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ANIMAL ETHICS SERIES



Creative Compassion, Literature and Animal Welfare

Michael J. Gilmour

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The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series

Series Editors

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In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry. This series will explore the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human-animal relations. Specifically, the Series will:

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars;
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

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Series Editors' Preface

This is a new book series for a new field of inquiry: Animal Ethics.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry.

In addition, a rethink of the status of animals has been fuelled by a range of scientific investigations which have revealed the complexity of animal sentience, cognition and awareness. The ethical implications of this new knowledge have yet to be properly evaluated, but it is becoming clear that the old view that animals are mere things, tools, machines or commodities cannot be sustained ethically.

But it is not only philosophy and science that are putting animals on the agenda. Increasingly, in Europe and the United States, animals are becoming a political issue as political parties vie for the “green” and “animal” vote. In turn, political scientists are beginning to look again at the history of political thought in relation to animals, and historians are beginning to revisit the political history of animal protection.

As animals grow as an issue of importance, so there have been more collaborative academic ventures leading to conference volumes, special journal issues, indeed new academic animal journals as well. Moreover,

we have witnessed the growth of academic courses, as well as university posts, in Animal Ethics, Animal Welfare, Animal Rights, Animal Law, Animals and Philosophy, Human–Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Animals and Society, Animals in Literature, Animals and Religion—tangible signs that a new academic discipline is emerging.

“Animal Ethics” is the new term for the academic exploration of the moral status of the non-human—an exploration that explicitly involves a focus on what we owe animals morally and which also helps us to understand the influences (social, legal, cultural, religious and political) that legitimate animal abuse. This series explores the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human–animal relations.

The series is needed for three reasons: (1) to provide the texts that will service the new university courses on animals, (2) to support the increasing number of students studying and academics researching in animal-related fields and (3) because there is currently no book series that is a focus for multidisciplinary research in the field.

Specifically, this series will

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars and
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

The new Palgrave Macmillan Series on Animal Ethics is the result of a unique partnership between Palgrave Macmillan and the Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The series is an integral part of the mission of the Centre to put animals on the intellectual agenda by facilitating academic research and publication. The series is also a natural complement to one of the Centre’s other major projects, the *Journal of Animal Ethics*. The Centre is an independent “think tank” for the advancement of progressive thought about animals and is the first Centre of its

kind in the world. It aims to demonstrate rigorous intellectual enquiry and the highest standards of scholarship. It strives to be a world-class centre of academic excellence in its field.

We invite academics to visit the Centre's website www.oxfordanimalethics.com and to contact us with new book proposals for the series.

Oxford, UK
Oxford, UK

Andrew Linzey
Clair Linzey

Preface

Sitting proudly on my bookshelf is an early edition of Anna Sewell's 1877 novel *Black Beauty* bearing the inscription, "To Michael from Grandma [Ethel] Stanley, 1974." It was first presented to her, according to an earlier inscription, on September 30, 1917. She would have been eleven at the time, just a generation removed from Sewell. I wasn't much of a reader in 1974 so this book collected far more dust than dogears for many years to come but, though Grandma Stanley could not have known it, in time Sewell's autobiography of a horse proved transformative. Stories change us. To read them is to see the world with new eyes. Sewell's *Black Beauty* awakened a sensitivity to animal suffering that is never far from my mind.

Along with literature, direct encounters also inform our views about animals and their wellbeing. One incident stands out in memory. It was a long low barn, dimly lit, the air thick with dust. Having never been on a farm this was all new to me. I was nineteen at the time, in the fall of 1986, and in my first year of university at a small rural campus on the Canadian prairies. An area farmer needed able-bodied workers for a few hours and offered each of us \$25 to do some 'chicken catching.' Coming from the city I had no idea what that meant but money was in short supply and that was incentive enough to go along. This was more than thirty years ago but I recall certain details. We arrived after dark. Chickens covered the entire floor of the enormous barn, sitting or standing listlessly. Our job for the next few hours was to reach under the birds and quickly

grab their legs before they fully woke up, then lift them so they were upside down. They start flapping their wings immediately so it's physically taxing—my arms, shoulders and back ached for days afterwards. The more experienced and stronger 'catchers' managed two birds in each hand. Once we had our chickens, we took them outside to waiting trucks and lifted them to others who stuffed the startled birds into small cages. After each delivery we returned to the barn for more, repeating the process until the floor was empty of living birds. The process was not smooth. A bird might slip away at some point and have to be wrestled down. The lids on the cages were shut quickly and often caught a wing or a foot or a head. And worst of all was the feeling of occasional breaking bones when grabbing or carrying the startled birds. Their bodies seemed brittle.

