

Marjorie Garber



"We are here tonight," he informed the audience, "to listen to a lecture."

Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*

THE TANNER LECTURES sponsored by the Princeton University Center for Human Values were organized this year with special attention to disciplinarity and its discontents. Novelist John Coetzee's two lectures, "The Philosophers and the Animals" and "The Poets and the Animals," met with responses from four scholars with widely different disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) trainings: an animal ethicist, a biologist, a historian of religion, and a literary critic.

Even within Coetzee's lecture-narratives themselves, we might note, some characters express anxiety about disciplines and their authority. The college president, we learn, used to be a political scientist. (What is he *now*?) "That's just anthropology," scoffs Norma, the philosopher of mind, when the subject of dietary laws comes up. And novelist Elizabeth Costello is equally dismissive of certain social science experiments which she regards as mere imbecilities.

In view of these partitions of knowledge, I thought I had better pose some questions having to do with the disciplines I was trained in or might be supposed to know something about—disciplines like literature, psychoanalysis, gender theory, cultural studies, and Shakespeare (which has emerged in recent years as

virtually a discipline unto itself). Here were the questions that came to my mind.

- What does the form have to do with the content?

This is a central question for all literary critics, of whatever generation and vintage—and with a novelist of this skill and artfulness (I mean John Coetzee, not Elizabeth Costello) it's a consistently rewarding one.

So, "What does the form of these lectures have to do with the content?" was my first question.

And my second, prompted by psychoanalysis, was:

- What does the form of these lectures displace, repress, or disavow? What is striking in its absence here?
- What are the relationships between the sexes, and between family members, in Coetzee's narrative?

This was a third kind of question, a gender-and-sexuality question. Why should a classic sexual triangle of the *human* social and cultural world (mother-son-son's wife) animate an argument about animals?

And this led me to yet another question, driven by my own recent interest in animal-human relations and what I've called "dog love":¹

- What does the emphasis on animals tell us about *people*?

You'll see that in a way this is a version of the displacement question. But it is also built into the very form and content of Coetzee's *Lives of Animals*, from the concern about Holocaust analogies to the framing of the whole narrative between references—at the beginning and the end—to the mother's arrival at and departure from the airport and to her "old flesh." If she's flying, she's also dying.

Finally, and most crucially perhaps for this occasion, which was, after all, a series sponsored by the Center for Human Values:

¹ Marjorie Garber, *Dog Love* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

- What, if anything, is the "value" of literary study in today's academy and today's world? Is literary analysis a human value?

In the next few pages I will hazard some very brief answers to each of these sweeping questions.

LET ME BEGIN with the one particular moment in the lectures we heard that struck me especially forcefully with its experiential truth—the moment when the narrator, John Bernard, a young, untenured professor of physics and astronomy, imagines the kind of audience that will attend his mother's *second* talk. "The English department is staging it," he tells his wife. "They are holding it in a seminar room, so I don't think they are expecting a big audience." As a member of an English department myself, I easily recognized this note of skepticism about the size of audiences for literary topics. (On the occasion of the Tanner Lectures at Princeton, in fact, the large lecture hall was full.)

"Writers teach us more than they are aware of," observes Costello. She is ostensibly talking about the poet Ted Hughes. And, "The book we read isn't the book he thought he was writing," she says. She is ostensibly talking about Wolfgang Köhler's *Mentality of Apes*. But she is also—could anything be clearer?—talking about the author of *The Lives of Animals*. Who, like Elizabeth Costello, is a novelist addressing an audience of college students and faculty. Costello herself, like Coetzee, the author of *Foe*, is celebrated for her rewriting of a classic—in her case Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The frame story—the metafiction so familiar and delightful to readers of Coetzee—is deftly established.

On the basis of her reputation as a novelist [she] has been invited to Appleton to speak on any subject she elects; and she has responded by electing to speak, not about herself and her fiction, as her sponsors would no doubt prefer, but about a hobbyhorse of hers, animals.

It's perfect; even to the term "hobbyhorse," which means both obsession and horse costume, the figurative and the literal bound up together in a way that will reveal itself as characteristic within these deceptively transparent lectures.

The debate with philosophy Professor O'Hearne is set up, we learn, rather like the Tanner Lectures. A text has been circulated in advance: "Since O'Hearne has had the courtesy to send her a précis beforehand, she knows, broadly speaking, what he will be saying." Broadly speaking indeed. Some things have been added and omitted—and such additions and omissions, such traces and overlaps, are the very stuff of literary analysis.

After Elizabeth Costello's first lecture, "The Philosophers and the Animals," her son concludes that the event has been an oddity: "A strange ending to a strange talk, he thinks, ill gauged, ill argued. Not her métier, argumentation. She should not be here." Is this authorial self-abnegation? An escape clause written in advance by a novelist who has consented to speak in an academic venue? A droll resistance to an imagined critique? Or an explanation of the path not taken, a tacit rationale for the novelist's decision to speak in and through a fictional frame?

These lectures and responses, in short—the lectures and responses that were initially presented to the audience in a Princeton University lecture hall—have already been anticipated, fictionalized, and appropriated. A lecture within a lecture; a response within a response. What is the strategy of such an appropriation? Among other things, it is a strategy of *control*.

I CONFESS that I have always been a great fan of metatextual fiction—fiction about fictions, fiction that embodies and builds itself around a hall of mirrors, a *mise en abîme*. So it was with a special flush of pleasure that I recognized these two lectures as belonging to that most accomplished and most maligned of modern literary genres, the academic novel. (Or in this case, perhaps, the academic novella.)

The academic novel is one of the most brilliant minor genres of our time. I say "minor" without intending any disparage-

ment: there is no more pleasurable reading, at least for academics. The acknowledged classics of the genre are Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* and Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution*, both of them, as it happens, published in 1954, one in England and one in the United States. No one who has read "Lucky" Jim Dixon's account of "Merrie England," delivered (at the behest of his tenured senior colleague) as his first—and perhaps last—public lecture, is likely to forget it. "The point about Merrie England is that it was about the most un-Merrie period in our history."²

Some of my other favorites from recent years are David Lodge's *Changing Places* (in which American Morris Zapp of Euphoria College and Briton Philip Swallow of the University of Rummidge exchange jobs and wives); Robert Barnard's murder mystery *The Old Goat*, in which a pompous and ill-tempered English academic visits Australia; and Carolyn Heilbrun's *Death in a Tenured Position*, in which the first tenured woman in the Harvard English department comes to an untimely end. (This particular text has had a special significance for me; on the occasion of my own arrival at Harvard in 1981, where I was—as it happens—the first woman to take up a tenured appointment in the Department of English, I received several copies of Heilbrun's novel in the mail. I would like to believe that they came from well-wishers.)

In any case the tendency of the academic novel to merge with the murder mystery (think of Dorothy Sayers's *Gaudy Night* or Michael Innes's *Death at the President's Lodging* or Rosamond Smith's *Nemesis*) is itself a symptom of culture. The familiar elements of the genre include a beleaguered or bemused junior faculty member, usually from a department of the humanities, a pompous senior colleague, an oblivious college president, several other faculty members including at least one with a German name and another with an exotic European accent, and one or two fresh-faced undergraduates.

² Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (1954; London and New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 227.

Perhaps closest to Coetzee's Appleton College (located in the town of Waltham—a conflation, perhaps, of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts) is poet Randall Jarrell's inspired description of the barely fictional Benton College for women (think southern Vermont). In *Pictures from an Institution* a wickedly witty female novelist, spending a year teaching creative writing, takes the occasion to write a tell-all academic novel. "Gertrude felt that the rhythms of academic conversation have been neglected by novelists; that whatever you say against novelists, you have to give them credit for *that*."³ Thus she resolutely submits to a conversation with the college president, who insists on talking to her about novels ("now she was Collecting for the Book"),⁴ and goads the resident painter, who paints feral animals in jungles and marshes, to reveal the identity of his favorite writer, D. H. Lawrence. ("Gertrude smiled and said to him, 'You're older than I thought.'")⁵ As in *The Lives of Animals*, a young male junior professor and his wife are what used to be called the "focalizers"—the people through whom we see events unfold.

THE English department of Appleton College holds its seminars in a room in Stubbs Hall, named, we can perhaps imagine (though the text never tells us so) after George Stubbs, the great English painter of horses, dogs, and their keepers. The first draft of John Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* was full of quiet jokes of this kind, some of which have been amended or edited in the later process of writing. The president's elegant wife, Olivia Garrard, was originally named Renée Garrard (*not* the same as a certain male comparatist at Stanford); the dean is a man called Arendt (*not* the same as a certain female philosopher). There is a scholar named Elaine Marx (with an *x*, as in Louis Marx Hall, the home of the Princeton University Center for Human Values), who is

³ Randall Jarrell, *Pictures from an Institution* (1954; Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

not the same as Elaine Marks, the translator of *Modern French Feminisms* but is instead the chair of the English department, a feminist who writes about women's fiction—a description that might fit Princeton English professor (and former department chair) Elaine Showalter. These are "in" jokes for literary scholars—jokes I would call "academic" if the word were not so consistently ironized throughout.

For novelist Elizabeth Costello seems to have little time for "academics." She describes the short and unhappy life of the mathematician Ramanujan, who, "unable to tolerate the climate . . . and the academic regime" in Cambridge (England) died prematurely at the age of thirty-three. She tells the tale of Kafka's domesticated ape Red Peter, who demonstrates a command of "lecture-hall etiquette and academic rhetoric." She deplores the academic totalitarianism with which an "orthodox" interpretation of Swift's *Modest Proposal* is "stuffed down the throat of young readers." She alludes twice, drily and unmistakably, to what she calls "academic philosophers." "Academic" is clearly a suspect term.

