

Elizabeth Costello Jm Coetzee

New essays providing critical views of Coetzee's major works for the scholar and the general reader.

Elizabeth Costello Fiction Penguin

This groundbreaking collection of contributions by leading philosophers offers a new way of thinking about animal rights, our obligation to animals, and the nature of philosophy itself. An eminent, ageing Australian writer is invited to contribute to a book entitled *Strong Opinions*. For him, troubled by Australia's complicity in the wars in the Middle East, it is a chance to air some urgent concerns: how should a citizen of a modern democracy react to their state's involvement in an immoral war on terror, a war that involves the use of torture? Then in the laundry room of his apartment block he encounters an alluring young woman. He offers her work typing up his manuscript. Anya is not interested in politics, but the job will be a welcome distraction, as will the writer's evident attraction towards her. Her boyfriend, Alan, is an investment consultant who understands the world in harsh economic terms. Suspicious of his trophy girlfriend's new pastime, Alan begins to formulate a plan...

Representing a wide range of critical and theoretical perspectives, this volume seeks to align the South African dimension of Coetzee's writing with his late modernist aesthetic. It includes essays exploring the relationship between Coetzee's novels and

Elizabeth Costello is an Australian writer of international renown. Famous principally for an early novel that established her reputation and from which, it seems, she will never escape, she has reached the stage, late in life, where her remaining function is to be venerated and applauded.

For a generation of contemporary Anglo-American novelists, the question "Why write?" has been answered with a renewed will to believe in the ethical value of literature. Dissatisfied with postmodernist parody and pastiche, a broad array of novelist-critics—including J.M. Coetzee, Toni Morrison, Zadie Smith, Gish Jen, Ian McEwan, and Jonathan Franzen—champion the novel as the literary genre most qualified to illuminate individual ethical action and decision-making within complex and diverse social worlds. Key to this contemporary vision of the novel's ethical power is the task of knowing and being responsible to people different from oneself, and so thoroughly have contemporary novelists devoted themselves to the ethics of otherness, that this ethics frequently sets the terms for plot, characterization, and theme. In *The Novel and the New Ethics*, literary critic Dorothy J. Hale investigates how the contemporary emphasis on literature's social relevance sparks a new ethical description of the novel's social value that is in fact rooted in the modernist notion of narrative form. This "new" ethics of the contemporary moment has its origin in the "new" idea of novelistic form that Henry James inaugurated and which was consolidated through the modernist narrative experiments and was developed over the course of the twentieth century. In Hale's reading, the art of the novel becomes defined with increasing explicitness as an aesthetics of alterity made visible as a formalist ethics. In fact, it is this commitment to otherness as a narrative act which has conferred on the genre an artistic intensity and richness that extends to the novel's every word. In *Boyhood*, J. M. Coetzee revisits the South Africa of half a century ago, to write about his childhood and interior life. *Boyhood*'s young narrator grew up in a small country town. With a father he imitated but could not respect, and a mother he both adored and resented, he picked his way through a world that refused to explain its rules, but whose rules he knew he must obey. Steering between these contradictions, *Boyhood* evokes the tensions, delights and terrors of childhood with startling, haunting immediacy. Coetzee examines his young self with the dispassionate curiosity of an explorer rediscovering his own early footprints, and the account of his progress is bright, hard and simply compelling.

Elizabeth Costello, romanière vieillissante, doit sa célébrité à un livre publié il y

a 25 ans. Aujourd'hui, elle parcourt le monde pour donner des conférences sur des bateaux de croisière et dans des colloques huppés. Malgré la fatigue, elle doit assurer le spectacle... J.M. Coetzee nous dresse le vibrant portrait d'une vieille dame déboussolée, rongée par le doute et l'interrogation sur le pouvoir de la littérature face à la solitude et à la mort.

