

An Open Access, Widely Indexed, Peer Reviewed Referred
Journal

Vol. 1 No. 2, June, 2024

The Enigma of the Lesson “At the Gate” of J M Coetzee’s Novel *Elizabeth Costello*: An Ecocritical Exploration

Md. Ali Rayhun Sarker

Associate Professor, Department of English

Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Bangladesh.

Corresponding Author Email: rayhun.eng@brur.ac.bd

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: ecocriticism,
anthropocentrism,
ecocentrism, egocentric
approach, Holocaust,
interconnectedness,
ecological balance,
posthumanism

Received : 10, April

Revised : 27, May

Accepted: 02, June

©2024 The Author(s): This
is an open-access article
distributed under the
terms of the [Creative
Commons Attribution 4.0
International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

J M Coetzee in his novel *Elizabeth Costello* has artistically delineated a tensed situation in respect of the conflicting interests between humans and animals. This conflict has dramatically been shown as a controversy. Throughout the novel, this conflict is not resolved, though in the last chapter titled “Postscript” one kind of resolution is suggested. The penultimate chapter titled “At the Gate” is a digression because of the fact that it creates a dreamlike atmosphere which is sharply contrasted to the remaining chapters where realistic atmosphere reigns supreme. In this research article, I have explored through the lens of ecocriticism what message is forwarded by Coetzee in the guise of a symbolic aura in the afore-mentioned chapter. Side by side, I have also focused on the relevance of this enigmatic chapter to the remaining parts of the novel. In this connection, I need to mention that Coetzee has used the word “lesson” in the “contents” of the novel, but for the convenience of understanding, I have used the word “chapter” throughout this article.

INTRODUCTION

The term ecocriticism is defined by Cheryll Glotfelty in the "Introduction" of her edited book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in this way, "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment (xviii)". The scope of "physical environment" is vast. It includes animate and inanimate objects. In the animate world, there are plants, trees, insects, animals, and numerous other life forms. One of the major concerns of ecocriticism is the study of the representation of animals in literature. In this respect J M Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello* is an important case-study because he posits the animal issue as the central theme in this novel.

Coetzee delivered two lectures on 15 and 16 October 1997 in the 1997-98 Tanner Lectures at Princeton University, and Princeton University Press published the lectures by the title *The Lives of Animals* in 1999. In between 1997 and 2003 Coetzee extended his Tanner Lecture into a full-fledged novel to be published in 2003 as *Elizabeth Costello*. The lectures titled as "The Philosophers and the Animals" and "The Poets and the Animals" of *The Lives of Animals* were reprinted in *Elizabeth Costello* with some minor changes. In *The Lives of Animals*, Coetzee presented his lectures in the form of a novel. In *Elizabeth Costello*, the story, characters, plot, themes are further developed to match the demand of a novel, and this has been given the status of "academic novel" (76) by the ecocritic Marjorie Garber in an untitled essay attached with *The Lives of Animals*. One noticeable characteristic of the novel is that it is not a novel of action, but a novel of idea.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this research, I have narrowed down the focus on the enigma of the chapter "At the Gate" of *Elizabeth Costello*. Now I will deal with the opinions of the critics regarding this. In this respect, I have found two tendencies among the critics. Carla Luciane Klos Schoninger in the article "The Writer's Provisional Beliefs: An Analysis of *Elizabeth Costello*" deals with Coetzee's handling of the role and belief of a writer in the chapter "At the Gate". Louise Bethlehem in the article "Materiality and the Madness of Reading: J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* as a Post-apartheid Text" shows the chapter "At the Gate" as a symbolic representation of post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Both in these two articles, the lens of ecocriticism is not used. On the other hand, there are some critics who have used ecocritical point of view for analyzing the chapter. For example, Lucilla Spini's "J. M. Coetzee and *Elizabeth Costello*: Landscape and Animals" is a commentary on the settings and landscapes in which the animals are situated in the novel *Elizabeth Costello*. Spini finds that in the chapter "At the Gate", animals and humans are shown as the part of an overall allegory, but she has not elaborated the allegorical significance of the chapter. The purgatorial aspect of the chapter "At the Gate" is suggested by Allison Carruth in the essay "Compassion, Commodification, and *The Lives of Animals*: J. M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction". Carruth uses the phrase "purgatorial city" (202) for the place around the gate. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in their *Postcolonial*

Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment comment on the chapter, "... she [Costello] presents herself to her Kafkaesque jury of inquisitors as someone through whom the voices of others may speak;..." (181). According to them, the voice of Costello is the voice of the non-human Other. From the analysis of the above critics, I have found the research gap that though all the critics are unanimous about the importance of this chapter, there is lack of adequate discussion about the relevance of the chapter to the plight of animals and to the remaining chapters of the novel. As a consequence of highlighting the voice of the Other, specifically the animal Other, one kind tension is created, and about this tension Huggan and Tiffin opine, "As usual, Coetzee fails to provide any solution to the problems his fiction raises" (183). I do not agree with this position, and in this research I have shown that Coetzee has become successful in providing solution, whether the solution is faint or strong that is different question.

DISCUSSION

In the novel *Elizabeth Costello*, Elizabeth Costello is a writer whose view on animals is highly anti-traditional. Before going to the main issue of this research, i.e. the enigma of the chapter "At the Gate", I would like to offer a brief overview of Coetzee's graphic picture of the tortures inflicted to animals by humans and the consequent pathetic plight of animals delineated by the lectures delivered by Costello, and by the conversation of different characters of the novel. Animals are mentioned as "prisoners of war" (104) in the novel. Costello compares the massive killing of animals to the Holocaust to portray the horrors of the butchery on animals. By comparing in this way, by bringing the humans and animals in the same platform, she has challenged the stronghold of culture, the claim of intellectual superiority of humans. By such comparison, she has not only enraged the Jews but also all the people on earth who are born and brought up under the existing culture. The main concern of Elizabeth Costello is to raise her voice in favour of the animals, and she wants to convince the readers of the pathetic situation of animals by showing a particular havoc experienced by human beings. This ecocentric approach of comparing Holocaust with the massive animal killing has become egocentric, as it has been considered from anthropocentric point of view. As a consequence of this egocentric approach, this comparison is treated by several characters in the novel as a blasphemous comparison.

The root cause of this egocentric approach is the anthropocentric establishment. According to anthropocentrism, human beings are not simply one of the members of nature, but their position is just below God in the hierarchy, and all the other life forms are far below. Elizabeth Costello in the novel *Elizabeth Costello* refutes and rejects this position. She challenges the Cartesian notion that animals do not possess reasoning faculty and they just act as biological machines. She shows that human philosophy, history, religion have worked hand in hand against animals. She opines that by the active pressure of our biased history, or

by the version of history on which we are dependent, we are oblivious of the fact that once upon a time the animals and human beings were in the same platform, struggling against each other. In this struggle, humans were victorious and consequently placed themselves forcefully at the top in their invented hierarchy. In ecological history, human beings' struggle is nothing special. Furthermore, Costello shows how religion is used to justify the killing of animals. She mentions the practice of Greek pagan religion of consecrating a particular part of the slaughtered animal to the gods in order to be free from guilty feeling (86). It is the manifestation of the joint venture of cruelty of gods and humans towards animals. With this she quotes from *Bible*, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you" (86). In this way Costello shows that within the framework of religion there is the scope of giving licence of slaughtering.

According to anthropocentric philosophy, humans are blessed with reasoning faculty and non-humans lack this. This notion paves the ground of assigning the non-humans second-grade citizenship of the earth. This demand is nullified by Costello in this way, "Both reason and seven decades of life experience tell me that reason is neither the being of the universe nor the being of God. On the contrary, reason looks to me suspiciously like the being of human thought; worse than that, like the being of one tendency in human thought" (67). Here Costello wants to emphasize that such kind of reason is a human invention, and hence is not applicable to the whole earth, or to a larger context to the universe. It is, in fact, "human reason"; ecology is totally unaware of this. For this reason she concludes, "And if this is so, if that is what I believe, then why should I bow to reason this afternoon and content myself with embroidering on the discourse of the old philosophers?" (67). Accordingly, she takes her position against this discourse.

