

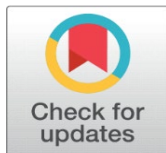
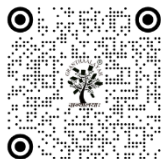
BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM: RETHINKING HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS IN COETZEE'S ELIZABETH COSTELLO AND MARTEL'S LIFE OF PI

Upakul Patowary ¹✉ , Kapahi Das ²✉ , Dr. Jeuti Talukdar ²✉ 

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of English, NH College, Patacharkuchi, Assam, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of English, K.C. Das Commerce College, Guwahati, Assam, India

³ Principal, GLC College, Barpeta Road, Assam, India



Received 12 December 2025

Accepted 19 March 2026

Published 28 March 2026

Corresponding Author

Upakul Patowary,
upakulpatowarynhcollege@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i2s.2026.7243](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i2s.2026.7243)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2026 The Author(s).

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

The anthropocentric worldview, which places humans at the center of existence, has long shaped Western philosophy, literature, and ethics. However, in the wake of posthumanist and ecocritical movements, the boundaries between the human and non-human have been increasingly questioned. This paper explores the ethical and philosophical reconfiguration of human-animal relationships in [Coetzee \(2003\)](#) and [Martel \(2001\)](#). Both novels serve as literary meditations on the limits of empathy, reason, and the moral imagination that define humanity's engagement with other living beings. Coetzee's protagonist, Elizabeth Costello, becomes a vehicle through which the author interrogates Cartesian rationalism and argues for a "sympathetic imagination" that dissolves the rigid separation between human and animal consciousness. Similarly, Martel's *Life of Pi* subverts traditional anthropocentrism through its allegorical narrative that questions the ethics of survival, coexistence, and the blurred distinction between man and beast. By reading both texts through the lens of posthumanism and critical animal studies, this paper argues that literature serves as an ethical laboratory for rethinking interspecies boundaries. The study highlights how both authors employ narrative strategies that decenter the human subject and envision a more inclusive form of being — one grounded in empathy, coexistence, and ecological awareness.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Empathy, Anthropocentrism, Ethics, Interspecies, Ecocriticism

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era increasingly defined by environmental crisis, ecological imbalance, and the ethical re-evaluation of human dominance, literature has emerged as a powerful medium to question and destabilize the anthropocentric worldview that has long governed Western thought. The term "anthropocentrism" refers to the philosophical position that considers human beings as the most significant entities in existence — an idea that has justified the subjugation and exploitation of animals and nature for centuries. As Cary Wolfe observes, "to be human is to be the species that knows it is not simply a species" [Wolfe \(2003\)](#), a recognition that paradoxically reinforces human exceptionalism. The rise of posthumanist and

ecocritical discourses in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries marks a paradigmatic shift away from this hierarchical worldview, urging a reconsideration of the human not as an autonomous center but as part of a complex web of interspecies relationships.

Coetzee (2003) and Martel (2001) are two significant literary works that engage deeply with this philosophical reorientation. Both texts challenge anthropocentric assumptions through their imaginative portrayals of human-animal relations and ethical consciousness. Coetzee, a Nobel laureate known for his profound moral inquiries, uses the figure of Elizabeth Costello — a fictional writer who delivers provocative lectures on animal ethics — to expose the limitations of human rationalism and the moral blindness of modern civilization. Martel, in *Life of Pi*, presents a metaphysical tale of survival and storytelling in which the boundaries between the human and the animal dissolve into allegorical ambiguity. Together, these novels interrogate the moral privilege that humanity claims over other living beings and envision an ethics rooted in empathy, interdependence, and imaginative identification.