After crossing oceans, a man and a boy arrive in a new land. Here they are each assigned a name and an age, and held in a camp in the desert while they learn Spanish, the language of their new country. As Simón and David they make their way to the relocation centre in the city of Novilla, where officialdom treats them politely but not necessarily helpfully. Simón finds a job in a grain wharf. The work is unfamiliar and backbreaking, but he soon warms to his stevedore comrades, who during breaks conduct philosophical dialogues on the dignity of labour, and generally take him to their hearts. Now he must set about his task of locating the boy's mother. Though like everyone else who arrives in this new country he seems to be washed clean of all traces of memory, he is convinced he will know her when he sees her. And indeed, while walking with the boy in the countryside Simón catches sight of a woman he is certain is the mother, and persuades her to assume the role. David's new mother comes to realise that he is an exceptional child, a bright, dreamy boy with highly unusual ideas about the world. But the school authorities detect a rebellious streak in him and insist he be sent to a special school far away. His mother refuses to yield him up, and it is Simón who must drive the car as the trio flees across the mountains. *THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS* is a profound, beautiful and continually surprising novel from a very great writer.

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2003 In *The Master of Petersburg* J. M. Coetzee dares to imagine the life of Dostoevsky. Set in 1869, when Dostoevsky was summoned from Germany to St Petersburg by the sudden death of his stepson, this novel is at once a compelling mystery steeped in the atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia and a brilliant and courageous meditation on authority and rebellion, art and imagination. Dostoevsky is seen obsessively following his stepson's ghost, trying to ascertain whether he was a suicide or a murder victim and whether he loved or despised his stepfather.

As Text continues the re-release of J. M. Coetzee's revered works, this second instalment of four titles—with introductions from top emerging and established writers—will win over a new generation of Coetzee readers.

Perhaps only the animals can tell us what it is to be human. The souls of ten animals caught up in human conflicts over the last century tell their astonishing stories of life and death. In a trench on the Western Front a cat recalls her owner Colette's theatrical antics in Paris. In Nazi Germany a dog seeks enlightenment. A Russian tortoise once owned by the Tolstoys drifts in space during the Cold War. In the siege of Sarajevo a bear starving to death tells a fairytale. And a dolphin sent to Iraq by the US Navy writes a letter to Sylvia Plath. Exquisitely written, playful and poignant, *Only the Animals* is a remarkable literary

achievement by this bright young writer. An animal's-eye view of humans at our brutal, violent worst and our creative, imaginative best, it asks us to find our way back to empathy not only for animals, but for other people, and to believe again in the redemptive power of reading and writing fiction.

"The relationship between philosophy and aesthetic criticism has occupied Robert Pippin throughout his illustrious career. Whether discussing film, literature, or modern and contemporary art, Pippin's claim is that we cannot understand aesthetic objects unless we reckon with the fact that some distinct philosophical issue is integral to their meaning. In his latest offering, *Philosophy by Other Means*, we are treated to a collection of essays that builds on this larger project, offering profound ruminations on philosophical issues in aesthetics along with revelatory readings of Henry James, Marcel Proust, and J. M. Coetzee"-- Critically analyzing the representation of pedagogy in the novels of J.M. Coetzee, this insightful text illustrates the author's profound conception of learning and personal development as something which takes place well beyond formal education. Bringing together critical and educational theory, *Pedagogy in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee* examines depictions of pedagogy in novels including *Age of Iron*, *Elizabeth Costello*, *Disgrace*, and *Childhood of Jesus*. Engaging with Coetzee's varied literary use of pedagogical themes such as motherhood, maternal love, and the importance of childhood interactions, reading, and experiences, chapters demonstrate how Coetzee foregrounds pedagogy as intrinsic to the formation of human actors, society, and civilization. The text thereby aptly explores and broadens our understanding of education - what it is, what it achieves, and how it can affect and shape human existence. This text will be of great interest to graduate and postgraduate students, academics, researchers and professionals in the fields of pedagogy, postcolonial studies, educational theory and philosophy, and English literature.

What do literary texts tell us about growing old? The essays in this volume introduce and explore representations of ageing and old age in canonical works of English and postcolonial literature. The contributors examine texts by William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Julian Barnes, Thomas Kinsella, Seamus Heaney, J.M. Coetzee, Alice Munro, Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace and, together with a medical study, they suggest solutions to the challenges arising from the current demographic change brought about by ageing Western populations.