I now regret my participation in that 'chicken catch,' and having since learned more about the factory farming of chickens for meat and eggs, I'm left with three lasting impressions. The first is the brutal force of human domination of some animals. Those birds—manipulated into docility by the lighting—were completely powerless against the muscle and machinery driving that business. The second is the unnaturalness of that low, dark, stinking place. Chemicals, overcrowding, body manipulation (through selective breeding, beak cutting), shortened lives. Third, it made me realize the enormous distance between the barn and the dinner plate. At that time, I had no idea what meat and dairy production involved. Not really.

Literary horses like Black Beauty and his friends, and real, frightened, fragile chickens. The ones products of the imagination, the others actual, vulnerable, sentient beings. And all of them, in their own way, whispering a compelling challenge to my then habitual indifference to animals as neighbours deserving moral consideration. Stories do not always remain between the covers of books. They linger, sometimes attach, unbidden, to the stuff of our lives. To meet and enjoy fictional animals is to risk meeting them again in unexpected ways. I cannot hear a toad without smiling, as the sound brings Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) to mind. Am I less likely to throw a stone at one for having read that book?

Another encounter. The punchline of the Good Samaritan parable comes at the beginning of that famous story rather than the end, and it is not Jesus who delivers it but instead a nameless onlooker. When Jesus

asks what is required of people to inherit eternal life, that onlooker cites Torah: love God and love your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27; cf. Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus agrees with him, but the man presses further, asking, Who is my neighbour? Jesus's story about an assault and robbery, and the unlikely hero who comes to the victim's aid is both commentary on the portion of Torah recited, and an answer to the man's question. As the parable illustrates, love is owed to a stranger left for dead *on the side of the road*. Your neighbour is the one in need. Your neighbour is the one in need, even when they are not part of your community. We are to love across boundaries. Love not only family and tribe, or those of our race and nation, or gender and religion, or sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Love not only the citizen but also the refugee. Simply love your neighbour as yourself, says Jesus. Love the one in need as you love yourself. That's all it says. My neighbour does not always look like me or believe like me but that's no matter. Jesus collapses the two great commandments of Torah. If we love God, we love our neighbours, whoever they are. We love our neighbours because we love God.

Animals are neighbours too. There's nothing in the story limiting this boundary-defying love to bipedal types. If this sounds odd, note the vague kinship between the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus's remarks about an animal fallen into a pit (Matthew 12:11): "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?" Of course you will. Yes, this is self-serving to a degree (sheep have economic value) but it remains aiding a distressed animal for its own sake is a religiously sanctioned response. You are not to pass by one in its moment of need any more than you pass by the human victim of a robbery laying in a ditch *at the side of a road*. You help, and you do so even if it is the Sabbath. Humans extending kindness to nonhumans—Jesus expects it of the God-fearing. And perhaps it deserves notice it works both ways in the parable. The Samaritan is not the only one who helps the injured man because he places the stranger "on his own animal" to get him to an inn for care (10:34). A brief hint of cross-species compassion?

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a work of fiction. Jesus often told stories as a way to teach. For me, just as Grahame's *The Wind in the*

Willows enriches my experience of the croaking toads I hear, Jesus's parable now attaches to a real-world encounter with a real-world animal. A few years back a student contacted me about a stray dog she found injured *at the side of the road* after being hit by a car. She stopped to help, taking the puppy she named Daisy to a nearby veterinary clinic even when unsure how to fund the expensive surgery/amputation needed to save her. This was a costly act of kindness. Costly just like the kindness shown by the Samaritan ("he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend'" [Luke 10:35]). She met one of God's creatures in need—like a sheep fallen in a pit, like an injured man on the side of the road—and ignoring the species divide offered a boundary-transgressing act of mercy. The tripod Daisy now lives with me, forever in my mind intertwined with Jesus's parable and this student's enactment of its ethical mandate. Story meets reality, fiction meets fur.

