



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN ANIMALS AND LITERATURE



The Palgrave Handbook of Animals and Literature

Edited by

Susan McHugh · Robert McKay · John Miller

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Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature

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Various academic disciplines can now be found in the process of executing an ‘animal turn’, questioning the ethical and philosophical grounds of human exceptionalism by taking seriously the nonhuman animal presences that haunt the margins of history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology and literary studies. Such work is characterised by a series of broad, cross-disciplinary questions. How might we rethink and problematise the separation of the human from other animals? What are the ethical and political stakes of our relationships with other species? How might we locate and understand the agency of animals in human cultures?

This series publishes work that looks, specifically, at the implications of the ‘animal turn’ for the field of English Studies. Language is often thought of as the key marker of humanity’s difference from other species; animals may have codes, calls or songs, but humans have a mode of communication of a wholly other order. The primary motivation is to muddy this assumption and to animalise the canons of English Literature by rethinking representations of animals and interspecies encounter. Whereas animals are conventionally read as objects of fable, allegory or metaphor (and as signs of specifically human concerns), this series significantly extends the new insights of interdisciplinary animal studies by tracing the engagement of such figuration with the material lives of animals. It examines textual cultures as variously embodying a debt to or an intimacy with animals and advances understanding of how the aesthetic engagements of literary arts have always done more than simply illustrate natural history. We publish studies of the representation of animals in literary texts from the Middle Ages to the present and with reference to the discipline’s key thematic concerns, genres and critical methods. The series focuses on literary prose and poetry, while also accommodating related discussion of the full range of materials and texts and contexts (from theatre and film to fine art, journalism, the law, popular writing and other cultural ephemera) with which English studies now engages.

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CONTENTS

Introduction: Towards an Animal-Centred Literary History	1
Susan McHugh, Robert McKay, and John Miller	
Part I Theoretical Underpinnings	13
The Exception and the Norm: Dimensions of Anthropocentrism	15
Tom Tyler	
Metaphor, Metonymy, More-Than-Anthropocentric. The Animal That Therefore I Read (and Follow)	37
Ann-Sofie Lönngren	
Narratology Beyond the Human: Self-Narratives and Inter-Species Identities	51
David Herman	
An(im)alogical Thinking: Contemporary Black Literature and the Dreaded Comparison	65
Diana Leong	
We Are Not in This World Alone: On Drawing Close, Animal Stories, and a Multispecies Sense of Place	79
Nandini Thiyagarajan	

Part II Medieval Literature	95
A Community of Exiles: Whale and Human Domains in Old English Poetry	97
Megan Cavell	
An Ontological Turn for the Medieval Books of Beasts: Environmental Theory from Premodern to Postmodern	111
Susan Crane	
Chaucer, Lydgate, and the Half-Heard Nightingale	127
Carolynn Van Dyke	
Huntings of the Hare: The Medieval and Early Modern Poetry of Imperiled Animals	141
Karl Steel	
Part III Early Modern Literature	153
Human, Animal, and Metamorphic Becomings	155
Carla Freccero	
Sheep, Beasts, and Knights: Fugitive Alterity in Edmund Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> Book VI, and <i>The Shepherdes Calender</i>	167
Rachel Stenner	
My Palfrey, Myself: Toward a Queer Phenomenology of the Horse-Human Bond in <i>Henry V</i> and Beyond	181
Karen Raber	
What Can Beast Fables Do in Literary Animal Studies? Ben Jonson's <i>Volpone</i> and the Prehumanist Human	195
Erica Fudge	
Part IV Literature of the Eighteenth Century	209
"Real" Animals and the Eighteenth-Century Literary Imagination	211
Laura Brown	

Mary Leapor’s Creatureliness in “An Essay on Woman” and Other Poems	225
Anne Milne	
Poetics of the Hunt: Re-reading Agency and Re-thinking Ecology in William Somerville’s <i>The Chase</i>	239
Richard Nash	
Part V Romantic Literature	251
Beyond Symbolism: The Rights and Biopolitics of Romantic Period Animals	253
Ron Broglio	
Bad Dog: The Dark Side of Misbehaving Animals	265
Chase Pielak	
Why Animals Matter in Jane Austen	277
Barbara K. Seeber	
John Keats and the Sound of Autumn: Reading Poetry in a Time of Extinction	291
Michael Malay	
Cooper’s Animal Offences: The Confusion of Species in <i>Last of the Mohicans</i>	307
Onno Oerlemans	
Part VI Victorian Literature	319
Jane Eyre and Tess Durbeyfield at the Human/Animal Border	321
Ivan Kreilkamp	
Animals and Nonsense: Edward Lear’s Menagerie	333
Ann C. Colley	
Intimacy, Objectification, and Inter/Intra-Species Relations in Victorian Animal Autobiographies	347
Monica Flegel	

How Not to Eat: Vegetarian Polemics in Victorian India Parama Roy	361
Part VII Modernist Literature	383
Modernist Animals and Bioaesthetics Carrie Rohman	385
Vivisection in Modernist Culture and Popular Fiction, 1890–1945 Katherine Ebury	397
Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein: Two Modernist Women Writing as Dogs Marianne DeKoven	411
Kingship, Kinship and the King of Beasts in Early Southern African Novels Jade Munslow Ong	423
Animals Inside: Creatureliness in Dezső Kosztolányi’s <i>Skylark</i> and Hanya Yanagihara’s <i>A Little Life</i> Anat Pick	437
Part VIII Contemporary Literature	457
Speculative Humanisms: Postwar Universalism and the Question of the Animal Seán McCorry	459
CanLit’s Ossiferous Fictions: Animal Bones and Fossils in Margaret Atwood’s <i>Life Before Man</i> and Carol Shields’s <i>The Stone Diaries</i> Sarah Bezan	473
Returning to the Animals’ Gaze: Reflective Readings of Lionesses Marah and Sekhmet Wendy Woodward	487

“Without the Right Words It’s Hard to Retain Clarity”: Speculative Fiction and Animal Narrative	499
Sherryl Vint	
Jesmyn Ward’s Dog Bite: Mississippi Love and Death Stories	513
Bénédicte Boisseron	
Shared and Hefted Lives in Twenty-First-Century Shepherds’ Calendars	525
Catherine Parry	
Part IX New Directions	539
The Biopolitics of Animal Love: Two Settler Stories	541
Nicole Shukin	
Companion Prosthetics: Avatars of Animality and Disability	557
Michael Lundblad and Jan Grue	
Denizen Habitations: Spaces of Solidarity in Recent South Asian Fiction	575
Sundhya Walther	
Plagues, Poisons, and Dead Rats: A Multispecies History	589
Lucinda Cole	
<i>Last Chance to See</i>: Extinction in Literary Animal Studies and the Environmental Humanities	605
John Miller	
Index	621

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LIST OF FIGURES

The Exception and the Norm: Dimensions of Anthropocentrism

- Fig. 1 Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" (c. 1490); pen and ink with wash over metalpoint on paper, 34.4 cm × 25.5 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice 16
- Fig. 2 "The Great Chain of Being" (1579); woodcut from Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, plate following p. 221 19
- Fig. 3 Haeckel's "Pedigree of Man" (1874) in *Evolution of Man*, vol. 2, plate XV 21

An Ontological Turn for the Medieval Books of Beasts: Environmental Theory from Premodern to Postmodern

- Fig. 1 "Lion with Ape, Men, and Rooster". The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folio 2. By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford 113
- Fig. 2 Swan entry with source texts. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folios 65v–66. By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford 117
- Fig. 3 Lion entry with source texts. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folios 3–4v. By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford 120

Huntings of the Hare: The Medieval and Early Modern Poetry of Imperiled Animals

- Fig. 1 Robert Henryson's "Preaching of the Swallow", (c) The British Library Board, Harley MS 3865, 43v, after 1571 146

John Keats and the Sound of Autumn: Reading Poetry in a Time of Extinction

- Fig. 1 "Two Butterflies went out at Noon", Emily Dickinson 295
- Fig. 2 "On the Grasshopper and Cricket", John Keats 296

Animals and Nonsense: Edward Lear’s Menagerie

Fig. 1	Edward Lear. “There was an old person of Crowle”	334
Fig. 2	Edward Lear. “There was an old man of Dumblane”	339
Fig. 3	Edward Lear. “There was an old man in a Marsh”	341
Fig. 4	Edward Lear. “There was an old man of Dunrose”	342
Fig. 5	Edward Lear. “The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World”	343
Fig. 6	Edward Lear. “The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple”	344

Companion Prosthetics: Avatars of Animality and Disability

Fig. 1	Negative constructions of prosthetic hierarchies	559
Fig. 2	Simplistic constructions of prosthetic agency	560
Fig. 3	Dynamic animacies of companion species	564
Fig. 4	Responding to prosthetic others	569

Plagues, Poisons, and Dead Rats: A Multispecies History

Fig. 1	1913 Advert for the Liverpool Virus. (Courtesy of The Skittish Library)	590
Fig. 2	From <i>Public Health Reports</i> April 17, 1914. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4570698 . (Courtesy of Jstor)	596



Introduction: Towards an Animal-Centred Literary History

Susan McHugh, Robert McKay, and John Miller

Slippery or hard to catch, difficult to pin down, to be flushed out into the open, a moving target. Metaphors abound for describing the elusiveness of literary meaning, metaphors that equate it to an animal to be pursued (such as, here, a fish, butterfly, fox, or grouse). The implication is that interpretation itself is some seemingly proper violence to be done. And yet, other more generous, friendly kinds of encounter of reader and animal in the field of literature are possible. This handbook is a record of such encounters, and so we hope it will bring yet more into the world.

To introduce them, let's start by opening a well-known and important novel, finding the animals in it, and making sense of the encounters with animality it makes possible. The beginning of Virginia Woolf's classic work of literary modernism, *To the Lighthouse*, is itself a good example of literary meaning's evasions, its disturbance of the human, and its proximity to animality.

"Yes of course, if it's fine tomorrow", said Mrs Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark", she added.¹

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These sentences place and then promptly displace a human reader. For the “you” they speak to is not the “me” that is reading, pulled into the story by the direct mode of address; instead “I” am changed to become Mrs Ramsay’s tantalised son James, a six year old boy who fervently hopes to make the eponymous visit to the lighthouse. As the novel proceeds, this visit, and the lighthouse itself, become heavily overdetermined symbols of humans’ striving for meaning and for understanding, of their perpetual need for that striving, and for the attempt to establish through it some kind of new order; it therefore matters greatly how these symbols are introduced. Mrs Ramsay is first reassuringly affirmative about the trip, but then immediately conditional: *To the Lighthouse* is set on Skye, an island to the north west of the Scottish mainland, where the prospect of good weather is certainly *not* to be guaranteed. Human projects, we are given to understand, are necessarily subject to climatic conditions—a strong enough reminder of their cosmic insignificance. But Mrs Ramsay is at last even more determinate and commanding: only by following the ways of the birds, by participating in the animal world, is there hope that such plans will come to pass. As the opening of a novel, this moment is a perfect instance of literature’s ability to undermine self-certainty, and its demand for a suspension, an evasion or a projection of the reading self. In literature, it says, “we” are not “ourselves”, our fully and separately human selves. And such a self-suspension demands of us, Woolf suggests, that we place ourselves at one with the animal.

Perhaps, you are thinking, such a reading is *strictly for the birds*—an idiom meaning unimportant or worthless (after the seeds and sprouts that sometimes appear in horse manure); after all, isn’t “up with the lark” simply a dead metaphor, a turn of phrase meaning to get up very early: something every traveller knows well enough? But if so, that makes it all the more fitting as a way to approach to the central topic of this handbook, animals in literature. The critic John Berger asserts that “it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal”.² It is a speculation whose reasoning, while strictly speaking impossible to prove, sits well with the near omnipresence of animal imagery across forms of visual, sonic or linguistic representation or creativity, from anywhere in the world at any point in time. Phrase and fable, religious iconography, painting, heraldry, popular cartoon, animated film, music, advertising, dance, digital media, drama, fiction, poetry. Certainly, the prevalence of the animal-as-metaphor thesis ensures that animals present a particular problem to reading or interpretation. This can be presented as an either/or dilemma. Do we read this or that literary animal as a metaphorical figure: as a symbol, part of a cross-species allegory in which animal life embodies ideas about human life? Or should we, reading animals in literature, find ways to make sense of them *as* animals, attentive to their portrayal as an account of their own material or experiential reality? But this would be to oversimplify, and to miss the special value of animals as literary presences. For, as the essays in this volume show, there is great value in both of these interpretive positions, the metaphorical and the material, in navigating between them, and attempting both at the same time.

From the very beginnings of literary production—in this handbook we travel as far back as the eighth century with some discussion of works from the ancient world—animals and animality have offered writers a limitless resource of expressive possibility. In creative, poetic hands, such imagery produces new and insightful ways of understanding human life and the world around it. Woolf is herself fond of such imagery and uses it throughout *To the Lighthouse*, with almost everyone in the novel characterised in relation to animal life at some point. Here are two examples which highlight how Woolf's modernism, an art of multiple perspectives showing that meaning is always shaped by the form of perception, would be impossible without a metaphoric of the animal.

Mrs Ramsay's husband is a philosopher whose aim is to comprehend the nature of reality, a project he thinks of as like working progressively through the alphabet; but he is past his prime, some way short of the genius he narcissistically hopes for, and self-conscious of his mind's waning acuity. The limits of his intellectual capacity are represented in a memorable saurian simile. "A shutter, like the leathern eyelid of a lizard, flickered over the intensity of his gaze and obscured the letter R. In that flash of darkness he heard people saying—he was a failure—that R was beyond him" (41). The poetic image here, strikingly alliterative and assonant, couples an exotic animal (by the standards of an English family holidaying in island Scotland, at least) with the mundane resilient quality of tanned animal skin. The metaphor is somewhat overburdened, though, drawing also on the way sight conventionally stands for intellectual knowledge, and mixing this with a symbol of finality in the closing of a window shutter. So the effect is striking, if somewhat strange, and this highlights by contrast the hidebound stolidity of Ramsay's intellect.

Conversely, the intimate reality of other people, and Mrs Ramsay's deep ability to perceive it through the "knowledge and wisdom [of the] heart" (58–9), is imagined by Lily Briscoe (a young artist and guest of the Ramsays) in quite different animal terms:

How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another about people, sealed as they were? Only like a bee, drawn by some sweetness or sharpness in the air intangible to touch or taste, one haunted the dome-shaped hive, ranged the wastes of the air over the countries of the world alone, and then haunted the hives with their murmurs and their stirrings; the hives which were people. (59)

For Martha Nussbaum, this passage shows Lily recognising that people cannot fundamentally be known, that they "cannot be entered and possessed" because they are "in fact, sealed hives".³ But this is surely to downplay how Woolf undermines the difference between human and bee by moving away from simile, to metaphor and then to an assertion of selfsameness; the effect is to naturalise and so insist upon the intimate understanding that Mrs Ramsay achieves. She is first "like a bee", pathetically and romantically imagined in a solitary, involuntary "haunting" of the "dome-shaped hive", a clear enough figure for

a compulsion to experience other minds. But the sentence ends with a kind of refusal of metaphor that is equally an assertion of cross-species existence: “the hives that were people”. As bees quite naturally range individually but live collectively in hives, Mrs Ramsay is herself alone but empathetically inhabits the worlds of others. Woolf’s writing does not put the specifics of apian life to use instrumentally, imaginatively drawing on them to describe a fundamentally different and more aesthetically important kind of life that is human. Rather, it lays bare the force of the creaturely, a space which holds human life together with nonhuman life. Many essays in this volume explore that space too.

We can sense in these examples something perhaps obvious but still needing to be remarked about the presence of animal life in literature, and this is the sheer experiential richness of animal bodies and animal worlds. This aspect of literary animality is important not least because of the increasing vulnerability of those bodies and worlds in this era of extinction. In their visual, sonic, olfactory, physical and experiential heterogeneity animals inspire, and thus they can be made to epitomise, any possible emotion: they surprise, excite, delight, intrigue; they provoke trepidation or fear *and* anticipation, fun; disgust *and* hunger; horror *and* compassion. Any such list will by necessity be incomplete; but it is also one reason why animality has been such a part of the imaginative force of mythological representations, to choose one especially prevalent site of animal imagery. Woolf, too, knows this. James Ramsay’s oedipal animosity towards his father, which he continues to experience in adolescence as impotence to resist the force of a fierce murderous rage, is figured as a “sudden black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard, that struck and struck at you (he could almost feel the beak on his bare leg, where it had struck as a child) and then made off” (198). The creative significance of avian animality in bodying forth psychic horror in lines like these reminds us that it is almost impossible to imagine a literary gothic without the aura of black feathers.

