



States of Exception in the Contemporary Novel: Martel, Eugenides, Coetzee, Sebald

Arne De Boever

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In the aftermath of the September 11 terror attacks, the political situation in both the United States and abroad has often been described as a "state of exception": an emergency situation in which the normal rule of law is suspended. In such a situation, the need for good decisions is felt ever more strongly. This book investigates the aesthetics, ethics, and politics of various decisions represented in novels published around 9/11: Martel's *Life of Pi*, Eugenides' *Middlesex*, Coetzee's *Disgrace*, and Sebald's *Austerlitz*.

De Boever's readings of the novels revolve around what he calls the 'aesthetic decision.' Which aesthetics do the characters and narrators in the novels adopt in a situation of crisis? How do these aesthetic decisions relate to the ethical and political decisions represented in the novels? What can they reveal about real-life ethical and political decisions? This book uncovers the politics of allegory, autobiography, focalization, and montage in today's planetary state of exception.

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