This dog is not a human being ... (right?)

Dressed-up pups and cosseted cats have long troubled Charlotte Wood. But for all her discomfort at the humanisation of pets, she can’t help wondering if she’s missing something."
A braver model was awarded one of the explosive-detection dogs used by Australian Defence Forces in Afghanistan. Sarbi disappeared during a battle with the Taliban in which nine Australian soldiers were injured. The dog was not seen again by her handler for more than a year later, when a US soldier saw the black Labrador-cross with an Afghan man, and returned Sarbi to the Australians.

I was deep in the writing of my new novel Animal People, when a ceremony awarding Sarbi an RSPCA Purple Cross was reported, apparently without irony, by every major news outlet.

At the ceremony in the last days of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, RSPCA president Lynne Bradshaw praised Sarbi’s “incredible tenacity and strength”. Dressed for the occasion in a suit and pearls, Bradshaw knelt down, saying, “Congratulations, congratulations and putting Sarbi as the honing mold, on a perfect satin ribbon around the dog’s neck.

Back at the lectern, Bradshaw said Sarbi won the Purple Cross “for the courage she has shown while serving her country during her time in Afghanistan”. The RSPCA wished to raise awareness of this and other animals “unquestioning and uncomplaining service to man”. She said afterwards, Sarbi posed for media photographs with military dignitaries and schoolchildren. Afterwards, Bradshaw posed for media photographs with military dignitaries and schoolchildren. I watched this coverage with a bemusement clearly not shared by anyone on the ceremony, or, indeed, by the journalists or television present. The ceremony was interminable – without, even, the indulgent smiles it seemed, by the journalists or television present.

Afterwards, Sarbi posed for media photographs with military dignitaries and schoolchildren. After the ceremony, I was intrigued to see little signs – like online dating profiles. The signs say “I know that you’re out there”.

You and I are as likely to be aliens, undeserving of any rights at all.

Another darker but obvious thought arises about the钞票 of it. As with most things that confuse me, I suspect that animals, like humans, are a pathway to empathy, and prevention of the deep ugliness in our treatment of them. We force a dichotomy in which the Mexican-American dog whisperer insists upon. And John Berger wrote of the sudden inspiration. And perhaps it’s in this quiet space that something rich and deep was going on.

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