But beyond this—the meaningfulness of an animal otherness not encountered in actuality but profoundly experienced nonetheless—we need also to recognise the force and meaningfulness in literature of the quotidian world of human–animal encounters. The importance of interpreting the everyday and the ordinary, of which animal encounters are a significant component, has been highlighted in recent years by literary critics and theorists such as Rita Felski.⁴ In *To the Lighthouse*, we learn that Mr Ramsay decides to abandon the homosocial world of male friendship and learning to enter family life when he sees a hen “straddling her wings out in protection of a covey of little chicks” and finds this “pretty, pretty” (27). This is neither the first nor last time that womanhood will be associated with such domestic animality, in this novel or elsewhere. By contrast, we learn of his characteristically masculine and metropolitan entitlement in longing for pastoral escape from the exact same family world when he wistfully and fantastically reflects on the intellectual freedom he has felt on “little sandy beaches where no one had been since the beginning of time [and] the seals sat up and looked at you” (77). Different again, Woolf characterises

with grim humour the uneasy mixture of fragility and violence that marks Ramsay's patriarchal position—an animal encounter and a glass thrown in rage as a result: “‘An earwig’, [his daughter] Prue murmured, awestruck, ‘in his milk’. Other people might find centipedes. But he had built round him such a fence of sanctity, and occupied the space with such a demeanour of majesty that an earwig in his milk was a monster” (214–15). This insect is out of place at the breakfast table, of course (hence the outrage). Another animal is involved but the difference is stark when Mrs Ramsay serves, as the *pièce de résistance* at the novel's centrepiece dinner, *boeuf-en-daube* (a peasant dish of beef and vegetables cooked slowly in a clay pot). There, an animal in its proper place, as meat, epitomises a rich coming together and mingling of different elements, speaking to the commingling of consciousnesses that is the novel's formal method.

Alongside such individual moments, literature documents the more systematic ways in which animal encounters are structured. As well as eating animals, humans live with animals, work with animals, train animals, make sport of animals, trade animals, study animals, farm animals, look at animals, fight beside animals, worship animals, make animals live and make animals die. These activities are so extensive in human societies that it is no surprise to find their significant presence in literature. And this offers rich scope both for learning about such important aspects of life through literature's lens and for forms of textual interpretation—historical; materialist; queer; feminist; colonial—that find literary meaning always embedded in social context.

At the dinner in Woolf's novel, for instance, Charles Tansley, a rather self-important young philosopher and would-be politician, shows his true colours like this: “They were talking about the fishing industry. Why did no one ask him his opinion? What did they know about the fishing industry?” It is a fleeting moment; but our understanding of the characters and their politics—and what it means for metropolitan intellectuals to pontificate at leisure about such things while on holiday in a community directly affected—would be helped by knowing more about the extensive parliamentary discussion on the topic around 1908–09, when this part of the novel is set.⁵ Later, we gain an insight to the troubled marriage between Paul and Minta Rayley by way of the increasingly boring husband's practice of breeding Belgian hares, a kind of domesticated rabbit (188). Our understanding of quite what a dull and ineffectual man Paul Rayley has become is helped by knowing that there *was* a lucrative vogue for this pastime, but it waned some twenty years before his interest. Elsewhere in the novel, when Mrs Ramsay's children laugh dismissively as she “speaks with warmth and eloquence”, and on the basis of research, about “the iniquity of the English dairy system” a quietly complex ironic point is made about misogyny and the diminution of women's expertise (112). In turn, though, Woolf offers us Mrs Ramsay's opinion, and her mothering, as a direct counterpoint to the violence of British colonial masculinity. When doing the work of calming a roomful of children scared or excited out of sleep by a taxidemised boar on the wall, she wonders “what had possessed Edward to send this horrid skull?”(112–13). She covers it with her shawl, and reimagines it, for her

frightened daughter Cam: “it was like a bird’s nest; it was like a beautiful mountain...with valleys and flowers and bells ringing and birds singing and little goats and antelopes”.⁶ And Cam is still soothing herself with this story a decade later (219).

Such moments indicate a truth borne out by many essays in this handbook, that if we pay attention to the ways that human and animal lives interact—attending to the tension, the complex relation, between animals’ lived experience and their literary representation, between their lives and what their lives are made to signify—we can come, through literature, to encounter animal standpoints and to understand animals’ experiences per se. This can happen in two broad ways. The first is by way of textual strategies that decentre humanist perception. As the ensuing essays reveal, there are too many of these to count. *To the Lighthouse*, famously, comprises two long sections each covering a few hours and one short, profoundly anti-realist section, “Time Passes”, which covers around a decade. In the latter, the force of what has recently been called a lively materialism, the agency of nonhuman beings and things, is epitomised in a memorable sentence that captures nature’s counter-colonisation of the Ramsays’ holiday house during the years the family is absent: “toads had nosed their way in” (150).⁷ Elsewhere, with a quite different technique, Woolf shocks us into thinking carefully about a moment of animal experience. This is the imagistic chapter six of the novel’s second section in full.

[Macalister’s boy took one of the fish and cut a square out of its side to bait the hook with. The mutilated body (it was still alive) was thrown back into the sea.]⁸

By devoting an entire chapter to what is presented as a kind of parenthesis to the novel’s main action, Woolf asks us to reconsider the seemingly minor nature of what is, from the animal’s perspective, such an extreme event. It is the multi-perspectival aim of her literary modernism extended, beyond subjectivity, to the animal as object.

The second, perhaps more recognisable, way we can encounter an animal’s standpoint entails what is often called anthropomorphism. This is a word that is often applied, not blankly to mean the representation of animal life in human manners or terms, but pejoratively for the misattribution of language, consciousness, perception, intentionality, emotionality or the like to animals.⁹ Certainly, the history of literature is also a history of putting clothes on animals’ backs and words in their mouths; but that is not quite to say that such words cannot be true to animals themselves. This handbook will offer many accounts of how we might read through anthropomorphism to animals. One final example from *To the Lighthouse* documents this dilemma too, when Mrs Ramsay thinks of two rooks on a treetop, playfully but with obvious meaning, as “Joseph and Mary”. Recognising them one evening, she speaks to her son who likes to hit at them with a slingshot:

“Don’t you think they mind”, she said to Jasper, “having their wings broken?” Why did he want to shoot poor old Joseph and Mary? He shuffled a little on the stairs, and felt rebuked, but not seriously, for she did not understand the fun of shooting birds; that they did not feel; and being his mother she lived away in another division of the world. (90)

Living away in another division of the world—a division not characterised by the separation of humans from animals—is, we might say, rather a good definition of the literature studied in this handbook, and of the interpretive encounters with animals and animality offered in it.

We have offered this survey of examples from *To the Lighthouse* not because it is especially noteworthy as a literary work about animals, but rather because it reveals the extent to which the meaningfulness of animals, animality and human–animal relations is hiding in plain sight in literature. As such, the novel stands as a helpful introduction to the different ways of writing and reading animals that follow in this handbook: from making sense of the interpretive complexity of animal imagery to meeting the demand to read textual animals as representations of actual animal presence; from documenting the phenomenological richness and complexity of animal worlds to dramatising the meaningfulness of everyday animal encounters and the social practice of life with them; and from thinking through the problematics of anthropomorphism to developing strategies of literary form that push us beyond anthropocentric interpretation.

That these aspects were not prioritised by Woolf’s initial critics also indicates how the value of reading and teaching literature in this way has not always been self-evident. Because literatures of all cultures and times include representations of nonhuman life, it is important to ask why literary animal studies has taken shape as a sub-field only in recent decades. The history of literary criticism largely reads like a handbook for the studied avoidance of animals in literature as anything but human symbols or other literary devices.¹⁰

That approach became impossible to sustain from the 1980s onwards with the applications of poststructuralist theory to twentieth-century literature. As reflected in many chapters of this book, Jacques Derrida’s linguistic emphasis in deconstructive theory has proven particularly influential. Initially, it helped to defer the problem of literary animals as human representations by identifying human animality as a deconstructive element, at least, within the hierarchical and dualistic terms that oppose human to animal in dominant Eurowestern traditions. But Derrida’s last set of lectures is proving still more significant as a direct call to address the violence inherent in language itself, which from post-humanist perspectives creates and maintains a limited notion of what constitutes humanity with dire consequences for all who are thereby thrust out of the human fold.¹¹

Yet it can also be said that the recent and profound changes to scholarship on animals in literary texts reflects a millennial turn marked by ever-growing scales of deaths, whether through genocide, industrial slaughter, or

anthropogenic extinction, and the interlinked, disproportionate losses of and for historically oppressed peoples. While animal studies across the disciplines remains dominated by an emphasis on Anglophone texts and perspectives, a propitious thread across still more literary scholarship from the 1980s works to decolonise representations of humans, animals, and human–animal relations alike. Recourse to Woolf’s novel allows us to foreground a problem that the volume as a whole resists. By situating canonical literature in English amid so many other rich texts and traditions, this volume is crafted to complement the inroads staked by Derridean deconstruction in literary animal studies by identifying possibilities for animal stories to transform the very terms of justice, upholding related claims of feminist and decolonial historians, philosophers, and others that animal discourses and embodied experiences are difficult to separate.

There are and need to be many more ways of studying and teaching animals in literature. With the wealth of additional possibilities modelled in the pages that follow, we make the case for why literary animal studies must remain open and welcoming in pursuit of creative answers to a shared problem, which is, as Tobias Linné and Helena Pedersen phrase it, “how to create a space and a language in academia [...] to speak about, and work to change, the situation and experiences of animals in human society”.¹² The global rise in meat consumption in tandem with the animal rights movement is an irony which shows that, at the very least, rights-based pro-animal logics need complementing. Reflecting and shaping the vital and intimate structures of feeling that negotiate “between the animals we are and the animals we aren’t”, in Philip Armstrong’s resonant phrasing,¹³ the socially transformative work of literature requires that there can be no pre-set agenda for representing—let alone imagining into being—a better world for humans and other animals. Taking up the challenge means resisting the moral solace of limiting ourselves to any one of the ways of doing literary animal studies that seem possible now, instead holding open a space for the possibility of more ways yet to come.

Even so, the organisation of this volume is based on a conventional division of literary studies into distinct historical periods, with the addition of a section on some of the theoretical underpinnings of literary animal studies and a section on future directions for research on literary animals. In many fields of critical endeavour, following this schema would require little explanation. Academic departments are often organised in terms of historical expertise, reflecting the way in which the process of academic specialisation tends to involve an increasing commitment to knowledge and understanding of a particular historical period; and university courses are often subdivided in terms of this periodisation. One significant aim of this handbook is to document and analyse the meaningful presence of animals and human–animal relations across the history of literature in English as it is read and studied today. As such, abiding by these periodisations is helpful because we want this handbook to be useful to students and educators, especially those who encounter literary animals in the context of university English studies courses without a specific focus on animals.

There are, of course, caveats that might be added to the parcelling up of literature into the institutionally convenient sequence of seven historical segments we use here: Medieval, Early Modern, Eighteenth Century, Romantic, Victorian, Modernist and Contemporary. Clearly, the neat demarcations of these periods are somewhat false. That the eighteenth century ran from 1700 to 1799 is unarguable, but this does not mean that the period is marked off by radical schisms in literary style that happened suddenly in 1699 or 1800. Similarly, though the Victorian period indisputably follows the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901, this does not mean that Romanticism ended in 1836 and that Modernism began in 1902. There are alternative ways of dividing literary history too. The long nineteenth century running from 1789 to 1914 enables a broader historical sweep; we might have included a section on the Restoration to include greater specificity in the earlier periods. Equally, any periodisation, most especially those based on nation states, like Victorian, is thrown into complex confusion when the inter-relation of time and place in a colonial or transnational world are taken into account. But despite these cautions about the precision of the shift from one period to the next and the seemingly rather arbitrary process of drawing of historical lines, the periodisation we have here still tends to be thought of as meaningfully, if broadly and contestably, descriptive of the march of human history and culture and, more specifically, of literary production. Here is what a very bald, generalising and traditional account of the literary history this volume covers might look like.

The Medieval period—in Anglophone literary studies—sees the arrival of something that might be thought of as *English* Literature; the Early Modern period brings us the great flowering of cultural production of the Renaissance; the eighteenth century is synonymous with the Enlightenment; Romanticism is an age of revolutionary sympathies and of emotional attunement to the natural world; the Victorians bring us realism; the modernists take it away through the remarkable artistic and cultural revolutions of the early twentieth-century avant-garde; the contemporary period sees the arrival of something called post-modernism and a proliferation of different national literatures in English stimulated by decolonisation and globalisation.

But what happens when we try to think of this periodisation from the point of view of literary animal studies? What do beasts know or care of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or the avant-garde? The answer, presumably, is nothing.¹⁴ Literary historical periodisations function through a humanist framework that conveys a partisan and exclusionary conception of textual production. A conventional view of literary history privileges particular forms of life and marginalises others (and, as well as being a humanist tradition, a canonical conception of literary history is also patriarchal and Eurocentric). Thinking of literary history, or indeed history more generally, as just the business of humans confines scholarship to a tiny fragment of planetary experience. Moreover, to treat human history as isolated from other species is phantasmagoric. Darwin begins the conclusion to his final book, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms*, with the perhaps surprising

observation that “worms have played a more important part in the history of the world than most persons would at first suppose”.¹⁵ Without worms, there is no agriculture; a Eurocentric narrative might then claim that without agriculture there is no civilisation, so that by extension there can be no literature without worms. Although this view chauvinistically dismisses the civilisations of nomadic peoples, oral literatures too emerge within food chains that ultimately rely on very small, perhaps seemingly insignificant creatures. Every time a bookworm picks up a work of literature for the first time, they should therefore perhaps take a moment to reflect on its deep undisclosed earthworminess.

We should also insist on a certain irony to the shape of this volume, therefore. Behind the grand march of literature from the medieval to the present, certainly, there are countless other directions of travel taking place which a careful reading can help us make imaginative contact with. For sure, animals appear in many texts as victims of human history (and this is not just in the words of books, but also, at many points of history, in their glue- and leather-bound materiality). An attention to the historical contexts like industrialisation and imperialism, which conventional humanist periodisations help us to understand, reveals the ways in which animal lives have been shaped by human culture. The key point here, argued in manifold ways from the beginning to the end of this handbook, is that animals should not—and cannot if literary works are read with good interpretive care—be regarded as the passive appendages to human history. On the contrary, the task of an animal-centred literary history, taken on here, aims to show how animals function dynamically in human cultures across the span of time.

NOTES

1. Woolf, *Lighthouse*, 9.
2. Berger, “Why Look”, p. 5. Berger’s essay is often cited as a formative work in the development of a critical field aiming to analyse the cultural representation of animals and its relation to animals’ lives and human treatment.
3. Nussbaum, “The Window”, 742.
4. Felski, “Everyday”.
5. It seems likely Woolf is alluding to discussion leading up to the passing of the *Trawling in Prohibited Areas (Prevention)* Act in 1909. The political context is complex, but relates to intra- and international tensions between Scottish, English, and foreign fishermen based on disputes about fishing rights in the waters off the coast of Scotland, in which nationalist sentiment certainly played a part. See United Kingdom, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*.
6. Woolf, *Lighthouse*, 123. Mrs Ramsay’s views are extended by Mrs McNab, a cleaner of the house (150), and her co-worker Mrs Bast who “wondered ... whatever they hung that beast’s skull there for. Shot in foreign parts no doubt” (153).
7. See Bennett, *Vibrant*.
8. Woolf, *Lighthouse*, 195.

9. For critical accounts of this notion see de Waal, “Anthropomorphism”; Simons, *Animal Rights*, 116–39; Parkinson, *Animals, Anthropomorphism*.
10. Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 6.
11. See Derrida, *The Animal*; and *The Beast and the Sovereign*.
12. Linné and Pedersen, “Expanding My Universe”, 269.
13. Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 225.
14. We can think of this as a version of the famous question asked by Joan Kelly-Gadol. See her “Did Women Have a Renaissance”?
15. Darwin, *Vegetable Mould*, 305.

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PART I

Theoretical Underpinnings



The Exception and the Norm: Dimensions of Anthropocentrism

Tom Tyler

In his *De Architectura*, written late in the first century BCE, Vitruvius recounted, alongside much else of interest to the Roman architect or engineer, the proper proportions of “a well formed human body” (*hominis bene figurati*). The distance from chin to crown, he asserted, is an eighth of the whole body, the length of the foot is a sixth, the width across the extended arms is equal to the total height, and so on.¹ “If Nature, therefore, has made the human body so that the different members of it are measures of the whole”, Vitruvius concluded, “so the ancients have, with great propriety, determined that in all perfect works, each part should be some aliquot part of the whole”.² In addition, it is worthy of remark, he said, “that the measures necessarily used in all buildings and other works, are derived from the members of the human body, as the digit, the palm, the foot, the cubit”.³ In short, Vitruvius took the proportions and dimensions of the human body to be the template from which the works of architecture, and indeed of other endeavours, should derive.⁴ Leonardo da Vinci’s is but the most famous of a series of Renaissance illustrations of these principles of human proportion (Fig. 1).⁵ The drawing that has become known as his “Vitruvian Man” represented not just the perfectly proportioned human figure, but the relationship of that figure to the wider world:

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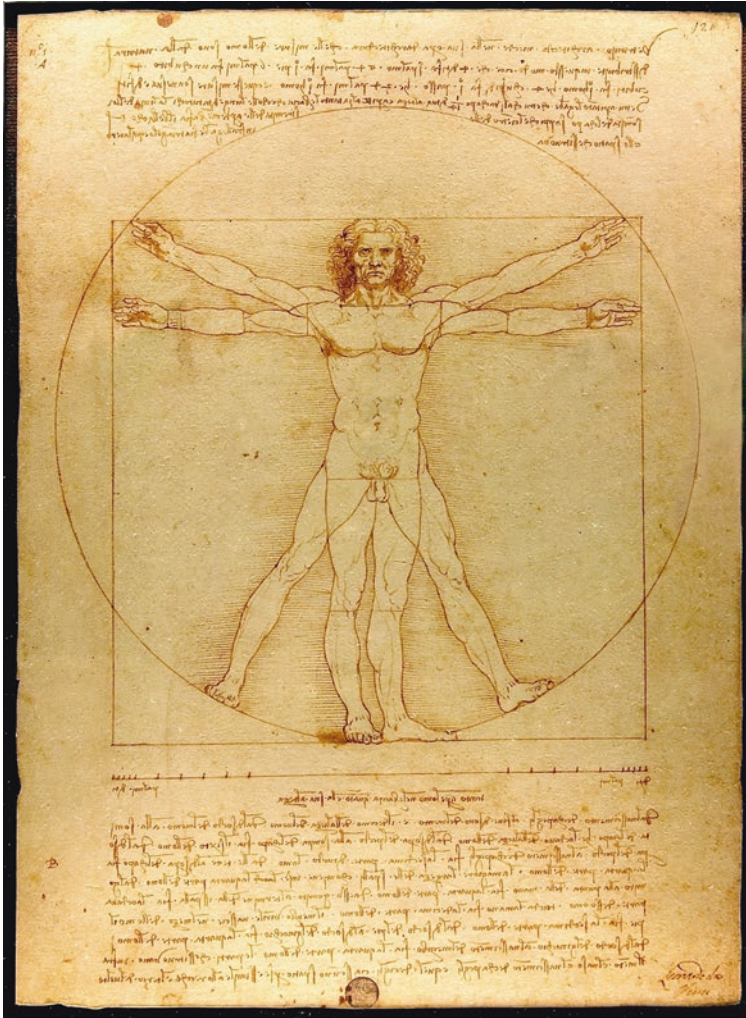


Fig. 1 Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" (c. 1490); pen and ink with wash over metalpoint on paper, 34.4 cm × 25.5 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

man as microcosm.⁶ In his commentary to the Italian edition of *De Architectura* published in 1521, Cesare Cesariano was able to assert that in the figure of the human body we can understand the proportions or common measure of everything in the world (*diximus sapere commensurare tutte le cose che sono nel mondo*).⁷ Vitruvius' schema, and its deployment by humanist scholars, is patently and unabashedly anthropocentric.⁸ It is only one of a great variety of modes of anthropocentric thought, however. In what follows, I would like to provide an admittedly schematic account of the dimensions of anthropocentrism that are

to be found within a broad body of historical literature, and to explore a little their persistent application to nothing less than everything in the world.