Nobel Prize-winning novelist J. M. Coetzee is one of the most widely taught contemporary writers, but also one of the most elusive. Many critics who have addressed his work have devoted themselves to rendering it more accessible and acceptable, often playing down the features that discomfort and perplex his readers. Yet it is just these features, Derek Attridge argues, that give Coetzee's work its haunting power and offer its greatest rewards. Attridge does justice to this power and these rewards in a study that serves as an introduction for readers new to Coetzee and a stimulus for thought for those who know his work well. Without overlooking the South African dimension of his fiction, Attridge treats Coetzee as a writer who raises questions

of central importance to current debates both within literary studies and more widely in the ethical arena. Implicit throughout the book is Attridge's view that literature, more than philosophy, politics, or even religion, does singular justice to our ethical impulses and acts. Attridge follows Coetzee's lead in exploring a number of issues such as interpretation and literary judgment, responsibility to the other, trust and betrayal, artistic commitment, confession, and the problematic idea of truth to the self.

Hugo von Hoffmannsthal made his mark as a poet, as a playwright, and as the librettist for Richard Strauss's greatest operas, but he was no less accomplished as a writer of short, strangely evocative prose works. The atmospheric stories and sketches collected here—fin-de-siècle fairy tales from the Vienna of Klimt and Freud, a number of them never before translated into English—propel the reader into a shadowy world of uncanny fates and secret desires. An aristocrat from Paris in the plague years shares a single night of passion with an unknown woman; a cavalry sergeant meets his double on the battlefield; an orphaned man withdraws from the world with his four servants, each of whom has a mysterious power over his destiny. The most influential of all of Hofmannsthal's writings is the title story, a fictional letter to the English philosopher Francis Bacon in which Lord Chandos explains why he is no longer able to write. The "Letter" not only symbolized Hofmannsthal's own turn away from poetry, it captured the psychological crisis of faith and language which was to define the twentieth century. Nobel Laureate and two-time Booker prize-winning author of *Disgrace* and *The Life and Times of Michael K*, J. M. Coetzee tells the remarkable story of a nation gripped in brutal apartheid in his Sunday Express Book of the Year award-winner *Age of Iron*. In Cape Town, South Africa, an elderly classics professor writes a letter to her distant daughter, recounting the strange and disturbing events of her dying days. She has been opposed to the lies and the brutality of apartheid all her life, but now she finds herself coming face to face with its true horrors: the hounding by the police of her servant's son, the burning of a nearby black township, the murder by security forces of a teenage activist who seeks refuge in her house. Through it all, her only companion, the only person to whom she can confess her mounting anger and despair, is a homeless man who one day appears on her doorstep. In *Age of Iron*, J. M. Coetzee brings his searing insight and masterful control of language to bear on one of the darkest episodes of our times. 'Quite simply a magnificent and unforgettable work' *Daily Telegraph* 'A superbly realized novel whose truth cuts to the bone' *The New York Times* 'A remarkable work by a brilliant writer' *Wall Street Journal* South African author J. M. Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003 and was the first author to win the Booker Prize twice for his novels *Disgrace* and *The Life and Times of Michael K*. His novel, *Foe*, an exquisite reinvention of the story of Robinson Crusoe is also available in Penguin paperback.

The man who tried and failed to assassinate Adolph Hitler is reborn from historical obscurity into a novel that details his brazen but ill-fated attempt to kill the Fuhrer with a bomb that he delivered personally

The idea of human cruelty to animals so consumes novelist Elizabeth Costello in her later years that she can no longer look another person in the eye: humans, especially meat-eating ones, seem to her to be conspirators in a crime of stupefying magnitude taking place on farms and in slaughterhouses, factories, and laboratories across the world. Costello's son, a physics professor, admires her literary achievements, but

dreads his mother's lecturing on animal rights at the college where he teaches. His colleagues resist her argument that human reason is overrated and that the inability to reason does not diminish the value of life; his wife denounces his mother's vegetarianism as a form of moral superiority. At the dinner that follows her first lecture, the guests confront Costello with a range of sympathetic and skeptical reactions to issues of animal rights, touching on broad philosophical, anthropological, and religious perspectives. Painfully for her son, Elizabeth Costello seems offensive and flaky, but—dare he admit it?—strangely on target. In this landmark book, Nobel Prize-winning writer J. M. Coetzee uses fiction to present a powerfully moving discussion of animal rights in all their complexity. He draws us into Elizabeth Costello's own sense of mortality, her compassion for animals, and her alienation from humans, even from her own family. In his fable, presented as a Tanner Lecture sponsored by the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, Coetzee immerses us in a drama reflecting the real-life situation at hand: a writer delivering a lecture on an emotionally charged issue at a prestigious university. Literature, philosophy, performance, and deep human conviction—Coetzee brings all these elements into play. As in the story of Elizabeth Costello, the Tanner Lecture is followed by responses treating the reader to a variety of perspectives, delivered by leading thinkers in different fields. Coetzee's text is accompanied by an introduction by political philosopher Amy Gutmann and responsive essays by religion scholar Wendy Doniger, primatologist Barbara Smuts, literary theorist Marjorie Garber, and moral philosopher Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation*. Together the lecture-fable and the essays explore the palpable social consequences of uncompromising moral conflict and confrontation.