This book considers that step. How do works of the imagination shape our attitudes and behaviors toward actual animals, and what do they contribute to debates about ethics? Through consideration of a very small sampling of representative works, I suggest authors (1) *educate* by revealing otherwise hidden worlds; (2) *empathize* with the vulnerable, inviting and urging readers to do the same; and (3) *envision* new possibilities for human-nonhuman interactions.

In the 1923 publication translated as *Civilization and Ethics*, Albert Schweitzer insists a person is truly ethical, "only when he obeys the compulsion to help all life that he is able to assist and shrinks from injuring anything that lives." Such a person does not ask whether and to what extent this or that life deserves sympathy. Leaf or flower, worm or insect, all life is sacred. Ridicule for being sentimental is sure to follow but such an individual is undeterred. A time will indeed come, Schweitzer predicts, when people will recognize thoughtless injury to life is incompatible with ethics. "Ethics is responsibility without limit toward all that lives."

The year 1923 also witnessed the publication of Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle's Post Office*. In it he writes of a paradisal island called No Man's Land where animals have (note the vaguely biblical phrasing), "lived at peace for a thousand years." Dolittle is indeed "the first human in a thousand years that has set foot" there. He alone among people, the island's

residents recognize, presents no threat. He alone, to borrow Schweitzer's description, responds to the compulsion to "help all life that he is able to assist." Indeed, the Doctor spends "several days" offering the animals advice and tending to their various ailments.

The simultaneous publication of these very different books offers a convenient segue into our subject. At the risk of being overly fanciful, Lofting's Doctor Dolittle is a playful, top-hatted version of Schweitzer's "truly ethical" person. The two writers envision a kinder, enchanted world where there is reverence for all life and a willingness to care. The one travelled there by means of rigorous theological and philosophical inquiry, the other by means of highly imaginative storytelling. Our concern is with the second path.

Otterburne, MB, Canada

Michael J. Gilmour

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1

Introduction: The Parallel Voices of Modern Animal Welfare Movements and a Literature of Compassion

My father recited poems out loud at home. I have vivid memories of him reading “The Bells Of Heaven” (Ralph Hodgson), “Snake” (D. H. Lawrence), and a poem I have never been able to relocate about a fox caught in a trap with young in the den. The innocence of anyimals and the cruel power of humanity was manifest in sorrow, anger, even bitterness in my father’s soft voice. Already then, his sentiments echoed my own experiences with humanity and anyimals in rural America. I also recall my mother singing the folksong, “The Fox Went out on a Chilly Night,” and how my father would say, “The fox has to eat, too.” I realize now that the poems themselves might never have reached me if my parents had not read and sung to us when we were young. Through their voices—through this shared experience of literature—I gained more than what was written on those dog-eared pages.

—Lisa Kemmerer, Montana State University Billings, philosopher-activist

Personal correspondence. On her use of the term anymal, see Prof. Kemmerer’s “Verbal Activism: ‘Anyimals’,” *Society and Animals* 14.1 (May 2006): 9–14. It is a contraction of any and animal, which indicates all individuals of any species other than the speaker/author. She prefers it to the regular spelling because it avoids the suggestion humans are not themselves animals, as well as the dualism and alienation implied by the prefixed term *nonhumans* or the qualifier other animals.

Animal stories are metonymic. Esther is perhaps the most famous pig in the world as I type this, and the accounts of her adventures, beautifully and humorously reported by her caregivers Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter, belie the idea of pigs as mindless automata. They give her a voice, they tell her story.¹ She is a personality, complete with an emotional range and a capacity for pleasure and pain. She is mischievous, and able to bond with humans and other nonhumans. Though anthropomorphism and sentimentalism invite the ridicule and censure of some, such stories, fictional and nonfictional, are persistently popular and effective tools for promoting kindness to animals. Jenkins and Walter persuade their readers to see more than meat the next time a livestock truck passes on the highway. The nameless pigs on that truck are just like Esther. They too have personalities. They too have a capacity for pleasure and pain.

