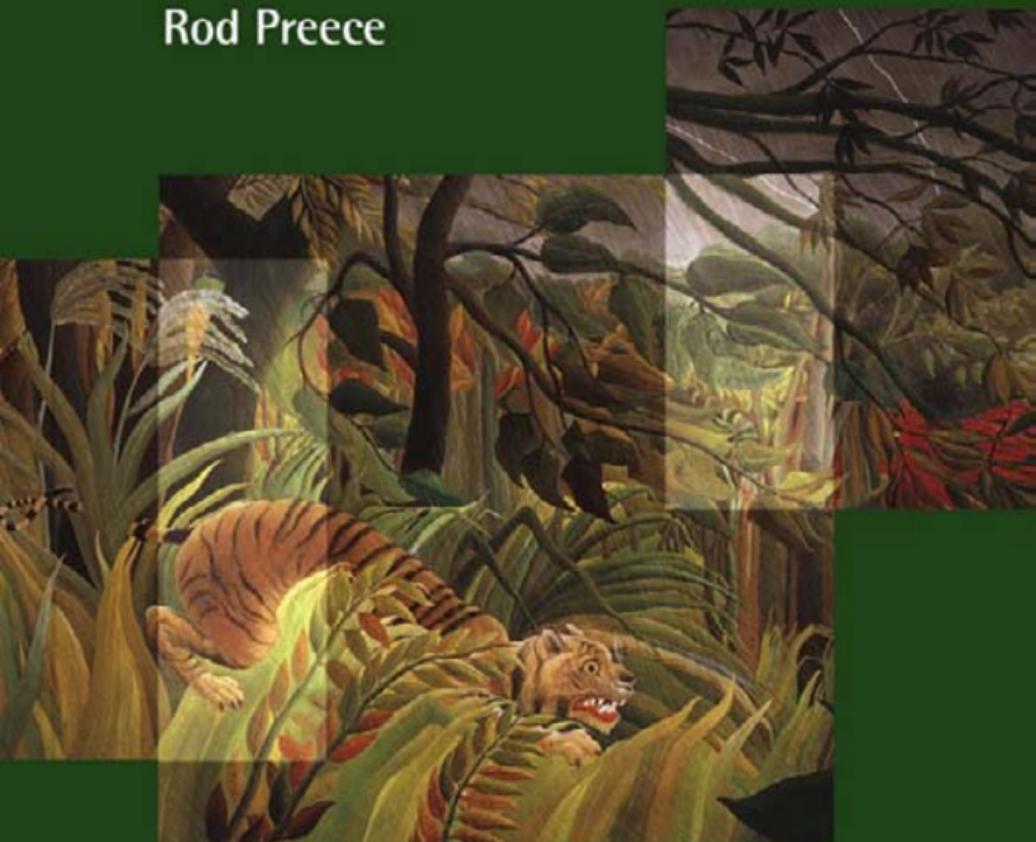


Rod Preece



# Animals and Nature

Cultural Myths, Cultural Realities

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*Rod Preece*

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Animals and Nature:  
Cultural Myths, Cultural Realities



**UBC**Press / Vancouver

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15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper

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**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Preece, Rod, 1939-  
Animals and nature

Includes bibliographical references and index  
ISBN-13: 978-0-7748-0724-1 (bound); 978-0-7748-0725-8 (pbk.)  
ISBN-10: 0-7748-0724-5 (bound); 0-7748-0725-3 (pbk.)

1. Animals and civilization. 2. Philosophy of nature. 3. Animal welfare – Moral and ethical aspects. I. Title

BD581.P74 1999 179'.3 C99-910127-7

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**Canada**

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP), and of the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and with the help of the Multiculturalism Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

UBC Press  
The University of British Columbia  
2029 West Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2  
604-822-5959 / Fax: 604-822-6083  
[www.ubcpress.ca](http://www.ubcpress.ca)

*For my gaea, Lorna*

... how do we let ourselves be moved by pity if not by transporting ourselves outside of ourselves and identifying with the suffering animal, by leaving as it were, our own being to take on its being?

– Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, Book IV, 1762

Zweck sein selbst ist jegliches Tier.  
Each animal is an end in itself.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Athroismos*,  
1819

... there is a poetry in wildness, and every alligator basking in the slime is himself an Epic, self contained.

– Putnam Smif in Charles Dickens's *Martin  
Chuzzlewit*, 1843

... the presence of Nature in all her awful loveliness.

– George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil*, 1859

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# Preface

When we are making comparisons among different types of society – which is the very purpose of this book – the categories employed must be meaningful and commonly understood. This requirement is especially important when the comparisons will be read as evaluations, both where intended and where not.

We all possess more or less vague conceptions of the Occident or the West, the Orient or the East, and the Aboriginal world in our minds, but when we try to be precise we find them as slippery as Lewis Carroll's "slithy toves" from "Jabberwocky" which "gyre and gimble in the wabe." Carroll also says, via Humpty Dumpty in "The Walrus and the Carpenter," "When I use a word ... it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." In reality, however, convenient as a Humpty-Dumpty world would be, we are not free to stipulate meanings outside the range of customary usage.

If we are to communicate successfully, we must be sure that the listener hears what the speaker intends. And what the speaker intends must conform more or less to what the listener already understands by the concepts employed. Unfortunately, conventional usage is often confusing and inconsistent. Indeed, conventional usage is often shifting. As late as the 1950s, Turkey was thought an integral part of the Orient. From 1883 until the Second World War – and thereafter intermittently – the exotic Orient Express ran from Paris to Islamic Istanbul, which was not only "the gateway to the Orient" but was deemed an essential part of the "mysterious" Orient itself. When such luminaries as Voltaire, Gustave Flaubert, Walter Scott, Edward FitzGerald, and Thomas Mann referred to the East or the Orient, they customarily meant Arabia.

While words like Oriental or Eastern and Occidental or Western may appear initially to indicate geographical location, we can recognize on closer inspection that they have not only geographical but also historical, ideological, economic, and cultural components – sometimes with emotive overtones, as in the ever "enigmatic" and "inscrutable" Orient. Thus,