

The Unruly, the Mut(ilat)ed, the Ailing: Corporeality as a Space of Subversion in J. M. Coetzee's Fiction

Kamel Abdaoui

Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Sousse, Tunisia

Abstract

This paper addresses corporeality as a space of subversion to hegemonic discourses in J. M. Coetzee's fiction. The body is not only elusive to representation but it is also entrusted with a certain degree of authority that allows it to contravene the systems of normalization imposed by dominant discourse. The paper tends to appropriate poststructuralism and postcolonialism as its main theoretical grid to argue that corporeality in Coetzee's novels is deployed as a fluid construct that offers a space of interaction between subjectivities beyond the rigid contours of discursive representation. In *Dusklands*, the clear-cut demarcations erect between the Self and the Other often blur and disintegrate while facing the permeability and extensiveness of the body. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, however, the mutilated and silenced body of the Other is presented as a space of resistance to the Empire's attempts to inscribe its statement of powerviolently. It is only the diseased body of Mrs. Curren, in *Age of Iron*, which transforms into an intersubjective space of reciprocity between Self and Other that is capable of overcoming the fixed barriers between subjects. Being an active site of contestation between subjectivities, the textual construction of corporeality in Coetzee's aforementioned novels offers creative opportunities of becoming and grants an imaginative understanding of otherness outside the limits of the logic of binarism encapsulated in colonial and imperialist discourses.

Keywords: colonialrepresentation, corporeality, identity, resistance, subversion

Cite as: Abdaoui , K. (2017). The Unruly, the Mut(ilat)ed, the Ailing: Corporeality as a Space of Subversion in J. M. Coetzee's Fiction. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 1(2). DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no2.2>