In *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee constructs a layered metafictional narrative where fiction itself becomes a vehicle for moral philosophy. The protagonist's lecture "The Lives of Animals" serves as the intellectual core of the novel, wherein Costello contends that the human tendency to view animals as inferior is not a product of moral truth but of intellectual arrogance. She states, "There is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another" Coetzee (2003), a claim that redefines empathy as an imaginative act rather than a sentimental one. Costello's insistence on "sympathetic imagination" resists the Cartesian split between mind and body — between the rational human and the instinctive animal — and thus opens a space for an ethical relationship based on shared vulnerability. Coetzee's use of metafiction, debate, and philosophical dialogue blurs the boundaries between author and character, reality and fiction, compelling the reader to engage not merely intellectually but morally with the question of animal life.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, though markedly different in narrative form, participates in the same ethical project through allegory and spiritual parable. The story of Pi Patel, stranded on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker, is both a literal survival tale and a metaphorical exploration of coexistence, faith, and moral interdependence. The tiger, often interpreted as Pi's alter ego or embodiment of primal instinct, simultaneously represents the animal other and the suppressed dimensions of human nature. As Pi remarks, "You cannot get to know an animal unless you make contact with it" Martel (2001). This statement, read metaphorically, underscores the impossibility of understanding life — human or non-human — without the willingness to engage empathetically and imaginatively. Martel's narrative structure, oscillating between myth and realism, invites readers to reconsider truth itself as a construct shaped by coexistence rather than dominance.

Both Coetzee and Martel employ animals not as symbols of the "other," but as beings with their own agency and moral weight. Their works resonate with the ethical call articulated by philosophers like Martha Nussbaum, who argues that "the moral imagination allows us to extend our compassion to lives different from our own" (*Upheavals of Thought* 33). Through their literary interventions, the authors reimagine empathy as a bridge across species boundaries, thereby dismantling the binaries of self/other, human/animal, and reason/emotion that have long structured Western ethics.

From a broader cultural perspective, this literary engagement with non-human life also reflects contemporary concerns about ecological sustainability and moral responsibility in the Anthropocene. As humans increasingly confront the consequences of their environmental destructiveness, literature becomes a crucial space for ethical introspection. Coetzee's and Martel's narratives not only question how humans treat animals but also how they define their own humanity in relation to the natural world. In *Elizabeth Costello*, the ethical confrontation arises from intellectual discourse; in *Life of Pi*, it emerges through existential experience. Yet, both converge on a shared philosophical ground — that the future of humanity depends upon its capacity to imagine the lives of others, to move beyond anthropocentric logic, and to cultivate a posthumanist ethics of coexistence.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research paper are:

- To explore how *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi* challenge anthropocentric ideologies.
- To examine the role of empathy and moral imagination in redefining human-animal relations.
- To analyze the use of narrative strategies that destabilize the binary between human and animal.
- To situate both novels within the framework of posthumanism and critical animal studies.

- To propose a more inclusive ethical framework for understanding interspecies coexistence.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourse surrounding human–animal relations has witnessed a radical transformation over the last few decades, propelled by the philosophical turn toward posthumanism and critical animal studies. Scholars and theorists have increasingly challenged the human-centered paradigm that underpins Western thought, literature, and ethics. This literature review traces major critical and philosophical contributions that inform the current research, particularly those relevant to the works of J.M. Coetzee and Yann Martel. It highlights the interdisciplinary convergence between literature, ethics, philosophy, and animal studies in reimagining the human-animal continuum.

The philosophical underpinnings of posthumanism and animal ethics can be traced to the deconstruction of Cartesian and Enlightenment humanism. René Descartes' notion that animals are automata — devoid of reason or consciousness — set the stage for centuries of human dominance. Jacques Derrida (2008), deconstructs this legacy by asking, "Can they suffer?" (27), echoing Jeremy Bentham's moral inquiry that shifts ethical consideration from reason to sentience. Derrida argues that the "animal gaze" reveals the fragility of human subjectivity and exposes the anthropocentric violence embedded in language itself (31). His ideas laid the foundation for what later became a key theoretical framework in animal studies — the recognition of shared vulnerability between species.

Wolfe (2003) further advances this critique, asserting that "speciesism functions as a structuring principle of modern subjectivity" Wolfe (2003). Wolfe posits that the humanist logic underpinning liberal democracy and ethics excludes animals by defining them as the "other" of reason. Similarly, Haraway (2008) rejects human exceptionalism and proposes the idea of companion species — a relational model of existence where all beings are co-constituted through interactions. Haraway's notion of "becoming with" Haraway (2008) directly resonates with Coetzee's and Martel's fictional explorations of interdependence, suggesting that moral and epistemological transformation begins with acknowledging mutual entanglement.

