

Taurus by Joseph Smith.
Jonathan Cape 2010.

Having brilliantly entered the mind of a Wolf in his first novel, Joseph Smith has now turned his attention to a Bull. The rare ability that he demonstrated in his first book, of credibly taking the reader into the mind of an animal, is replicated here, and much as I enjoyed Wolf I think that Taurus is even better.

The reader is introduced to the bull in his paddock, near a farm house where its breeder lives with his family. His only companion is a grey horse, stabled separately and with its own grazing area and stall.

At first, the bull's thoughts are all focussed on his immediate surroundings, but things change dramatically as the story rolls on. The bull is at times quite serene and peaceful but then bursts of huge energy transform him into a violent avenger.

As the story proceeds the reader becomes aware precisely of the bull's circumstances and suspects his likely fate, but the book's conclusion, though inevitable, contains many shocks and surprises.

This is as fine a piece of writing as I have read all year, complemented by the drawings of John Spencer, and I eagerly await the animal to which Joseph Smith next turns his attention, for he has a rare gift for this genre.

Hasta la vista, Toro!

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