Throughout the novel *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee shows that Costello is charged and accused by several characters for having unusual and anti-traditional feelings and sympathy for animals. Her view of human reason is criticized by Norma, her daughter-in-law, as "total intellectual paralysis" (92). She also comments that Costello's opinions on animals, animal consciousness and ethical relations with animals are "jejune and sentimental" (61). In an ironical sense, she uses the phrase "delicate sensibilities" (60) for Costello, though indeed it is true that Costello possesses one kind of hyper sensitive sensibilities for animals. This statement of Norma shows the rage and personal hatred she possesses for Costello, "Elizabeth Costello and her Second Ark, with her dogs and cats and wolves, none of whom, of course, has ever been guilty of the sin of eating flesh, to say nothing of the malaria virus and the rabies virus and the HI virus, which she will want to save so that she can restock her Brave New World" (113). This is exaggeration because Costello has not mentioned anything about "virus rights", and this exaggeration shows the degree of Norma's rage.

Costello's son John is disturbed by the hue and cry created as the aftermath of her opinion about animals. This has been reflected in his thought process thus,

"Why can she not be an ordinary old woman living and ordinary old woman's life? If she wants to open her heart to animals, why can't she stay home and open it to her cats?" (83). It is reported by Coetzee that for Costello's speech at the Appleton College, she is attacked in the monthly magazine *Commentary*¹ for "belittling the Holocaust" and as "covert anti-Semites, animal-rights sentimentalists" (156). Coetzee also reports of a protest by the students of the Hillel Centre² in this way, "Appleton College should as an institution distance itself from her utterances, they demanded. In fact, the college should go further and apologize for having offered her a platform" (157). In Costello's home country, Australia, *Age*³ publishes the news with the headline "PRIZE-WINNING NOVELIST ACCUSED OF ANTI-SEMITISM" (157). Apart from these, she starts to get awkward phone calls mostly from journalist, and particularly from an unknown woman who shouted down the line "You Fascist bitch!" (157). As a consequence, she is bound to stop answering the phone.

Within the law of nature it is evident that different life forms will have to prey on some other life forms for their survival. Bearing this reality in mind, several characters in the novel react in different ways against the position held by Costello. Professor O'Hearne, one of the characters of the novel, comments on the aftermath of the position of Costello in this way, "... a utopian life in which everyone is miraculously fed and no one preys on anyone else" (110). In fact, this kind of utopian thought is impractical. Similar kind of reaction is shown by John in this way, "Do you really believe, Mother, that poetry classes are going to close down the slaughterhouses?" and "You wouldn't want to put a jaguar on a soybean diet" (103). He also mentions, "We treat them badly because we despise them; we despise them because they don't fight back" (104). By mentioning this he raises a very much important ecological law and that is the species which wants to survive must fight back. As they do not or cannot fight back, they do not have any right.

In ecological consideration, the killing of any animal is legal for the fact that a particular life is dedicated to the survival of another life which sustains the complicated web of ecosystem. Surprisingly, Costello's position is against this ecological law. The ecological law of predation, the necessity and growing demand of meat, the claim of numbness of feeling of life and death by animals: all these are challenged by Costello in *Elizabeth Costello*, as she thinks from the point of view of the victim in this way, "...is as little consolation to those victims" and it becomes absurd to Costello "...to excuse their killers because their body fat was needed..." (66). In this way, she becomes a nonconformist to this widely accepted ecological law. Between the hunter and the hunted, she takes the side of the hunted. As a consequence of this nonconformist position she is rejected by a lot and is treated as a criminal and condemned. Coetzee takes her to a metaphorical condemn cell almost at the end of the novel in the chapter titled "At the Gate".

In her speech on “The Problem of Evil” Costello mentions, “... that certain things are not good to read *or to write*” (173) (Italics in the original). She has mentioned this on the novelist Paul West⁴, but in a roundabout way this is applicable to the total philosophy and belief system of her. For writing and expressing something which ought not to be expressed, Coetzee mentions, she is condemned. Throughout the novel, she is well-behaved and honoured as a learned person and writer. She resides in expensive hotels, she is well-dined and attended soberly by a train of attendants. Even her critics maintain a standard of decency in their criticism. But in the chapter “At the Gate”, we witness a totally different atmosphere; it is so different that it appears as a digression.