Braidotti (2013) offers another vital perspective by arguing that posthumanism entails an "ontological flattening" of hierarchies between species Braidotti (2013). For Braidotti, posthuman ethics is "zoe-centered" rather than "bio-centered," focusing on life as a dynamic, interconnected process that transcends anthropocentric subjectivity Braidotti (2013). This philosophical position aligns with the narrative trajectories of *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi*, where human identity is destabilized, and empathy becomes the ethical foundation for coexistence.

Turning to literary scholarship, J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* has attracted extensive critical attention for its philosophical and ethical dimensions. As David Attwell observes, "Coetzee uses fiction as a space of moral experiment, where philosophy can be felt rather than merely thought" Attwell (1993). The novel's metafictional structure — particularly in the lecture chapters — blurs the boundary between narrative and philosophical discourse. McHugh (2011), emphasizes that Coetzee's narrative strategy challenges "the representational violence of speaking for animals" by dramatizing the ethical discomfort of human spectatorship McHugh (2011). Likewise, Woodward (2008) contends that Coetzee's work embodies "an ethics of proximity," where the reader is called to respond emotionally and imaginatively to animal suffering Woodward (2008). Coetzee's use of Elizabeth Costello as both character and ethical voice underscores the tension between moral conviction and philosophical skepticism, a hallmark of his engagement with posthuman ethics.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* has been interpreted through multiple critical lenses — religious, allegorical, psychological, and ecological. Early readings focused on its theological dimensions, but more recent scholarship situates the novel within ecocritical and posthumanist frameworks. Maria Olausson, in her essay "Posthumanism and Survival in *Life of Pi*," argues that the novel "destabilizes human identity by foregrounding the animal as co-agent in the process of survival" (Olausson 54). The relationship between Pi and Richard Parker, according to Olausson, exemplifies a "biocentric ethics" where the human learns endurance, humility, and moral reciprocity from the animal world. Similarly, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010) view Martel's narrative as "a fable for the Anthropocene," where the struggle for coexistence on the lifeboat mirrors humanity's larger struggle for ecological balance Huggan and Tiffin (2010). They argue that Martel's storytelling refuses anthropocentric closure by leaving the reader uncertain whether the tiger is real or symbolic, forcing a confrontation with the limits of human perception and moral judgment.

Another key contribution comes from [Pick \(2011\)](#), which frames both Coetzee and Martel within the “ethics of exposure.” Pick suggests that “literature’s greatest ethical power lies in its capacity to imagine vulnerability — to expose life in its most precarious forms” [Pick \(2011\)](#). This insight is particularly relevant to *Elizabeth Costello*, where the protagonist’s moral anguish arises not from superiority but from the unbearable recognition of shared mortality. Similarly, Pi’s survival narrative becomes an allegory of vulnerability and dependence, undermining the illusion of human control over nature.

The intersection of empathy, ethics, and imagination in both texts has also been explored through feminist and affective frameworks. Martha Nussbaum’s *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (2001) emphasizes that compassion is a form of moral intelligence — “a capacity to enter imaginatively into the lives of others” [Nussbaum \(2001\)](#). Coetzee’s “sympathetic imagination” echoes this concept, suggesting that moral understanding emerges from affective identification rather than rational abstraction. Lori Gruen’s *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals* (2015) similarly calls for “a contextual, caring approach to ethics” [Gruen \(2015\)](#), which resonates with both Coetzee’s and Martel’s portrayal of human-animal interconnectedness.

While Coetzee’s philosophical fiction foregrounds intellectual discourse and moral unease, Martel’s allegorical storytelling employs myth and faith as vehicles for the same ethical inquiry. Critics such as Eileen Crist argue that “the deconstruction of human exceptionalism in fiction reveals our longing to reconnect with the more-than-human world” [Crist \(2012\)](#). Both authors, though differing in narrative form, embody what Stefan Herbrechter describes as “the posthumanist impulse in contemporary fiction” — the drive to imagine the human as an ecological, relational, and vulnerable being (*Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* 2013, 83).

