

Book Review ...

Summertime by J.M. Coetzee

A conceptual review of *Summertime* by J.M. Coetzee

J.M. Coetzee (South Africa, 1940) won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003 and has won the prestigious Booker Prize twice. His latest novel, *Summertime* (2009), currently has the shortest odds to win the 2009 Booker, which would make Coetzee the only writer to have won it on three occasions. (This review is written in the style of the novel, told through the diaries and ex-lovers of the reviewer.)

11th September 2009

Summertime lies next to him in a sprinkling of taco chip crumbs, finished. He turns back to the computer and struggles to finish the review.

He writes a note to himself. Questions to ask RE: Coetzee. If Coetzee attaches so much importance to ethics, why repeatedly dramatise the frailty of principles, morals, ideas and their subordination to jealousy, fear and sexual desire? If Coetzee had confidence in his anti-apartheid or animal rights convictions, why always hide behind the third person pronoun? Why fictionalise a memoir?

Julia

"Would I call what I had with Peter Crowe 'love'? No. He was always more in love with himself. I'd be surprised if he was capable of real love. He walked around with his head full of ideas that had nothing to do with how to fix the guttering or the car. He did this funny thing when he kissed me: he'd always put on a CD and move his lips in perfect rhythm. It was very off-putting."

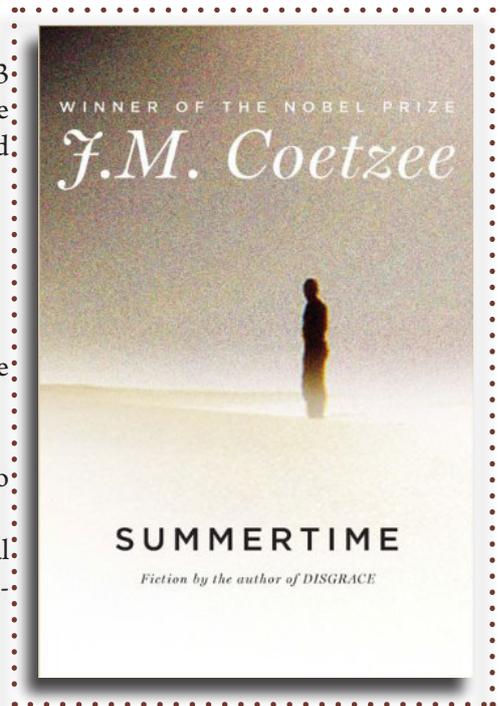
Megan

"You ask me if Peter Crowe is a good reviewer? How could he be? To be a good reviewer you have to first be a good man, and he is certainly not that. I'd struggle to call him human. I've never read any of his reviews and I don't intend to. It wouldn't surprise me if he spent the whole time talking about himself rather than the book he was supposed to be reviewing. And he'd probably write about himself using the third person. Idiot."

21st September 2009

He still speaks to his father on the phone every Sunday evening. It's their ritual, though they would never presume to talk about common interests, of which there are few. He would never, for example, tell his father about Coetzee, the novelist who drives his readers out into the narrative desert at the heart of man and has the car break down.

He writes a note to himself: is Coetzee the greatest living novelist in the English language?



by Peter Crowe