

ABSTRACT

This MA thesis examines how selected works of contemporary anglophone literature reflect ethical principles in human behaviour towards animals. It begins by explaining basic ethical theories and their development in Western philosophy. The first chapter also presents several works of literary criticism that explore literary animal studies, with reference both to representations of human-animal interaction in literature, and to new ways of interpreting literary texts. The second chapter analyses Karen Joy Fowler's novel, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013), along with the collection of short stories by the Australian writer Ceridwen Dovey *Only Animals* (2014). Both works illustrate the possibilities of human communication and emotional relationships with animals. Blurring the physical boundaries between human and non-human animals, and associated ethical considerations come to the fore in Michel Faber's sci-fi novel *Under the Skin* (2000), and in the novel *Animal's People* (2007) by Indra Sinha, discussed in the next chapter. The final chapter deals with the novel *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), in which J. M. Coetzee consciously crosses the boundaries between moral philosophy, literary theory and fiction.