussed how the government can use the ideology of exceptionalism in order to excuse its violent actions after a

traumatic national event by instilling fear into the population, and healing their wounds by punishing the enemy and avenging the violation of their Virgin Land. And by keeping the public captivated with the imperial spectacles of violence, such as military campaigns and torture, the public feels it is in charge, that it once again sits on the driver's seat, as if it is punishing the enemy. In the process, the public gives up its freedom for the state to violate under the state of exception.

As I have discussed the three different types of torture, as formulated by Foucault, I have aimed to argue that there is no such thing as interrogational torture. By examining the case of “the ticking bomb terrorist,” I have shown that there is absolutely no act-utilitarian logic or reason to use torture as an interrogation method. Interrogational torture does not work, the only “logic” for its use is to use it as an official reason for disguising the atrocious actions, and, more importantly, to use it as an excuse to subjugate the tortured, to make the tortured aware that the sovereign/state/empire is to be feared. The logic of torture is the same whether the torturer is represented by the executioner on the gallows in seventeenth century Paris, the colonial officer in French Algeria in the 1950's, Lynndie England in Abu Ghraib in 2004, or Colonel Joll in the unnamed Empire in an unspecified time and place in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Both Coetzee's Empire and the US use torture in order to repair their imperial images, to reconstitute themselves after a humiliating blow by an “inferior,” treacherous enemy.

In December 2014, the bipartisan United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) released a 524-page summary of their 6,000-page report about the Detention and Interrogation Program, enforced by the CIA in the course of the War on Terror. Keeping in mind all the other reports and testimonies about the use of torture by the US, including the material I have referred to in this thesis, the findings and conclusions of the committee are not really that surprising. In the report's findings and conclusions section, SSCI lists, for example, the following points about the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program:

The CIA's use of its enhanced interrogation techniques was *not an effective means of acquiring intelligence* or gaining cooperation from detainees . . . The CIA's *justification* for the use of its enhanced interrogation techniques rested on *inaccurate claims of their effectiveness* . . . The interrogations of CIA detainees were *brutal* and far worse than the CIA *represented to policymakers and others* . . . The conditions of confinement for CIA detainees were harsher than the CIA had *represented to policymakers and others* . . . The CIA repeatedly *provided inaccurate information to the Department of Justice, . . . actively avoided or impeded congressional oversight* of the program [and] *impeded effective White House oversight and decision-making* . . . The CIA *coordinated the release of classified information to the media, including inaccurate information* concerning the effectiveness of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques . . . The CIA's management and operations of [the program] was *deeply flawed* throughout the [its] duration, *particularly so in 2002 and early 2003* . . . The CIA did not conduct a comprehensive or accurate accounting of the number of individuals it detained, and *held individuals who did not meet the legal standard for detention* . . . The CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program *damaged the United States' standing in the world*. And resulted in other significant *monetary and non-monetary costs*. (2-16, emphasis added)

The report confirms what has been said above about the effectiveness and the brutal nature of (interrogational) torture. The SSCI admits that detainees were wrongfully held and accused. It states that the program was particularly flawed in 2002 and early 2003. Incidentally, the war in Iraq began in March 2003 and the reports about the prisoner abuse came to light later that year. Furthermore, the report states that the program “caused immeasurable damage to the United States’ public standing, as well as to the United States’ *longstanding global leadership on human rights in general and the prevention of torture in particular*” (16, emphasis added). The committee ends the conclusion section by stating that the program “resulted in other significant monetary and non-monetary costs” and that it “cost well over \$300 million in non-personnel costs” (ibid.).

The greatest concern here seems to be the blow to the American image (which, as I have argued above, has not really been a terribly big issue at all) and the fact that the program cost so much. What stands out the most, however, is the SSCI's insistence on laying all blame on the CIA who purposely and knowingly misled the entire United States government including the White House and President George W. Bush, the very same president who claimed executive powers in the aftermath of 9/11 and declared the state of exception. The committee, thus, suggests that the whole debacle of scandalous

torture was a black op run by the CIA who somehow managed to keep the government completely in the dark. Furthermore, it is likely that the SSCI report will be assessed by the International Criminal Court but it is “unlikely that the ICC’s inquiry will lead to charges against the US officials involved in the torture programme, for both legal and political reasons” (Borger). In other words: no one is to blame. However, even if the report does not lead to any prosecution, let alone convictions, and even though it completely exonerates the US government, it clearly declares that torture is not only morally wrong, but it does not work as a means of extracting reliable, life-saving information.

The recent Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks in Paris caused a huge uproar worldwide and, once again, the gap between the Muslims and the West seemed to be widening. The attacks were immediately condemned as barbaric, violating one of the core principles in Western society: the freedom of speech. By demonizing the terrorists and making generalizations that seemed to lay the blame on all 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide, most of the mainstream media in the West ignored the reasons that cause terrorist attacks in the first place. By blaming Islam, all of Islam, all Muslims, the mainstream media disregard the possibility that maybe the history of European colonialism and imperialism, American imperialism and neocolonialism, as well as oppressive Third World governments are to blame.

Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the march organized in homage to the victims of the Charlie Hebdo attacks was attended by leaders from countries that are notorious for restricting the freedom of expression – Egypt, Russia, and Turkey to name a few. Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire argues in their internet publication that “[i]t would be unacceptable if representatives of countries that silence journalists were to take advantage of the current outpouring of emotion to try to improve their international image and then continue their repressive policies when they return home. We must not let predators of press freedom spit on the graves of Charlie Hebdo” (“RWB Condemns Presence of ‘Predators’ in Paris March”). These



governments are using the fear of the unknown barbaric extremists to strengthen and uphold their states of exception just like Coetzee's *Empire* does in the novel or the Bush administration did in the wake of 9/11.

I ended my introduction with a question "who are the real barbarians?" Gallagher (285) states that "barbarity hides behind all the faces of society..." and that it is up to the author to "provide authority and meaning." Coetzee's novels may seem cynical and dark but that is because they address the most fundamental themes. Moses (116) rightly describes Coetzee as "the bad conscience of postmodern fiction in the postcolonial world," and states furthermore that

[i]f we accept the magistrate's (and by extension Coetzee's) deconstruction of an entire set of significant distinctions – between liberalism and authoritarianism, between the rule of law and the rule of force, between the Western self and the non-Western Other, between torture and truth, between civilization and barbarism – then we must take an extremely dim view of the possibility of historical progress, of the development of a genuinely humane society" (Moses 123).

When we look at the progress of our Western civilization in the prohibition of torture, and how authoritarianism in the form of the state of exception, where the force of the executive trumps the legislative, has become the rule, as Agamben argues, there seems to be no other choice than accepting the magistrate's and Coetzee's cynicism. But that would mean we surrender and succumb to the unscrupulous and violent ways of the sovereign. Instead, we must take off our sunglasses and expose our eyes open to the sun, and hope the others will do the same.

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