The word *anthropocentric* derives from the Greek terms *ἄνθρωπος* (man) and *κέντρον* (centre), and entered the English language during the mid-nineteenth century. Writing in 1855, the theologian Carl Bernhard Hundeshagen opposed the “idolatry of humanity” exemplified within the universities by the ideas of Rousseau, Feuerbach and their followers. Depriving so many of “warm Christian heartiness”, it is easy to imagine, he said, “what great injury this anthropocentric mode of contemplation would inflict”.⁹ On the other hand, in considering the science of astronomy in 1861, the Presbyterian minister William Henderson wrote that “Biblical teaching is [...] *anthropocentric*, so far as the world is concerned, the true centre of it being, not earth so much as man. The sun, physical centre of the system as he may be, shines for our sakes: the moon walks the night in our interest: the stars are there for our use. From the Biblical point of view, everything turns round the earth as the habitation of human *spirit*”.¹⁰ And so, in *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, published in 1863, John William Draper suggested that, having emerged from a barbarous “phase of sorcery”, man moved on to an “anthropocentric phase” in which he conceives himself Nature’s most prominent object and understands that “whatever there is has been made for his pleasure, or to minister to his use. To this belief that every thing is of a subordinate value compared with himself, he clings with tenacity even in his most advanced mental state”.¹¹ The range and forms of this tenacity, and the diverse ways in which humanity might be regarded as central, have been considerable. It will be useful, therefore, to understand the varieties or dimensions of anthropocentric contemplation as articulating one or sometimes both of what have been two indispensable conceptions. On the one hand, this centrality has often manifested as the claim that humanity is special, extraordinary, indeed *exceptional*; on the other, and not without paradox, that human being is self-evidently and reassuringly *normal*.¹²

The term *human exceptionalism* has been employed to designate those world-views or philosophies or systems of thought that characterise humanity as essentially and fundamentally different in kind from the rest of the natural order. The expression has appeared in works dealing with widely varying topics, frequently to describe a perspective which resists or opposes a fully scientific approach. In his review of a 1954 monograph on the form and significance of the chin, for instance, Arnold Tamarin remarked that “the school of human exceptionalism will find little comfort from this demonstration that Hominidae obey the same laws of evolution as other families”.¹³ In a Pavlovian critique of Freud, Harry Kohlsaat Wells suggested in 1960 that the separation of psychology from cerebral physiology “represents the last great theoretical stronghold of theology with its essential doctrines of the specially created human soul and its immortality”. Accepting that the mind is a function of the brain is a bitter pill to swallow, “for it eliminates the last refuge of human exceptionalism to the pervading order of natural law”.¹⁴ And William Catton and Riley Dunlap,

writing in 1978, identified a “Human Exceptionalist Paradigm” within sociology, a fundamentally anthropocentric worldview underlying competing theoretical perspectives, which assumes that humans are unique among the earth’s creatures in their possession of culture, and optimistically downplays or ignores material and physical constraints on progress and expansion. They opposed to it an environmental or ecological sensibility that would take fully into account habitat as well as humans.¹⁵ In keeping with the tenor of these accounts, I would like, in what follows, to use the term “human exceptionalism” to indicate not just those philosophies that exempt humanity from otherwise universal accounts of the natural world, but, in addition, those that emphasise and are especially impressed by humanity’s capabilities and achievements. We are interested here, then, in the exceptional in the senses both of that which stands outside the rule, and that which is most excellent.¹⁶ *Anthrōpos* is central in that humans are taken to lie at the heart of things, to occupy the principal, most significant position. Of this first key conception in anthropocentric thought, which singles out humanity as exceptional, we can identify three separate dimensions.

In the first of these dimensions of anthropocentrism, we find a *spatial* characterisation of the order of things, in which humanity holds an elevated, perhaps even supreme, position on a purported hierarchy. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, for instance, Immanuel Kant suggested that man’s sense of self, his idea of “I”, “raises (*erhebt*) him infinitely above (*über*) all the other beings living on earth”. Such a being is “altogether different in rank and dignity from *things*, such as irrational animals, which we can dispose of as we please”.¹⁷ For Kant, man enjoys a prerogative “over (*über*) all the animals”, which he regards not as fellow creatures “but as means and instruments to be used at will”.¹⁸ In writing of humanity’s lofty position, raised “above” and “over” all, Kant employed a well-established spatial trope. Arthur O. Lovejoy famously described one of the most enduring of organising principles in the history of ideas, which is to say “the conception of the universe as a ‘Great Chain of Being’, composed of an immense, or [...] of an infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through ‘every possible’ grade up to [...] the highest possible kind of creature, [...] every one of them differing from that immediately above and that immediately below it by the ‘least possible’ degree of difference”¹⁹ (Fig. 2). In recounting his biography of an idea, Lovejoy traces the origins and development of the great chain of being from its earliest articulation by Plotinus and the Neoplatonists, through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, up to its continuing influence in the modern period.²⁰ To be sure, humans are not “the highest possible kind of creature” on this chain, given the angelic ranks that are most often to be found above: they occupy, rather, a mid-point, a central place in fact, between the meagerest and most exalted. But humans are unique, indeed exceptional, in combining the material and the spiritual, in virtue of which they are to be considered as raised up above all other earthly creatures on the *scala naturae*. Anthropocentric philosophies



Fig. 2 “The Great Chain of Being” (1579); woodcut from Diego Valadés, *Rhetorica Christiana*, plate following p. 221

which evoke a spatial dimension, then, have tended to represent humans as exceptional by placing them at the summit of a hierarchy of earthly beings.²¹

A second dimension of anthropocentric thought takes up a *temporal* characterisation of the natural order, in which humanity appears as the endpoint or culmination of a chronological sequence. “Man persuades himself”, said Draper, “of the human destiny of the universe”,²² and is perhaps even cast, as the evolutionist Ernst Haeckel observed, as “the premeditated aim of the

creation of the earth, for whose service alone all the rest of nature is said to have been created".²³ Haeckel finds such an account in what he calls "the Mosaic hypothesis of creation" as recounted in Genesis, in which God, having separated light from darkness, and the waters from the sky and land, creates plants, the celestial bodies, the creatures of water and air, the animals of dry land and then finally "creates man, the last of all organisms, in his own image, and as the ruler of the earth".²⁴ Depictions of the advance towards humanity's ultimate or inevitable supremacy have not been confined to religious hypotheses, however, and Haeckel's own celebrated diagrams of a "non-miraculous theory of development" implied the same finale. Stephen Jay Gould has discussed the enduring iconographies of evolutionary theory. Both the trees of life of the sort popularised by Haeckel, for instance, which flower at their peak with a capitalized "MAN" (Fig. 3),²⁵ as well as the canonical image of the "march of progress" from stooping, hairy proto-ape to striding, well-groomed "Modern Man",²⁶ suggest a steady, inevitable development from earlier and simpler to later and more advanced, a progression towards and culmination in humanity.²⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin synthesised the religious and the scientific perspectives in his own distinctive, anthropocentric system. In *The Phenomenon of Man* and elsewhere, Teilhard argued that evolution traces the "progressive spiritualization of matter", as life strives its way through increasingly complex organisms and eventually "physically culminates in man".²⁸ Like a teleological chain of being,²⁹ the moment of "hominisation" is not the conclusion to this inevitable, irreversible sequence, but the extraordinary, foreordained turning point of self-consciousness on life's journey towards absolute spirit, which is to say towards the "Omega Point" that so resembles the Christian god. Anthropocentric philosophies which evoke a temporal dimension, then, have tended in diverse ways to represent humans as exceptional by casting them as the culmination of a progression of earthly beings.

Thus, within spatially and temporally anthropocentric world-views, humanity has commonly been considered exceptional in the sense that it is uniquely placed in a hierarchy or succession, the most marvellous of earthly creatures who sits either at the end- or highpoint, or perhaps at some pivotal mid-point, of a continuum.³⁰ A third dimension of anthropocentrism would sever humanity entirely from the rest of the natural order, making it something that is *fundamentally different* in kind. The legal scholar Richard A. Epstein has argued that the survival and advancement of human civilisation has always depended on the possession and use of other animals. Regarding the attribution of rights to animals, then, he finds himself compelled to conclude, as a matter of pragmatic expedience, that "in the end we have to separate ourselves from (the rest of) nature from which we evolved".³¹ D. H. Lawrence, prompted to reflection by the creatures he found around him in Mexico, insisted on a more radical break still: "If you come to think of it, when you look at the monkey you are looking straight into the other dimension. He's got length and breadth and height all right, and he's in the same universe of Space and Time as you are. But there's another dimension. He's different. There's no rope of evolution linking

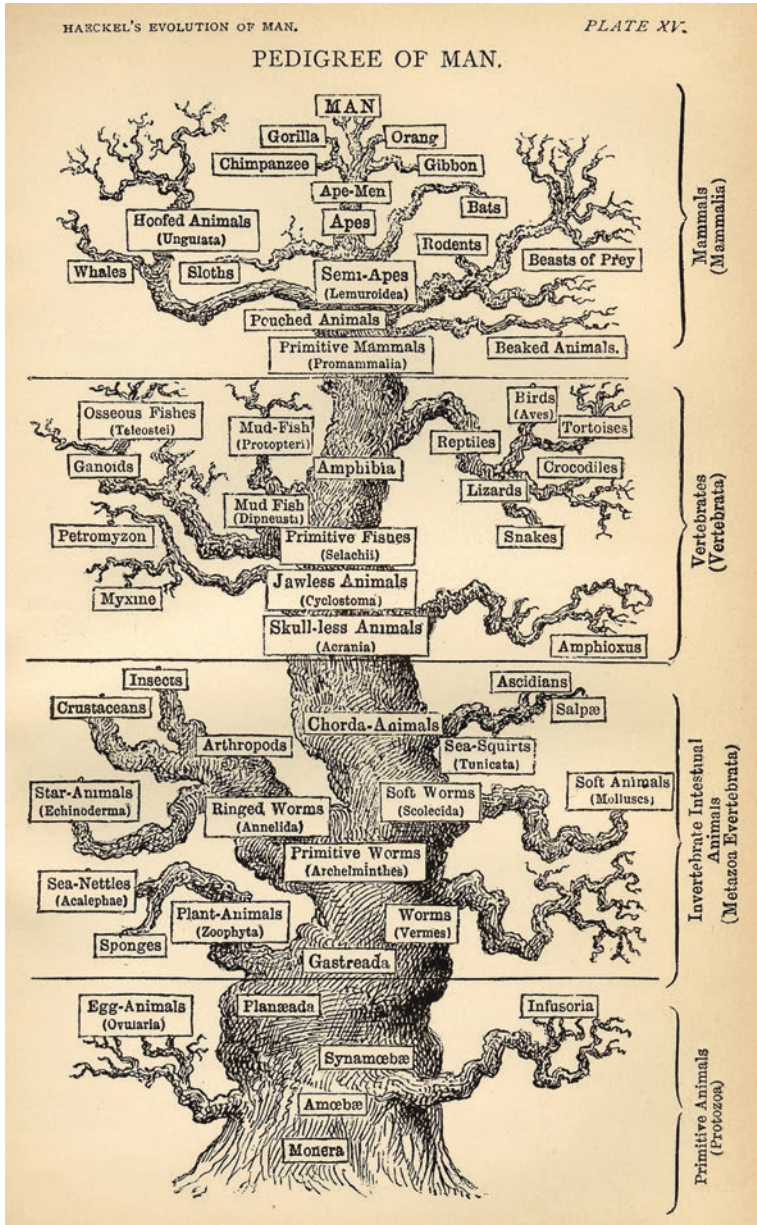


Fig. 3 Haeckel's "Pedigree of Man" (1874) in *Evolution of Man*, vol. 2, plate XV

him to you, like a navel string. No! Between you and him there's a cataclysm and another dimension".³² And V. S. Ramachandran, in his book *The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human*, is committed to identifying what makes humans "something unique, something unprecedented, something transcendent".³³ Despite starting from the very evolutionary premises rejected by Lawrence, premises which require him to concede that, by definition, *all* species are unique, Ramachandran insists that, due to their "qualitatively different abilities", humans are "uniquely unique".³⁴ Anthropocentric philosophies which evoke images of absolute difference would erect, then, as Gould has put it, a "picket fence", in order "to secure an exceptional status for one peculiar primate",³⁵ locating humanity entirely outside or beyond the usual order of earthly beings.³⁶ In addition to these dimensions of human exceptionalism, however, we can identify another, opposing theme within anthropocentric thought.

The term *anthroponormative* has been employed to describe those world-views or philosophies or systems of thought that take humanity to be, not an exception, but a norm. Where claims for human exceptionalism are most often explicit and even celebratory, anthroponormative assumptions have tended to be implicit and largely unacknowledged by their authors. Albion Woodbury Small wrote, in 1907, the introduction to a collection of sermons by Frederic E. Dewhurst, in which he described the author's work as neither anthropomorphic nor anthropocentric, but as "frankly anthroponormative, if I may be permitted to coin such a term for views of life in which the latest readings of psychology and sociology blend".³⁷ Dewhurst understood, that is, the importance of the "dynamic interpretation of life", and "that everything has value for our intelligence in proportion to its visible worth for human personality".³⁸ Writing much later, in 1999, Lawrence Buell suggested that the recently burgeoning field of ecocriticism had begun to review the archive of literary history "with a view to appraising its status both as reinscription and as critique of anthropocentrism".³⁹ He directed attention particularly to the substantial body of work that examined how literary representations of animals "unsettle anthropocentric norms", and to the work of feminist studies that continued to question "all kinds of pathologies in anthroponormative thinking".⁴⁰ And in 2007, Michael Mikulak brought an ecological sensibility to bear on Marx's critique of capitalism, in which an instrumental "anthroponormative gaze renders nature into raw material" for human transformation and use, and discounts other modes of production, human or otherwise.⁴¹ Thus, in what follows, I use the term *anthroponormative* of those approaches which, in some way or other, take human being to be self-evidently normal. *Anthrōpos* is central in that human being functions as a reference point, or axis for reflection, or criterion for judgement. Of this second theme of anthropocentric thought, which characterises humanity as the norm, we can again identify three separate dimensions.