The genre of these lectures, then, is metafiction, and together they constitute a version of the academic novel, though crucially this one is suffused with pathos rather than comedy. The effect is to insulate the warring "ideas" (about animal rights, about consciousness, about death, about the family, about academia) against claims of authorship and authority. They are put in play by characters who—precisely because they are "academics"—can be relied upon to be unreliable: both too vehement and too wishy-washy, expert in debaters' points and classroom hyperbole. "Sincerity," assuming it to be a value, cannot be assumed in this contest of faculties. We don't know whose voice to believe.

BUT WHY is the debate about the "lives of animals" so clearly staged as a debate between poetry and philosophy, and why does philosophy seem so clearly to dominate, if not to win? Another familiar genre to which Coetzee's lectures are related is, of course, the philosophical dialogue. It is Plato who most famously

invites the comparison of poet and philosopher, and not to the advantage of the poet. On the other hand, poet John Keats once wrote in a letter that poetry "is not so fine a thing as philosophy— For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth."⁶ It's hard to know exactly where Keats's admiration and his irony reside.

Coetzee's first lecture is titled "The Philosophers and the Animals," and the second "The Poets and the Animals." But a good half of the second lecture, and a third of Elizabeth Costello's performance schedule at Appleton College, is given over to discussing philosophy or philosophers, since after her appearance at the English department she takes part in a debate with philosopher Thomas O'Hearne. (Can he be a relative of animal poet and philosopher Vickie Hearne?)

Within the family, too, there is a parallel debate, between the novelist and the philosopher, between Elizabeth and Norma. What are they really fighting about? What is the structural relationship between the mother and the wife—which is to say, between literature and philosophy? Norma's resistance is staged as competition with the mother, and in the closing moments there is an insistence on the word "normal"—defined as life without the famous mother on the scene. (Or perhaps life without literature?)

And is the mother—the famous mother—above the battle? I don't think so. John arrives late at his mother's English department seminar, and the minute he comes in she begins to talk about *his* subject, physics, in connection with Rilke's panther poem. Actually, John Bernard and his wife don't really seem very interested in animals—and they don't know a lot about them if they think an older dog is more trouble than a puppy.

A GREAT DEAL of the tension at Appleton College seems to revolve around what Freud called "the seduction of an analogy." This is a matter that goes straight to the heart of the humanities and of

⁶ John Keats, letter to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 February–3 May 1819, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 230.

literary and cultural studies. I made a list of figures of speech that appeared in these lectures: donkey's years, scapegoat, close to the bone, stew in their own juice, prick up my ears, easy to digest, baby potatoes. I'm sure I've missed some. Whoever it was who coined the phrase "dead metaphor" could hardly have been more wrong. Is the comparison of human beings to animals venal? Patronizing? A mode of false consciousness? A blasphemy? A necessary mediation? Viewed in literary terms, this is the challenge to humanism.

But there is a larger question: the function of analogy in the posing of some of the most urgent ethical and political questions. At the beginning of "The Poets and the Animals" we are offered the quiet anger of a poet who objects to Elizabeth Costello's analogy between the murdered Jews of Europe and slaughtered cattle. "If Jews were treated like cattle," he says, "it does not follow that cattle are treated like Jews. The inversion insults the memory of the dead." In protest he absents himself from the dinner in her honor. At the end of "The Poets and the Animals" Elizabeth herself returns, as if compelled, to the horrific image of the Holocaust. She confesses to her son that sometimes she thinks the entire population of the meat-eating world are "participants in a crime of stupefying proportions." And she imagines visiting friends and admiring a lamp in their living room, only to be told that the shade is made of Polish-Jewish female skin.

Whether the Holocaust could ever be part of *any* analogy, much less this one, has been regularly debated and disputed. It is the event beyond analogy, many people say. And yet it is part of oblique and not so oblique analogies every day. Here is an example from recent popular culture.

The children's film *Babe*, about an intelligent and sensitive pig who learns to herd sheep, begins with a scene in a factory shed that directly evokes both German expressionist film and the specter of the Nazi death camps. Low-angled cameras and glaring lights illuminate men dressed in ankle-length lab coats that are evocative of storm-trooper trenchcoats. The men are carrying cattle prods. They descend upon a nursing sow and her piglets

and drive her into a truck. The film's voice-over speaks ironically of pig heaven, the place to which all pigs must desire to go, since those that have gone before them seem so content never to return. Suddenly a mechanical milking spigot descends like a bomb in the midst of the remaining piglets. They, too, are marked for slaughter. Babe, the runt, is the only one to survive—and even he narrowly escapes being made into chops and ham in his new life on a family farm. Is this a trivial analogy? Even an insulting one, since pigs, after all, are distinctly non-Kosher? The Holocaust is one profound challenge to the use of analogy.

Coetzee's philosopher O'Hearne alludes briefly to another seductive and painful analogy between animal suffering and human suffering when he dismisses the animal-rights movement as "Western" and falsely universalist. For the animal-protection societies that arose in the nineteenth century were in fact founded by the same social activists who founded the antislavery and woman's suffrage societies. In the United States the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was followed by the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865; a year later the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded. A similar pattern can be found in Britain, where those who campaigned against slavery were also active in the anticruelty movement. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, published in 1877, was hailed as "the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the horse" by the president of the American Humane Society, George Angell. This analogy—to a horse called *black beauty*, after all—was surely capable of giving offense to many American blacks. Again human suffering seems (perhaps) demeaned by comparison with animal suffering. Is this, too, the seduction of an analogy?

But the dangers of figurative language are perhaps most effectively evoked in Coetzee's text through the references to sociobiology, or what Elizabeth Costello refers to as "ethnobiology." In *Not in Our Genes* authors Richard Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon J. Kamin argue that one of the errors of sociobiology is to take metaphors for real identities, and to forget (we might say "naturalize") the source of the metaphors. Here they cite in par-

ticular two ideas that predate sociobiology but are incorporated into it: the idea of caste in insects and the phenomenon of "slavery" in ants.

These ideas, they say, are transferences from the human realm to the animal or natural realm. (What in linguistics and in literary study is called back-formation, the creation of a new word through the deletion of what is mistakenly understood to be an affix from an existing word: for example, *laze*, a back-formation from *lazy* on the model of *haze* and *hazy*.) "There is a process of backward etymology in sociobiological theory in which human social institutions are laid on animals, metaphorically, and then the human behavior is rederived from the animals as if it were a special case of a general phenomenon that had been independently discovered in other species," they point out. "Does an ant queen (once called a king, before her sex was realized), a totally captive, force-fed, egg-bearing machine, have any resemblance to Elizabeth I or Catherine the Great, or even to the politically powerless but exceedingly rich Elizabeth II?"⁷ (*Angels and Insects*, anyone?)

And here is the authors' argument against what they call "false metaphor"—an argument that speaks directly to the use and abuse of literature and literary analysis in culture:

While sociobiologists inherited royalty and slavery in ants from nineteenth-century entomology, they have made the false metaphor a device of their own. Aggression, warfare, cooperation, kinship, loyalty, coyness, rape, cheating, culture are all applied to nonhuman animals. Human manifestations then come to be seen as special, perhaps more developed, cases.⁸

Let me illustrate this observation with a passage that has always particularly fascinated me from E. O. Wilson's book *Sociobiology* (1975) on the question of what Wilson terms "reciprocal altruism" in nature—a passage that, as you will see, seamlessly

⁷ R. C. Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon J. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology, and Human Nature* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 249.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

incorporates tautology, a spectacular example of quotation out of context, and a definition (all too familiar) of poetry as the unproblematic and timeless truth of human nature:

Selection will discriminate against the individual if cheating has later adverse effects on his life and reproduction that outweigh the momentary advantage gained.

And how does E. O. Wilson support this assertion? He quotes Shakespeare:

Iago stated the essence in *Othello*: "Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls."⁹

Here Shakespeare quoted out of context equals human nature. Never mind that Iago is lying through his teeth.

"Do you really believe, Mother, that poetry classes are going to close down the slaughterhouses?" asks Coetzee's John Bernard, and his mother answers, "No." "Then why do it?" he persists. That is indeed the question.

Poetry makes nothing happen, W. H. Auden once wrote. But is that true? And must it be true? What has poetry to offer, what has language to offer, by way of solace, except analogy, except the art of language? In these two elegant lectures we thought John Coetzee was talking about animals. Could it be, however, that all along he was really asking, "What is the value of literature?"

⁹ E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 58.

Peter Singer



WHEN Naomi comes down for breakfast, her father is already at the table. Though there is a bowl of muesli in front of him, his attention is on a typescript that is lying on the table beside him. For Naomi the only unusual aspect of this scene is the depth of her father's frown. She fills her own bowl with muesli, covers it with soymilk, flicks a dangling dreadlock out of it, and breaks the silence:

"Let me guess . . . It's a paper from that graduate student who majored in cultural studies before turning to philosophy?"

"No. This is worse. Not the paper itself—that's really interesting. But it's a more serious problem for me."

"Like?"

"You know how next month I'm going to Princeton to respond to that South African novelist, J. M. Coetzee, who's giving a special lecture about philosophy and animals? This is his lecture. Except that it isn't a lecture at all. It's a fictional account of a female novelist called Costello giving a lecture at an American university."

"You mean that he's going to stand up there and give a lecture about someone giving a lecture? *Très post-moderne*."

"What's postmodern about it?"

"Oh, Dad, where have you been for the past decade? You know, Baudrillard, and all that stuff about simulation, breaking down the distinction between reality and representation, and so on? And look at all the opportunities for playing with self-reference!"