The convergence of these critical perspectives demonstrates that both *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi* are situated within a broader literary and philosophical movement that seeks to transcend anthropocentrism. These texts not only participate in the posthumanist debate but also reimagine the ethical potential of literature itself. As Wolfe asserts, “Posthumanist thought does not abolish the human but rethinks what it means to be human in a world shared with others” [Wolfe \(2003\)](#). Both Coetzee and Martel answer this challenge through their narrative experimentation — transforming the act of reading into an ethical encounter with the non-human.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative literary methodology grounded in the interdisciplinary frameworks of Posthumanism, Ecocriticism, and Critical Animal Studies. Since the research examines the ethical and philosophical reconfiguration of human–animal relations in [Coetzee \(2003\)](#) and [Martel \(2001\)](#), it adopts a hermeneutic approach that privileges close textual reading, theoretical synthesis, and contextual interpretation over empirical generalization. The analysis draws upon the interpretive traditions of literary ethics, phenomenology, and posthumanist philosophy to reveal how both authors articulate a critique of anthropocentrism through narrative form, character construction, and moral discourse.

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is analytical and theoretical in design, seeking to uncover how the two selected texts negotiate the ethical terrain between human and non-human life. The theoretical framework is primarily informed by:

- 1) Posthumanist Theory, as articulated by Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, and Donna Haraway, which challenges the centrality of the human subject and advocates a relational ontology that includes animals, technology, and the environment.
- 2) Ecocriticism, which situates literary texts within ecological and environmental discourses, emphasizing interdependence among all forms of life.
- 3) Critical Animal Studies (CAS), which interrogates cultural constructions of species hierarchy and explores the ethical implications of human treatment of non-human beings.

The research situates Coetzee’s and Martel’s narratives within these frameworks to trace how they reimagine moral agency and empathy beyond species boundaries. It also draws upon the ethical philosophy of Martha Nussbaum and Jacques Derrida to emphasize affective imagination and shared vulnerability as foundations for moral awareness.

4.2. PRIMARY TEXTS

The two primary literary works selected for study are:

- 1) [Coetzee \(2003\)](#): a metafictional novel that combines fictional narrative with philosophical dialogue, exploring animal ethics through the lens of a female intellectual.
- 2) [Martel \(2001\)](#): a postmodern allegorical novel that uses survival narrative and myth to question the boundaries between human and animal consciousness.

These texts are chosen for their shared thematic focus on human–animal interaction and their distinct narrative approaches — Coetzee’s discursive philosophical fiction versus Martel’s allegorical realism — which together offer a rich comparative perspective on post-anthropocentric ethics.

4.3. SECONDARY SOURCES

A wide range of secondary scholarly materials have been consulted to support and frame the analysis. These include seminal texts in posthumanist and animal studies theory such as:

- 1) [Derrida \(2008\)](#)
- 2) [Wolfe \(2003\)](#)
- 3) [Braidotti \(2013\)](#)
- 4) [Haraway \(2008\)](#)
- 5) [Pick \(2011\)](#)
- 6) [Woodward \(2008\)](#)

These works provide the philosophical and ethical context necessary for examining how literature can engage with animal life beyond mere symbolism or anthropomorphism.

4.4. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The research utilizes close textual analysis to examine narrative techniques, thematic structures, and ethical propositions in both novels. The methodology involves:

- 1) **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying recurring motifs such as empathy, suffering, survival, and interdependence that signify the breakdown of human exceptionalism.
- 2) **Comparative Analysis:** Evaluating how each author represents the human–animal dynamic differently — Coetzee through philosophical introspection and Martel through allegory and narrative ambiguity.
- 3) **Discourse Analysis:** Examining the ideological and ethical assumptions embedded in language, particularly the portrayal of animals as subjects rather than metaphors.
- 4) **Contextual Reading:** Situating both novels within broader philosophical, ecological, and cultural contexts that inform posthumanist thought.

The study also interprets narrative empathy as a methodological tool — following Coetzee’s concept of “sympathetic imagination” — to explore how fiction invites readers to “think themselves into the being of another” (*Elizabeth Costello* 35). This act of imaginative identification is treated not only as a literary device but as an ethical methodology.

4.5. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The research focuses specifically on *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi* as representative posthumanist literary texts. While references to broader philosophical works are included, the analysis is confined to the literary dimension — that is, how narrative, metaphor, and imagination participate in constructing ethical perspectives. The study does not attempt a zoological or biological interpretation of animal life but rather a literary-ethical inquiry into how animals function as agents of moral reflection.