Though it took me many years to realize the potential of literature to further the efforts of animal compassion agendas—the long-neglected copy of *Black Beauty* mentioned in the Preface left closed and unheeded—other readers and writers long before and since Anna Sewell credit stories for awakening an affection for nature and the desire to care for it. Jane Goodall, for one, identifies fiction as a formative influence:

As a child I was not at all keen on going to school. I dreamed about nature, animals, and the magic of far-off wild and remote places. Our house was filled with bookshelves and the books spilled out onto the floor. When it was wet and cold, I would curl up in a chair by the fire and lose myself in other worlds. My very favourite books at the time were *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*, *The Jungle Book*, and the marvelous Edgar Rice Burroughs Tarzan books.²

¹ Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter, with Caprice Crane, *Esther the Wonder Pig: Changing the World One Heart at a Time* (New York: Grand Central, 2017); and Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter, with Caprice Crane, *Happily Ever Esther: Two Men, A Wonder Pig, and Their Life-Changing Mission to Give Animals a Home* (New York: Grand Central, 2018).

² Jane Goodall, with Phillip Berman, *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* (New York: Warner, 1999), 11.

As she puts it elsewhere, “I learned from nature. … I also learned from the books that my mother found for me about animals. I read and read about animals. Doctor Dolittle and Tarzan and Mowgli.”³

This book approaches storytelling as a form of animal advocacy and considers the contributions of literature toward a widened circle of care. With Jane Goodall, I include Hugh Lofting’s Doctor Dolittle novels among my favorites in the category and refer to them throughout. There are a few reasons for this. Not only does the central character model kindness to animals and confront forms of cruelty, but the stories also illustrate a useful way to approach conversations about welfare. Many find the objectives of advocates to be extreme, unrealistic, and divorced from all that is familiar. Meals without meat? Clothes without leather? Science without laboratory rats? Circuses without elephants? Impossible. This is the way we live and the way it’s always been. In many contexts, to suggest we do without such uses of animals is to shut down the conversation even before it begins. But literature often succeeds where communication in other forums breaks down. When couched in a compelling story, we tend to be more amenable to new ideas.

Consider Lofting’s opposition to fox hunting. Allyson May’s study of this English pastime observes how soldiers returning from the Great War viewed it in different ways. For some, their experiences on the battlefield provoked “nostalgia, affection for the pre-War, comparatively innocent world of the hunting field,” but for others, Lofting among them, the War resulted in “a heightened compassion for the suffering of animals as well as men.” Fox hunting was no longer an innocent distraction. Indeed, it was during Lofting’s time as a soldier in Flanders and France that his Dolittle stories first appeared.⁴ According to Gary D. Schmidt, “None of the novels can ever be read outside the context of … the trenches of the

³ Jane Goodall and Marc Bekoff, *The Ten Trusts: What We Must Do to Care for the Animals We Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 69. In *Reason for Hope*, she also writes appreciatively of *The Wind in the Willows* and George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), both of which involve, in very different ways, highly imaginative depictions of animals (11–12).

⁴ Allyson N. May, *The Fox-Hunting Controversy, 1781–2004: Class and Cruelty* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 74. See too chap. 6 of May’s book, “The Flight from Modernity: Nostalgia and the Hunt.” She closes that chapter observing that fox-hunting’s survival “past the Great War and the Second World War into the twenty-first century in many ways can be explained by the very fact that it is *not* modern” (184). Italics original.