A fourth dimension of anthropocentrism conceives the human body, or the human *form*, as a standard or model or measure by which all else is to be assessed or gauged.⁴² This is the perspective of Vitruvius and his Renaissance admirers, whose very starting point was the geometric perfection and ideal proportions of the human body. In his *De Divina Proportione*, for which Leonardo supplied illustrations, Luca Pacioli declared that “from the human body derive all measures and their denominations and in it is to be found all and every ratio and proportion by which God reveals the innermost secrets of nature.”⁴³ In a similar vein, the contested notion of *anthropomorphism*, which describes the apparent attribution of human form to that which is not human, is in itself anthroponormative: disdainful accusations and approving defences of this practice alike take the human body or its capabilities as a kind of exemplar or archetype, in terms of which the gods, or forces of nature, or other creatures or artefacts are rightly or erroneously described. Thus, when the entomologist John Kennedy claims that “anthropomorphism is in fact a kind of blind prejudice, and that is why it gives rise to errors”, or when the primatologist Frans de Waal argues that “anthropomorphism is not only inevitable, it is a powerful tool”, in both cases a self-evident human form, or norm, is assumed, on which these evaluations depend.⁴⁴ The particularity of human material existence also plays a central explanatory role in the many versions of the so-called “anthropic principle” of cosmology. The principle starts from the observation that if the physical parameters of the universe, such as the strength of gravity, had been just slightly different, there would today be no life or human observers of this universe. Proponents of stronger versions of the principle go on to suggest that the existence of human life is the best explanation for *why* things are as they are, or even that the universe is compelled for intelligent life to evolve.⁴⁵ Anthropocentric philosophies which start from the human body, then, have tended to characterise humans as normal by employing this form as a yardstick against which the universe, or nature, or some part thereof, is measured.⁴⁶

A fifth dimension of anthropocentrism takes the human mind to be an inevitable and necessary axis for reflection, which constrains or determines *apprehension*. In his scientific work, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe considered the human observer’s direct experience to be the very means of achieving truth about natural phenomena: “Insofar as he makes use of his healthy senses, man himself is the best and most exact scientific instrument possible. [...] [M]an occupies such a high position that things otherwise beyond depiction may be depicted in him”.⁴⁷ In what amounted to a phenomenology *avant la lettre*, Goethe argued that when properly attentive, the human subject and natural object, the perception and that which is perceived, are united in an indivisible totality. And so, “When the healthy nature of man works as a whole, when he feels himself in the world as though in a great, beautiful, worthy, and precious whole, when his harmonious sense of well-being imparts to him a pure free delight, *then the universe, if it could experience itself, would, as having achieved*

its goal, exult with joy and marvel at the pinnacle of its own becoming and being".⁴⁸ Benjamin Lee Whorf, on the other hand, proposed with his principle of linguistic relativity that the structure of every language, be it Hopi, Japanese or "Standard Average European", will shape in a very different way how its speakers conceive the world, and that each such worldview is of equal validity. Underlying these many microcosms, however, we find a deeper "human brotherhood". The very differences are a defining characteristic of the species: human beings are alike and alone, and thus united, in their being ruled by the patterns of language.⁴⁹ Where Goethe argued that the human mind might furnish truth, and Whorf that it permits only partial perspectives, the philosopher Thomas Nagel suggests that, in certain respects at least, it necessarily entails ignorance. In his essay "What Is It Like to be a Bat?", Nagel argues that, due to their distinctive mode of perception, echolocation, bats represent "a fundamentally *alien* form of life".⁵⁰ Bats present "a range of activity and a sensory apparatus so different from ours", in fact, that their consciousness, the subjective character of their experience, will lie forever "beyond our ability to conceive".⁵¹ It is, Nagel concludes, *impossible* for a human to know what it is like to be a bat. Anthropocentric philosophies which concern themselves with the human mind or experience, then, have tended to characterise humans as normal in so far as they suggest that these necessitate a particular, inescapable perception or apprehension or knowledge of the world.⁵²

Thus, anthroponormative thought has taken the human body to be a measure for the external world, or the human mind as a determining internality, but there is, additionally, a yet more thorough and encompassing variety of this mode of anthropocentrism. Where the ultimate dimension of human exceptionalism invoked an absolute difference, the final dimension of anthroponormativity calls, instead, upon a definitive, unquestioned identity. The normative assumption that the speaking or writing subject, as well as their audience, *should identify as human* is evidenced by a persistent series of first person plural pronouns, that is by invitingly axiomatic *we*, *ours* and *uses*. When Henderson suggests that, as they turn around the earth, the heavenly bodies shine for *our* sakes; when Kant asserts that *we* can dispose of irrational animals as *we* please; when Epstein declares that *we* must separate *ourselves* from the rest of nature from which *we* have evolved; when Ramachandran undertakes his quest for what makes *us* human; when Small finds the worth of things in their value for *our* intelligence and personality; and when Nagel detects a sensory apparatus wholly different from *ours*, and a subjective experience that lies beyond *our* ability to conceive; then, each of these writers self-identifies, without argument or explanation, as human, and entreats their readers to do the same. They do not identify, as they might, as a terran, an animal, a part of evolving nature, an intelligent being, a personality, a consciousness, or as a member of any of a host of other potential collectivities that, though they do not preclude membership of the human race, do not take it as their self-evident starting point. Anthropocentric philosophies which appeal to a common human identity, then, have tended to characterise humans as normal by inviting those they

address to recognise this shared community, or race, or “brotherhood” as their own.

Draper suggested in his early account of anthropocentric thought that it takes man to be Nature’s “most prominent object”.⁵³ I have recounted, diagrammatically, the ways in which humanity has been considered most prominent: it has been conceived as a spatial highpoint; as a temporal endpoint; as fundamentally different in kind; as a bodily measure; as a mental constraint; and as a self-evident identity. It is doubtless the case that there have been world-views or philosophies or systems of thought that might usefully be described as anthropocentric, but which do not immediately align with one or more of these six dimensions. Nonetheless, it is certain that the two contrasting or perhaps complementary conceptions, of humanity as both exceptional and as normal, have proven indispensable in placing *anthrōpos* at the centre of things. Draper went on, however, to outline the full implications of man’s supposed eminence: “every thing is of a subordinate value compared with himself” and “whatever there is has been made for his pleasure, or to minister to his use”.⁵⁴ Declarations or suppositions regarding the centrality of humanity, whatever form that centrality takes, have most often been accompanied by evaluations of the human being’s relative worth, and pronouncements regarding the appropriate actions that it may or must take with respect to the rest of the natural order. Ontologies and epistemologies have, inevitably, been accompanied by ethics. The variety of anthropocentric moralities has in fact been more diverse than Draper allows, even if the theme of human supremacy has indeed predominated, and it is to these that I turn in closing.

In addition to providing the iconic illustration of a perfectly proportioned Vitruvian body, Leonardo himself recorded one of the bleakest accounts of the consequence of believing that whatever there is has been made to minister to human use. In a passage of his notebooks entitled “Of the Cruelty of Man”, Leonardo wrote:

Animals will be seen on the earth who will always be fighting against each other with the greatest loss and frequent deaths on each side. And there will be no end to their malignity; by their strong limbs we shall see a great portion of the trees of the vast forests laid low throughout the universe; and, when they are filled with food the satisfaction of their desires will be to deal death and grief and labour and wars and fury to every living thing; and from their immoderate pride they will desire to rise towards heaven, but the too great weight of their limbs will keep them down. Nothing will remain on earth, or under the earth or in the waters which will not be persecuted, disturbed and spoiled, and those of one country removed into another. And their bodies will become the sepulture and means of transit of all they have killed. O Earth! why dost thou not open and engulf them in the fissures of thy vast abyss and caverns, and no longer display in the sight of heaven such a cruel and horrible monster.⁵⁵

Leonardo describes a world in which there is understood to be no impediment to the satisfaction of human desires, and in which humankind exercises

absolute and unchecked *domination*. Haeckel highlighted the Mosaic tradition in which “God creates man [...] as the ruler of the earth” (and, indeed, expressly tasks him to “subdue it”),⁵⁶ and Kant ratified this Biblical authority with that of reason, which realises that animals are “means and instruments to be used at will”.⁵⁷ These most common themes, of a “world made for man”⁵⁸ whose denizens are but means to human ends, and the many variants thereof, are to be found in writers from antiquity to the modern period, from Aristotle to Calvin and beyond.⁵⁹ At the same time, a tradition of human *stewardship* of nature has endured. Whilst in the first chapter of Genesis, God charges humanity to fill the earth and subdue it, in the second he “took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it”.⁶⁰ Neoplatonists like Iamblichus, and idealists such as Fichte, cast humanity still as unequivocal ruler, but now as a responsible custodian or caretaker, or as an improver and perfecter of nature, or, as Julian Huxley maintained in a very modern formulation, as the “business manager for the cosmic process of evolution”.⁶¹ A third variety of anthropocentric ethics, extrapolating from humanity’s prominent position, would extend the charmed circle of those deemed worthy of consideration in their own right to animals and beyond. In his *History of European Morals*, Lecky suggested that, although the humanity of a “humane disposition” has been an enduring virtue, the progressively *expanding circle* of benevolent affections stops not at “all humanity” but comes to encompass the whole of “the animal world”,⁶² whilst to Schweitzer is attributed the reflection that “until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace”.⁶³ Finally, we can identify as a distinct ethic that strain of *misanthropy* which recognises the human being as an aberration, an exceptional, malignant monster. Leonardo himself condemns and recoils from humanity’s presumptuous, immoderate pride and, in despair, can find no fitting course of action other than to call upon the Earth to engulf in the fissures of its vast abyss this cruel persecutor, disturber and spoiler.⁶⁴ An array of anthropocentric moralities, then, whilst consistently according humanity an exceptional or normative centrality, have run the whole gamut from an unconditional elevation of the interests of the human and accompanying indifference to the worth of the world beyond, through diverse, qualified considerations of the value of both, to what amounts to an outright inversion of that initial, evaluative order.

The diagrams sketched here, of the dimensions of anthropocentric thought and modes of ethical deliberation, have certainly been overly schematic, tracing clearly delineated perspectives that have rarely existed in anything like a pure form. Their heuristic value is that they permit us to enquire into the mixtures and combinations, the disparate, uneven and at times inconsistent forms of human centring that have co-existed in unquestioned accord. Spatial characterisations in particular recur in these combinations with a persistence that bespeaks their supple utility.⁶⁵ As we saw, for instance, the temporal processes of evolution have been rendered as a branching route or linear march through space. Goethe combined spatial hierarchy with an anthroponormative understanding of apprehension when he suggested that the universe might marvel at

man as the “pinnacle” (*Gipfel*) of its own becoming, and that in occupying such a high position (“*steht [...] so hoch*”) he is able to depict what is usually beyond depiction. Kant, working still with a spatial metaphor, but desirous of emphasising that man is qualitatively unique, argued by way of an uneasy synthesis of differences in both degree and kind that he is raised “infinitely” (*unendlich*) or “completely” (*gänzlich*) above all the other beings living on earth.⁶⁶ Indeed, Kant conjoined this extraordinary ontological positioning with the ethical claim, couched in anthroponormative terms, that “we can dispose of as we please” mere things, such as irrational animals.⁶⁷ Similarly, Lecky’s opposing moral contention that the whole of the animal world should be treated with humanity was articulated by means of the alternative spatial figure of the expanding circle. And a great number of our writers, whilst prosecuting their varied arguments, in spatial terms or not, persisted with a normative identification as human. This body of thought that we have examined is not, in short, perfectly proportioned or well formed. With something less than great propriety have these assertions and assumptions provided seemingly self-evident, mutually supporting evidence for one another. They have not, by any measure, comprised aliquot parts of a whole, but have worked, rather, in antinomic fashion, to place *anthrōpos*, that exceptional norm, at the centre of all things.

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NOTES

1. Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 3.1.1–2.
2. Vitruvius, *Architecture*, 79 (3.1.4). In mathematics, an aliquot is an exact divisor, that is, is contained in a larger number a certain number of times without leaving any remainder.
3. Vitruvius, *Architecture*, 79 (3.1.5). The cubit was a unit of measurement based on the length of the forearm, from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.
4. Indra Kagis McEwen makes much of Vitruvius’ claim that he was “writing the body of architecture”; see McEwen, *Vitruvius*, 6–11, and *passim*. On the relationship between architecture and the human body, in Vitruvius and elsewhere, see Rykwert, *Dancing Column*; Dodds and Tavernor, *Body and Building*.
5. Several others, with illuminating commentary, are provided in Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*, 22–25.
6. See Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 93–101; for Leonardo’s extensive notes on the human body, see Richter, *Leonardo*, I, 167–201, and Pedretti, *Leonardo*, I, 227–90.
7. Quoted in Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*, 25n63.

8. Steadman's brief argument to the contrary, on the grounds that the human is the *imago Dei*, seems self-defeating; see Steadman, *Evolution of Designs*, 17–18.
9. As far as I have been able to determine, Hundeshagen's text survives only in the form of a long abstract, prepared by one of his colleagues at the University of Heidelberg; see "Inner Mission". This is the earliest use of the term *anthropo-centric* that I have been able to trace; I would be interested to learn of instances that antedate it.
10. Henderson, *Christianity and Modern Thought*, 131. The use of "man" to designate the human species, by Henderson and other writers cited here, is indicative of an enduring interdependence between anthropocentrism and androcentrism; see for instance Lakoff, *Language and Women's Place*, 69–71; Morgan, *Descent of Woman*, 8–9; Spender, *Man Made Language*, 147–54.
11. Draper, *History*, 27, 42. This was the case, according to Draper, both in the development of ancient Greece, explored in his second chapter, and that of India, discussed in his third.
12. This essay revises and elaborates my earlier distinction between *evaluative* and *epistemological* modes of anthropocentric thought; see Tyler, *CIFERAE*, 20–22.
13. Tamarin, "Review"; the monograph in question is E. Lloyd DuBrul and Harry Sicher's *The Adaptive Chin*. This is the earliest use of the term *human exceptionalism* that I have been able to trace; I would be interested to learn of instances that antedate it.
14. Wells, *Pavlov and Freud*, 2, 175, 236.
15. Catton and Dunlap, "Environmental Sociology". The authors' Human Exceptionalist Paradigm (HEP) and New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) of 1978 became a little later the Human *Exemptionalist* Paradigm and New *Ecological* Paradigm; see Dunlap and Catton, "Environmental Sociology", and Catton and Dunlap, "New Ecological Paradigm". For an overview of literature on anthropocentrism from an eco-philosophy or environmental ethics perspective, see Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, 3–40.
16. The two meanings of *exceptional* are in all probability due to the fact that, like so many intensifiers, the term seems to have undergone a process of "delexicalisation", in which much of the specific semantic content has been lost. Use of the term in the present essay to cover both senses doubtless contributes to this process. On the delexicalisation of intensifiers, see Partington, "Language Change", and Lorenz, "Corpus-Based Approach".
17. Kant, *Anthropology*, 127 (1.1.1).
18. Kant, "Conjectures", 225.
19. Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, 59.
20. On Kant's own thoughts on the chain of being, see Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, 193–94, 240–41, 265–68 and Formigari, "Chain of Being", 330–31.
21. Lovejoy discusses the tension between this *hierarchical* characterisation and that alternative spatial system, the pre-Copernican, geocentric cosmography, which located the world, and thus humanity, in a *central* position. Far from encouraging an image of humanity's importance and dignity, as is often supposed, the latter emphasised distance from the incorruptible, immutable heavens, and immersion in the sordid, base matter of the world. Indeed, the true centre was, in fact, that worst possible place, Hell itself; see Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being*, 101ff.
22. Draper, *History*, 27.

23. Haeckel, *History of Creation*, 1, 38–39. This is the position disputed by Pope in his *Essay on Man*, I.v, and ridiculed by Henry Salt in “The Sending of the Animals”.
24. Haeckel, *History of Creation*, 1, 38; Genesis 1.
25. Temporal succession is here represented as upward spatial progression, not unlike the earlier hierarchy of the chain of being; see Dayrat, “Roots of Phylogeny”.
26. Illustration by Rudolph Zallinger in Howell et al., *Early Man*, 41–45. The phrase “march of progress” is only implied by the original illustration’s accompanying text, but subsequently attached itself to this iconic image and its many parodies. See Howell, *Early Man*, 41–45; Barringer, “Raining on Evolution’s Parade”; Gee, “Progressive Evolution”.
27. Gould, *Wonderful Life*, 27–45, 263–67.
28. Quoted in Gould, “Our Natural Place”, 246.
29. On the temporalising of the chain of being during the eighteenth century, see Lovejoy, *Chain of Being*, 242–87.
30. Donna Haraway’s characteristic take on human exceptionalism defines it as “the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies”. See Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 11.
31. Epstein, “Animals as Objects”, 158.
32. Lawrence, “Corasmin and the Parrots”, 7. It is true that Lawrence also imagines himself to be separated by this other dimension from his inscrutable Mexican mozo, Rosalino (8). Anthropocentrism here shifts uncomfortably into ethnocentrism. On the tensions in Lawrence’s work with regard to animal alterity, race and human exceptionalism, see Rohman, *Stalking the Subject*, especially 52–62, 91–99, 100–32.
33. Ramachandran, *Tell-Tale Brain*, 4.
34. Ramachandran, “‘The Tell-Tale Brain’: An Exchange”. On this point, see Colin McGinn’s preceding review; McGinn, “Can the Brain Explain Your Mind?”.
35. Gould, “Midst of Life...”, 136.
36. Drawing on the work of Jerome Bruner, Bruce Mazlish argues that there have been four historic “discontinuities”, premised on humanity’s alleged cosmological, biological, psychological and technological significance; see Mazlish, *Fourth Discontinuity*, 3–5.
37. Small, “Introduction”, ix. This is indeed the earliest use of the term *anthropo-normative* that I have been able to trace; I would be interested to learn of instances that antedate Small’s coining. A very positive review of Dewhurst’s book in *The Christian Register*, published that year, could not resist complaining that Small’s new word and its two partners were “somewhat too long”; Review of *The Investment of Truth*, 1017.
38. Small, “Introduction”, x.
39. Buell, “Ecocritical Insurgency”, 707.
40. Buell, “Ecocritical Insurgency”, 708.
41. Mikulak, “Cross-pollinating Marxism”, 17. There has also been a number of uses of the term *anthropo-normative* within the context of sexual relations, which explicitly draw parallels with the term *hetero-normative*; see Welling, “Peculiar Kind of Intimacy”, 29, 32; Hansen, “Horse-Crazy Girls”, 109; and, for an example of the alternative term *anthro-normativity*, Kuzniar, “I Married My Dog”, 213n4.

