

the creator of *Star Wars*; Sherlock Holmes does not confront Jack the Ripper in *The Seven Per Cent Solution* (166), in which the sleuth joins forces with Sigmund Freud, but rather in a completely different film, 1979's *Murder By Decree*. Egregious slips like these are joined by various typographical flubs and unintentionally funny malapropisms, like "ostensively" (81) and "expatriot" (108 and elsewhere).

Cult Fiction is a late dispatch, from a sheltered and distant outpost, rather than from the front, of the culture wars, which wars in any case have themselves now fizzled to a *détente*. Although Bloom offers some interesting interpretations of lurid-leaning anecdotes, the occasional flash of wit ("Norman Bates keeps mum" [231]), and a hint of prospective talent for biography, this uneven study does not offer much that is new, and its more general theoretical (or anti-theoretical) utterances—"High culture is now dead" (226)—are not sustained or delineated carefully enough to pose any threats to their targets.

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Dominic Head. *J. M. Coetzee*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. xvi, 192. £35.00.

Dominic Head's *J. M. Coetzee* is the fifth full-length study of the Booker Prize-winning author in the past decade, joining the growing corpus of Coetzee criticism, which also includes two comparative studies, and three collections of essays. It is the first book on Coetzee specifically to set itself out as an introduction to his fiction, although as the fifth volume in the Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature Series, it also aims to be of use to those already familiar with his work.

Head's intention is to focus on the novels themselves, to draw out their major themes and the links between them, and to provide an overview of Coetzee's whole fictional *oeuvre*. And while the focus is on the fiction, there is ample referencing to Coetzee's non-fiction, and an opening chapter which usefully attempts to tease out Coetzee's place in postcolonial literature. Head does not put the postcolonial tag on Coetzee lightly, and there is a good balance of debate in this section. Although cautious about conflating theories, he argues that there is an overlapping of the postcolonial and the postmodern in Coetzee's fiction. Indeed, he makes a case for calling Coetzee a "post-colonizer,"

a position, he says, which "locates a transitional site between Europe and Africa" (ix).

Considering the ongoing debate regarding the usefulness of the term "postcolonial," how much more does Head's label provide a helpful alternative? He explains that "The idea of the post-colonizer allows for the engagement with Western influences *within* postcolonial writing, in a way that is not flatly ironic or parodic" (18). Borrowing from Homi Bhabha's idea of "postcolonial contramodernity" (20) and Stephen Slemon's theory of "postcolonial allegory" (22-24), Head endeavours to situate Coetzee's textuality as a political/ethical gesture. This is already a mainstay of Coetzee criticism, for example in Susan VanZanten Gallagher's *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (1991) and David Attwell's *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (1993), as well as in the work of Derek Attridge.

The Cambridge series requirements for coverage of the "significant themes, governing ideas and formal procedures" of Coetzee's corpus are met, but does Dominic Head's *J. M. Coetzee* fill the gap in Coetzee scholarship for a readable and engaging introduction to his work? Is this the key secondary text for undergraduate and postgraduate students approaching Coetzee's novels for the first time?

Head's first chapter assumes, rather than introduces, a certain theoretical background which then is never really taken up by his textual discussion. Devoting a chapter to each of Coetzee's seven novels up to 1994, the close readings offer some sense of the South African context, but little in the way of South African debates. Having also authored the second volume in the Cambridge series, *Nadine Gordimer*, Head should have a good foundation; instead, it seems to limit him to examples from Gordimer, to the exclusion of other writers. This makes one wonder how serious Head is about the local in his discussion of Coetzee's "transitional site" as a "post-colonizer."

Head searches for his audience and finds it only somewhere in the second half of the book. As is to be expected in an introductory text, there is much rehearsal here, but there are of course good points too, for example: on "gaming" in *Dusklands* (45-47) on insects (60-61) and colonial landscape (51; 54; 66) in *In the Heart of the Country*; on "the literary pastoral" (88-89) in *Waiting for the Barbarians*; on the "control of space" [with reference to Foucault's breakdown of institutions (103)] in *Life & Times of Michael K*. His reading of *Foe* is very good, and he helpfully alerts us to another Defoe allusion: "A True Revelation of the Apparition of One Mrs Veal (1706)" (113-14; 117-18). His best writing, however, is on the most recent novels, *Age of Iron* (1990) and *The Master of Petersburg* (1994).¹ Here the book finally comes into its own, offering engaging readings on the confessional which are both challenging and accessible. His final chapter is certainly the most rigorous and rewarding for readers familiar with Coetzee. Head is on solid ground with Dostoevsky and his novel *Demons*, the key intertext of

The Master of Petersburg. He gleans much from Coetzee's own essay on Dostoevsky and confession in *Doubling the Point* (1992). And from an essay on Breytenbach and the censor in *Giving Offense* (1996) he links Coetzee's discussion of Bakhtin and the notion of "hidden contestatory dialogue" (148) in Dostoevsky with Coetzee's own novel.

The best kind of introduction serves as a reminder and a teaching tool; it offers a pathway to a new subject, while also highlighting the main debates with incisiveness, conciseness, originality, and enthusiasm. Head has an unfortunate tendency to smother his prose with unnecessary paranthetical remarks and preambles, resulting in a book which does not succeed as a clear or stimulating guide to Coetzee's novels. Rather still go to Attwell and Gallagher first, using Head's book to supplement the more recent novels.

The publishers may wish to reword their mission statement for the series, which curiously specifies that it has been established for the "growing area of study" in the twentieth century of "black literature in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa as a distinct corpus of imaginative work." Out of the five volumes published, two have been on internationally renowned white South African writers.

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NOTE

¹ Note, Coetzee's third-person "memoir," *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*, is not covered in Head's study, either in reference or detail. Head's book may already have been at press when *Boyhood* was published in September 1997. Coetzee's eighth novel, *Disgrace*, is scheduled for publication in July 1999.



Katie Trumpener. *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. Pp. xviii, 426. \$60.00, \$19.95 pb.

The book jacket appropriately calls Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism* a "magisterial work." Trumpener sets out her book's aim early in the Preface which opens this way: "This book links the literary and intellectual history of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Britain's overseas colonies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to redraw our picture of the origins of cultural nationalism, the lineages of the novel, and the early literary history of the English-speaking world" (xi). Trumpener considers the interaction between England and its peripheries and between the central empire and its often-forgotten remotest regions. In order to map out this interplay, she uses Bakhtin's concept of the "literary chronotope" which, she writes, "theorizes the spatial-temporal parameters that determine the worldview of a fictional genre and the rules of operation that establish the direction, the pace, and the meaning of the stories un-