First World War, where horses, unprotected against the green billows of gas that belched across the fields and cascaded into the trenches, died screaming out of burning lungs.”⁵ This is where Lofting’s longing for a kinder relationship with nature begins:

While he could somehow avoid despair and place the war in the context of a reasonable explanation—these were apparently rational creatures who had consciously decided to commit atrocity—he could not accept the destruction of horses. While the troops could protect themselves against the green gas that poured into the trenches and coated the landscape, the horses could not. It sprang into their lungs, blistered their tissues, and led to agonizing death.⁶

The Dolittle stories, Lofting explains, began life as letters home to his children during the War, and the idea of a medical person caring for animals has direct connection to what he saw:

One thing … that kept forcing itself more and more on my attention was the very considerable part the animals were playing in the World War and that as time went on they, too, seemed to become Fatalists. They took their chances with the rest of us. But their fate was far different from the men’s. However seriously a soldier was wounded, his life was not despairs of; all the resources of a surgery highly developed by the war were brought to his aid. A seriously wounded horse was put out by a timely bullet.⁷

There is even evidence his tenderness toward animals extended beyond the battlefield. The usually placid Lofting once attacked three men, one armed with a knife, who had hobbled some wild horses. Having dispatched the three, he cut loose the horses, emptied the rifles, and, wiping the blood from his cheek, sauntered back to his camp, unruffled, to read a story to his son.⁸

⁵ Gary D. Schmidt, *Hugh Lofting*, Twayne’s English Authors Series 496 (New York: Twayne, 1992), 51.

⁶ Schmidt, *Hugh Lofting*, 13.

⁷ As cited in Schmidt, *Hugh Lofting*, 6.

⁸ Schmidt, *Hugh Lofting*, 2. Schmidt here relates the anecdote as told by Lofting’s son, in Colin Lofting, “Mortifying Visit from a Dude Dad,” *Life* 30 (September 1966), 128–30.

The result of those wartime experiences was a fictional world depicting an alternative vision of human-animal relations, with deep criticisms of many entrenched attitudes and activities, fox hunting among them: “‘What a childish sport!’ [Doctor John Dolittle] murmured. ‘I can’t understand what they see in it. Really, I can’t. Grown men rushing about the landscape on horseback, caterwauling and blowing tin horns—all after one poor little wild animal! Perfectly childish!’”⁹ But his response involves more than ridicule and disdain. Dolittle inevitably comes to the aid of animals in distress in all the stories. On one occasion during his travels, he meets a mother fox named Nightshade, and she asks him to look at one of her pups who has something wrong with his paw. While attending to the cub, they suddenly hear the approach of hunters.¹⁰ The account of the vixen’s terror—the despair of a mother helpless to protect her children—highlights the brutality of the sport. The same pack and the same hunters killed Nightshade’s sister the week before.¹¹ Dolittle hides the mother and babies in his pockets before the dogs arrive, and once they do, tells them to lead the horse-riding men in another direction.¹²

Having addressed the immediate threat, Dolittle then listens to Nightshade as she relates at length another occasion when fox hunters threatened her life. The first-person, point-of-view description is unsettling.

Nightshade, the vixen, paused in her story a moment, her ears laid back, her dainty mouth slightly open, her eyes staring fixedly. She looked as though she saw that dreadful day all over again, that long terrible chase, at the end of which, with a safe refuge in sight, she felt her strength giving out as the dogs of Death drew close upon her heels.¹³

⁹ Hugh Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, in *Doctor Dolittle: The Complete Collection*, vol. 2 (1924; New York: Aladdin, 2019), 173. He describes fox hunting as “childish” again on p. 170.

¹⁰ Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 166–68.

¹¹ Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 168. Dolittle’s opposition to sport hunting is longstanding. The sound of the horses, dogs, and hunters’ shouts reminds him of an earlier experience that “made him an enemy of fox hunting for life—when he had met an old fox one evening lying half dead with exhaustion under a tangle of blackberries” (168).

¹² Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 168–71. Dolittle, of course, speaks animal languages.

¹³ Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 176. Full account, 174–77.

As readers of these stories come to expect, the good Doctor comes up with a solution for her and her family. Because dogs rely on scent, he recommends spirits of camphor and eucalyptus as a way to mask their smell and throw pursuing dogs off the trail. He wraps vials of these medicines in handkerchiefs. Nightshade is to carry them and when dogs give chase, drop a rock on one of them to break the glass and roll on the damp, smelling cloth. It proves so effective foxes all over the region request their own so-called Dolittle Safety Packs.¹⁴ The result is far reaching: “‘It’s no use,’ Sir William [Peabody] said [to a companion], ‘we can’t hunt foxes in this district unless we can breed and train a pack of eucalyptus hounds. And I’ll bet my last penny it’s Dolittle’s doing. He always said he’d like to stop the sport altogether. And, by George! so far as this county is concerned, he’s done it!’”¹⁵ Within this imaginative space, Lofting brings a fox hunt to an end. He enacts a welfare fantasy. As the child narrator of the earlier book *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle* puts it, being part of the great man’s animal-filled, animal-friendly household is “like living in a new world.”¹⁶

