

Genocidal Inscriptions in the Postcolony and Beyond: J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song*, and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*

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Abstract

This essay examines the ways that genocide is always rhetorically justified and inscribed on the body before it is literally enacted, as well as the ways that the act of defining what constitutes a genocide is a shifting, politically motivated, and fraught process of uncertainty, social positioning, and willful ignorance. I begin this exploration with two symbolic texts – Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Paul Lynch's 2023 novel *Prophet Song* – as both situate totalitarianism, resistance, and genocide within the space of simultaneity the always eminent, already past, and pervasively present. Neither text focuses on an actual historical event, but both illustrate the ways that humanity has and will continue to engage in the same cycles of violent erasure. Finally, I bring these texts into conversation with Edwidge Danticat's 1998 novel *The Farming of Bones* and the ways that its protagonist, unlike the Magistrate, rhetorically exhumes the bones of the Haitians who were murdered during the historical Parsley Massacre of 1937 ordered by Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, then dictator of the Dominican Republic.

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