The paper also limits its comparative scope to the ethical and philosophical implications of human–animal relations rather than theological or purely existential readings of Martel's text or feminist-specific readings of Coetzee's protagonist, though both dimensions inform the larger discourse.

4.6. METHODOLOGICAL RATIONALE

This methodology is justified by the nature of the research problem — which is not empirical but interpretive, ethical, and conceptual. The qualitative hermeneutic approach allows for deep engagement with the philosophical texture of the texts and their ethical provocations. The comparative framework enriches the analysis by juxtaposing two distinct narrative styles and cultural contexts — Coetzee's South African moral realism and Martel's transnational allegorical fiction — revealing their shared commitment to rethinking the boundaries of the human.

Through this multi-layered analytical design, the study seeks to demonstrate that literary narratives are not merely reflective of posthumanist thought but are themselves instruments of ethical transformation. Literature here functions as a moral laboratory, where the reader's imagination becomes the site of ethical encounter between species.

5. DISCUSSION

Both *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi* serve as philosophical meditations on the fragile boundary that separates the human from the nonhuman. Through narrative experimentation and allegorical intensity, Coetzee and Martel dismantle the long-standing anthropocentric ideology that privileges human consciousness as the sole measure of value. The analysis reveals that both novels move toward a post-anthropocentric ethics, one that replaces human dominance with compassion, reciprocity, and coexistence.

5.1. HUMANISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS IN *ELIZABETH COSTELLO*

J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* stages a series of philosophical confrontations that expose the moral inconsistencies of Western humanism. Costello's lectures, particularly "The Lives of Animals," question the Enlightenment belief in human rational superiority. She asserts, "To be kind, it is not necessary to know what it is like to be the other" [Coetzee \(2003\)](#), rejecting Cartesian reason in favor of empathetic imagination. This statement dismantles the binary of reason versus feeling, positioning emotion as a legitimate epistemic mode through which humans might relate to animals.

Costello's discomfort with human exceptionalism mirrors Derrida's argument in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, where he notes, "The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it" [Derrida \(2008\)](#). Derrida's notion of being "seen" by the animal dismantles the subject–object divide, implicating the human as vulnerable and accountable. Similarly, Costello's confrontation with her audience — scholars who intellectualize rather than empathize — exposes how language and reason perpetuate violence through abstraction. Her moral position, though dismissed as sentimental, resonates with Cary Wolfe's critique that "humanism rests upon the systematic repression of the animal" [Wolfe \(2003\)](#).

Through metafictional self-reflexivity, Coetzee blurs the line between author and character, reason and emotion. *Elizabeth Costello*'s moral anguish becomes a narrative instrument through which Coetzee performs posthumanist critique. The novel resists closure, embodying what Rosi Braidotti terms "zoe-centered egalitarianism," the idea that life in all its forms holds intrinsic value beyond the human [Braidotti \(2013\)](#). Thus, Costello's empathetic imagination becomes not merely an ethical choice but a mode of epistemic resistance to the dehumanizing abstractions of Western rationalism.

5.2. THE ANIMAL AS COMPANION AND REFLECTION IN *LIFE OF PI*

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* stages its challenge to anthropocentrism through a narrative of survival that collapses distinctions between human and animal. Pi Patel's coexistence with the Bengal tiger Richard Parker on the lifeboat is both literal and allegorical, revealing the interdependence of species. As Pi reflects, "We fought like two opponents in a chess game, each making moves to ensure his survival" [Martel \(2001\)](#). This simile positions man and animal as equal agents in the existential game of life.

Unlike Costello's overt philosophical stance, Martel employs allegorical realism to dramatize the shared instincts and emotional reciprocity between species. Pi's relationship with Richard Parker evolves from terror to companionship: "He kept me from thinking too much about my family and my tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living" [Martel \(2001\)](#). This statement reveals the paradox of coexistence — the animal, once a symbol of fear, becomes the very reason for survival. Here, Martel transforms the tiger from a predator into a mirror of human instinct, illustrating Donna Haraway's notion of "becoming-with," where species co-evolve through interaction rather than dominance [Haraway \(2008\)](#).