In this episode, Lofting *educates* readers by showing them what this past time actually involves, awakens *empathy* through a sympathetic portrait of a terrified, desperate mother, and in highly imaginative fashion *envision*s the possibility of an end to senseless bloodshed. Such fantasies—maybe, just maybe—lead us to wonder what *we* might do for animals in our own ‘county,’ how we too might create a “new world.” Art precedes reform. A visit to Toad Hall is incentive enough to stop throwing stones.

Some theorists recognize literature’s potential to disrupt prior understandings, to render strange the otherwise ordinary. Terry Eagleton, for one, writes of Bertolt Brecht’s ability “to unsettle [audiences’] convictions, dismantle and refashion their received identities, and expose the unity of this selfhood as an ideological illusion.”¹⁷ He “uses certain

¹⁴ Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 177–84.

¹⁵ Lofting, *Doctor Dolittle’s Circus*, 184.

¹⁶ Hugh Lofting, *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle*, in *Doctor Dolittle: The Complete Collection*, vol. 1 (1922; New York: Aladdin, 2019), 60.

¹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 162.

dramatic techniques (the so-called ‘estrangement effect’) to render the most taken-for-granted aspects of social reality shockingly unfamiliar, and so to rouse the audience to a new critical awareness of them.”¹⁸ To adapt the concept to the present issue, welfare-leaning animal writing has a defamiliarizing, estranging effect. By questioning and often refashioning received behaviors, unconventional possibilities present themselves (Dolittle’s “new world”). And so it is we have a substantial number of writers who imagine life without fox hunts, or meals without meat, or clothes without leather, or science without vivisection.

Writers sometimes acknowledge this capacity of storytelling to unsettle the taken-for-granted and spark a realignment of priorities. When discussing the stories read to him when a boy, Richard Adams, one-time president of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the author of *Watership Down* mentions the Lofting series with particular fondness, and credits them for his turn toward advocacy. Hugh Lofting “wrote with warmth and humor, and again, the characters are likeable and well-drawn. In the best of the books the narrative grip is powerful. Above all, the author obviously felt real compassion for animals. If I am up to the neck in the animal rights movement today, Dr. Dolittle must answer for it.”¹⁹ He develops this point again later: “there is nothing amiss with the Doctor’s passionate concern about the abuse of animals. He turned me against circuses, fur coats and other such evil things—for life.”²⁰ Taking my cue from Jane Goodall and Richard Adams, I also look to Lofting for wisdom in the pages that follow. This is not, therefore, a work of traditional literary criticism. I write with advocates in mind, aiming to persuade them that the arts bring much to the formation of humane values. It is a potential resource for reform efforts. As much as possible I allow the novels and poems introduced to speak for themselves, with only minimal interaction with scholarly analyses of

¹⁸ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 162.

¹⁹ Richard Adams, *The Day Gone By: An Autobiography* (1990; London: Penguin, 1991), 22.

²⁰ Adams, *Day Gone By*, 106. If Lofting was progressive in his thinking about animal welfare, he was also mired in some of the worst prejudices of his historical moment. As often noted in the critical literature, early editions of the stories include some egregious racist remarks. Later editions of the books remove offensive passages.

them. What the book contributes, I hope, is a way of reading that brings the welfare interests of creative writers to the forefront.