LECTIONS

"Call me old-fashioned, then, but I prefer to keep truth and fiction clearly separate. All I want to know is: how am I supposed to reply to this?"

"What does this fictional Costello say about animals, anyway?"

"She's on the right side, no doubt about that. She's a vegetarian. She shows how limited and restrictive some famous scientific inquiries into the minds of apes have been. And there are some very strong passages comparing what we are doing to animals to the Holocaust."

"Oooh, sensitive stuff! I wouldn't equate what the Nazis did to your grandparents with what most people today do to animals."

"Nor would I. But a comparison is not necessarily an equation. Isaac Bashevis Singer has one of his characters compare human behavior toward animals with the Nazis' behavior toward Jews. He's not saying that the crimes are equally evil, but that both are based on the principle that might is right, and the strong can do what they please with those who are in their power."

"That's just a specific example of the parallel between racism and speciesism that you're always making. Is that all Coetzee does with the Holocaust comparison?"

"Costello, you mean. No. She's also saying something about the way in which so many people prefer not to think too much about what is being done to those outside the sphere of the favored group, how we avoid things that might disturb us and look the other way while evil is done. But I think she would go further than that. There's a more radical egalitarianism about humans and animals running through her lecture than I would be prepared to defend."

"A *more* radical egalitarianism?" Naomi raises an eyebrow, tops up her muesli, and continues, "Didn't you write a book the first chapter of which was called 'All Animals are Equal?'"

"I didn't think you'd ever read it."

"Why do I need to read it? I get it from you all the time anyway. Looks like I'm about to get another dose. But I did once get as far as the first page of the first chapter."

"That figures. Anyway, when I say that all animals—all sentient creatures—are equal, I mean that they are entitled to equal consideration of their interests, whatever those interests may be. Pain is pain, no matter what the species of the being that feels it. But I don't say that all animals have the same interests. Species membership may point to things that are morally significant. When it comes to the wrongness of taking life, for example, I've always said that different capacities are relevant to the wrongness of killing."

"That's a relief. When I was little I used to wonder who you would save if the house caught fire, me or Max."

Max had seemed to be asleep on his rug; but at the sound of his name, he lifts his head and looks around expectantly.

Peter kneels by the dog and strokes his neck. "Sorry, Max, but you would have had to fend for yourself. You see, even when she was little, Naomi could wonder about whether I would save her or you. You never wondered about that, did you? And Naomi was always chattering about what she was going to be when she grew up. I'm sure that you don't think about what you will be doing next summer, or even next week."

"And that makes a difference?" It was Naomi, rather than Max, who responded. "What about before I was old enough to think about what I was going to be when I grew up? Would you have tossed a coin—heads I save Naomi, tails I save Max?"

"No, silly. I'm your father, of course I would have saved my lovely baby daughter. But the point is, normal humans have capacities that far exceed those of nonhuman animals, and some of these capacities are morally significant in particular contexts. Look at you. You were up late last night working on your research project, which you have to hand in next month. The topic ceased to excite you long ago, but you are finishing it so that you can get your degree and, if you are lucky, use it to find a job doing something environmentally friendly. Your whole life is future-oriented to a degree that is inconceivable for Max. That gives you much more to lose, and gives an objective reason for anyone—

not just your father—to save you rather than Max if the house catches fire.”

“Isn’t that still speciesist? Aren’t you saying that these characteristics—being self-aware, planning for the future, and so on—are the ones that *humans* have, and therefore they are more valuable than any that *animals* have? Max has a better sense of smell than I do. Why isn’t that an objective reason for saving him rather than me?”

“As long as Max is alive, the more happy sniffing he can do, the better. But ask yourself in what way killing—assume that it is painless, unanticipated killing, without any fear beforehand . . .”

Naomi interrupts: “So you’re not talking about what really happens in slaughterhouses, then? You’ve just excluded the overwhelming majority of the deaths that humans inflict on animals. This discussion is becoming purely theoretical.”

“Not *purely*. Let me finish. *You tell me*: in what way is painless, unanticipated killing wrong in itself?”

“It means the loss of everything. If Max were to be killed, there would be no more doggy-joy of welcoming me home, being taken for a walk, chewing his bone . . .”

“No more of that *for Max*, true. But there are plenty of dog breeders out there who breed dogs to meet the demand. So if we got another puppy from them, thus causing one more dog to come into existence, then there would be just as much of all those good aspects of dog-existence.”

“What are you saying—that we could painlessly kill Max, get another puppy to replace him, and everything would be fine? Really, Dad, sometimes you let philosophy carry you away. Too much reasoning, not enough feeling. That’s a *horrible* thought.”

Naomi is so distressed that Max, who has been listening attentively to the conversation, gets stiffly up from his rug, goes over to her, and starts consolingly licking her bare feet.

“You know very well that I care about Max, so lay off with the ‘You reason, so you don’t feel’ stuff, please. I feel, but I also think about what I feel. When people say we should *only* feel—and at times Costello comes close to that in her lecture—I’m reminded

of Göring, who said, ‘I think with my blood.’ See where it led him. We can’t take our feelings as moral data, immune from rational criticism. But to get back to the point, I don’t mean that *everything* would be fine if Max were killed and replaced by a puppy. *We* love Max, and *for us* no puppy would replace him. But I asked you why painlessly killing is wrong *in itself*. Our distress is a *side effect* of the killing, not something that makes it wrong in itself. Let’s leave Max out of it, since mentioning his name seems to excite him and distress you. Someone once said that pigs have to be thankful that most people are not Jewish, because if all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all . . .”

Naomi interrupts again: “Pigs on factory farms don’t need to *thank* anyone for their miserable existence, confined indoors on bare concrete for life. They’d be better off not existing at all.”

“You know very well that I’m not defending eating pork, just trying to get a philosophical point across. Let’s assume the pigs are leading a happy life and are then painlessly killed. For each happy pig killed, a new one is bred, who will lead an equally happy life. So killing the pig does not reduce the total amount of porcine happiness in the world. What’s wrong with it?”

Naomi pauses momentarily. “You’re still killing animals with wants of their own. Pigs are as smart as dogs. And I know when Max is looking forward to his walk. Even if he doesn’t plan what he’ll do next week, he can have short-term wants and anticipations. I bet pigs can too. So we are doing them a wrong by ending their lives, and we don’t make up for it when we bring another pig or dog into existence.”

Peter smiles triumphantly: “Ah, but now you are conceding my point. We are disagreeing only about the facts of porcine and canine life. And maybe I don’t really even disagree with you about that. Suppose I grant that pigs and dogs are self-aware to some degree, and do have thoughts about things in the future. That would provide some reason for thinking it intrinsically wrong to kill them—not absolutely wrong, but perhaps quite a serious wrong. Still, there are other animals—chickens maybe, or fish—who can feel pain but don’t have any self-awareness or capacity

for thinking about the future. For those animals, you haven't given me any reason why painless killing would be wrong, if other animals take their place and lead an equally good life."

Naomi has finished her breakfast, pushed Max away from her feet, and is lacing up her nonleather Doc Martens. Talking to her father about philosophy always ends up with his switching into lecture mode. Soon she'll be able to get away. But she doesn't want to be rude, so she asks, "And Coetzee doesn't agree with that?"

"Costello doesn't, anyway. She talks about bat-being and human-being both being full of being, and seems to say that their fullness of being is more important than whether it is bat-being or human-being."

"I can see what she's getting at. When you kill a bat, you take away everything that the bat has, its entire existence. Killing a human being can't do more than that."

"Yes, it can. If I pour the rest of this soymilk down the sink, I've emptied the container; and if I do the same to that bottle of Kahlúa you and your friends are fond of drinking when we are out, I'd empty it too. But you'd care more about the loss of the Kahlúa. The value that is lost when something is emptied depends on what was there when it was full, and there is more to human existence than there is to bat existence."

Naomi says quietly: "Oh. I didn't think you'd noticed the Kahlúa." But her father has picked up the paper again and is flipping through the pages. "That's not the worst argument, either. Listen to this. Costello is talking about a book she has written in which she thinks herself into the character of Joyce's Marion Bloom, and then she says,

If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life."

Naomi is glad to leave the topic of Kahlúa: "You don't have to be a philosopher to see what is wrong with that. The fact that a char-

acter doesn't exist isn't something that makes it hard to imagine yourself as that character. You can imagine someone very like yourself, or like someone else you know. Then it is easy to think your way into the existence of that being. But a bat, or an oyster? Who knows? If that's the best argument Coetzee can put up for his radical egalitarianism, you won't have any trouble showing how weak it is."

"But *are* they Coetzee's arguments? That's just the point—that's why I don't know how to go about responding to this so-called lecture. They are *Costello's* arguments. Coetzee's fictional device enables him to distance himself from them. And he has this character, Norma, Costello's daughter-in-law, who makes all the obvious objections to what Costello is saying. It's a marvelous device, really. Costello can blithely criticize the use of reason, or the need to have any clear principles or proscriptions, without Coetzee really committing himself to these claims. Maybe he really shares Norma's very proper doubts about them. Coetzee doesn't even have to worry too much about getting the structure of the lecture right. When he notices that it is starting to ramble, he just has Norma say that Costello is rambling!"

"Pretty tricky. Not an easy thing to reply to. But why don't you try the same trick in response?"

"Me? When have I ever written fiction?"

