

Real Estate News

By Marian Goetzinger, Pine Knoll Shores Realty



How do you choose a real estate agent?

When thinking of buying or selling property, most people select a real estate professional to assist them. The person you choose will make a difference in whether you have a good experience or not. When you are in that situation, how will you be sure you choose well?

First, be sure the person you choose is not just a licensed agent. Not all real estate agents are realtors. Realtors must subscribe to a Code of Ethics and have ethics training on a regular basis. The Preamble to the Realtor Code of Ethics states:

Under all is the land. Upon its wise utilization and widely allocated ownership depend the survival and growth of free institutions and of our civilization. REALTORS® should recognize that the interests of the nation and its citizens require the highest and best use of the land and the widest distribution of land ownership. They require the creation of adequate housing, the building of functioning cities, the development of productive industries and farms, and the preservation of a healthful environment.

If you have a friend who is a realtor and is familiar with your market, it makes sense to work with her. The process of buying or selling property can be

a lengthy and stressful experience, with lots of twists and turns along the way. It is important to work with a professional with whom you are comfortable—someone you can trust and with whom you can enjoy the process.

If you don't have a friend who fits that description, ask your neighbors and friends for recommendations and interview two or three realtors. What is their success rate? Do they know your neighborhood? Are they active in the community? Google them. Check them out on national real estate sites to see if they are advertising well.

And finally, trust your gut. Regardless of the success rate and credentials of any professional, if you don't click, it just may be a hard experience. Choose a realtor with good credentials and recommendations, but be sure she is also someone with whom you can enjoy the experience. Once you have chosen your realtor, trust her. Be totally honest with her so she can assist you to the best of her ability. Now, enjoy the process.



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Book Talk

The Schooldays of Jesus by J.M. Coetzee
Viking 2016

Reviewed by Ken Wilkins

Think for yourself

Nobel laureates seem to exist on a different plane from us normal folk, and J. M. Coetzee is no exception. Many of his earlier works may seem more accessible, but his two recent novels about a young boy and his caregivers stretch one's mind to places it might rarely, if ever, go. *The Childhood of Jesus* and, now, *The Schooldays of Jesus*, function as allegories disguised as novels. Coetzee raises questions as profound as life itself, shows us how his characters grapple with them, and leaves us with no answers. To properly read and enjoy these books, the reader must be willing to stop and think—and to look far deeper than the straightforward plot and spare prose.

Though one really needs to read these books in order, this review will focus on the second of the two. In *The Childhood of Jesus*, Coetzee introduces us to the main characters of the tales, Simón, Inés and David (who is in the first book). The bizarre situation in which they find themselves is this: Like all residents of this new land, they came by boat from their original lives, having been "washed clean" in the passage, with no memories of their previous lives. Simón finds himself caring for David, with the promise of finding his mother, a role that Inés takes when they meet her.

After getting in trouble with the authorities regarding David's education, they leave—run away, really—and move from Novilla to Estrella. Here is where *Schooldays* takes up the story. Simón and Inés find work and a place to live, and enroll David in a dance academy, where they hope he will also take more conventional lessons. The academy is run by the beautiful Ana Magdalena, who teaches dancing, and her husband, a musician and composer.

Trouble ensues: Ana dies, Simón and Inés move into separate places, and the academy closes. Such are the bare bones of the plot, and Coetzee's prose serves to flesh out the story only a little more. Rather than finding a compelling plot and characters, readers must use their imagination to make sense of the events of these novels.

We are left with three people in an unimaginable situation, starting life anew in a strange, passionless land. Everyone is friendly and helpful, food is bland and the same for all, money is not an object, and those in charge are invisible for the most part. Yet, underneath there still beat human hearts, with desires, hopes and fears. Simón is the best example of this. He simply cannot come to terms with the new reality.

Coetzee is remodeling the novel and has taken its structure down to the studs. Both *Childhood* and *Schooldays* have the minimum requirements of location, characters and plot. Coetzee's prose, never flowery, is reduced here to its basics. Still, Coetzee is able to educe themes of love, parenting and what it means to grow up. Underlying all of this is a battle between cold intellectualism and passion or emotion. When stripped of the trappings of our lives, what is left?

The Schooldays of Jesus is not fun to read, but careful attention to its surprising depth makes it worthwhile. One can read this from a religious view, in which there may be a Christ figure—or consider it as a treatise on totalitarianism. Wherever your mind wants to wander, Coetzee is prepared to take you. And perhaps, like Simón at the conclusion of *The Schooldays of Jesus*, you might begin to dance.