42. Though Protagoras' infamous claim that "man is the measure of all things" (cited in Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152a) seems to describe this variety of anthropocentrism, its meaning corresponds more closely to the kind of anthroponormativity outlined in the next paragraph.
43. Quoted in Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*, 25.
44. Kennedy, *New Anthropomorphism*, 160; de Waal, *Ape and the Sushi Master*, 40. I have discussed anthropomorphism at greater length in *CIFERAE*, 51–64. de Waal's converse notion of "anthropodenial" is equally anthroponormative; see de Waal, "Anthropomorphism and Anthropodenial".
45. The anthropic principle effectively reverses the traditional form of deductive explanation, from the cosmic environment explaining life to life explaining the cosmic environment; see Gale, "Anthropic Principle", 114, 117–118 and Guillen, "Center of Attention", 75. As such, the normative contention here is different from the human exceptionalist claim that humanity is the culmination of a temporal process (see above). Douglas Adams parodied this explanatory reversal, imagining a puddle reflecting on the remarkably close fit of the puddle-shaped hole in which it finds itself; see Adams, "Is there an Artificial God?" For an exhaustive account of diverse aspects of the anthropic principle, including an argument that it might ultimately entail an Omega Point not unlike Teilhard's, see Barrow and Tipler, *Anthropic Cosmological Principle*.
46. We should understand this question of human form fairly broadly. Just as the term *anthropomorphism* has come to describe the attribution of more than just physical shape, so this variety of anthroponormativity encompasses appraisal in terms of human behaviour, competences and capacities. The famous Turing Test, for instance, which assesses machine intelligence according to its ability to pass as human in conversation, explicitly avoids consideration of physical resemblance, but is nonetheless anthropocentric in the sense under consideration here; see Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"; French, "Subcognition", 53–56, 62.
47. Letter to Carl Friedrich Zelter, quoted in Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, xvi–xvii. The statement was reused in Goethe's *Maxims and Reflections*; see *Scientific Studies*, 311, and also 24–25 on "Empirical Observation and Science". Goethe's aphorisms include the assertion that "The human being never realizes just how anthropomorphic he is"; quoted in Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, 46. In addition to the meanings outlined earlier, the term *anthropomorphism* has been used, as Goethe does here, synonymously with the sense of anthroponormativity now under consideration. See Steiner, *Goethean Science*, 262, and for further examples, Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Falsity,' 180, 183, 187; Bertalanffy, "Essay on the Relativity of Categories", 255–62.
48. Quoted in Steiner, *Goethe's World View*, 47.
49. Whorf, "Language, Mind, and Reality", especially 257, 263–64. I have discussed Whorf's relativistic humanism in *CIFERAE*, 144–59.
50. Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", 438.
51. Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", 438, 439.
52. This, in fact, is the meaning of Protagoras' much-cited assertion that "man is the measure of all things", which only appears to concern itself with the kinds of measuring examined in the previous paragraph. I have discussed Protagoras' words, and their anthroponormative implications, in *CIFERAE*, especially 2, 264.
53. Draper, *History*, 27; see above.

54. Draper, *History*, 27.
55. Richter, *Literary Works of Leonardo*, II, §1296, 364–65.
56. Haeckel, *History of Creation*, I, 38–39; Genesis 1:28 (NRSV); see above. Lynn White infamously argued that the creation myth of Genesis, and the outlook it exemplifies, demonstrates Christianity’s position as “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen”; *Historical Roots*, 1205.
57. Kant, “Conjectures”, 225; see above.
58. Mark Twain’s characteristically caustic query, “Was the World made for Man?” was a response to Alfred Russel Wallace’s demonstration, by means of the then (1903) most recent findings in astronomy, that is was; see Wallace, “Man’s Place in the Universe”, and Twain, “Was the World made for Man?”.
59. Aristotle, *Politics*, I.8.1256b; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 1, chapter 14, §2, 22 (191–92, 212–13); on this theme, see Passmore, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature*, 3–27, and Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Values*, 13–18, and the works cited therein.
60. Genesis 2:15 (NRSV).
61. On Iamblichus see Passmore, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature*, 28–29; Fichte, *Vocation of Man*, book 3, chapter 2, 330–32; Huxley, *Evolution in Action*, 132; on this theme, see Passmore, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature*, 28–40, and Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Values*, 24–29, and the works cited therein.
62. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, I, v, 103 (but see also 47–50).
63. The quotation has been very widely credited to Schweitzer (see, for example, Wynne-Tyson, *The Extended Circle*, 316 and front cover), but it is not to be found in his published work. The sentiment is characteristic of his ideas: see for instance Schweitzer, “Religion in Modern Civilization”, 1520–21, and “Indian Thought”, 261–62. On the notion of the expanding circle, see particularly Wynne-Tyson’s introduction to *The Extended Circle*, the subtitle of which is *A Dictionary of Humane Thought*, ix–xx. Peter Singer extended it further, in the other direction so to speak, by tracing the human capacity for ethics back to its origins in animal altruism; see Singer, *Expanding Circle*.
By the same token, ethicists whose starting point is to recognise in non-human beings those qualities, capacities and potentials that are acknowledged in humans as entitling them to moral consideration are in danger, still, of embarking from an anthropocentric platform; see critiques of Singer and Regan in this regard: Slicer, “Your Daughter or your Dog?”, Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 33–36.
64. Similarly, Steven Vogel highlights a pessimistic strand of environmental discourse which, having conceded the ubiquity of a “uniquely dangerous” human influence, leaves itself with nothing to do but mourn the loss of nature; see Vogel, “Why ‘Nature’”, esp. 85, 95. The Church of Euthanasia’s slogan and record “Save the Planet, Kill Yourself”, perhaps comes closer still to Leonardo’s despondency, though it proposes a more proactive means to their shared end; see Church of Euthanasia.
65. On spatial metaphors, see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14–24.
66. Kant, *Anthropology*, I.1.1 (127); Kant, “Conjectures”, 225; see discussion above. On the difficulty of accommodating differences both of degree and of kind within a “qualitative continuum”, see Lovejoy, *Chain of Being*, 331–32; Bynum, “Great Chain of Being”, 5.
67. Kant, *Anthropology*, I.1.1 (127).

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RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

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Metaphor, Metonymy, More-Than- Anthropocentric. The Animal That Therefore I Read (and Follow)

Ann-Sofie Lönngren

How does one go about reading literary animals?¹ This question is far more complicated than it may appear at first sight, since fictive designs of animals are characterized by an unusually high degree of complexity. Several circumstances contribute to this end, such as human ignorance of the phenomenology of animals, the relationship between animal life and human systems of meaning, notions of the ontology of literary texts, and the power invested in anthropocentric world-views. In order to meet ethical demands on the production of knowledge in the humanities,² it is crucial, however, that the complexity of literary animals is made visible in readings.³ In the following, I take “the question of the animal”⁴ as a point of departure for a discussion about conceptualizations of the ontology of literature. I then move on to pinpoint the meaning-productive potential inherent in the tension between metaphorical and metonymic understandings of literary animals. Indeed, reading animal figures as metaphors for the human condition or as “actual animals” may give very different results in the construction of what a fictive text is about. Finally, I propose “following” as a reading strategy for the production of “more-than-anthropocentric” meaning in literary narratives.⁵

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LITERATURE AND ANIMALS

For a long time, the question of how to read literary animals was considered largely irrelevant; indeed, it may still be in some places. Scholars in the field of literary human–animal studies are familiar with Susan McHugh’s recollection of her university teacher’s reaction when, as a student, she suggested that it would make sense to see William Wordsworth’s poem “Nutting” as a depiction of the squirrel’s reflections on the passing of seasons, only to be rebuked: “That’s insane. Animals don’t think, and they certainly don’t write poetry”.⁶ This short statement contains a whole world of preconceptions regarding the human–animal relationship and literature’s epistemology and ontology.

Parts of the philosophy of literature do, however, offer other ways to understanding the nature of literary texts and their relationship with the non-human world. Theodor Adorno, for example, claims that in the process of civilization, humanity has mastered both internal human nature (desires, needs) and external non-human nature. But art, such as literature, remembers humanity’s dependence on nature, and thus functions both as a witness of and a voice for its subjugation in modern societies.⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, moreover, have emphasized literature’s potential to make visible the processes of “becoming animal”, and also to function as a “line of escape” from reductive and oppressive capitalist and patriarchal anthropocentric regimes.⁸ Finally, although they are not explicitly invested in questions regarding the non-human, certain lines of thought of poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (1967), Michel Foucault (1969), Roland Barthes (1977), and Julia Kristeva (1980) nevertheless contribute perspectives that are instructive for the field of literary human–animal studies.⁹ Relevant aspects include the view of literature’s potential to signify more than the author intended, and for contexts to inform the contingencies of literature’s messages and meanings.

Another relevant view of “literature” in relation to the human–animal divide crystallizes when considering that “anthropocentrism” has been defined as a power structure that presumes and inscribes the notion that the human is at the center of the world, that there is a clear and stable divide between human and animal, and that the human is hierarchically superior to the animal.¹⁰ Not only relevant in relation to questions of animal rights, this definition also encompasses the wider functioning of the human/non-human divide in distributions of power, in environmental concerns, and in co-constituting relations with categories such as gender, sexuality, and race.¹¹ Against this background, it is possible to understand “literature” according to Michel Foucault’s notion that discourse, including literature, is characterized by the dynamics of a struggle between power and resistance.¹²

A Foucauldian perspective suggests that configurations of animals in the artistic medium of literature either comply with, or subvert and resist, anthropocentric norms. Although literary animals are more likely to appear in certain genres (such as, for example, Gothic and children’s literature), there is, however, no way of knowing for sure where the resistance will be found since this

neither appears apart from certain places, nor everywhere, but always *somewhere*.¹³ With these lines of thought, “literature” comes across as a heavily politicized space in need of historical, political, temporal, and spatial contextualizations, and with the human–animal divide situated right at the core of its dynamics.

With a holistic view of the thinkers mentioned in the above paragraphs, it is apparent that they were active in different contexts and that their lines of thought differ on fundamental levels. However, it is still relevant to note that, as far as the field of literary human–animal studies is concerned, the parts of their thinking highlighted here all point to the conclusion that literature is not solely a human affair, but, on the contrary, overflowing with non-human activities.

So how is this accounted for in literary reading strategies? Is it possible to *not see* literature’s revolutionary qualities with regard to non-human animals, and, if so, how is this “non-seeing” extended to the practice of literary readings? According to poststructuralist conceptualizations of literature, there is no such thing as a text that holds a meaning that precedes formulation in an act of reading.¹⁴ However, this act can be carried out in a range of different ways depending on readers’ perceptions of the ontology of literature. Thus, it is possible to formulate meanings of the very same text in ways that both reproduce hegemonic structures of power and in ways that undermine them.¹⁵ Due to their complex dynamics, all texts are of course not equally open to all reading strategies, but this premise still serves as a general point of departure.

ANIMAL AS METAPHOR: THE SYMPTOMATIC TRADITION

With regard to the human–animal relationship, reproductive and subversive ways of reading can be understood in relation to two opposing metaphors for the nature of literature formulated even in ancient times: as a *depth* (vertically organized) and as a *surface* (horizontally organized).¹⁶ Over time, the vertical view, often referred to as the symptomatic tradition, has come to be dominant,¹⁷ something that can partly be understood as an effect of the age-old influence of such principles in Biblical hermeneutics, Western history’s standard of textual interpretation. More directly in relation to today’s scholarly discussions about literature, the dominance of the symptomatic tradition can be seen in connection with developments of Marxist and psychoanalytic lines of thought. This is evident in influential texts written by, for example, Fredric Jameson (1981), Paul Ricoeur (1970), and Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar (1968).¹⁸ One of the characteristics of the symptomatic tradition is that the reader suspects the text of hiding its “true” meaning in its depths, and that it therefore needs to be interpreted, primarily (although not always) with a focus on the metaphor: the literary figure which, through the workings of distance and substitution, displays *something* in order to enlighten *something else*. Indeed, the symptomatic approach might map onto texts featuring animal

representations also in broader terms—as seen in, for example, the insistence on allegory in readings of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1946).¹⁹

Despite its dominance, the symptomatic view of literary texts has also been criticized. Even in 1964, Susan Sontag noted the aggression inherent in the conceptualization of the text as an enemy who is trying to hide something from the reader, and who the reader must outsmart.²⁰ Moreover, the symptomatic tradition inevitably entails a process of selecting those aspects of literary texts that are assumed to signify *something other* than that which is stated, and those presumed to signify *themselves*. Inherent in the symptomatic tradition is, namely, the view that *not all* aspects of the text are expected to function as metaphors, but, rather, that some are seen as signifying a general and universal experience or “truth”, the complexity of which is added to by the metaphors. This elevation of certain experiences, identities, and positions at the expense of others makes the symptomatic tradition vulnerable to accusations of reproducing structures of power.²¹

This critique is highly relevant to the field of human–animal studies. In readings of literary depictions of humans and animals it is the animals that are generally expected to function as metaphors for humans, who are consequently seen as signifying themselves.²² The figure of the animal is thus used as a tool in the construction of the human as a subject, a process that Cary Wolfe has referred to as “speciesist”, that is the “systematic discrimination against an other solely based on a generic characteristic—in this case, species”.²³ With the option of having the literary animal functioning as an independent figure thus effectively eliminated, it can instead be claimed for the purpose of signifying *something else*, which, in the wake of Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud, is often conceptualized as “human animality” or “the animal within” signaled, for example, by sexuality, violence, or a longing for freedom.²⁴

Based upon anthropocentric presumptions about the centrality of the human, the symptomatic tradition thus renders “the actual animal”²⁵ passive, silent, hollow, and invisible, and at the same time it reproduces and further contributes to notions of human uniqueness, significance, and complexity. Therefore, anthropocentric readings based in the symptomatic tradition come across as part of a larger “anthropological machine of humanism” in Western, industrialized societies: a means to define and establish the superiority of the human rather than to say anything about actual animals.²⁶ In relation to the human–animal divide, the history of literary criticism consequently functions as what Hillevi Ganetz has described as a “cultural boomerang”: research that affirms its own points of departure rather than producing new knowledge.²⁷

ANIMAL AS METONYMY: SURFACE READINGS

How, then, can we read literary animals in other ways, ways that do not erase the animal but rather make it visible and bring out the subversive potential of literature? During the last few decades, the symptomatic reading tradition has been challenged by “surface readings”,²⁸ based on thoughts formulated by, for

example, Sontag (1964), Deleuze (1993), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1997, 2003), and Rita Felski (2008).²⁹ This strategy stems from a view of literature as a surface which is not related vertically to a depth, but, rather, horizontally to that which is beside.³⁰ Thus, literature can be treated much like a map over which the reader can take different trajectories.³¹ The practices of surface readings have also been inspired by Sedgwick's argument that the aggression of "paranoid" (i.e. symptomatic, suspicious) reading practices should be replaced with "reparative" readings, which presuppose benevolence from reader and text alike (1997).³²

In relation to human–animal studies, a refocusing from the text's depth to its surface makes space for understandings of literary animals along the lines of the rhetorical figure that is often put forward as the opposite of metaphor: metonymy.³³ Whereas metaphor functions according to principles of difference, substitution, and distance, metonymy is characterized by similarity, presence, and closeness, and the latter is thus particularly apt for readings of animal figures as "actual animals". Indeed, while metaphor has been accused of substituting and usurping the animal, metonymy is understood as a call for self-signification, connection, recognition, relation, and correspondence.³⁴ The distinction between symptomatic, metaphorical, and hierarchical readings on the one hand, and metonymic and parallel readings on the surface on the other, can thus be situated in the larger field of tension between "alienation" and "association" which has been defined as characteristic of the history of the human–animal relationship.³⁵

By extension, the fact that there is nothing that limits the metonymy's workings through proximity and likeness to non-human animals means that it can also disrupt the anthropocentric order through destabilizations of the category of "the human". According to metaphor, Gabeba Baderoon explains, what is "human" can be defined with the help of an animal figure, but according to metonymy, the human *is* an animal among other animals.³⁶ This line of thought defines these two rhetorical terms as apt for a discussion of "the play of likeness and difference in the relationship of humans and animals".³⁷ Following Kathy Rudy's axiom that posits the human–animal relationship in the center of the cultural analysis,³⁸ the metonymic emphasis of likeness may shift the scope of attention away from the hegemonic view of Man as an image of God to affirm proximity between humans and animals.³⁹ However, in order for their disruptive potential to come out, it is crucial that metonymic likenesses are not reduced to anthropomorphism, that is, "attributing through carelessness or convenience all manner of human motives to the animals".⁴⁰ Rather, it needs to do its work along the lines of Gordon Burghardt's proposal of "critical anthropomorphism" (1991)⁴¹—a conscious and cautious uptake of certain aspects, concepts, and traits—as a way to make use of human/animal likenesses in the academic production of knowledge.

DIVIDING...