Wendy Doniger



IT SEEMS somehow reductionistic to respond to these deeply moving readings as if they had been dry academic arguments. But all I can do is offer some texts from the other traditions that I know, in support of what I take to be the ideas implicit in J. M. Coetzee's Tanner Lectures—namely, an argument for the inevitable, if unfalsifiable, links between communion with animals, compassion for animals, and the refusal to torment, if not necessarily the refusal to kill and/or eat, animals. Let me begin, as he does, with the eating.

COMPASSION TOWARD ANIMALS,
AND VEGETARIANISM

Thomas O'Hearne, one of Elizabeth Costello's critics in the second Tanner Lecture, argues that to treat animals compassionately is "very recent, very Western, and even very Anglo-Saxon," and that we delude ourselves when we think that we can impose this idea on other traditions who are "blind" to it. Elizabeth challenges him too weakly (people keep pets, and children love animals, all over the world). I would make a stronger case for the non-Western religions, though not so strong as most animal-lovers generally assume.

After about the sixth century B.C.E., most Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains did indeed feel that people should not eat animals, in part, as is generally argued, because they themselves might be reborn as animals, but more because they feared that animals might retaliate in the afterworld. A Vedic text from 900 B.C.E. tells

of a boy who went to "the world beyond" (that is, the world to which one goes after death—the theory of rebirth is not yet reflected in this text) and saw a man cut another man to pieces and eat him, and another man "eating a man who was screaming," and another man "eating a man who was *soundlessly* screaming." When he returned to earth, his father explained that the first man represented people who, when they had been in *this* world, had cut down trees and burnt them, the second people who had cooked for themselves animals that cry out, and the third people who had cooked for themselves rice and barley, which scream soundlessly.¹

Now, we might regard this as an extreme ecological program—to ban not only the eating of animals, but the burning of fuel and the consumption of vegetables (there was one Hindu, in the twentieth century, who claimed to have recorded the screams of carrots that were strapped down to a table and chopped up). But in fact this is not what this text argues for. When the terrified boy asked his father, "How can one avoid that fate?" his father told him that he could easily avoid it simply by offering oblations to the gods before consuming fuel, animals, and vegetables. This is an example of the rationalization attributed to the Greeks in Elizabeth's argument with Wunderlich in the first lecture: invent the gods and blame *them*.

Other parts of this same text do express a kind of submerged guilt at the slaughter of animals, perhaps even compassion, though the ostensible point of the myth is to justify the slaughter: in the beginning, cattle had the skin that humans have now, and humans had the skin that cattle have now. Cattle could not bear the heat, rain, flies, and mosquitoes, and asked humans to change skins with them; in return, they said, "You can eat us and use our skin for your clothing." And so it was. And the sacrificer puts on the red hide of a cow so that, when he goes to the other world, cattle do not eat him; otherwise, they would eat

¹ *Jaiminiya Brahmana* 1.42–44; Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence: Folklore, Sacrifice, and Danger in the Jaiminiya Brahmana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 32–35.

him.² Another common ploy to assuage guilt—which is to say, to silence compassion—was to assert that the animal willingly sacrificed itself.³ On yet other occasions an attempt was made to convince the animal that it was not in fact killed. Thus in the hymn of the horse sacrifice in the *Rig Veda*, ca. 1000 B.C.E., the priest says to the horse, "You do not really die through this, nor are you harmed. You go on paths pleasant to go on."⁴

Hindu legal texts generated a great deal of what we now call "language" to sidestep this deep ambivalence. The most famous of these texts, *The Laws of Manu*, composed in the early centuries of the Common Era, ricochets back and forth between the vegetarian and sacrificial stances:

As many hairs as there are on the body of the sacrificial animal that he kills for no (religious) purpose here on earth, so many times will he, after his death, suffer a violent death in birth after birth. The Self-existent one himself created sacrificial animals for sacrifice; sacrifice is for the good of this whole (universe); and therefore killing in a sacrifice is not killing. Herbs, sacrificial animals, trees, animals (other than sacrificial animals), and birds who have been killed for sacrifice win higher births again. On the occasion of offering the honey-mixture (to a guest), at a sacrifice, and in rituals in which the ancestors are the deities, and only in these circumstances, should sacrificial animals suffer violence, but not on any other occasion; this is what Manu has said.⁵

² See the story of "How Men Changed Skins with Animals," *Jaiminiya Brahmana* 2.182–83; also in O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*. For a discussion of this genre of prevarication in other religions, see Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 53–65.

³ See the discussion of the willingness of the sacrificed animal in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "The Good and Evil Shepherd," in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution, and Permanence in the History of Religions, Dedicated to Zwi Werblowsky*, ed. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stromsa (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 169–91.

⁴ *Rig Veda* 1.162.21; Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, 108 *Hymns Translated from the Sanskrit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1981), 91.

⁵ *The Laws of Manu* 5.38–41; *The Laws of Manu*, a new translation of the *Manu-vadharmanasra*, by Wendy Doniger, with Brian K. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1991), 103.

Outside the sacrificial arena, the cow that generously gives her milk replaces the steer that must be slaughtered to provide food;⁶ Hindu myths imagine the transition from hunting to farming, from killing to milking, from blood sacrifice to vegetable sacrifice.⁷

We may see a variant of this argument in a part of *Gulliver's Travels* that Elizabeth does not cite in her evocation of this text. When Gulliver finds himself unable to live on either the vegetarian fare of the Houyhnhnms or the flesh that is the food of the horrid Yahoos, he devises a solution: "I observed a cow passing by; whereupon I pointed to her, and expressed a desire to let me go and milk her." Henceforth Gulliver survives, in perfect health, on a diet of milk and a bread made of oats—two civilized alternatives to the two natural extremes of raw flesh and grass.

In Hindu myths of this genre, the humans among the animals eat "fruits and roots"; in the Buddhist variants, they eat nothing at all (not being true humans yet) or they eat the earth itself, which is delicious and nourishing, and is sometimes called the earth-cow.⁸ (Shame, too, a factor that Elizabeth's son John interjects into the argument, enters in here: when people begin to hoard the food given by the earth-cow, they build houses to hide both the food and their newly discovered sexuality; for people who watch others copulating say, "How could anyone treat someone else like that?" and throw clods of earth at them.)⁹ These two strategies, one realistic and one fantastic, provide natural alternatives to the food that men do in fact share with *unmythical* animals: meat.

But it is not quite so simple. Vegetarianism and compassion for animals are not the same thing at all. Elizabeth Costello vividly

⁶ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 239–54.

⁷ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths: The Cave of Echoes* (New York: Macmillan, 1988; reprint, University of Chicago Press, 1995), 82–96.

⁸ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 29, 321–46.

⁹ *Digha Nikaya*, Aggañña Suttanta 27.10; *Visuddhimagga* 13.49; cited by O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil*, 33.

reminds us that it is usual for most *individuals* to eat meat without killing animals (most nonvegetarians, few of whom hunt or butcher, do it every day) and equally normal for an individual to kill without eating the kill—or, indeed, any other meat (what percentage of hit men or soldiers devour their fallen enemies?). Indeed, one historian of ancient India has suggested that vegetarianism and killing were originally mutually exclusive: that in the earliest period of Indian civilization, meat-eating householders would, in time of war, consecrate themselves as warriors by giving up the eating of meat.¹⁰ They either ate meat *or* killed. In later Hinduism, the strictures against eating and killing continued to work at odds, so that it was regarded as better (for most people, in general: the rules would vary according to the caste status of the person in each case) to kill an Untouchable than to kill a Brahmin, but better to eat a Brahmin (presuming that one came across a dead one) than to eat an Untouchable (under the same circumstances). It is within this world of revisionist scripture and unresolved ambivalence that we must come to terms with Gandhi's twisted vegetarianism—rightly problematized by "the blond man" who argues with Norma.

Nevertheless, the logical assumption that any animal that one ate had to have been killed by *someone* led to a natural association between the ideal of vegetarianism and the ideal of nonviolence toward living creatures. And this ideal came to prevail in India, reinforced by the idea of reincarnation and its implication that humans and animals were part of a single system of the recycling of souls: do not kill an animal, for it might be your grandmother, or your grandchild, or you.

COMPASSION TOWARD ANIMALS, AND INDIVIDUAL HUMAN SALVATION

But compassion for animals is seldom the dominant factor in South Asian arguments for vegetarianism. Buddhists and Jains

¹⁰ Jan Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

cared, like Elizabeth Costello, for individual human salvation, more, really, than they cared for animals; they refrained from killing and eating animals to protect their own souls from pollution (and even, as Norma nastily but correctly points out, to protect their bodies from social pollution). Yet it seems to me that this argument for individual salvation could be adopted in a secular form in the Western conversation more often than it is. It is an argument often made against capital punishment, that it should be abolished not because of its evil effects upon criminals but because it is bad for *us*, bad for us to be a people who kill people like that. So, too, whether or not we can argue that killing animals for food or experimentation is bad for the universe, for the food supply, for medical advances, or even whether or not we can prove that animals suffer as we do, or know that they are going to die, we might take from the South Asian context the very wise argument that *we* know that they are going to die, and that *that* makes it bad for us to kill them.