From the double Booker Prize-winning author of *Disgrace*, an astonishing novel of new beginnings and the troubles of youth. 'Brilliant... Tenaciously absorbing' *Daily Telegraph* David is the small boy who is always asking questions. Simón and Inés take care of him in their new town, Estrella. He is learning the language, he has begun to make friends and he has the big dog Bolívar to watch over him. But he'll be seven soon and he should be at school. And so, David is enrolled in the Academy of Dance. It's here, in his new golden dancing slippers, that he learns how to call down the numbers from the sky. Yet it's here too that he will make troubling discoveries about what adults are capable of. *The Schooldays of Jesus* is a mesmerising tale about growing up, and about the choices we are forced to make in our lives. 'Compelling, often very funny, full of sudden depths' *Observer* Longlisted for the Booker Prize 2016

J.M. Coetzee's latest novel, *The Schooldays of Jesus*, is now available from Viking. *Late Essays: 2006-2016* will be available January 2018. Since 1982, J. M. Coetzee has been dazzling the literary world. After eight novels that have won, among other awards, two Booker Prizes, and most recently, the Nobel Prize, Coetzee has once again crafted an unusual and deeply affecting tale. Told through an ingenious series of formal addresses, Elizabeth Costello is, on the surface, the story of a woman's life as mother, sister, lover, and writer. Yet it is also a profound and haunting meditation on the nature of storytelling.

In 2003, South African writer J. M. Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his riveting portrayals of racial repression, sexual politics, the guises of reason, and the hypocrisy of human beings toward animals and nature. Coetzee was credited with being "a scrupulous doubter, ruthless in his criticism of the cruel rationalism and

cosmetic morality of western civilization." The film of his novel *Disgrace*, starring John Malkovich, brought his challenging ideas to a new audience. Anton Leist and Peter Singer have assembled an outstanding group of contributors who probe deeply into Coetzee's extensive and extraordinary corpus. They explore his approach to ethical theory and philosophy and pay particular attention to his representation of the human-animal relationship. They also confront Coetzee's depiction of the elementary conditions of life, the origins of morality, the recognition of value in others, the sexual dynamics between men and women, the normality of suppression, and the possibility of equality in postcolonial society. With its wide-ranging consideration of philosophical issues, especially in relation to fiction, this volume stands alone in its extraordinary exchange of ethical and literary inquiry.

The luminous new novel from 'one of the best writers of our time', double Booker Prize winner J. M. Coetzee. 'Full of truth, tearfully moving to read... Brilliant' *Evening Standard* Simón and David - a tall ten-year-old - are in a new land, together with a woman named Inés. The small family have found a home in which David can thrive. But David is spotted by Julio Fabricante, the director of a local orphanage, playing football with his friends. He shows unusual talent. When David announces that he wants to live with Julio and the children in his care, Simón and Inés are stunned. David is leaving them, and they can only love him and bear witness. *The Death of Jesus* is the completion of an incomparable trilogy in which J. M. Coetzee explores the meaning of a world empty of memory but brimming with questions. * *A New York Times Notable Book* * _____ 'Extraordinary... Coetzee stands as the pre-eminent novelist in the English-writing world' *New Statesman* 'You will read its cool, dry final sentences - as I did - with tears in your eyes' *The Times*

