

Acknowledgments

This project began as I waited with many others in the sunbaked courtyard of the temporary offices – long since de facto permanent – of the Department of the Registrar General in Harare. We were waiting to be called. I had temporarily lost my citizenship on a technicality, and was reading *Moby Dick* to try to kill the time and assuage my frayed nerves. What were we all doing there? How had it come to this? One elderly woman was told to return to the town of her birth on the other side of the country to have her birth certificate changed as it gave the wrong gender. Each infuriating encounter with the bureaucracy gave way to a disciplined kind of apathy. No less remarkable were the bureaucrats themselves, who demonstrated a painstaking patience in explaining and executing policies that were in not a few cases – at least to those of us languishing in the courtyard – patently absurd. I was inspired, if that is the right word, to look into the history of the experience of bureaucracy. Whatever else I may have been able to discover in my investigations of the literature of bureaucratization, I have to acknowledge that this book fails to offer the one thing that may have made it worthwhile, namely, a therapy for the passions of bureaucratization. Much as I would like to, I cannot recommend taking *Bureaucratic Fanatics* to the passport office – best stick with *Moby Dick*.

At a time when university life has become so bureaucratic, I count myself lucky to have begun this project at Northwestern in the invigorating intellectual company afforded by my dissertation committee: Peter Fenves, Samuel Weber, Jörg Kreienbrock, and Susannah Gottlieb. For their always thoughtful and thought-provoking guidance, my thanks. The friendship and collegiality I enjoyed at Northwestern was complemented by the generosity of students and faculty at the various institutions with which I was associated in Europe. Eva Geulen at the Goethe University, Frankfurt sponsored my stay in Germany 2014–2015 on a DAAD scholarship and I am very grateful for her continuing support of my work. Thanks to Sigrid Weigel and Daniel Weidner, I was able to write in spring 2015 among the welcoming scholarly community at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research (ZfL) in Berlin. In my year as a postdoc in Berlin, the fellows and staff of the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICI) provided an incomparable environment for the rethinking and revision of the dissertation into a book. My thanks go to Stanley Corngold, Christoph Menke, Yv Nay, Nathan Taylor, and Arnd Wedemeyer, for reading and remarking on various chapters, and to Paul North, Chad Wellmon, and Caroline Lillian Schopp for their generous comments on the whole manuscript.

Research for the epilogue on Coetzee was conducted in March 2016 at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin with a Northwestern Graduate Research Grant as well as research funding from the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. Versions of chapters of this book have appeared elsewhere and I am grateful to the publishers for allowing their publication here: “Passions for Justice: Kleist’s Michael Kohlhaas and Coetzee’s Michael K,” *Comparative Literature* (2018); “State of Embarrassment: Kafka’s *In der Strafkolonie*,” *The Germanic Review* (2015); and “The Poverty of Agency in Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*,” *Conradiana* (2014). References to Coetzee’s unpublished papers are cited with permission of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Paul Fleming and Rüdiger Campe showed faith in the project and I am particularly pleased that *Bureaucratic Fanatics* is part of the *Paradigms* series. I am grateful to Manuela Gerlof and Stella Diedrich at De Gruyter for their attention and support. Eva Horn, who advised me on some of the earliest drafts, has been a continuous source of intellectual stimulation and encouragement. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of German at the University of Vienna for furnishing me with “office-room” – and time – to complete this book. Finally, to CLS and FEL without whom this undertaking would doubtless have ended in despair – thank you!