In the chapter “At the Gate” Coetzee shows that an unknown woman arrives in a hot afternoon in front of a gate which is shut and she requests entry through the gate to a walled-area. At the beginning of the chapter, the woman is described in this way, “Few spare a glance for the white-haired woman who, suitcase in hand, descends from the bus. She wears a blue cotton frock; her neck, in the sun, is burned red and beaded with sweat” (193). Later it is reported by Coetzee that this woman is none but Elizabeth Costello. After reading seven chapters, in chapter 8, it becomes difficult for the readers to believe that descending from a crowded public transport Elizabeth Costello is bound to carry her loaded suitcase herself unattended under the burning sun, sweating and exasperated. The situation is so changed for her that even a mere guard pats her on the arm which is very close to physical assault. Before the entry through the gate she is bound to lodge in the dormitory which is a windowless room having several bunks in two tiers; the height of each tier is so scanty that one cannot even sit there. The setting of the place is eerie, languid, enigmatic, hazy, and dreamlike; for this reason, it is problematic for the readers to associate this chapter with the other chapters of the novel. It is so dreamy that Costello has lost the track of time. The depiction of such eerie situation is one of the characteristic features of the writings of Coetzee, for example, in his novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, he delineates similar eerie and dreamlike situation in part three of the novel. The reason of this is that in order to understand the complicated psychological structure of Michael K straightforward narration does not work, and hence metaphoric rhetoric is essential. Similar is the case for *Elizabeth Costello*; in order to show the anti-traditional standpoint of Costello about animals, metaphoric rhetoric is used by Coetzee.

In front of the gate, in response to Costello’s request of entry, the guard on duty sets the condition, “First you must make a statement” (193). Apart from their demand of the statement, they also frequently pressurize her to clarify her belief. This insistence connotes that they want confession from her for her position on animal rights. Then she faces the judges who hear her pleas. One of the judges accuses her of being a cynic. Then their intention becomes clear when another judge mentions, “... a writer who has written not just entertainments but books exploring the complexities of human conduct. In those books you make one judgement upon another, it must be so. What guides you in these

judgements?" (203). From this statement it has become clear that Coetzee has intentionally attached the chapter "At the Gate" to show that Costello has discussed the issue of animal rights in her writings in such a way that it has become blasphemous from human point of view and for this reason she is brought under trial, and this chapter deals with the process of that trial. To the judges she mentions that she is the "secretary of the invisible" (199). By the word 'invisible' she means the old Tasmanian aboriginal people, and they are mentioned as invisible because they were exterminated by the settlers who had come from Europe and America. About this historical incidence, Coetzee mentions, "The Extermination of the old Tasmanians by her countrymen, her ancestors. Is that, finally, what lies behind this hearing, this trial: the question of historical guilt?" (203). In ecocritical discourse, the extinction of the Tasmanian tiger is a frequently discussed issue. Costello is the descendent of those white European and American settlers who had completely destroyed the rich tradition and lineage of indigenous Australian people, animals, plants, and trees, and replaced their own identity there. So this is one explanation of the justification of the chapter of "At the Gate" that Costello thinks that she is guilty of all the oppressions and tortures. It is a collective sense of guilt of which nobody is interested to shoulder, and as a result she takes the total responsibility in a metaphorical sense and ultimately is condemned. It is one kind of self condemnation.

Elsewhere in the novel in the chapter "The Novel of Africa", the fictitious character Emmanuel Egudu refers to this opinion of a real writer Paul Zumthor⁵, "Since the seventeenth century, Europe has spread across the world like a cancer, at first stealthily, but for a while now at a gathering pace, until today it ravages life forms, animals, plants, habitats, languages" (45). In this cancerous journey, the inhabitants of the former colonies have been bound to develop the culture of destruction against nature. The impact of colonialism and the Western world on animal life is indicated by this in the speech of Costello, "... the first travelers to South America encountered settlements where human beings and animals lived higgledy-piggledy together" (106). It indicates that in pre-colonial time, at least in South America, there was no established and ordered system of exploitation of animals. As the boundary line between humans and animals was not clearly drawn, both these two sides were intertwined together. It indicates that there was a system of coexistence, and that coexistence was better than that of the so called civilized world. Costello does not protest the condemnation and forced confession because she understands that she is one of the shareholders of this destruction of innocence and of the loss of the system of coexistence.