COMPASSION FOR ANIMALS AS NONOTHER

Let me turn now to the argument, implicit in the rebirth scenario, that we must not kill and eat animals because they are like us. In India, this argument begins the other way around: the Vedic myths of sacrifice (before the theory of rebirth) close the gap between humans and animals in the other direction, by including humans with animals as sacrificial beasts. The Sanskrit term *Pashu* (cognate with Latin *pecus*, cattle [as in Pecos Bill or impecunious—meaning having no cattle, no bread, no money]) designates sacrificial and domestic animals, animals that we keep until we slaughter them, either in ritual or for food, or both. These are the animals that we own and measure ourselves by; they are the animals that are us. *Mriga*, related to the verb “to hunt” (*margayati*, from which is also derived the noun *marga*, “a trail or path”), designates any animal that we hunt, in particular a deer. But just as “deer” in English comes from the German *Tier*, meaning any wild animal, a meaning that persisted in English for some time

(Shakespeare used the phrase “small deer” in this sense), so too in Sanskrit the paradigmatic *mriga*, the wild animal par excellence, is the deer, just as the paradigmatic *pashu* is the cow (or, more precisely, the bull). But *mriga* is also the general term for any wild animal in contrast with any tame beast or *pashu*. *Pashus* are the animals that get sacrificed, whatever their origins; *mrigas* are the animals that get hunted. In both cases, the ancient Indians defined animals according to the manner in which they killed them.

The Vedas and Brahmanas often list five basic kinds of sacrificial animal or *pashu*: bull (*go*, which can also mean “cow”), horse, billygoat, ram, and human being (person, particularly male person or man).¹¹ The later Vedic tradition then opens the gap by distinguishing humans from animals in sacrificing only animals; *The Laws of Manu* lists *pashus*, *mrigas*, and humans as three separate groups—though one Hindu commentator glosses this by saying that, even though humans are in fact *pashus*, they are mentioned separately because of their special preeminence.¹² And still later Hinduism once again narrows the gap between humans and animals by joining humans and animals together as creatures *not* to be sacrificed, in contrast with vegetables (which remain stubbornly other).¹³

To imply that humans are sacrificial victims just like other animals, and to imply that neither humans nor animals should be sacrificial victims, are two very different ways of expressing the belief that we are like animals. So, too, the decision not to kill and/or eat animals follows from the belief that, since animals are nonother, to eat them is a kind of cannibalism. On the other hand, the belief that animals are *so* other as to be gods gives yet another swing to the pendulum and produces a reason to eat such animals after all—to eat them ritually, which lands us back at square one. The argument that humans (but not animals) are

¹¹ *Atharva Veda* 11.2.9, with Sayana's commentary.

¹² Govindaraja on *Manu* 1.39. In *Manu-Smṛiti, with Nine Commentaries*, ed. Jayantakrishna Harikrishna Dave (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Series, no. 29, 1975).

¹³ O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths*, 82–83.

created in the image of god is often used in the West to justify cruelty to animals, but most mythologies assume that animals, *rather than humans*, are the image of god—which may be a reason to eat them.

The belief that animals are like us in some essential way is the source of the enduring and widespread myth of a magic time or place or person that erases the boundary between humans and animals. The place is like the Looking-Glass forest where things have no names, where Alice could walk with her arms around the neck of a fawn. The list of people who live at peace among animals would include Enkidu in the epic of *Gilgamesh* and the many mythical children who are raised as cubs by a pack of animals, like Romulus and Remus, Mowgli, and Tarzan, like Pecos Bill (suckled by a puma) and Davy Crockett (raised among mountain lions). T. H. White, translator of a medieval bestiary, imagined the young King Arthur's education by Merlin the magician as taking place among ants and geese and owls and badgers.¹⁴ This myth is very different from the mythologies of bestiality, which imagine a very different sort of intimacy (though the two intersect uncomfortably in the image of "lying down with" animals, literally sleeping with animals).¹⁵ Our myths generally do *not* define animals as those with whom we do not have sex (though the president's elegant wife, Olivia Garrard, favors this distinction).

The ideal state of humans among animals is not one in which wild animals become tame (like Elsa the Lionness in *Born Free*, or the Lone Ranger's horse Silver). It is a state in which a human becomes one of the animals. Or rather, more precisely, a human becomes part of the society of the animals but remains a human, like Barbara Smuts among the nonhuman primates; the adopted child in the myth must eventually return to the human world. In

¹⁴ T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Fontana Books, 1962); pt. 1, "The Sword in the Stone." The culmination of the animal education comes in chap. 23.

¹⁵ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "The Mythology of Masquerading Animals, or, Bestiality" (in *In the Company of Animals*, ed. Arien Mack, *Social Research: An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences* 62, no. 3 [Fall 1995]: 751–72).

contrast with the rituals of cultural transformation, in which we cease to eat flesh by becoming quintessentially cultural and eating bread or milk instead, these are myths of natural transformation, in which we become quintessentially natural and eat what animals eat (food that may in fact include other animals).

COMPASSION FOR ANIMALS AS CONSCIOUS

Hinduism assumes that animals have transmigrating souls and a consciousness like our own, and that, though they do not have human language, they can communicate with us in other ways that reveal the presence of a mind and a soul. This does not, of course, mean that they think and/or feel precisely as we do; merely that they, too, think and feel. Descartes's assumption that thinking is what makes us what we are is all wrong, as Elizabeth demonstrates.¹⁶

Elizabeth gives a fine answer to the philosopher Thomas Nagel's provocative question, "What is it like to be a bat?" Long before Nagel, an equine metaphor was used to express the problems that we have in imagining minds of animals. Xenophanes, an ancient Greek philosopher, said, "If cattle and horses or lions had hands, or could draw with their feet, horses would draw the forms of god like horses."¹⁷ The anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, in conversation with his colleague Max Gluckman, had nicknamed Sir James George Frazer's mode of reasoning (in *The Golden Bough*) the "if I were a horse" argument, from the story of the farmer in the Middle West whose horse had strayed from its paddock. The farmer went into the paddock, chewed some grass, and ruminated, "Now if I were a horse, which way would I go?"¹⁸

¹⁶ The *reductio ad absurdum* of the Cartesian assumption is expressed by the joke about Descartes ordering a cup of coffee, to go, in a Dunkin' Donut shop; when the waitress asked him, "Do you want cream and sugar in that, Mr. Descartes?" he replied, "I think not," and vanished.

¹⁷ Xenophanes, frag. 15, in *Die Fragmente*, ed. Ernst Heitsch (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1983).

¹⁸ Cited by R. Angus Downie, *Frazer and the Golden Bough* (London: Gollancz, 1970), 42.

The British anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, in criticizing the introspectionist psychologies of Spencer and Tylor, warned that it was futile to try to imagine how it would feel "if I were a horse."¹⁹ Whatever its merits as a caveat for anthropologists, I would regard the "if I were a horse" fantasy as quite a useful way of dealing with *horses* (like Elizabeth Costello, I am literal-minded). For it is the pious belief of many horsemen (and horsewomen) that they can think like horses.²⁰ And maybe they can. If the farmer, after chewing grass, lopes off to a field where the grass is much better than the field where he had been keeping his horse, and finds his horse there, perhaps he *has* thought like a horse. On the other hand, he does not have to eat the grass himself when he gets there; he does not have to *feel* like a horse. It is useful to distinguish between ontological relativism and moral relativism; one need not adopt the morals, or the diet, of a horse to understand a horse. Perhaps Nagel changed the horse to a bat to make the point of noncommunication more dramatic, because we don't *love* bats; but that is precisely my point: we can understand horses because we love them (and, tautologically, we love them because we understand them).

Though we can never *know*, for certain, if we or anyone else has really understood how horses think, many people have tried and have persuaded us that they have succeeded. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (sometimes dubbed "the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the horse") (1877), Rudyard Kipling's "The Maltese Cat" (1898—the Cat is actually a polo pony) and Leo Tolstoy's "Strider [Xolstomer]" (1894) are narrated by horses (the latter so vividly that it led Maxim Gorky to exclaim to Tolstoy, "You must have been a horse in a previous incarnation"). This line of argument may or may not be good anthropology, but it is good ecology. It argues for the

¹⁹ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 24, 43.

²⁰ See, for example, R. H. Smythe, *The Mind of the Horse* (London: Country Life, 1965); Moyra Williams, *Horse Psychology* (London: Methuen, 1956); and, most recently, Vicki Hearne, *Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

empathic leap of faith, the Kantian belief that what hurts me hurts you—and hurts horses. The poetry, if not the comparative neurology, persuades me that Coetzee has in fact entered the head of Sultan to discover the better questions that the captive ape might have thought about ("What is wrong with him, what misconception does he have of me, that makes him believe it is easier for me to reach a banana hanging from a wire than to pick up a banana from the floor?" "WHERE IS HOME? HOW DO I GET HOME?"), questions that are so much better (if so much less falsifiable) than "How can I get this banana?"

I have followed Coetzee in shifting the ground from the thoughts of animals to their feelings. There is a justly famous Taoist parable to this effect:

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu had strolled on to the bridge over the Hao, when the former observed, "See how the minnows are darting about! That is the pleasure of fishes." "You not being a fish yourself," said Hui Tzu, "how can you possibly know in what consists the pleasure of fishes?" "And you not being I," retorted Chuang Tzu, "how can you know that I do not know?" "If I, not being you, cannot know what you know," urged Hui Tzu, "it follows that you, not being a fish, cannot know in what consists the pleasure of fishes." "Let us go back," said Chuang Tzu, "to your original question. You asked me how I knew in what consists the pleasure of fishes. Your very question shows that you knew I knew. I knew it from my own feelings on the bridge."²¹

No one can prove that someone else does *not* know how animals feel.

One could, though Coetzee and Elizabeth do not, also argue that animals themselves understand the feelings of other animals, that they themselves have compassion. Dogs and horses certainly do, as anyone knows who has seen their deeply troubled reaction to the sight of a wounded animal of their own or a closely related

²¹ Chuang Chou, *Chuang-tzu*, bk. 17, par. 13, "Chuang-tzu and Hui-tzu dispute on their understanding of the enjoyment of fishes." *Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralizer, and Social Reformer*, trans. Herbert A. Giles (London: B. Quaritch, 1926), 218–19.

species. Our empathy cannot be limited by our physical, any more than by our mental, capacities.²² Elizabeth could feel what a corpse felt; amputees experience pain in the absent limb, the phantom limb. Surely we, too, can experience pain in our paws, in our tails, in our fetlocks and pasterns, perhaps even, if we are truly talented, in our fins and scales.

