



J.M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics after Beckett (Oxford English Monographs)

Patrick Hayes

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'Anti-illusionism is, I suspect, only a marking of time, a phase of recuperation, in the history of the novel. The question is, what next?' (J.M. Coetzee)

This book argues that the significance of Coetzee's fiction lies in the acuity with which it both explores and develops the tradition of the novel - ranging from Cervantes, Defoe and Richardson, to Dostoevsky, Kafka and Beckett - as part of a sustained attempt to rethink the relationship between writing and politics. For Coetzee questions about the future of the novel are closely related to what it means to write after Beckett, and *J.M. Coetzee and the Novel* pays special attention to the ways in which his fiction discerningly assimilates different aspects of literary modernism to address the questions most fundamental to the experience of late twentieth-century politics.

While Coetzee is rightly known as an intensely serious writer, Patrick Hayes shows that the true seriousness of his writing is intimately bound up with comedy - or, to use the word Coetzee borrows from Joyce, the 'jocoserious'. Opening up a range of new approaches to this major contemporary author, *J.M. Coetzee and the Novel* argues that it is only by paying especially close attention to the experience of reading Coetzee's complex and finely-nuanced fiction that its distinctive and important impact on longstanding questions about identity, community, and the nature of political modernity can be appreciated.

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