We have now come to a point where it is possible to formalize the two different views of the text that I have discussed with regard to the literary animal:

<i>Symptomatic tradition</i>	<i>Surface tradition</i>
Metaphor	Metonymy
Suspicious	Benevolent
Paranoid	Reparative
Vertical	Horizontal
Hierarchical	Parallel
Object	Subject
Passive	Active
Silent	Communicative
Invisible	Visible
Hollow	Embodied
Something else (animality)	Itself (animal)
Different	Same
Distant	Proximate
Independent	Relational
Rigid	Transgressive
Alienated	Associated
Anthropomorphic	Critically anthropomorphic

When looking at this table, one almost gets the impression that the question of how to read the literary animal is solved. Why not simply read along the lines of the right-hand column, thus ensuring that the subversive qualities of the literary animal are accounted for? Indeed, this is a process that is already underway in the field of literary human–animal studies; just consider, for example, Erica Fudge’s (2009) dog-centered reading of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*,⁴² or Susan McHugh’s (2011) influential concept “literary animal agency”.⁴³

On the one hand, there are strong reasons for doing this, both on a general level of literary theory, and, more specifically, with regards to the human–animal relationship. On the general level, we may remind ourselves of Roman Jakobson’s influential claim that metaphor and metonymy are the two fundamental poles of the order of language. In relation to literature, he notes that while certain time periods, genres, or authors may favor metaphor and others metonymy, the study of poetical tropes is directed chiefly toward the metaphor. Although Jakobson does not give any reason for this circumstance, he does note that literary studies in this regard display many of the same characteristics as a certain kind of aphasia, “the contiguity disorder”, which renders language amputated and unipolar.⁴⁴

As the field of human–animal studies emerged in the late twentieth century, the focus on metaphor might be understood with John Berger’s discussion about the general disappearance of animals in modern society. What remains are human projections of “animals” in zoos and education, which ultimately

are only possible and indeed only worthy to interpret to the extent that they can be related to and enlightening for “the human”.⁴⁵ These lines of thought are possible to expand on with reference to Akira Mizuta Lippit who, just like Jakobsen, refers to a certain diagnosis (“paraneoplastic encephalopathy”) in his claims that modern humans are suffering from a collective loss of memory concerning actual animals.⁴⁶ Against this background it might certainly, as Amelie Björck argues, be considered an “anti-anthropocentric” gesture to stay with the metonymic understanding of animal figures, at least for a while, especially since literary researchers have a general tendency either to overlook animal figures completely or to reduce the metonymic implications to a minimum in lieu of metaphorical understandings.⁴⁷ Indeed, metonymic focusing of “actual animals” might not only be constructive in studies of animal tropes and themes, but also, for example, literary form, onomatopoeia and “zoopoetics”.

... AND UNITING

On the other hand, let us revisit Jakobsen’s claim that language is fundamentally bipolar, and highlight the argument that in any symbolic process there is a competition underway between metonymical and metaphorical levels.⁴⁸ This means that it is not really possible to say that a certain aspect of or a figure in a literary text “is” one or the other (metaphoric/metonymic). Rather, one can only analyze if the ways in which they relate to other things allow them to be defined,⁴⁹ and activated as such in acts of reading. This line of thought resonates with Robyn Wiegman’s critique of excessively strict dichotomizing between suspicious and reparative reading practices, since both of them are nevertheless affectively and temporally affiliated to the act of interpretation itself.⁵⁰

In relation to the human–animal relationship, this discussion gains special significance since, as Ron Willis notes, animals hold a peculiar ability “to alternate, as objects of human thought, between the contiguity of the metonymic mode and the distanced, analogical mode of the metaphor”.⁵¹ Berger expresses a similar view in his discussion of the dynamic relationship between animal life and human systems of meaning. Rather than aiming at separating the animal from the metaphor, he points to what could be referred to as the animal’s character of *simultaneity*: it is *both* a material organism with its own agency and phenomenology, separate from the human and her experiences, *and* part of a human epistemological system. As Berger argues, each lion is also Lion, each ox is Ox.⁵² He thereby formulates a view of the relationship between animal and metaphor that is akin to what Steve Baker has called a “rhetoric of animality”, which is characterized by its defying of dichotomies.⁵³ Moreover, Lippit has phrased a perception of the relationship between animals and metaphors that pushes this discussion beyond the familiar limits of human animality:

[There is a] fantastic transversality at work between the animal and the metaphor—the animal is already a metaphor, the metaphor an animal. Together they

transport to language, breathe into language, the vitality of another life, another expression: animal and metaphor, a metaphor made flesh, a living metaphor that is by definition not a metaphor, antimetaphor—“animetaphor”.⁵⁴

It may be exactly this “transversality” between metaphor and animal that, according to Garrard, makes the animal figure just “as functional in descriptions of human social and political relations as it is in describing actual animals”.⁵⁵ Indeed, the high and complex degree of functionality that thus defines the figure of the literary animal makes any easy solutions to read it in defiance of anthropocentrism impossible. Moreover, the circumstance that there seems to be a history of having metaphorical readings serving anthropocentrism does not mean that there cannot be such things as anti-anthropocentric metaphors, nor that the metonymy cannot be read in anthropocentric ways.

FOLLOWING THE ANIMAL FOR “MORE-THAN-ANTHROPOCENTRIC” WORLDS

After this discussion about the animal figure in relation to metaphor and metonymy, we are, thus, back to the question of how to read in ways that do not reproduce anthropocentric paradigms. Although there might of course be many different answers to this question, I would like to end this chapter with a basic outline of a point of departure for a reading strategy that neither abandons the distinction between metaphor and metonymy, nor subjects itself to it, but rather makes use of its inherent tension.

The background to this is the reoccurring proposition that animals leave “traces” and “tracks” in the text for the reader to follow.⁵⁶ This line of thought resonates with Jacques Derrida’s influential argument that if it were the animal rather than the human that were being followed in the Western production of knowledge, the outcome would be completely different, to the point where it would dissolve into a kind of non-significance and madness. However, that is not all that “following” means in Derrida’s discussion, where it is a multifaceted term that, in the original French text, is a wordplay between “being” and “following”. As Derrida notes, humans are depicted as following after the animal in both the Christian narrative of creation and in evolutionary theory. Moreover, following animals is what humans have always done, if not for the purposes of locking up, killing, and eating them, then to care for, study, and name them. But human is also animal, and it is the overlaps between being and following that eventually, according to Derrida, leads to the question of who *is* really following whom. In this sense, “following” can be seen as a subversive concept that defies human–animal hierarchies in lieu of interchangeability, interconnectedness, and a common history of development.⁵⁷

The inherent potential in Derrida’s concept to challenge anthropocentrism makes it a constructive starting point for the production of “more-than-anthropocentric” meaning in literary narratives. The term “more-than-anthropocentric” point to the fact that understandings of the world which

situates “Man” as the center of universe, clearly separate from and superior to the animal,⁵⁸ has always been challenged by conceptualizations of “other worlds”, defying anthropocentric paradigms.⁵⁹ In relation to literary animal studies, a recognition of this fundamental tension in the human–animal relationship opens up for possibilities of animal representations and textual effects reaching beyond the human realm.⁶⁰ “Following”, in that it entails an imperative for the reader to *give up*, to *give away*, some of the control of the process of formulating meaning in literary texts, presents itself as an apt tool for making visible such more-than-human aspects. Indeed, if guided by the literary animal rather than by metaphysical notions about human exceptionalism, or of pre-conceptualizations regarding metaphorical versus metonymical levels in texts, the understanding of what a text concerns will be formulated quite differently.

In spite of its subversive potential, however, parts of Derrida’s thinking around the concept of “following” need to be adjusted to the specificities of the artistic medium of literature. While the figure of the animal, as we saw above, is generally characterized by the possibility of being activated as both metaphor and metonymy, “verbal art” is, as Jakobson notes, where language’s interaction between these two levels is “especially pronounced”.⁶¹ Thus, literary animals are both self-signifying, active figures as Derrida proposes, *and* saturated with metaphorical meaning—and this is before we even consider contextual and intertextual meaning, which can’t be held at bay. Indeed, it is in the very tension between the actual animal and its symbolical connotations that it might be possible to begin to pinpoint what a literary animal “is”, and, in the end, what kind of meaning it can be expected to produce.

Therefore, employing “following the animal” as a point of departure for readings is not a walk in the (zoological) park, but, rather, a non-linear, affective, irregular, rhizomatic journey through “literary contact zones”, material wormholes, agential realism, metaphorical elevations, metonymical proximities, intriguing paradoxes, brutal dead-ends, and discursive vacuums, along with sudden appearances and inexplicable disappearances, transgressions of borders and positions (who is following whom?), silences, rejections, and complete stillness.⁶² Embracing this dynamic process in the recreation of the text’s ontology holds the potential to challenge the “cultural boomerang”⁶³ of anthropocentrism by means of producing “more-than-anthropocentric” meaning in literary narratives. In thus making it possible for the wide template of fictional representations to be part of the vocabulary regarding the human–animal relationship,⁶⁴ this strategy meets some of the ethical demands on humanist research in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. In this article, I mostly employ the terms “human” and “animal” as shorthand for the more accurate but longer phrase “human and non-human animals”. In this practice I am inspired by Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, 2.

2. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 26–7.
3. Fudge, “Introduction”.
4. Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*.
5. Concepts such as “reading”, “understanding”, and “meaning-making” are used interchangeably in this text. This is because I do not aim to make an argument regarding the distinctive qualities of these terms, but, rather, I include them all in a more general discussion about the process of making sense of (producing meaning in) literary texts.
6. McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 5.
7. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Flodin, “On Mice and Men”.
8. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka*.
Deleuze and Guattari have been influential in the process of questioning anthropocentrism in relation to literature, but in the field of human–animal studies, they have been criticized for their ultimate interest in what the notion of “becoming animal” does to and for the “human” (see Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 27–35).
9. Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play”; Foucault, “What is an Author?”; Barthes, “The Death of the Author”; Kristeva, *Desire in Language*.
10. Baker, *Postmodern Animal*, 92–5; Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontent*, 1–3; Woodward, *Animal Gaze*, 5–6.
11. Wolfe, *Animal Rites*; Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*; Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*.
12. Foucault, “What is an Author?” and *History of Sexuality*.
13. Lönngren, *Following the Animal*, 15; “Following the Animal”, 235.
14. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*; Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value*.
15. Sedgwick, *Between Men; Epistemology*; “Paranoid Readings”; “Introduction”.
16. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 5–8.
17. Sedgwick, “Paranoid Readings”, 3–25; Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 1–3.
18. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*; Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*; Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*.
19. See McHugh, “*Animal Farm’s* Lessons”.
20. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 5–8.
21. Sedgwick, “Paranoid Readings”.
22. Simons, *Animal Rights*, 5; Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 2; McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 6, 13–5.
23. Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 1.
24. Lundblad, *Birth of a Jungle*, 1–28; Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 101–34.
25. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 140; Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 5.
When I use Garrard’s and Armstrong’s term “the actual animal”, I do not propose the possibility of accessing a “pure”, essential animal outside of the human systems of meaning. Rather, I understand this phrase to entail an acknowledgment of the potential of the figure of the animal to represent or signify “animal” rather than aspects of the “human”.
26. Agamben, *The Open*, 26, 29.
27. Ganetz, “Familiar Beasts”, 209.
28. Best and Marcus, “Surface Readings”.
29. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*; Deleuze, “What Children Say”, Sedgwick, “Paranoid Readings” and “Introduction”; Felski, *Uses of Literature*.
30. Sedgwick, “Introduction”, 8–9.

31. Deleuze, "What Children Say", 61–3.
32. Sedgwick, "Paranoid Readings".
33. Baker, "Picturing the Beast", 84–8.
According to Baker, this distinction was first made with regards to animals by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* in 1962 (*Picturing the Beast*, 85).
34. Baderoon, "Animal Likenesses", 355, 359.
35. Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, 8–9.
36. Baderoon, "Animal Likenesses", 354.
37. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 140.
38. Rudy, "LGBTQ...Z?", 612.
39. Graham, "Yes, I am Giving Him up", 9–13.
40. Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, 81.
41. Burghardt, "Cognitive Ethology and Critical Anthropomorphism".
42. Fudge, "At the Heart of the Home".
43. McHugh, *Animal Stories*.
44. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language", 258–59.
45. Berger, *About Looking*, 3–28; see also Scholtmeijer, "Animals and Spirituality"; Malamud, *Poetic Animals*.
46. Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 3–10.
47. Björck, *Zooësis*, chapter one.
Björck refers to Jacques Rancière's definition of the metonymy as the political figure *par excellence* because of its ability to make visible renewed relations between part and whole, cause and effect (Björck, *Zooësis*, chapter one; Rancière, *Emancipated Spectator*, 97).
48. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language", 258–59.
49. Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, 88.
50. Wiegman, "The Times We're In"; see also Stacey, "Wishing away Ambivalence", 40–1.
51. Willis, *Man and Beast*, 128.
This was shown in AnnaCarin Billing's fine essay "Människa, kanin, text och bild", about rabbits in Swedish children's literature and those encountered on a conference journey to Vancouver Island.
52. Berger, *About Looking*, 7.
53. Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, 77–81.
54. Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 165.
55. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 140.
56. Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 3; McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 6; Simons, *Animal Rights*, 5.
57. Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am*, 10, 55, 65–9.
58. Baker, *Postmodern Animal*, 92–5; Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, 8–9; Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents*, 1–3.
59. Noske, *Humans and Other Animals*, xi; Haraway "Otherworldly Conversations", 174–82.
60. See McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 1–15.
61. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language", 258–59.
62. See Lönngren, *Following the Animal*, 29–31.
63. Ganetz, "Familiar Beasts", 209.
64. See Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, 23–24; Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 2–3.

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Narratology Beyond the Human: Self-Narratives and Inter-Species Identities

David Herman

This chapter builds on the cross-disciplinary approach to narratives concerned with animals and human-animal relationships outlined in my recent book *Narratology Beyond the Human: Storytelling and Animal Life*.¹ My approach begins from the premise that stories are, in general, interwoven with cultures' ontologies. These ontologies can be described as more or less widely shared understandings of the kinds of beings that populate the world, the qualities and abilities those beings are taken to embody, and how the beings included in various categories and subcategories relate to those categorized as human.² Although narrative can be used to critique, disrupt, and reframe the cultural ontologies that undergird hierarchical understandings of humans' place within larger communities of living beings, stories can also help shore up and even amplify human-centric understandings of animals and cross-species relationships. Hence one way of describing the project of a narratology beyond the human is to say that it aims to map out, both historically and in the context of any given account, the interplay between anthropocentric and biocentric storytelling traditions. At issue are traditions in which humans figure as the preeminent species vis-à-vis other forms of creatural life, on the one hand, and traditions that question such preeminence, on the other hand. A narratology beyond the human explores not only how these ways of telling stories interrelate, but also how particular methods of narration emerge from, and feed back into, the dialogue between them.³

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In considering how strategies for portraying nonhuman agents in narratives both derive from and contribute to broader attitudes toward animal life, analysts will need to investigate a whole corpus of stories that include but extend beyond the realm of the human. This corpus includes stories that take the form of literary fictions in which animals figure, more or less prominently; graphic memoirs that involve or foreground nonhuman characters; animal autobiographies; and modes of nature writing. My book-length study explores a range of topics across these and other narrative subtypes, discussing, among other relevant issues,

- how traditional definitions of narrative reveal an anthropocentric bias, by making the presence of human or human-like characters criterial for narrativity itself, or what makes a story more or less amenable to being interpreted *as* a story;
- how questions of genre and medium play out in fictional versus nonfictional accounts of nonhuman lives, in cinematic adaptations of print texts, and in other domains;
- how storytelling practices link up with animal geographies, or the systems used by cultures and subcultures to emplace animals relative to the locales associated with humans;
- how nondomesticated animals, companion animals, and also animals used in therapeutic contexts have contributed to the emergence of what can be characterized as the “transhuman family”, in which kinship networks cross species lines;
- how mental-state attributions, in nonfictional as well as fictional accounts, not only reflect but also have the potential to reshape broader assumptions about animal as well as human minds;
- and how stories can serve as a means for engaging with supra-individual phenomena unfolding over long timescales and in widely separated places, including patterns and events situated at the level of animal populations and species rather than particular creatures.

In the present chapter, I limit myself to tracing just one of the many lines of inquiry encompassed by this general project, focusing on how previous research on the concept of self-narratives can be leveraged for a narratology beyond the human. A guiding question of my chapter is how this earlier work on stories of the self might need to be adapted in order to accommodate—to register but also enable—biocentric cultural ontologies. Such ontologies, instead of casting selfhood either as an exclusively human endowment or else as a charmed circle into which very few other-than-human species are admitted, call for prolific allocations of possibilities for selfhood across the whole spectrum of creaturely life.

STORYTELLING AND SELFHOOD BEYOND THE HUMAN

In this section, I use two fictional texts—Paula Fox’s novel *Desperate Characters* (1970) and Alice Munro’s short story “Boys and Girls” (1964)—to explore the limits of applicability of extant research on self-narratives. Human characters are, to be sure, focal participants in the storyworlds projected by both of these works. Nonetheless, in Fox’s and Munro’s texts encounters with animals coincide with—and give impetus to—a reassessment of the self-narratives that these characters have employed to account for their experiences and their place in the wider world.

As developed in the social-psychological literature, self-narratives are stories told by persons to make sense of and provide a rationale or justification for their actions; such narratives allow the actions in question to be configured as relevant to, or even constitutive of, a self over time. In turn, this self-configuring process at once reflects and helps establish relational ties with (human) others. Thus, in their study “Narratives of the Self”, Kenneth J. and Mary M. Gergen confer on self-narratives crucial psychological, interactional, and more broadly sociocultural functions. Suggesting that self-narratives result from persons’ attempts “to establish coherent connections among life events”, Gergen and Gergen further argue that “although self-narratives are possessed by individuals, their genesis and sustenance may be viewed as fundamentally social”, since such narratives are ultimately “symbolic systems used for such social purposes as justification, criticism, and social solidification”.⁴ In other words, self-narratives are sense-making resources “constructed and reconstructed by people in relationships, and employed in relationships to sustain, enhance, or impede various actions”(163).