COMPASSION FOR ANIMALS AS HAVING LANGUAGE

Wittgenstein would, I think, have been skeptical of the "if I were a horse" approach; he argued that "if a lion could talk, we could not understand him."²³ And language is, I think, the place from which compassion springs. We cannot torment (or eat) the people we speak with. Elaine Scarry made this point, in reverse, when she argued that torture takes away speech,²⁴ and Lewis Carroll made it when the Red Queen, having introduced Alice to the roast ("Alice—mutton: Mutton—Alice"), commanded: "It isn't etiquette to cut any one you've been introduced to. Remove the joint!"²⁵ And this language need not be even the signing of chimps, let alone the whistles of dolphins (or the body language of primates that Barbara Smuts learns to read); it may be no more than the silent language of the eyes. Emmanuel Levinas once said that the face of the other says, Don't kill me.²⁶ This is the language that we must learn to read, and the language that is denied by people who defend the right to treat animals as things, through a self-serving tautology. Elizabeth Costello speaks of animals that

²² I once fainted dead away at a circumcision; apparently my foreskin recoiled in horror of the cut; contrariwise, many men have fainted away during their wives' childbirth pains, and not merely in societies that ritually enshrine the couvade.

²³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3d ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Prentice Hall, 1958), 223.

²⁴ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁵ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, chap. 9, "Queen Alice."

²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay in Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 198–99.

refuse to speak, that keep the dignity of the silence. I disagree: they speak, and we refuse to grant them the dignity of *listening* to them.

Since dolphins are not fish but look like fish, and since they are animals but they talk to us in a way that most other animals cannot, they doubly straddle the boundary between our own categories of mammals and fish and thereby threaten our definition of what it is to be human. This accounts, in part, for some people's reluctance to call what dolphins do "speech." And in fact the language that people use to talk to dolphins is neither the language in which dolphins talk to one another nor the language in which we talk to one another—it is a Rosetta stone language, a kind of mammalian Esperanto. Yet it is a language, and it joins us with the fish.

Often, the myth of the human among wild animals does not tell us what the people and animals eat, but it always tells us how they manage to speak to one another, and how they manage not to attack one another (two closely related problems). Gulliver *asks* the cow, in sign language, for her milk. It is language, not food, that ultimately separates us from the animals, even in myths. Only by speaking their language will we really be able to know how we would think and feel if we were fish or horses.

EPILOGUE

"If Red Peter had any sense, he would not have any children," says Elizabeth. Do animals think like this? Do they want to be sterile? I once met an animal-rights activist, dined with him, and after a while cheerfully began to make friends with him by telling him about my dogs and my horse, and then asking him what pets he had. He said he didn't have pets, thought it was cruel to keep them in a city. I began to apologize for myself ("I take them out to the park to run free with other dogs for hours every day, feed them minced steak, etc., etc.") but had to acknowledge the violence done to them by their restricted freedom, periods of

absence from me, and so forth. What would you do? I asked. His answer was simple: neuter all the extant dogs and cats, and in twenty years there would be no more dogs and cats in the world. As with Greek tragic heroes, the ultimate right of all animals—in his view—was never to be born. It seems to me that we can do better than that.

Barbara Smuts



IN THE third Tanner Lecture, Coetzee's protagonist, novelist Elizabeth Costello, debates the issue of animal rights with philosophy professor Thomas O'Hearne. According to O'Hearne, "Thomas Aquinas says that friendship between human beings and animals is impossible, and I tend to agree. You can be friends neither with a Martian nor with a bat, for the simple reason that you have too little in common with them." Although Costello challenges many of O'Hearne's other statements, on this one, so easily refuted, she remains mysteriously silent. Yet the failure of Costello—and of Coetzee's other characters—to address Aquinas's claim is not so surprising when we realize that in a story that is, ostensibly,¹ about our relations with members of other species, none of the characters ever mentions a personal encounter with an animal. The closest we come to the possibility of such encounters is when Costello's son says to himself, "If she wants to open her heart to animals, why can't she stay home and open it to her cats?" Thus we discover only secondhand that Elizabeth Costello lives with animals. At no point in her passionate comments on animal rights does she mention the beings who, in all probability (given that she is an old woman who lives alone, far from her son)

I thank Peter M. Sherman and Steve Lansing for valuable feedback.

¹ I say "ostensibly" because Coetzee's lectures can be interpreted in many ways, as indicated most clearly by Garber's commentary (this volume). However, to paraphrase Elizabeth Costello (in her reflections on the essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" by philosopher Thomas Nagel), when Coetzee writes about animal rights, I take him to be writing, in the first place, about animals and our relations with them.

are the individuals with whom she interacts most often and, perhaps, most intimately.

Why doesn't Elizabeth Costello mention her relations with her cats as an important source of her knowledge about, and attitudes toward, other animals? Maybe she feels constrained by the still-strong academic taboo against references to personal experience, although this seems unlikely, given her expressed disdain for so many of the other taboos of rationalism. Whatever her (or Coetzee's) reasons, the lack of reference to real-life relations with animals is a striking gap in the discourse on animal rights contained in Coetzee's text. Entering territory where, perhaps, Costello (and maybe even Coetzee) feared to tread, I will attempt to close this gap, not through formal scientific discourse, but rather, as Elizabeth Costello urges, by speaking from the heart. The heart, says Costello, is "the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share . . . the being of another." For the heart to truly share another's being, it must be an embodied heart, prepared to encounter directly the embodied heart of another. I have met the "other" in this way, not once or a few times, but over and over during years spent in the company of "persons" like you and me,² who happen to be nonhuman.

These nonhuman persons include gorillas at home in the perpetually wet, foggy mountaintops of central Africa, chimpanzees carousing in the hot, rugged hills of Western Tanzania, baboons lazily strolling across the golden grass plains of highland Kenya, and dolphins gliding languorously through the green, clear waters of Shark Bay.³ In each case, I was lucky to be accepted by

² The term *person* is commonly used in two different ways: first, as a synonym for human, and, second, to refer to a type of interaction or relationship of some degree of intimacy involving actors who are individually known to one another, as in "personal relationship," knowing someone "personally," or engaging with another "person to person." Here I use the word in the second sense, to refer to any animal, human or nonhuman, who has the capacity to participate in personal relationships, with one another, with humans, or both. I return to the concept of animal "personhood" later in the essay.

³ Shark Bay is off the coast of Western Australia, the site of a research project on wild bottlenose dolphins.

the animals as a mildly interesting, harmless companion, permitted to travel amongst them, eligible to be touched by hands and fins, although I refrained, most of the time, from touching in turn.

I mingled with these animals under the guise of scientific research, and, indeed, most of my activities while "in the field" were designed to gain objective, replicable information about the animals' lives. Doing good science, it turned out, consisted mostly of spending every possible moment with the animals, watching them with the utmost concentration, and documenting myriad aspects of their behavior. In this way, I learned much that I could confidently report as scientific findings. But while one component of my being was engaged in rational inquiry, another part of me, by necessity, was absorbed in the physical challenge of functioning in an unfamiliar landscape devoid of other humans or any human-created objects save what I carried on my back.⁴ When I first began working with baboons, my main problem was learning to keep up with them while remaining alert to poisonous snakes, irascible buffalo, aggressive bees, and leg-breaking pig-holes. Fortunately, these challenges eased over time, mainly because I was traveling in the company of expert guides—baboons who could spot a predator a mile away and seemed to possess a sixth sense for the proximity of snakes. Abandoning myself to their far superior knowledge, I moved as a humble disciple, learning from masters about being an African anthropoid.

Thus I became (or, rather, regained my ancestral right to be) an animal, moving instinctively through a world that felt (because it was) like my ancient home. Having begun to master this challenge, I faced another one equally daunting: to comprehend and behave according to a system of baboon etiquette bizarre and subtle enough to stop Emily Post in her tracks. This task was forced on me by the fact that the baboons stubbornly resisted my feeble but sincere attempts to convince them that I was nothing more than a detached observer, a neutral object they could

⁴ I spent more time studying baboons than any other species, and so in what follows, I concentrate on my experiences with them.

ignore. Right from the start, they knew better, insisting that I was, like them, a social subject vulnerable to the demands and rewards of relationship. Since I was in their world, they determined the rules of the game, and I was thus compelled to explore the unknown terrain of human-baboon intersubjectivity. Through trial and embarrassing error, I gradually mastered at least the rudiments of baboon propriety. I learned much through observation, but the deepest lessons came when I found myself sharing the being of a baboon⁵ because other baboons were treating me like one. Thus I learned from personal experience that if I turned my face away but held my ground, a charging male with canines bared in threat would stop short of attack. I became familiar with the invisible line defining the personal space of each troop member, and then I discovered that the space expands and contracts depending on the circumstances. I developed the knack of sweetly but firmly turning my back on the playful advances of juveniles, conveying, as did the older females, that although I found them appealing, I had more important things to do. After many months of immersion in their society I stopped thinking so much about what to do and instead simply surrendered to instinct, not as mindless, reflexive action, but rather as action rooted in an ancient primate legacy of embodied knowledge.