Apart from considering Costello as a cynic by the aforementioned judges, she is thought and considered as an insane by several characters in the novel. In this respect, I will compare Costello with the character Titus of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. In the following extract, in the dialogue between Titus and Marcus, they are involved in a conversation over the killing of a fly:

Marcus: Alas, my lord, I have but kill'd a fly.

Titus: "But!"? How if that fly had a father and mother?
How would he hang his slender gilded wings
And buzz lamenting doings in the air!
Poor harmless fly,
That, with his pretty buzzing melody,
Came here to make us merry! and thou hast kill'd him.

.....
Marcus: Alas, poor man, grief has so wrought on him,
He takes false shadows for true substances. (3.2.58-80)

In response to Titus' sympathy for a mere insect and treating it by human emotion, Marcus comes to the conclusion that Titus has become insane; "false shadows" indicates the plight of the fly and for Marcus "true substance" meaning the death of a fly is not a big issue. In a similar fashion, in a covert way, several characters in the novel *Elizabeth Costello* hold that by avoiding true substances, Costello hankers after false shadows. The voice of Titus is none other than the voice of Costello, and the voice of Marcus represents all the other voices against Costello.

Coetzee, by this comment of Costello's son John Bernard, provides us his impression about the position of Costello as a writer, "Your handicap is that you're not a problem. What you write hasn't been demonstrated to be a problem. Once you offer yourself as a problem, you might be shifted over into their court. But for the present you're not a problem, just an example" (7-8). From this statement it comes out that there are two kinds of writers; one is "problem writers", and another is "example writers" (8). A problem writer is a writer who through his/her writings advances some ideas which are far more advanced than his/her time. As the time is not ready to accept such ideas, it creates one kind of tumult. In the history of the great human thinkers, it has happened frequently. On the other hand, an example writer is a writer who can touch in maximum the temperament of his/her time; such a writer cannot create anything which transcends time. In the process of time, many example writers come, and wither away without creating any impact on the history of the globe; on the contrary, the problem writers, by addressing the injustices of the time, change the course of history which may have been identified as "problem" by that time. According to John, as it has been mentioned in the above statement, Elizabeth Costello is not a problem writer, she is an example writer. But, I do not agree with his assessment, because the ideas and position of Elizabeth Costello regarding animals is a very much advanced one to the time that is addressed by her. To most of the characters around her, whether they are her family members, acquaintances, audiences, or readers, she is problematic; she has successfully forwarded a problematic issue for their consideration. The problem is created because she has gone against the industrialization of animal lives and the commodification of animal flesh. For this kind of fighting tendency, she should be truly termed as the "ecowarrior" (530), the term suggested by Swarnalatha Rangarajan in her essay "Engaging with Prakriti". As a consequence of her position as an ecowarrior and problem writer, she is brought at the gate.

From another angle, this chapter entitled “At the gate” may be considered as a trial of Costello by the murderers and violators of animals and this fact has been indicated by Coetzee in this way, “If it is their murderers and violators who choose to summon me instead...” (204). The human beings are the murderers and violators of all kinds of life forms on earth including the comparatively weaker section like the indigenous, and it is ironical that the murderers are conducting the trial. Hence this is an unjust trial; but as this is the reality, she is bound to bear this. She understands that she is cornered for her belief, practice and preaching. She is brought to the trial and interrogated; this interrogation is mentioned by Coetzee in this way, “Like the interrogation of Joan of Arc...” (204). She is interrogated because she has challenged “the irrepressible human spirit” (207), this spirit becomes unethical when it is used to repress all the other life forms. For expressing this in her writing and speeches, she is brought in one of the border towns of an unnamed country, as Coetzee mentions, “to teach pilgrim a lesson” (209). Costello is that pilgrim who is intended to teach a lesson for the fact that she has denied the claim of anthropocentrism and embraced ecocentrism.

