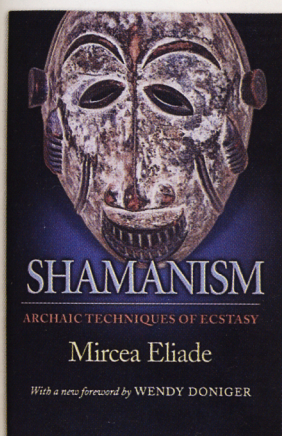


Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*

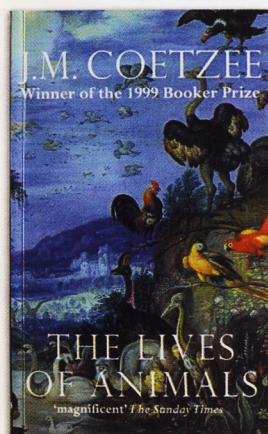
(Princeton University Press, 2004; first published 1951)

A seminal book on the rituals and techniques of shamanic traditions across the world. The connections between these geographically separate 'ahistorical' cultures are remarkably similar; I like the idea of this universality. However, much of the information here includes accounts by western eye-witnesses from the first half of the 20th century – you can't help doubting the anthropologists' perceived and received meanings and wondering how much these magical narratives are versions of their own values. I use it as a reference and companion to modern western society – specific details of initiation, dance, costume, narcotics, healing, spirit capture and appeasement, are all very practical.



J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*
(Princeton University Press, 1999)

A collection of essays and a fictional narrative told from opposing positions by characters with strong moral and logical arguments. The subject of their disagreement is animal welfare and its philosophical, anthropological and religious implications. Its wider reach, though, reveals the consequences of an uncompromising moral conflict.



Reverend C.A. Johns, *British Birds in Their Haunts*

(Routledge, London, 1938; first published 1862)

This is a bird guide written at a time when the wider status of birds and their distribution was not accurately known. The descriptions are wonderfully detailed and read like the anecdotes of an enthusiast; the Reverend's observations are as compelling as they are informative. His knowledge seems remarkable now, but the intimacy he demonstrates with wildlife was once commonplace. Some of the information is interestingly out of date: for example, he discusses once-common birds that are now extinct in Britain. *British Birds in Their Haunts* is full of old names and old knowledge that informs my work and which I haven't come across anywhere else.

John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*

(Granta Books, London, 2003)

A book that presents a world-view of a planet where humans are not at its centre, *Straw Dogs* is relentless in its upheaval of the ideology and moral framework most of us inhabit like a big comfy armchair. Progress, freedom, selfhood, morality, justice and technology – all are turned around so you doubt which direction you are going, if any. Gray writes: 'Most people think they belong to a species which can be master of its own destiny [...] this is faith, not science [...] looking for meaning in history is like looking for patterns in clouds [...] we are not rid of illusions. Illusion is our natural condition.'