Gergen and Gergen take a relational approach to the self, regarding it as a construction to be worked out through socially embedded sense-making acts that situate happenings, achievements, and goals vis-à-vis a more or less persistent narrative line. But this relational account of selves as narratively negotiated, as story-involving projects at once shaped by and shaping social interactions, can be reframed within a wider understanding of self-other relations. In that broader understanding, humans orient to animals not only as other-than-human beings but also as selves in their own right, nonhuman selves who in turn orient to humans as others. As Fox’s and Munro’s texts reveal, expanding the scope of selfhood in this manner requires that humans’ self-narratives be recalibrated accordingly.

Both authors thus underscore how narrative in general and fiction in particular provide a workspace for reconsidering—for critiquing or reaffirming, dismantling or reconstructing—ways of understanding humans’ place in a more-than-human world. Employing different narrative techniques to similar ends, Fox and Munro use the resources of fiction to model enlarged self-narratives, stories that resituate emergent human selves within a multispecies “ecology of selves”.⁵ In sum, by suggesting that stories of the self are entangled with assumptions about human-animal relationships, *Desperate Characters* and “Boys and Girls” help demonstrate how the idea of self-narratives can be repurposed for a narratology beyond the human.

*Self-Narratives in the Third Person: Modeling the Emergence
of a Biocentric Story of Self*

In the parlance of Gérard Genette, Fox's novel combines extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narration and fixed internal focalization.⁶ To gloss these narratological terms of art: standing apart from the storyworld of which the novel gives a retrospective account, the narrator relates events in which this teller has not participated. At the same time, the protagonist, Sophie Bentwood, serves as what Henry James called a reflector, a character through whose vantage point the unfolding situations and events are refracted—including the key incident, early in the novel, in which Sophie is bitten by a stray cat. Because of Sophie's role as internal focalizer or reflector, her negotiation of the biting incident and what follows resonates throughout the discourse of the novel, coloring a narrative that does not originate from her. Fox thus exploits narrative's power to project the lived experiences of others in order to model, on a moment-by-moment basis, what it is like for Sophie to have to forge a different story of the self—in the aftermath of a cross-species encounter that challenges her understanding of who and what she is. More precisely, Fox uses a particular method of focalization, a specific kind of perspective structure, not just to tell about but to dramatize the far-reaching effects of Sophie's early interaction with the cat. By filtering events through the texture of the protagonist's lived experience, as opposed to merely recounting what happens to her, the novel stages the felt impact of Sophie's new, biocentric orientation to animal life. At issue is what it is like to undergo, moment by moment, the experience of rejecting restrictive notions of selfhood that both undergird and arise from anthropocentrism, and instead embrace humans' place within a more-than-human community of selves.

The precipitating event of the story arc traced in Fox's novel occurs when the stray cat whom Sophie has been feeding, over the objections of her husband Otto, bites her on the hand, causing a painful infection. Initially Sophie doesn't tell Otto about being bitten because of feelings of shame. Although these feelings may be due in part to Otto's strident, smug insistence that her feeding the cat is a form of self-indulgence (5), they also reflect and reinforce cultural associations between animals and disfavored human traits, such as norm-violating impulsiveness⁷: "She pushed the door closed and walked quickly to the kitchen, keeping her back turned to Otto. Her heart pounded. She tried to breathe deeply to subdue that noisy thud and she wondered fleetingly at the shame she felt—as though she'd been caught in some despicable act"(7). Sophie's encounter with the cat reveals and perhaps widens one of the faultlines in her marriage, caused by the tension between Otto's over-certain closed-mindedness and Sophie's more open and empathetic demeanor.⁸ But the incident also points to ways in which a self-narrative, too, can become fractured—in particular, through a recognition in the self of qualities once quarantined off and ascribed to others, and vice versa. Thus, when Sophie awakens at 3:00 a.m.

on the morning after she is bitten, her injured hand becomes coextensive with animal otherness, even as she begins to reassess her own attitudes toward the cat and that animal's possible reasons for acting:

Her hand, doubled up beneath her, was like an alien object which had somehow attached itself to her body, something that had clamped itself to her.⁹ She lay there for a moment, thinking of the cat, how surprised she'd been, seeing it again, when she and Otto had come home [after the biting incident]. It had looked so ordinary, just another city stray. What had she expected? That it would have been deranged by its attack on her? That it planned to smash and cuff its way into their house and eat them both up? (29)

A double transposition is at work here, whereby the animal installs itself in the human and, reciprocally, qualities and abilities once restricted to the human are extended past the species boundary. Such transpositional logic is not just fleeting or figurative, but comes into play throughout the novel, as when Sophie finds anarchy within "the carapace of ordinary life"(62), when a baby's cry reminds Otto of the wail of a cat (144), or when Tanya, describing her affair to Sophie over the phone, recounts how "the poor little animal crawls into my bed... He's a darling little animal"(153). This intertwining of human and animal selves also spans behaviors that have served as shibboleths separating nature from culture, the wild from the domestic, and the animal, immune to shame, from the shameable human. For example, Otto, having concluded that no dog could have deposited faeces near the curb in front of their house, blames the unsightly mess on the "slum people" who live nearby, asking Sophie: "Do you suppose they come here to shit at night?"(13). In lieu of articulating a response, Sophie wonders how Otto would view the period in her childhood when she and her friends took up "moving the bowels, as her mother called it,... as an outdoor activity, until they were all caught in a community squat beneath a lilac bush"(13). Sophie's experiences during this period perhaps explain what Otto later takes to be her insufficiently outraged response to the discovery that their summer cottage has been broken into and used as a toilet: "Are you defending pigs who shit in your fireplace!"(140).

Conversely, animals cross into cultural and socio-psychological territories that have been reserved for humans. After the biting incident, Sophie begins to reposition the cat as a potential interlocutor, rather than as a non-self devoid of a perspective on events, a mere biophysical transducer converting stimuli into responses. This is the model of animal otherness that, having been set out by René Descartes in the seventeenth century, still held sway three centuries later, being systematically developed in mid-twentieth-century ethological research.¹⁰ When Charlie Russel, Otto's business partner, asks Sophie what happened with the cat, she replies: "It was a stray I was determined to feed. And it bit me, stood up on its hind legs and fell upon me. My skin crawls to think about it"(36). What exactly makes Sophie so uncomfortable: is it the bite itself, or

rather the cat's adopting an upright, quasi-human posture during their encounter (at least as she reconstructs it), requiring that Sophie in turn take up a new stance toward a no-longer-subordinate animal other—and hence toward herself? The second of these glosses, involving a biocentric reorientation, a new attunement to possibilities for human-animal dialogue, finds support in Otto's sense that after being bitten Sophie, as she sits stock-still in a chair with the newspaper in her lap, "appeared to be listening for something, waiting"(10). A moment later, Sophie in effect casts Otto as a stand-in for the animal agent who has now become a nonhuman interlocutor: "why did it attack me so?"(10). Sophie will go on to express concern on four separate occasions about the fate of the cat, after Sophie's and Otto's visit to the hospital triggers the legal requirement that the animal be tested for rabies (111, 115, 141, 155). Because, when the novel ends, Sophie has not received the call from the A.S.P.C.A. that officials promised to make should the test results prove positive, Fox leaves unresolved the question of what motivated the cat to bite Sophie in the first place.¹¹

Perhaps because it literalizes the trope "biting the hand that feeds you", and therefore opens onto ethical notions of care, duty, respect, and reciprocity, Sophie's interaction with the stray cat sensitizes her to questions surrounding self-other relationships more generally, including questions about the fundamentally relational nature of the self as such. This relationality manifests itself not only in intra-species associations spanning marriage, extramarital affairs, and family histories, but also in inter-species encounters involving cats and dogs in the city, a dead bird and a mouse at the Bentwoods' summer cottage, and the many kinds of animals about which Sophie's one-time lover, Francis Early, has published books. At issue in all these contexts is the way a self, rather than being an intrinsic essence that stands apart from the vicissitudes of dialogue, interaction, and exchange, emerges through relationships with others, such that my sense of who I am is molded by my understanding of who you take me to be, and vice versa. As Sophie's experiences underscore, relationality of this sort does not stop at the species boundary. Rather, in being bitten by the stray cat Sophie is forced to (re)orient to the animal as an agential other, an other-than-human locus of volition and intention in relation to whom her own sense of self takes shape. The biting incident thus reveals an expanded community of selves—a community that cuts across species lines. Sophie realizes that she is accountable to nonhuman as well as human others, in dialogue with all of whom she must formulate a new storyline about herself.

In short, the novel dramatizes how Sophie's once-sustaining story of self becomes insufficient. In doing so the text questions, at the level of individual lives, the assumptions and priorities underpinning wider cultural ontologies. For Sophie, working toward a new self-narrative at once requires and enables a rethinking of humans' place within a larger, transhuman community of selves.

*Self-Narratives in the First Person: Fictional Memoirs
and Inter-Species Becoming*

Fox's heterodiegetic narration in *Desperate Characters* evokes a storyworld organized around an adult protagonist's movement toward a more biocentric story of the self. This movement is made possible by Sophie's beginning to unlearn a longstanding self-narrative involving parsimonious allocations of possibilities for selfhood beyond the human. Munro's short story, by contrast, explores how such narratives of the self are learned, or inculcated, in the first place. More precisely, "Boys and Girls" relies on retrospective autodiegetic narration, in which an older narrating I recounts events that she lived through as a younger experiencing I, to examine deep, mutually reinforcing interconnections among anthropocentric and patriarchal institutions, attitudes, and practices. In part, Munro uses a fictional memoir to probe how gender identities take shape at the intersection of ontology and ideology. But what is more, given that the (unnamed) narrator reconsiders the stories she used to tell herself, as a child, about her own future, the text reflexively thematizes the role of self-narratives in enabling—and potentially disrupting—the interconnections between gender roles and species hierarchies.

The title of "Boys and Girls" signals Munro's concern with questions of gender. The story begins with what Genette calls iterative narration, or a summative, one-time telling of events that happen repeatedly, to evoke the patterns of life in which the narrator participated as a young child. The text then zooms in on what the narrator presents as life-shaping incidents that take place when she was eleven years old. These focal events involve two horses that her father slaughters in order to feed the foxes that he raises in pens before slaughtering them, in turn, for their pelts. Because of these events, the narrator—or rather the protagonist or experiencing I who will grow up to become the narrator—finds herself alienated from her brother, aligned willy-nilly with her mother, and, crucially, dismissed by her father as a *girl*.

The narrator reports that she once thought the word *girl* to be blandly descriptive, like the term *child*, but then came to recognize (even before the key events of the story) how it was used as a means for categorizing and downgrading those who fall under its purview. As the narrator puts it, "A girl was not, as I had supposed, simply what I was; it was what I had to become. It was a definition, always touched with emphasis, with reproach and disappointment. And it was a joke on me".¹² What Munro highlights by means of the narrator's account is how the process of becoming gendered unfolds in a relational context that cuts across the species divide, such that ways of orienting to animal others help constitute the human self as masculine or feminine. The text also suggests how these different stances toward creatural life take their place in, and inflect, a larger ensemble of attitudes and practices associated with gender identities—ensembles that can be studied holistically via patterns in the construction and use of self-narratives.

In the world evoked by this fictional memoir, the performance of a masculine identity requires adopting or at least displaying a certain range of responses to animal others. These responses encompass taciturnity and flattened affect, coupled somewhat uneasily with a tendency toward self-heroization; an absence of inter-species identification or empathy; and even, in some contexts, cruel mockery in the face of animal vulnerability and suffering. Orienting to creaturely life in a manner that falls outside this range of permissible responses is at least part of what, early in the life course, constitutes one as a girl. At the same time, other attitudes and practices that are deemed gender-relevant can help shape responses to animals, such that being a girl figures not just as a consequence but also a cause of inter-species empathy.

The story begins with the narrator's account of her initial immersion in and alignment with her father's approach to life on the farm, with the younger, experiencing I gravitating toward the images on the "heroic calendars" provided by trading companies to which her father sells the foxes' pelts. Posted "in a part of the stable my mother had probably never seen" (148), the calendars project a masculine world of conquest in which the exploited members of Indigenous populations are interchangeable with subordinated animal others: "plumed adventurers" plant the flags of England or of France against "a background of cold blue sky and black pine forests and treacherous northern rivers", with "magnificent savages [bending] their backs to the portage" (138). At this stage, too, the narrator is on friendly terms with Henry Bailey, her father's hired man, who swings a sack full of dead, skinned foxes at the narrator and says, "Christmas present!" (137). The narrator's mother is not amused by such behavior, and particularly dislikes the way the smell of the "pelting operation" emanates from the cellar. By contrast, the current-day teller reports that at the time she found the smell of blood and animal fat that permeated the house "reassuringly seasonal, like the smell of oranges and pine needles" (138). The narrator's language here marks the protagonist's alignment with her father's projects and aims. By the same token, the experiencing I's perception of the smell of slaughter as reassuring can be read as opening an ironic gap between two sets of assumptions, beliefs, and values: those held by the experiencing self, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those held by the narrating self that the young protagonist eventually became.

Ironic distance comes into play again when the protagonist overhears her mother complain to her father that "I just get my back turned and she runs off. It's not like I had a girl in the family at all" (144). This complaint is part of her mother's efforts to make a case that Laird, the narrator's younger brother, will soon be old enough to become the primary helper for outdoor work, allowing the protagonist to shift to canning chores and other indoor tasks. In one of the story's more humorous moments, the experiencing I proves unable to imagine an older, stronger Laird undertaking jobs around the farm that currently fall to her (145). Yet beyond the difference in age that has given the narrating I a capacity to envision children growing up that her younger self lacked, what

here separates the teller from the protagonist is that the experiencing I has not yet fully internalized cultural mores concerned with gender.

The intra-species implications of these mores come into view when her grandmother visits the farm for a few weeks and makes pronouncements such as “Girls don’t slam doors like that”, “Girls keep their knees together when they sit down”, and “That’s none of girls’ business”(147).¹³ But the mores also have inter-species scope, as is made evident by the discourse of the narrator’s mother, whose loquaciousness contrasts with the protagonist’s father’s silence, and who, “if she was feeling cheerful, would tell me all sorts of things—the name of a dog she had had when was a little girl, the names of the boys she had gone out with later on when she was grown up, and what certain dresses of hers had looked like”(142). It is significant that the narrator recounts her mother intermixing talk of her lasting bond with a companion animal and remarks about dating and clothing. In this manner, the narrator portrays her younger self as being schooled, from early on, in the way attitudes toward animals are entangled with priorities and values bound up with received ideas about gender.

An either-or choice thus presents itself to the experiencing I. She must *either* avoid being “absolved and dismissed” as a girl (157) by reproducing her father’s silent stolidity and apparent numbness toward animal slaughter, *or else* honor her own empathetic response to the “golden eyes” and “exquisitely sharp” faces of the foxes (142), as well as her traumatic memories of the death of Mack, one of the horses from the stable (152). The father’s stance is legible in the easy, practiced way he shoots Mack, in Bailey’s laughter at how Mack kicks his legs up in the air after being shot, “as if [the horse] had done a trick for him”(150), and, later, in Laird’s showing off a streak of blood on his arm and bragging that “We shot old Flora... and cut her up in fifty pieces”(156). The alternative, empathetic stance requires embracing a capacity for affiliative bonds with other animals—even though that capacity has become freighted or even coterminous with other, self-limiting attitudes and practices.¹⁴ Initially, the protagonist attempts to choose the first, masculine horn of this ideological-ontological dilemma; but as time goes on, and especially after she witnesses the killing of Mack, the experiencing I finds herself caught up in the process of becoming a girl, ultimately accepting the stigma of acquiring a disfavored gender identity as the cost of recognizing and respecting selfhood beyond the species boundary.

The protagonist’s changing attitude toward the stigma at issue can be discerned in the stories of self that she rehearses just before going to sleep at night—stories that, in effect, bound the horizons of her dreams and aspirations, and thus help determine her future. Early in the text, before the fateful events involving Mack and Flora, the other horse destined to be slaughtered, the narrating I recounts how she and Laird used to sing together before her brother fell off to sleep (139). The protagonist would then continue “one of the stories I was telling myself from night to night. These stories were about myself, when I had grown a little older; they took place in a world that was

recognizably mine, yet one that presented opportunities for courage, boldness and self-sacrifice, as mine never did”(140). At this stage in her self-narrating practices, significantly, the protagonist’s stories combine an empowerment of the self with cross-species violence and domination. Thus the narrator rescues people from a bombed building, shoots rabid wolves menacing the schoolyard, and rides a “fine horse spiritedly down the main street of Jubilee, acknowledging the townspeople’s gratitude for some yet-to-be-worked-out piece of heroism”(140). Later on, when the narrator and her brother are older, and Laird has mocked the sound of her singing voice as “silly”, the experiencing I still rehearses stories about her slightly older self:

but even in these stories something different was happening, mysterious alterations took place. A story might start off in the old way, with a spectacular danger, a fire or wild animals, and for a while I might rescue people; and then things would change around, and instead, somebody would be rescuing me. It might be a boy from our class at school, or even Mr. Campbell, our teacher, who tickled girls under the arms. And at this point the story concerned itself at great length with what I looked like—how long my hair was, and what kind of dress I had on; by the time I had these details worked out the real excitement of the story was lost. (155–56)

It should be kept in mind here that Munro’s text as a whole constitutes another iteration of this same protagonist’s story of self, with the narrator’s fictional memoir reframing and recontextualizing her own earlier attempts to construct a viable self-narrative. In its current iteration, the teller’s self-narrative allows her acceptance of the stigma of girlhood to be seen for what it is: as a decision about what constitutes the lesser of two evils, the least bad option in an impossible choice that, demanded by the jointly sexist and speciesist logic of her culture, seems to be required by the world around her. This impossible choice takes on an especially concrete form toward the end of the story when the narrator, disobeying her father’s direct command, opens a gate for Flora to escape through, the horse having broken free from Bailey as he leads her out of the stable for the protagonist’s father to shoot her. The narrator retrospectively constructs herself as aware of the true cost of her decision, even as a child: “when my father found out about it he was not going to trust me any more; he would know I was not entirely on his side. I was on Flora’s side, and that made me of no use to anybody, not even to her. Just the same, I did not regret it; when she came running at me and I held the gate open, that was the only thing I could do”(154). The protagonist thus recognizes both the finality and the necessity of her decision. Accordingly, the narrating I reports that when her father “spoke with resignation, even good humour, the words [‘She’s only a girl’] which absolved and dismissed me for good”, she does not protest his statement “even in my heart. Maybe it was true”(157). The “maybe” here straddles the two time-frames of past and present; the hedge marks the experiencing I’s unwillingness to submit wholly to a definition imposed on her by

others, but also the narrating I's questioning of the either-or logic that gave rise to that definition in the first place.

