



# Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship

*J. M. Coetzee*

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**Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship** J. M. Coetzee

Winner of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature.

J. M. Coetzee presents a coherent, unorthodox analysis of censorship from the perspective of one who has lived and worked under its shadow. The essays collected here attempt to understand the passion that plays itself out in acts of silencing and censoring. He argues that a destructive dynamic of belligerence and escalation tends to overtake the rivals in any field ruled by censorship.

From Osip Mandelstam commanded to compose an ode in praise of Stalin, to Breyten Breytenbach writing poems under and for the eyes of his prison guards, to Aleksander Solzhenitsyn engaging in a trial of wits with the organs of the Soviet state, *Giving Offense* focuses on the ways authors have historically responded to censorship. It also analyzes the arguments of Catharine MacKinnon for the suppression of pornography and traces the operations of the old South African censorship system.

"The most impressive feature of Coetzee's essays, besides his ear for language, is his coolheadedness. He can dissect repugnant notions and analyze volatile emotions with enviable poise."—Kenneth Baker, *San Francisco Chronicle Book Review*


"Those looking for simple, ringing denunciations of censorship's evils will be disappointed. Coetzee explicitly rejects such noble tritenesses. Instead . . . he pursues censorship's deeper, more fickle meanings and unmeanings."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"These erudite essays form a powerful, bracing criticism of censorship in its many guises."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Giving Offense gets its incisive message across clearly, even when Coetzee is dealing with such murky theorists as Bakhtin, Lacan, Foucault, and René; Girard. Coetzee has a light, wry sense of humor."—Bill Marx, *Hungry Mind Review*

"An extraordinary collection of essays."—Martha Bayles, *New York Times Book Review*

"A disturbing and illuminating moral expedition."—Richard Eder, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

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