Welfarist Reading

From Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan to the work of primatologist Jane Goodall; from gassed horses on the battlefields of World War I to Hugh Lofting's Doctor Dolittle; from *The Wind in the Willows* to the sound of croaking toads I hear. The boundaries between real and imagined animals are often porous, and the potential for the experience of one to shape our experience of the other, in both directions, is ever present. Writers help us see animals we might otherwise overlook. To meet Esther the pig in print is to view those inside the livestock trucks we pass with new eyes, and our interactions with real animals intrude on our experience of fiction, the way Daisy the tripod is for me a marginal gloss to the parable told in Luke 10:25–37. Readers' propensity for mingling the imagined with the real and vice versa makes animal literature a rich resource for the promotion of humane themes. As C. S. Lewis puts it, in verse, our "love" for Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle or Nutkin in the Beatrix Potter tales "no doubt—splashes over on the / Actual archtypes," by which he means the real hedgehogs and squirrels that lie behind those artistic representations.²¹ Literature helps us "love" the animals we meet after closing our books.

Those who advocate for animals bring a different set of concerns and questions to literature than those typical of other critical approaches. A welfarist perspective, for lack of a better term, is attentive to ways animals appear in fiction and verse. It considers what this novel or that poem teaches us about animals *and* our interactions with them. It looks at ways art surfaces ethical questions by critiquing cruelty or exhibiting models of compassion, both of which invite a reassessment of our own actions. Use of the term welfarist criticism is idiosyncratic so perhaps an analogy helps to clarify my objectives. This reading strategy employs a hermeneutic of suspicion like that found in Marxist literary criticism, which maintains

²¹C. S. Lewis, "Impenitence," in *Poems* (1964; New York: HarperOne, 2017), 5–6. Lewis first published this poem in 1953.

works of fiction do not exist independently of historical contexts. Literature is ideological and individual works expressions of class conflict. Ideology, according to Michael Ryan, refers to “the beliefs, attitudes, and habits of feeling which a society inculcates in order to generate an automatic reproduction of its structuring premises. Ideology is what preserves social power in the absence of direct coercion.”²² Literature potentially perpetuates and legitimizes the dominant, structuring premises. If there is a hidden subtext below the surface that perpetuates power structures serving the interest of some, while oppressing many more, the critic’s role is to expose those potentially damaging biases.

If we examine the law, politics, religion, education and culture of class-societies, writes Terry Eagleton, “we find that most of what they do lends support to the prevailing social order. And this, indeed, is no more than we should expect. There is no capitalist civilisation in which the law forbids private property, or in which children are regularly instructed in the evils of economic competition.” Art and literature often contribute to this bolstering of the *status quo*. While it is true there “is no sense in which Shelley, Blake, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emily Brontë, Dickens, George Orwell and D. H. Lawrence were all shamelessly pumping out propaganda on behalf of the ruling class,” if we consider “English literature as a whole, we find that its critique of the social order rarely extends to questioning the property system.”²³

Welfare-inclined animal literature and criticism reveal hidden ideologies. Most works of fiction reinforce a worldview that privileges people over other animals, maintaining might is right, that human reason is the measure of all things, and that the exercise of “dominion” over the earth and its creatures is a God-given privilege. Such assumptions are often implied when not stated directly, a habitual default insisting, *That’s just the way it is*. In addition to explicit arguments asserting humanity’s right to rule, there are also ‘gaps’ in the vast majority of stories where animals are present. Think of stories about pre-mechanistic warfare with armies on horseback, where nothing is said of the injuries from spears or bullets

²² Michael Ryan, “Political Criticism,” *Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. G. Douglas Atkins and Laura Morrow (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 203.

²³ Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 153–54.

or green gases those horses sustain. Think of meals around the campfire or dinner table that say nothing of the sacrificed animals supplying the meat. Think of the leather and fur characters wear. Think of the animal labour supplying the muscle for travel and construction in historical fiction. All are untold stories. The unacknowledged animal is everywhere in fiction. But when writers shift focus, when they privilege animal well-being and tell *their* stories, ‘the way it is’ is suddenly open to scrutiny.