Living in this way with baboons, I discovered what Elizabeth Costello means when she says that to be an animal is to "be full of being," full of "joy." Like the rest of us, baboons get grouchy, go hungry, feel fear and pain and loss. But during my times with them, the default state seemed to be a lighthearted appreciation of being a baboon body in baboon-land. Adolescent females concluded formal, grown-up-style greetings with somber adult males with a somersault flourish. Distinguished old ladies, unable to get a male's attention, stood on their heads and gazed up at the guy upside down. Grizzled males approached balls of wrestling infants and tickled them. Juveniles spent hours perfecting the technique of swinging from a vine to land precisely on the top of

⁵ I refer again to Elizabeth Costello's comments on sharing "the being of another."

BARBARA SMOLIS
mom's head. And the voiceless, breathy chuckles of baboon play echoed through the forest from dawn to dusk.

During the cool, early morning hours, the baboons would work hard to fill their stomachs, but as the temperature rose, they became prone to taking long breaks in especially attractive locales. In a mossy glade or along the white-sanded beach of an inland lake, they would shamelessly indulge a passion for lying around in the shade on their backs with their feet in the air. Every now and then someone would emit a deep sigh of satisfaction. Off and on, they would concur about the agreeableness of the present situation by participating in a chorus of soft grunts that rippled through the troop like a gentle wave. In the early days of my fieldwork when I was still preoccupied with doing things right, I regarded these siestas as valuable opportunities to gather data on who rested near whom. But later, I began to lie around with them. Later still, I would sometimes lie around without them—that is, among them, but while they were still busy eating. Once I fell asleep surrounded by 100 munching baboons only to awaken half an hour later, alone, except for an adolescent male who had chosen to nap by my side (presumably inferring from my deep sleep that I'd found a particularly good resting spot). We blinked at one another in the light of the noonday sun and then casually sauntered several miles back to the rest of the troop, with him leading the way.

There were 140 baboons in the troop, and I came to know every one as a highly distinctive individual. Each one had a particular gait, which allowed me to know who was who, even from great distances when I couldn't see anyone's face. Every baboon had a characteristic voice and unique things to say with it; each had a face like no other, favorite foods, favorite friends, favorite bad habits. Dido, when chased by an unwelcome suitor, would dash behind some cover and then dive into a pig-hole, carefully peeking out every few moments to see if the male had given up the chase. Lysistrata liked to sneak up on an infant riding on its mother's back, knock it off (gently), and then pretend to be deeply preoccupied with eating some grass when mom turned to

see the cause of her infant's distress. Apié, the alpha male, would carefully study the local fishermen from a great distance, wait for just the right moment to rush toward them, take a flying leap over their heads to land on the fish-drying rack, grab the largest fish, and disappear into the forest before anyone knew what was happening.

I also learned about baboon individuality directly, since each one approached his or her relationship with me in a slightly different way. Cicero, the outcast juvenile, often followed me and sat quietly a few feet away, seemingly deriving some small comfort from my proximity. Leda, the easygoing female, would walk so close to me I could feel her fur against my bare legs. Dakar, feisty adolescent male, would catch my eye and then march over to me, stand directly in front of me, and grab my kneecap while staring at my face intently (thanks to Dakar, I've become rather good at appearing calm when my heart is pounding). Clearly, the baboons also knew me as an individual.⁶ This knowledge was lasting, as I learned when I paid an unexpected visit to one of my study troops seven years after last being with them. They had been unstudied during the previous five years, so the adults had no recent experience with people coming close to them, and the youngsters had no such experience at all. I was traveling with a fellow scientist whom the baboons had never met, and, as we approached on foot from a distance, I anticipated considerable wariness toward both of us. When we got to within about one hundred yards, all of the youngsters fled, but the adults merely glanced at us and continued foraging. I asked my companion to remain where he was, and slowly I moved closer, expecting the remaining baboons to move away at any moment. To my utter

⁶ I tested this once by dressing up a woman friend of similar appearance, height, and build in my field clothes. Carrying my distinctive hat, sunglasses, binoculars, and notebook, she emerged from my jeep and approached the baboons. They almost immediately took off, looking back nervously, even though she was still several hundred meters away. On another occasion, I returned after a few days' absence, with most of my long hair cut off. The baboons closest to me began to run away, but then they stopped, turned around, and peered at me intently. I could see the light of recognition dawn as, one by one, they relaxed and resumed their normal activities.

amazement, they ignored me, except for an occasional glance, until I found myself walking among them exactly as I had done many years before. To make sure they were comfortable with me, as opposed to white people in general,⁷ I asked my friend to come closer. Immediately, the baboons moved away. It was I they recognized, and after a seven-year interval they clearly trusted me as much as they had on the day I left.

Trust, while an important component of friendship, does not, in and of itself, define it. Friendship requires some degree of mutuality, some give-and-take. Because it was important, scientifically, for me to minimize my interactions with the baboons, I had few opportunities to explore the possibilities of such give-and-take with them. But occasional events hinted that such relations might be possible, were I encountering them first and foremost as fellow social beings, rather than as subjects of scientific inquiry. For example, one day, as I rested my hand on a large rock, I suddenly felt the gentlest of touches on my fingertips. Turning around slowly, I came face-to-face with one of my favorite juveniles, a slight fellow named Damien. He looked intently into my eyes, as if to make sure that I was not disturbed by his touch, and then he proceeded to use his index finger to examine, in great detail, each one of my fingernails in turn. This exploration was made especially poignant by the fact that Damien was examining my fingers with one that looked very much the same, except that his was smaller and black. After touching each nail, and without removing his finger, Damien glanced up at me for a few seconds. Each time our gaze met, I wondered if he, like I, was contemplating the implications of the realization that our fingers and fingernails were so alike.

I experienced an even greater sense of intimacy when, in 1978, I had the exceptional privilege of spending a week with Dian Fossey and the mountain gorillas she had been studying for many

⁷ The baboons were far more comfortable, in general, with white people than with Africans, simply because most of the whites they had known were nonthreatening researchers, while most of the Africans they'd encountered were local people who sometimes chased them.

years. One day, I was out with one of her groups, along with a male colleague unfamiliar to the gorillas and a young male researcher whom they knew well. Digit, one of the young adult males, was strutting about and beating his chest in an early challenge to the leading silverback male. My two male companions were fascinated by this tension, but after a while I had had enough of the macho energy, and I wandered off. About thirty meters away, I came upon a "nursery" group of mothers and infants who had perhaps moved off for the same reasons I had. I sat near them and watched the mothers eating and the babies playing for timeless, peaceful moments. Then my eyes met the warm gaze of an adolescent female, Pandora. I continued to look at her, silently sending friendliness her way. Unexpectedly, she stood and moved closer. Stopping right in front of me, with her face at eye level, she leaned forward and pushed her large, flat, wrinkled nose against mine. I know that she was right up against me, because I distinctly remember how her warm, sweet breath fogged up my glasses, blinding me. I felt no fear and continued to focus on the enormous affection and respect I felt for her. Perhaps she sensed my attitude, because in the next moment I felt her impossibly long ape arms wrap around me, and for precious seconds, she held me in her embrace. Then she released me, gazed once more into my eyes, and returned to munching on leaves. If you find this account hard to believe, watch Dian Fossey's National Geographic special on the mountain gorillas and look for the scene in which she comes face-to-face with the young male Digit (the same one whose macho display drove me away).

After returning from Africa, I was very lonely for nonhuman company. This yearning was greatly eased by my dog Safi, who, like the baboons, has given me the opportunity to experience a joyful intersubjectivity that transcends species boundaries. I turn now to this relationship, because, while few of us can travel to Africa to live with wild baboons, most of us have the chance to develop a bond with a member of another intelligent, social species, be it a dog, a cat, or some other kind of animal.

Before I went to Africa, I had lived with dogs, but not until my baboon experience did I begin to question the rather limited framework within which I, and other members of my culture, relate to our "pets." The very word "pet" connotes a lesser being than the wild counterpart, a being who is neotenous, domesticated, dependent. Even the most avid pet-lovers generally operate within a narrow set of assumptions about what their animals are capable of, and what sort of relationship it is possible to have with them. This was true of me before the baboons, despite my long experience with pets and abundant knowledge of animal behavior.

I rescued Safi, aged eight months, from an animal shelter where she had been brought as a stray, collarless, without history. She hovered on the border between childhood and adulthood, mature enough to focus her attention intelligently, but still extremely puppylike in demeanor and playfulness. From the instant of our first meeting, I experienced her as a wild animal⁸ possessed by an instinctual wisdom akin to that of my baboons. Because I had so much respect for her intelligence, I did not consider it necessary to "train" her. Instead, I discuss all important matters with her, in English, repeating phrases and sentences over and over in particular circumstances to facilitate her ability to learn my language. She understands (in the sense of responding appropriately to) many English phrases, and she, in turn, has patiently taught me to understand her language of gestures and postures (she rarely uses vocal communication). Some dogs bark when they want to go out, but Safi instead gazes at the door, even if she's standing far away, and then looks at me (it took me a while to catch on). If we're out walking, and I become too absorbed in my own thoughts or in talking with other people, she regains my attention by gently touching her nose to the back of my leg in that sensitive spot behind the knee. As I write this paragraph, she

⁸ This perception was no doubt facilitated by the fact that she closely resembles a jet-black timber wolf, her dogness given away only by the abnormally large size of her upright ears.

leaves the spot where she's been resting for the last hour and gently prods my elbow with her nose, signaling a desire to connect. When I approach her with a similar desire, she's nearly always willing to pause in her activities to attend to me, and I do the same for her. I stop typing, meet her gaze, say her name, and brush the top of her head with my lips. Apparently fulfilled by this brief contact, she leaves me uninterrupted for another hour or two, a restraint specific to those times when I am writing.