Pi's survival story also blurs the line between myth and truth, challenging anthropocentric notions of rational knowledge. The second version of Pi's tale, where humans replace animals, exposes the cruelty and savagery inherent in the human condition. As Pi asks, "Which is the better story?" [Martel \(2001\)](#), the reader confronts the ethics of storytelling itself. The preference for the "animal" version suggests that the imagination — rather than reason — holds the key to a more compassionate worldview. This aligns with Coetzee's insistence that the moral imagination transcends rational boundaries, bridging the gap between human and animal.

5.3. CONVERGENCES: ETHICS OF IMAGINATION AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Both texts converge on the idea that imagination serves as the ethical bridge across species divides. Costello's call to extend empathy beyond reason parallels Pi's imaginative reconstruction of his survival story. In both narratives, the animal emerges not as "other" but as a participant in shared being. This echoes Martha Nussbaum's argument that literature "invites us into the lives of others, breaking down the barriers of self-interest and human exceptionalism" [Nussbaum \(2001\)](#).

Moreover, both Coetzee and Martel critique the humanist tradition of domination masked as benevolence. In Elizabeth Costello, the refusal to empathize with animal suffering becomes an indictment of moral apathy; in *Life of Pi*, the will to survive becomes an allegory for the inescapable animality within the human. Both texts dismantle the illusion of purity in human rationality, replacing it with what Jacques Derrida calls "shared mortality" — the acknowledgment that "the animal and man have in common the experience of dying" [Derrida \(2008\)](#).

5.4. DIVERGENCES: PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY VS. ALLEGORICAL SURVIVAL

While Coetzee adopts a discursive and introspective tone, Martel opts for narrative vitality and mythic energy. Coetzee's protagonist is a philosopher-novelist who uses words as moral weapons; Martel's protagonist uses storytelling as a means of psychological and physical endurance. Yet both approaches converge in the realization that the human cannot be understood without the animal.

In Coetzee, the human must imagine the animal to reclaim moral wholeness; in Martel, the human must live with the animal to achieve existential balance. Both authors dissolve the anthropocentric boundary that has long defined the Enlightenment tradition, repositioning animals as moral interlocutors rather than mute objects.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This analysis reveals that both *Elizabeth Costello* and *Life of Pi* transcend anthropocentric discourse through narrative experimentation and ethical imagination. Coetzee's philosophical fiction insists on empathy as the foundation of moral reasoning, while Martel's allegory dramatizes interspecies dependency. Together, they embody the posthumanist conviction that ethical life begins where human exceptionalism ends.

7. CONCLUSION

Thus, J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* dismantle the rigid boundary between human and animal, inviting a re-evaluation of ethics, empathy, and existence beyond anthropocentrism. Through different narrative strategies — Coetzee's philosophical introspection and Martel's allegorical survival tale — both writers reveal that moral evolution depends on recognizing the continuum of life rather than human supremacy.

Costello's plea for imaginative sympathy and Pi's lived encounter with Richard Parker converge on a shared posthuman insight: that humanity's salvation lies not in domination but in coexistence. The animal, once positioned as

the "other," becomes the mirror through which the human perceives its own fragility and interdependence. Both texts, therefore, call for an ethical reorientation — one that affirms, in Donna Haraway's words, the necessity of "becoming with" all forms of life [Haraway \(2008\)](#).

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

All three authors contributed significantly to the research.

TRANSPARENCY

The authors affirm that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study, and that no important aspects have been omitted.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Attwell, D. (1993). *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520912519>
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The Posthuman*. Polity Press.
- Coetzee, J. M. (2003). *Elizabeth Costello*. Secker and Warburg.
- Crist, E. (2012). *Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and the Ethics of Representation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (2008). *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (D. Wills, Trans.). Fordham University Press.
- Glotfelty, C., and Fromm, H. (Eds.). (1996). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- Gruen, L. (2015). *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals*. Lantern Books.
- Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Huggan, G., and Tiffin, H. (2010). *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203498170>
- Martel, Y. (2001). *Life of Pi*. Knopf Canada.
- McHugh, S. (2011). *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816670321.001.0001>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511840715>
- Olaussen, M. (2014). Posthumanism and Survival in *Life of Pi*. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 21(1), 50–68.
- Pick, A. (2011). *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Wolfe, C. (2003). *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226905129.001.0001>
- Woodward, W. (2008). *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives*. Ohio University Press.