

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Start Making Sense

Professor Anthony Uhlmann of the Writing and Society Research Centre with Professor Nicholas Jose of the University of Adelaide and Professor Bruno Clément of the University of Paris 8 are examining the fiction of the Nobel Prize winning South African-Australian novelist J.M. Coetzee. This project is supported by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects scheme.

'How meaning is constructed, how we make sense of things, is central to our idea of ourselves,' says Professor Uhlmann. 'J. M. Coetzee has a profound interest in the methods through which we make sense of the contemporary world and our place in it and his approach appeals to readers of fiction, critics and philosophers alike. The central problems he deals with in his fiction are of the kind that confront people everywhere and so involve a "translatability" that allow the works to maintain relevance across cultures. Added to this, though, his fiction makes us question the nature of meaning itself. For example, his work might question particular forms of understanding of the world such as historical or political understandings, or literary understandings. Yet what becomes of interest is not only the questions and answers that occur to historians, or politicians, or novelists, but the methods they use to arrive at these. That is, he is concerned with the meaning of the methods of history, the meaning of the methods of politics, the meaning of the methods of fiction. He forces us to ask about the kinds of understandings they produce and some of the effects of these understandings. This project will undertake scholarly examinations of Coetzee's own methods, by examining archives, as well as developing readings of his works in order to consider the question of how meaning is linked to method in his work.'



J. M. Coetzee and Anthony Uhlmann

Analysis will draw upon newly available archival materials and examples of these will be shared publically using an online exhibition. A series of detailed studies of Coetzee's work will be published, including a monograph and collections of essays. An international Coetzee symposium will bring together prominent philosophers and literary scholars from around the world to discuss Coetzee's unique and sophisticated body of writing. See www.jmcoetzee.net for further details.

J. M. Coetzee's fiction challenges us to think about human understanding and our place in the world. This study will contribute to the profile of Australian and international literary criticism and scholarship, underlining how literature provides an important way of thinking about the world.

Project Title: J.M. Coetzee and Making Sense in Literature

Funding has been set at: \$120,000

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