Continuing Text's re-release of J.M. Coetzee's revered works with stylish new covers, *Elizabeth Costello* is a modern classic by the great the great Nobel Prize winner accompanied by introduction from one of Australia's foremost writing critics and Coetzee experts. The idea of human cruelty to animals so consumes novelist Elizabeth Costello in her later years that she can no longer look another person in the eye: humans, especially meat-eating ones, seem to her to be conspirators in a crime of stupefying magnitude taking place on farms and in slaughterhouses, factories, and laboratories across the world. Costello's son, a physics professor, admires her literary achievements, but dreads his mother's lecturing on animal rights at the college where he teaches. His colleagues resist her argument that human reason is overrated and that the inability to reason does not diminish the value of life; his wife denounces his mother's vegetarianism as a form of moral superiority. At the dinner that follows her first lecture, the guests confront Costello with a range of sympathetic and skeptical reactions to issues of animal rights, touching on broad philosophical, anthropological, and religious perspectives. Painfully for her son, Elizabeth Costello seems offensive and flaky, but--dare he admit it?--strangely on target. Here the internationally renowned writer J. M. Coetzee uses fiction to present a powerfully moving discussion of animal rights in all their complexity. He draws us into Elizabeth Costello's own sense of mortality, her compassion for animals, and her alienation from humans, even from her own family. In his fable, presented as a Tanner Lecture sponsored by the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, Coetzee immerses us in a drama reflecting the real-life situation at hand: a writer delivering a lecture on an emotionally charged issue at a prestigious university. Literature, philosophy, performance, and deep human conviction--Coetzee brings all these elements into play. As in the story of *Elizabeth Costello*, the Tanner Lecture is followed by responses treating the reader to a variety of perspectives, delivered by leading thinkers in different fields. Coetzee's text is accompanied by an introduction by political philosopher Amy Gutmann and responsive essays by religion scholar Wendy Doniger, primatologist Barbara Smuts, literary theorist Marjorie Garber, and

moral philosopher Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation*. Together the lecture-fable and the essays explore the palpable social consequences of uncompromising moral conflict and confrontation.

A fascinating collection of essays on literary subjects ranging from Daniel Defoe to Samuel Beckett by a Nobel and Booker Prize-winning writer *Late Essays* gathers together J.M. Coetzee's literary essays from 2006 to 2017. The subjects covered in this stunning collection range from Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century to Coetzee's contemporary Philip Roth. Coetzee has had a long-standing interest in German literature and here he engages with the work of Goethe, Hölderlin, Kleist and Walser. There are four fascinating essays on fellow Nobel laureate Samuel Beckett and he looks at the work of three Australian writers: Patrick White, Les Murray and Gerald Murnane. There are essays too on Tolstoy's great novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, on Flaubert's masterpiece *Madame Bovary*, and on the Argentine modernist Antonio Di Benedetto.

Just as J. M. Coetzee's post-2003 books present essays and narrative alongside one another, this book engages with its ideas through both critical and creative writing. Reading Coetzee interleaves critical essays on Coetzee's works with an autobiographical narrative detailing MacFarlane's more personal response to her reading and writing. The presentation of elements of the creative with the critical, and the critical within the creative, aims to challenge the traditional boundary between the two. This kind of methodology derives from the idea (and practice) of embodiment: that an idea or philosophy does not 'float free', but is tied to the idiosyncrasies, divergences, and subjective 'travel' of its speaker or writer. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello*, *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year* explicitly address themes which abide more surreptitiously throughout his oeuvre: the divisions and paradoxes which occur the moment pen gains page, the value of literature, and the ethics of embodiment. In revealing the dialogue between writer-self and reader-self, and between author and character, these recent novels invite a rereading of Coetzee's previous literature. Reading Coetzee explores Coetzee's preoccupation with the act of writing using his recent books as a lens through which to view his eight previous novels as well as his memoirs and essays.

Arguably the most decorated and critically acclaimed writer of today, J. M. Coetzee is a deeply intellectual writer. Yet while just about everyone who comes to Coetzee's writing is aware that the visible superstructure of his works is moved from below by a vast substructure of ideas, we are still far from grasping Coetzee's intellectual allegiances as a whole. This book sets out to examine these allegiances in ways not attempted before, by bringing leading figures in the philosophy of literary fiction and ethics together with leading Coetzee scholars. The book is organized into three parts: the first part evaluates Coetzee with respect to notions of truth and justification. At issue is how the reader is to understand the ground on which Coetzee builds his ethical commitments. The second part considers the problem of language, in which ethics is rooted and on which it depends. The chapters of the third part position Coetzee's writing with respect to notions of social and moral solidarity, where, in regard to literature as such or experience as such, philosophy and literature together exercise an unrivaled right to be heard. Contributors: Elisa Aaltola, Derek Attridge, David Attwell, Maria Boletsi, Carrol Clarkson, Simon During, Patrick Hayes, Alexander Honold, Anton Leist, Tim Mehigan, Christian Moser, Robert B. Pippin, Robert Stockhammer, Markus Winkler, Martin Woessner. Tim Mehigan is Deputy Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland. Christian Moser is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Bonn. Presents lucid and exemplary critical essays, introducing readers to J. M. Coetzee's works, practices, horizons and relations.