Telling Their Own Stories

Isa Leshko admits the early stages of work photographing elderly animals for a book involved a degree of self-interest. It offered a way to confront her own fears about aging and decline. But she and the project transformed after spending time with her subjects and learning their stories: “I became a passionate advocate for these animals, and I wanted my images to speak on their behalf. It seemed selfish to photograph rescued animals for any other reason. From that point on, I approached these images as portraits in earnest, and I endeavored to reveal something unique about each animal I photographed.”²⁴ Some creative writers think of their art in similar terms. Katherine Applegate says this about writing the children’s novel *The One and Only Ivan*: “I wanted to give [the gorilla] Ivan (even while captive behind the walls of his tiny cage) a voice of his own and a story to tell.”²⁵ And indeed, Ivan and his friends have stories to tell, and they are not all pleasant. They include acts of human kindness but also cruelties. The novel presents the good and the bad, and because of this has a pedagogical function. It is a work of the imagination but also an education in what human interactions with animals—at their best, at their worse—look like. The story is a peek behind the surface veneer and carnival atmosphere of a cheap shopping mall zoo attraction. Veneers hide something less appealing underneath. What goes on after closing hours at this particular mall?

²⁴ Isa Leshko, *Allowed to Grow Old: Portraits of Elderly Animals from Farm Sanctuaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 11.

²⁵ Katherine Applegate, “Author’s Note,” in *The One and Only Ivan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 308.

There is a substantial library of animal stories of the last two hundred or so years, roughly the period of modern animal welfare movements, doing the same thing. These stories take readers to places they do not usually go and show them things they do not usually see. They offer glimpses of torments animals endure at human hands. What might a once-free-roaming gorilla think after years of confinement in small quarters? We do not know all there is to know about the cognitive processes and the emotional lives of other species but that there *are* cognitive processes and emotions in nonhumans is plain to see. Though a highly imaginative fantasy, the exercise of exploring how animals perceive human behaviors is a valuable one, as is the ability of storytellers to show us a broad spectrum of human-animal interactions. Between the lines of such stories are ethical questions. Is it possible a caged animal is unfulfilled? Are the entertainments gained by circuslike spectacles really worth the pain and distress inflicted by trainers on those required to perform?

This desire to give suffering animals a platform to tell their stories puts Katherine Applegate in good company. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* is justly celebrated as the template for welfare-oriented animal autobiographies, and as Jane Smiley observes, its author's "motive for giving voice to a horse was not entertainment, but moral teaching." Her self-appointed task as an author, "was to propose ways for equine mistreatment to be mitigated."²⁶ To read *Black Beauty* is to experience something of what it is like to have an uncomfortable bit in the mouth, to be worked to exhaustion, to be left in the cold, to be whipped, abused, underfed, and neglected. For many readers, then and now, consideration of ways our actions help or harm animals is not reflex. Sewell understood this, and like Applegate's *The One and Only Ivan*, the objective is welfare reform. *Black Beauty* is a work of fiction, but Sewell expects the story to detach from its ink and paper to persuade readers who interact with actual horses to be kind. In that way, it is a confrontational book, challenging such

²⁶Jane Smiley, "Foreword," to Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty* (1877; New York: Penguin, 2011), ix. Many note the contributions of Sewell's *Black Beauty* toward greater awareness of animal suffering. "The novel had a very powerful impact on the public," writes Paul Waldau, "and it, along with much other literature modeled on it, increased concern greatly for not only the welfare of work animals but for dogs as well" (*Animal Rights: What Everyone Needs to Know* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 42).

things as fashion as it concerns horse-drawn carriages, and economic expediency in businesses relying on animal labour. Ethical arguments in animal literature are always Davids facing any number of self-concerned Goliaths.

Questioning Authority

*“Do not accept injustice even if you hear it in my name.”*²⁷ This, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues, is the import of the strange story related in Genesis 18 about God’s plan to destroy the cities of the plain. When God announces it, Abraham questions the justice of the intended action: “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? … Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (18:23, 25).²⁸ It is an extraordinary scene and an unexpected question to ask. Does Abraham really think he is more righteous than God? If we go back a few verses, Sacks suggests, there is an important clue putting the exchange in context:

The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:17–19)

That initial question, which Abraham overhears, is an invitation for him to act, and it sets the terms of the challenge. “God is inviting Abraham to respond,” according to Sacks. God chose Abraham to keep the way of the Lord, to do what is right and just. By not hiding plans to destroy the cities on the plain, Sacks notes, God puts Abraham in a position to respond using those very terms.

²⁷ Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Schocken, 2011), 243. Italics original.

²⁸ Here and throughout I use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, unless otherwise indicated.