Through encounters like these, I have developed a deep appreciation for the subtlety and gentleness of her communication, and I have tried to respond in kind, by keeping my voice low and my touch soft, even in situations of great emotional intensity, for her or me or both. These situations are bound to arise when dogs live in a human-dominated world that carries dangers they may not understand (such as cars) and prohibitions that defy their instincts (such as not eating squirrels or chasing deer). For example, early in our relationship, we came upon several deer about a hundred yards away grazing in an open field. They were barely moving, but Safi had clearly caught their scent. One doe lifted her head and turned toward us. In response to this movement, Safi leapt forward (she was not on a leash). I said, without raising my voice, "No, Safi, don't chase." To my amazement, she stopped in her tracks. Thus I learned that I could communicate prohibitions without yelling or punishing her. I learned later that with Safi, rules do not have to be absolute. Under some circumstances, it's OK for her to approach a cat (for instance, one who is an expert on dogs), and more often, it's not. If I notice a cat nearby, before I open the door to let Safi out of the car (or disengage her leash), I say either, "No cats" or "It's OK to greet the cat." If I say the former, she turns her head away from the cat and walks with a bit of a slink in the other direction (as if avoiding temptation), but if I say, "It's OK," she'll check to make sure I mean it, and if I repeat myself, she'll approach the cat.

The most remarkable example of Safi's willingness to respond to my preferences concerning her relations with other animals involved a very tame, very fat (and very stupid?) fox squirrel who

approached us, sat a couple of feet away, went up on his haunches, and chattered at her. I asked Safi to stay put. Her body trembled all over but she held her ground. The squirrel did too. I asked Safi again to stay put, and then I told her over and over how much I appreciated her self-control. The squirrel remained. Finally, I turned away and said to Safi, "Please come with me." She did.

These examples might be taken to indicate that I make and enforce the rules in our relationship, but this view is inaccurate for two reasons. First, Safi has trained me in at least as many prohibitions based on her needs. For example, she has taught me that I must not clean the mud off her delicate tummy area with anything but the softest cloth and the tenderest touch. She has made it clear that stepping over her while she is asleep makes her extremely uncomfortable, and so I never do it. Second, Safi knows that absolute prohibitions are rare. More often, we find ourselves in situations in which I have one preference and she has another. Unless her safety or someone else's is at stake, we negotiate. For example, we have come to an agreement about the much-hated bath. I bring her into the bathroom and suggest that she climb into the tub. Usually, with great reluctance, she does so. But sometimes she chooses not to, in which case she voluntarily travels to the kitchen where she remains until the mud has dried enough for me to brush it off. Similarly, when playing fetch with a toy, Safi drops it when I ask her to only about half the time. If she refuses to drop it, it means either that she's inviting a game of keep-away, or that she wants to rest with her toy for a while before chasing it some more. Since the toys belong to her, and since she never substitutes objects like my new shoes, it seems fair that she decides when to keep the toy and when to share it with me.

I could sum up our relationship by saying that Safi and I are equals. This does not mean that I think we are the same; we are in fact, very different, she with the blood of wolves in her veins and me with the blood of apes. What it does mean is that I regard her as a "person," albeit of another species—a possibility first made

⁹ And, equally important, she behaves as if she regards me as a person in the same sense of the word.

real to me during my life with the baboons. In the language I am developing here, relating to other beings as persons has nothing to do with whether or not we attribute human characteristics to them. It has to do, instead, with recognizing that they are social subjects,¹⁰ like us, whose idiosyncratic, subjective experience of us plays the same role in their relations with us that our subjective experience of them plays in our relations with them. If they relate to us as individuals, and we relate to them as individuals, it is possible for us to have a *personal* relationship. If either party fails to take into account the other's social subjectivity, such a relationship is precluded. Thus while we normally think of personhood as an essential quality that we can "discover" or "fail to find" in another, in the view espoused here personhood connotes a way of being *in relation to others*, and thus no one other than the subject can give it or take it away. In other words, when a human being relates to an individual nonhuman being as an anonymous object, rather than as a being with its own subjectivity, it is the human, and not the other animal, who relinquishes personhood.

The possibility of voluntary, mutual surrender to the dictates of intersubjectivity constitutes the common ground that Aquinas and O'Hearne ignore when they claim that animals and humans cannot be friends. I use the word "surrender" intentionally, for relating to others (human or nonhuman) in this way requires giving up control over them and how they relate to us. We fear such loss of control, but the gifts we receive in turn make it a small price to pay.

Thus because I regard Safi as a person, and she regards me as one, we can be friends. As in any genuine human-to-human friendship, our relationship is predicated on mutual respect and reciprocity. Although she depends on me to provide certain necessities, like food and water, this dependence is contingent, not inherent; if I lived in the world of wild dogs, I would depend on her for food and protection and much more. She is not my child; she is not my servant. She is not even my companion, in the sense

¹⁰ Cf. Elizabeth Costello on viewing animals as subjects rather than objects.

of existing to keep me company. I wish for her what I wish for all of my friends: maximum freedom of expression, maximum well-being.

So that Safi and I can experience the full joys of canine-being and primate-being, we spend a lot of time outside, moving freely. Most of the dog-walkers I know automatically decide where to go, and the dog accommodates. But because I spent years following baboons around, I realized that nonhumans tend to have a superior grasp of wild places. It was natural to transfer this attribution to Safi, and I made sure that she understood the words "You decide where to go," as well as "Please bring us back to the car [or house or camp]." Thus much of the time we are outside together, Safi, not I, determines where we go. Putting Safi in charge turned out to be a very good idea, because she reliably discovers more interesting places to go than I ever would: the beaver dam hidden behind the boulders, the secret stream at the bottom of the valley, found just as we are yearning for a drink.

Because Safi has considerable autonomy, she freely chooses many aspects of how she will relate to me. As a result, she does things for me that I could never have imagined and certainly could never have "trained" her to do. For example, at some point Safi apparently decided that when we're alone in the wilderness, whenever I close my eyes or lie down, her job is to remain sitting or standing, monitoring all directions continually. I discovered, in fact, that she will refuse to lie down or close her eyes, no matter how tired she is, unless I adopt an alert posture and tell her, expressly, that it is OK for her to rest (one of the many sentences she understands). Had I "trained" her to play this role, I would have to rely on her continued "obedience" to rest assured that I was fully protected. But because Safi chose this role of her own accord, presumably out of a deep regard for my safety, I trust her absolutely to continue to watch over me.

In our early months together, Safi appeared to prefer perfunctory pats to wrestling or snuggling, and she still does not relish the kinds of extensive physical contact that most dogs crave from the people they love. This aversion to cuddling makes all the

more precious her behavior when I am feeling very low. First she approaches, looks into my eyes, and presses her forehead against mine. Then, without fail, she lies down beside me, maximizing contact between her body and mine. At this point, if I'm not already lying down, I do so (Safi has taught me that). As soon as I am supine, she rests her chin on my chest, right on top of my heart, and locks her gaze with mine until my mood shifts. Perhaps, a skeptic might respond, she does this simply because she's learned, first, that you're more fun when you're not feeling sad, and, second, that she can cheer you up in this way. To this I would reply: if we had human companions who behaved in much the same way, for identical motives, would we doubt their sincerity, or consider ourselves very lucky indeed?

I do not claim that any dog will show such behaviors if treated as an equal. In fact, I believe that Safi is exceptional, that she was born, perhaps, with an unusually sensitive nature. However, I do firmly believe—and my experience with other animals supports this belief—that treating members of other species as persons, as beings with potential far beyond our normal expectations, will bring out the best in them, and that each animal's best includes unforeseeable gifts.

What would Elizabeth Costello say to all this? I suspect she would not be surprised by my experiences with baboons or my relationship with Safi. Indeed, they seem very much in keeping with her claim that "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another." But I would phrase her point slightly differently, so that it has less to do with the poetic imagination and more to do with real-life encounters with other animals. My own life has convinced me that the limitations most of us encounter in our relations with other animals reflect not their shortcomings, as we so often assume, but our own narrow views about who they are and the kinds of relationships we can have with them. And so I conclude by urging anyone with an interest in animal rights to open your heart to the animals around you and find out for yourself what it's like to befriend a nonhuman person.

CONTRIBUTORS



J. M. COETZEE is the author of seven novels (most recently *The Master of Petersburg*, 1994) and three volumes of criticism, as well as of memoirs and translations. Among the prizes he has won for his fiction are the Booker Prize, the Prix Femina, and the Jerusalem Prize. He is Professor of General Literature at the University of Cape Town.

WENDY DONIGER is the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago. Her most recent book is *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*; forthcoming is *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India*. She graduated from Radcliffe College and received a Ph.D. from Harvard University and a D.Phil. from Oxford.

MARJORIE GARBER is William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of English at Harvard University, and Director of Harvard's Center for Literary and Cultural Studies. A Shakespearean and a cultural critic, she is the author of seven books, including, most recently, *Dog Love* and *Symptoms of Culture*.

AMY GUTMANN, Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor at Princeton University, is founding director of the University Center for Human Values. Her books include *Democratic Education* (Princeton University Press), *Democracy and Disagreement*, with Dennis Thompson (Harvard University Press), and *Color Conscious*, with Anthony Appiah (Princeton).

PETER SINGER is a Professor in the Centre for Human Bioethics at Monash University. He is the author of several books, including *Animal Liberation*, *Practical Ethics*, *The Expanding Circle*, and *Rethinking Life and Death*. From July 1999, he will take up an appointment as DeCamp Professor of Bioethics in the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University.