Taking a work by J.M. Coetzee as an example, this volume explores the way both literature and philosophy seek - and fail - to represent reality. Stephen Mulhall examines Coetzee's '*Elizabeth Costello*', which deals with the moral status of animals.

In 1997, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist J. M. Coetzee, invited to Princeton University to lecture on the moral status of animals, read a work of fiction about an eminent novelist, Elizabeth Costello, invited to lecture on the moral status of animals at an American college. Coetzee's lectures were published in 1999 as *The Lives of Animals*, and reappeared in 2003 as part of his novel *Elizabeth Costello*; and both lectures and novel have attracted the critical attention of a number of influential philosophers--including Peter Singer, Cora Diamond, Stanley Cavell, and John McDowell. In *The Wounded Animal*, Stephen Mulhall closely examines Coetzee's writings about Costello, and the ways in which philosophers have responded to them, focusing in particular on their powerful presentation of both literature and philosophy as seeking, and failing, to represent reality--in part because of reality's resistance to such projects of understanding, but also because of philosophy's unwillingness to learn from literature how best to acknowledge that resistance. In so doing, Mulhall is led to consider the relations among reason, language, and the imagination, as well as more specific ethical issues concerning the moral status of animals, the meaning of mortality, the nature of evil, and the demands of religion. The ancient quarrel between philosophy and literature here displays undiminished vigor and renewed significance.

"An unabashedly smart and affecting portrait of the strains of a marriage."

—Ayana Mathis, author of *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* Meet Ivan and Prue: a married couple - both experts in language and communication - who nevertheless cannot seem to communicate with each other Ivan is a tightly wound philosophy professor whose reverence for logic and order governs not only his academic interests, but also his closest relationships. His wife, Prue, is quite the opposite: a pioneer in the emerging field of biolinguistics, she is bold and vibrant, full of life and feeling. Thus far, they have managed to weather their differences. But lately, an odd distance has settled in between them. Might it have something to do with the arrival of the college's dashing but insufferable new writer-in-residence, whose novel Prue always seems to be reading? Into this delicate moment barrels Ivan's unstable father-in-law, Frank, in town to hear Prue deliver a lecture on birdsong that is set to cement her tenure application. But the talk doesn't go as planned, unleashing a series of crises that force Ivan to finally confront the problems in his marriage, and to begin to fight - at last - for what he holds dear. A dazzlingly insightful and entertaining novel about the limitations of language, the fragility of love, and the ways we misunderstand each other and ourselves, *The Study of Animal Languages* marks the debut of a brilliant new voice in fiction.

Elizabeth Costello is an Australian writer of international renown. Famous principally for an early novel that established her reputation, she has reached the stage where her remaining function is to be venerated and applauded. Her life has become a series of engagements in sterile conference rooms throughout the world - a private consciousness obliged to reveal itself to a curious public: the

presentation of a major award at an American college where she is required to deliver a lecture; a sojourn as the writer in residence on a cruise liner; a visit to her sister, a missionary in Africa, who is receiving an honorary degree, an occasion which both recognise as the final opportunity for effecting some form of reconciliation; and a disquieting appearance at a writers' conference in Amsterdam where she finds the subject of her talk unexpectedly amongst the audience. She has made her life's work the study of other people yet now it is she who is the object of scrutiny. But, for her, what matters is the continuing search for a means of articulating her vision and the verdict of future generations. Paul Rayment is on the threshold of a comfortable old age when a calamitous cycling accident results in the amputation of a leg. Humiliated, his body truncated, his life circumscribed, he turns away from his friends. He hires a nurse named Marijana, with whom he has a European childhood in common: hers in Croatia, his in France. Tactfully and efficiently she ministers to his needs. But his feelings for her, and for her handsome teenage son, are complicated by the sudden arrival on his doorstep of the celebrated Australian novelist Elizabeth Costello, who threatens to take over the direction of his life and the affairs of his heart.

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