The depiction of the chapter “At the Gate” may appear pessimistic, but I opine that it is optimistic for the future, if we consider it from the perspective of posthumanistic reality. In the chapter “The Humanities in Africa”, Costello denies the claims of humanism and introduces posthumanism, though the word “posthumanism” has not been used by Coetzee throughout the novel. In the twenty first century context, in a world which is ecologically endangered, there is a dormant proneness of humanism to fall down because egocentric humanism does not match with the ecocentric reality. This proneness is suggested by Cary Wolfe in his *What is Posthumanism?* in this way, “... it [posthumanism] fundamentally unsettles and reconfigures the question of the knowing subject and the disciplinary paradigms and procedures...” (xxix). In the context of the novel *Elizabeth Costello*, I have seen that the posthumanistic approach of Costello has unsettled the traditional attitude of humans regarding animals, and has created pressure to reconfigure the paradigmatic framework of culture related to animal studies. This proneness to falling down suggests that mankind should return to the spirit of his primitive roots, when and where there was the tendency of coexistence. In order to ensure coexistence, she intends to substitute humanism by posthumanism. As a consequence, she is benumbed, challenged for propounding a philosophy which is far more advanced than her own time. For this reason, Costello may be mentioned as an avant-garde. All the ecocritics and eco-writers are avant-garde and this fact is suggested by Richard Kerridge in his essay “Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre” in this way, “Ecocritics who advocate this deconstructive approach are placing themselves in the traditional position of an avant-garde, preparing ideas for a later time. The term “avant-garde” recovers its original aspiration here: its vision of a future in which what is now startlingly experimental has become normal” (364). Throughout the novel *Elizabeth Costello*, Costello puts forward a vision of future

about philosophy of animals which is shockingly experimental at the present time, but has the strength to become normal in future. This is the optimistic aspect of the chapter "At the Gate".

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion, I have come to the conclusion that the chapter "At the Gate" functions as a catharsis which purges the short-sightedness of humanism and offers a broader ecological vision. The summary of this ecological vision is provided in the last chapter "Postscript" which is in temperament an extension of "At the Gate". Here Coetzee inserts the epigrammatic conclusion in the anachronistic letter of Elizabeth Costello addressed to Francis Bacon and the conclusion is, "Each creature is key to all other creatures" (229). This indicates that any single species acts as the key to establish relationship with the others and the extinction of any species is the disruption of this chain or web. In fact, ecosystem is indicated by Coetzee here. After mentioning the pathetic plight of animals as well as the Jews and the resultant controversy, the adverse reactions of different characters of the position of Costello, Costello's suffering for her inability of establishing any powerful and convincing philosophy in favour of animal rights, her trial and infinite waiting in front of the gate, Coetzee has placed this quotation as one kind of solace. He wants to show that there is one kind of beauty, power, and optimism in the sense of interconnectedness which is forwarded by this quotation. Elizabeth Costello can tolerate all these hardships because she has understood this beauty, she has found the key to ecological balance. We can solve a lot of ecological problems, if we can inject this sense and feeling of interconnectedness in our mind.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Commentary* is not at all any fictitious publication, it is a monthly American magazine on religion, Judaism, and politics in which conservative Jewish thoughts and opinions are published. It was founded by the American Jewish Committee in 1945.

² Hillel Centre, also known as Hillel International, is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world. It works with thousands of Jewish college students across the world.

³ *Age* is an Australian daily newspaper that has been published since 1854.

⁴ Paul West (1930-2015) is not any fictitious character. He was a British-born American novelist, poet, and essayist. In the novel *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee frequently uses many fictitious and real writers and academicians, and this is one of the characteristic features of academic novel.

⁵ Paul Zumthor is the Swedish medievalist, literary historian and linguist.

REFERENCES

- Bethlehem, Louise. "Materiality and the Madness of Reading: J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* As a Post-apartheid Text". *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3-4. 2005, pp. 235-53.
- Carruth, Allison. "Compassion, Commodification, and *The Lives of Animals*: J. M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction". *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Elizabeth Deloughrey, editor. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Life & Times of Michael K*. Vintage, 1998.
- . *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton University Press, 1999.
- . *Elizabeth Costello*. Penguin, 2004.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.
- Kerridge, Richard. "Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre". *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Greg Garrard, editor. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Rangarajan, Swarnalatha. "Engaging with Prakriti". *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Greg Garrard, editor. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Schoninger, Carla Luciane Klos. "The Writer's Provisional Beliefs: An Analysis of *Elizabeth Costello*". *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2022, pp. 11-21.
- Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Spini, Lucilla. "J. M. Coetzee and Elizabeth Costello: Landscape and Animals". *Humanities*, vol. 9, no. 3. 2020.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.