Munro's narrator thus uses what might be characterized as a second-order self-narrative, a meta-self-narrative, to diagnose how her previous stories of the self were molded by a pernicious interlocking of anthropocentric and patriarchal attitudes and norms. In the process, this fictional memoir broaches difficult, far-reaching questions. How does a gendered, disempowering concern with one's own appearance co-opt what would otherwise be a productively relational sense of self? To what extent does this process of co-optation cause one not just to see but furthermore to define oneself from another's perspective, in a way that diminishes rather than enhances agency, closing off pathways to the future? In turn, how does an ability to model the perspectives of nonhuman others bear on—and sometimes derail or interrupt—this gendering of the dynamics of relationality? Can a richer modelling of animal worlds short-circuit the mutual reinforcement of two parallel logics: on the hand, the logic of speciesism, with its curtailment of possibilities for agential selfhood beyond the human; on the other hand, the logic of sexism, with its curtailment of possibilities for women's (and girls') agency? Munro's text begins to address these questions by staging multiple revisions to the narrator-protagonist's story of self. It suggests how a critical recasting of both men's and women's self-narratives provides a way of reimagining forms of human being as, instead, modalities of inter-species becoming.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, in considering ways in which previous work on self-narratives might need to be adapted for a narratology beyond the human, I have chosen as my primary case studies two texts exemplifying very different narrative designs. As my discussion suggests, no one narrational mode is better (more powerful, more illuminating) than another when it comes to exploring the possibilities and limitations of stories of the self in environments shared with other-than-human forms of creatural life. Autodiegetic or heterodiegetic narration, concordant or discordant telling by a narrating I aligned with or divergent from the experiencing I, fixed or variable focalization—any of these (or other) methods of telling may be put in the service of self-narratives that engage with human-animal relationships and the larger cultural ontologies in which they are embedded. The key question, in this context, is how critically and reflexively a given story of the self confronts the human-centric storytelling traditions with which even anti-anthropocentric narratives remain in dialogue.

More broadly, my aim in this chapter has been to suggest how a focus on questions of trans-species relationality can illuminate narrative as such, and not just the subset of stories featuring an exclusively or even a predominantly non-human cast of characters. Any given narrative may affirm or deny, occlude, or highlight relationality of this sort, whereby humans and nonhumans occupy their particular worldly situations, coming to be who and what they are,

through (at least in part) their being-in-relation-to-one-another. But such variability only underscores the tendentiousness of claims that narrative is by its nature human-centric—that narrativity itself depends on the filtering of situations and events through human or human-like experiencers.¹⁵ A narratology beyond the human begins by questioning these claims; it then proceeds to build an alternative platform for analysis by exploring how stories embody, and sometimes work to remold, understandings of relational ties that cross species lines. Such ties, as Fox’s and Munro’s narratives dramatize so vividly, make us accountable to diverse ecologies of selves, more-than-human communities.

NOTES

1. It is important to clarify, at the outset, how I use the terms “human”, “nonhuman”, and “animal” in this chapter. My working assumption is that humans are animals too—that humans, as members of larger biotic communities, occupy one niche within the broader domain of creatural life. For the sake of simplicity, however, I sometimes use the terms “human” and “animal” as shorthand for “human animal” and “nonhuman animal”. Likewise, even though the term “nonhuman” encompasses inanimate objects and artifacts as well as living creatures, I sometimes use terms such as “nonhumans” and “nonhuman others” as abbreviations for “nonhuman animals”.
2. See Candeia, “Ontology Is Just Another Word for Culture”; Descola, *The Ecology of Others*; Kohn, *How Forests Think*; and Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis”.
3. Whereas anthropocentric perspectives posit a hierarchical separation between humans and other species, biocentric perspectives assume a fundamental continuity across human and nonhuman forms of life. For more on the history of biocentrism after Darwin, see Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*.
4. Gergen and Gergen, “Narratives of the Self”, 162–63. See also Ritivoi, “Explaining People”, 27–36.
5. I adapt the term “ecology of selves” from Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 16–17.
6. See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*. For concise definitions of these and other narratological terms, see Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*.
7. For a discussion of related issues vis-à-vis the intertwined discourses of animality and intellectual disability, see Herman, *Narratology beyond the Human*, 87–113. For more on the general concept of disavowal, whereby humans seek to distance themselves from what they may have in common with other animals, see Rohman, *Stalking the Subject*.
8. In accusing Sophie of self-indulgence, Otto argues that she would not be inclined to feed the cat if she did not “have to see the cat looking starved”. Sophie replies, “I don’t care why I’m doing it. .. The point is that I *can* see it starving”(5).
9. Compare the later passage in which Sophie has the impression that her hand “looked like a tarantula”(20).
10. See Crist, *Images of Animals*, 88–122; Herman, *Narratology beyond the Human*, 202–32.

11. A central irony of the text arises from Otto's insistence that Sophie be tested for rabies when he himself is subject to sudden outbursts of anger and aggressiveness, as when he hurls an inkpot against the wall in the concluding scene of the novel (156).
12. Munro, "Boys and Girls", 147.
13. In a passage combining empathetic alignment with and ironic distance from her past self, Munro's narrator reports that "I continued to slam the doors and sit as awkwardly as possible, thinking that by such measures I kept myself free" (147).
14. Significantly, these attitudes and practices, which involve forms of learned dependency, align "girls" with nonhuman animals in the hierarchies of value that both derive from and underwrite patriarchal institutions, assumptions, and modes of conduct.
15. See Herman, *Narratology beyond the Human*, 156.

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An(im)alogical Thinking: Contemporary Black Literature and the Dreaded Comparison

Diana Leong

In 2011, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) filed a lawsuit against SeaWorld charging that their five wild-caught orcas were being held in violation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Drawing an explicit connection between chattel slavery and the orcas' confinement, the lawsuit argues that the 13th Amendment prohibits the condition of slavery regardless of the (non)humanity of the entities in question. In an accompanying press release, PETA explains: "Animals are no longer regarded as 'things' to dominate, but as breathing, feeling beings with families, dialects, intellect, and emotions. Just as we look back with shame at a time when we enslaved other humans and viewed some people as property less deserving of protection and consideration, we will look back on our treatment of these animals with shame".¹ The lawsuit was an attempt to extend legal personhood to the orcas consistent with PETA's larger mission to recast animals as subjects worthy of moral consideration. As well established by animal rights and welfare advocates from Peter Singer to Temple Grandin, the formative assumptions of the animal–human divide have produced strict legal categories that enable modern forms of animal subjugation.² To that end, the lawsuit attempts to dissolve the boundaries between humans and orcas by emphasizing shared capacities for sociality (for example, "families"), language ("dialects"), sapience ("intellect"), and sentience ("emotions"). If, on this account, orcas are "breathing, feeling beings with families, dialects, intellect, and emotions", then many

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of the justifications for the emancipation of slaves should apply to the orcas at SeaWorld.

However, in order to leverage the moral force of the 13th Amendment, the lawsuit confines slavery to an historicist timeline that equates the legal prohibition of slavery with its substantive abolition and the attainment of racial equality. PETA's use of the phrase "just as we look back" implies that we no longer "[view] some people as property less deserving of protection and consideration". In fact, during the first public hearing for the lawsuit, PETA's general counsel, Jeffrey Kerr, commented: "This case is on the next frontier of civil rights".³ By appropriating the myth of the "frontier", Kerr suggests that a movement "toward" animal rights represents the next evolutionary stage in the fight for moral progress. Although it was dismissed by a federal judge in 2012, PETA's case captured the difficulties of employing what Marjorie Spiegel famously termed the "dreaded comparison", or the analogizing of animal captivity to racial slavery.

Claire Jean Kim and Bénédicte Boisseron have demonstrated that the dreaded comparison has become such an entrenched strategy that it continues to inform the ways we envision animal and human liberation alike.⁴ Yet, as Spiegel acknowledges, "many people might feel that it is insulting to compare the suffering of non-human animals to that of humans" because it "[implies] that the oppressions experienced by blacks and animals have taken identical forms".⁵ What makes this comparison "dreaded" is its potential to trivialize black suffering, even as it amplifies the material ties between human and animal oppression. Indeed, while animal rights advocates like PETA have contributed significantly to animal welfare debates, they also embraced the post-Reconstruction assumption that the comprehensive emancipation of black communities was a *fait accompli*.⁶ The dreaded comparison, as Alexander Weheliye notes in *Habeas Viscus*, too often "[presumes] that we have now entered a stage in human development where all subjects have been granted equal access to western humanity".⁷ In this light, I ask: how do our understandings of the animal and the human shift if we approach the dreaded comparison through the lens of black literature rather than the conventional assumptions of animal rights discourse? By engaging the Afrofuturist novels of Kiese Laymon and Nalo Hopkinson, this essay investigates some of the ways that contemporary writers of the African diaspora restage the moral, philosophical, and political coordinates of the dreaded comparison. In doing so, I track the emergence of an alternative mode of comparison and relationality, an an(im)alogical thinking, that reveals how the slave serves as an organizing principle for the animal-human divide.

A SLAVERY MORE ANCIENT

In a 2005 essay entitled "The New Abolitionism: Capitalism, Slavery and Animal Liberation", Steven Best invokes the dreaded comparison to call for "the complete emancipation of animals from all forms of human exploitation".⁸

To pursue this “new abolitionism”, he defines slavery as the reduction of any sentient being to an object, property, or thing. According to Best, “one cannot ‘enslave’, ‘dominate’, or ‘exploit’ physical objects” because “these terms apply only to organic life forms that are sentient—to beings who can experience pleasure and pain, happiness or suffering”. This definition allows him to posit animal captivity as a “far more ancient . . . form of slavery”, whereby the “horrors . . . inflicted on black slaves began with the exploitation of animals”. Such a claim, however, discounts that human slavery is also an ancient institution and effectively disavows the “specificity of antiblackness and presumes or insists upon the monolithic character of victimization”.⁹ Though Best recognizes that “in the U.S. slavery market, a human being, on the basis of skin color alone, was declared biologically and naturally inferior to whites”, his definition of slavery allows him to position antiblackness and speciesism as varieties of the same general oppression. In this register, Best echoes Spiegel, who offers us the following prompt: “Let us remember that to the oppressors, there is often very little difference between one victim and the next”.¹⁰ That point is, of course, eminently debatable.

More importantly, such an approach indicates a deeper anxiety with what might escape or resist this “monolithic victimization”. On this score, animal rights discourse represents the terms of the dreaded comparison as “single trajector[ies]” or “unitary sign[s]” that precede and transcend slavery’s race-making practices.¹¹ PETA’s press release, for example, maintains that “Orcas are intelligent animals who, in the wild, work cooperatively, form complex relationships, communicate using distinct dialects, and swim up to 100 miles every day . . . [At SeaWorld] they are denied freedom and everything else that is natural and important to them”. On the one hand, by focusing on lifeways specific to the Orcas, or their “nongeneric nature”, PETA avoids reducing them to the “metaphors, similes, proverbs, and narratives” that support essentialist interpretations of animals.¹² On the other hand, their assertion that the Orcas are denied the freedoms they enjoy “in the wild” defines slavery as the removal of not only freedoms in general, but also of freedoms that are by their very provenance “natural”. The conditions of slavery and the slave itself become opposed to both nature and the “natural”, with PETA’s condemnation of slavery coinciding rhetorically with the privileging of this more “natural” state. And if we follow the logic implied by this rhetoric, two related conclusions emerge: (1) the abolition of slavery would result in at least the partial restoration of this state and (2) slavery is a condition that primarily suspends, but not transforms, these “natural” conditions of being. We can observe a similar logic at work apropos of the human in Best’s remark that “Abolitionists viewed the institution of slavery as inherently evil . . . such that no black person in bondage . . . could ever attain the full dignity, intelligence, and creativity of their humanity”. It is indeed true that under slavery and captivity respectively, it is nearly impossible to “attain the full dignity, intelligence, and creativity” of humanity and the “freedom and everything else that is natural and important” to the

animal, but only if one forecloses on the possibility that other ways of being human or animal might exist.

To this end, I agree with Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, who reminds us that the categories of “slave” and “human” are not mutually exclusive: “our conception of anti-blackness is defined by the specter of ‘denied humanity’” yet “the process of making the slave relied on the abjection and criminalization of the enslaved’s humanity rather than the denial of it. Thus, humanization is not an antidote to slavery’s violence; rather, slavery is a technology for producing a kind of human”.¹³ Here, Jackson draws on Saidiya Hartman’s path-breaking *Scenes of Subjection*, which verifies that under the auspices of slavery, “humanity” was neither “denied” nor withheld, but singularly refashioned. At the same time, because our concepts of the human and animal have evolved in tandem, this suggests that if racial slavery forced a re-conceptualization of what it meant to be human, it also transformed what it meant to be an animal. We might say, then, that the dreaded comparison provides a defense against what Jackson calls the “plasticity” of the slave, or the presumption that the “enslaved, in their humanity, could function as infinitely malleable lexical and biological matter, at once sub/super/human”.¹⁴ Certainly, slaves were treated “like animals” because animals themselves were already exploited. But while racial slavery undeniably contributed to the objectification of animals, the slave’s ability to be “at once sub/super/human” indicates that we cannot safely assume these contributions belonged to the current logic of speciesism.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, over the last decade, the dreaded comparison has received new scrutiny from scholars jointly interested in critical animal studies and critical race studies. Among these, Kim, Jackson, and Boisseron have laid the groundwork for moving beyond the dreaded comparison’s “ruse of analogy” and toward the material and philosophical connections that it indexes.¹⁵ Doing so, Boisseron emphasizes, requires that we address “the race-animal question . . . as a true combination rather than as a succession of thoughts”.¹⁶ Therefore, in taking seriously this task, I argue that the modern animal–human divide can be traced to the same site that produced the racial slave, namely the notorious “Door of No Return”. Historically, the Door of No Return refers to an architectural feature found in the slave castles built along Africa’s West Coast during the transatlantic slave trade. These holding facilities were the final embarkation points for captives destined for the New World, and in order to pass from the dungeons to the ships, captives were herded through a narrow door. Accordingly, this physical structure marked the entrance to the Middle Passage, where Africans were stripped systematically of their cultural and social affiliations as a prelude to their forced transubstantiation into property. The Door of No Return thus facilitated what Dionne Brand describes as a “rupture in the quality of being”, or a “tear in the world” that launched the making of the modern era.¹⁷ As Jared Sexton writes: “The question of the possibility of racial slavery is, we might say, the question of the possibility of global modernity itself, including the development of historical capitalism and the advent of European imperialism and its colonial devolutions”.¹⁸ This is to say that insofar

as these aspects of “global modernity” govern our understandings of the human and animal, the Door of No Return designates the point at which these understandings became intertwined with race.

As I illustrate above, animal rights discourse portrays the terms of the dreaded comparison as if they were largely unaffected by the epochal racialization of modern slavery. To be sure, animal–human relations have long served as a locus for human exceptionalism. As Spiegel stresses, texts as early as Aristotle’s *Politics* and as recent as Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* have taken up this exceptionalism as a central concern.¹⁹ In this regard, Best and Spiegel are correct that modern racism and racial slavery are preceded by some form of speciesism. Nonetheless, their claim that this same speciesism succeeded racial slavery unchanged is only accurate insofar as membership in the species *Homo sapiens* remained the primary criterion for being human. As its very name confirms, racial slavery introduced a third referent (i.e., race) into the animal–human divide that precipitated the “hierarchical ordering of the *Homo sapiens* species into humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans”.²⁰ More precisely, by initiating a set of divisions internal to the category of the human itself, racial slavery ensured that species membership alone could no longer determine one’s privilege apropos of the animal. When we consider this alongside the “rupture” Brand identifies, it becomes clear that the Door of No Return (hereafter the “Door”) symbolizes a traumatic break between pre- and post-slavery renderings of the animal–human divide. This same symbolism bears directly on representations of animal–human relations in Kiese Laymon’s *Long Division*.

THE WISDOM OF A CAT

Long Division opens in Mississippi in the year 2013. Our protagonist, a high schooler named City Coldson, and his classmate, LaVander Peeler, are preparing for a nationally televised academic competition. Once it begins, however, City becomes aware that it has been rigged in favor of its black participants to assuage the guilt of its white organizers. After losing his round in protest, City denounces the competition, and a clip of his outburst goes viral. Subsequently, City is sent to live with his grandmother in rural Melahatchie and he brings with him a book entitled “Long Division” that also features a protagonist named City who resides in Melahatchie in the year 1985. The remainder of the novel then toggles between the City of *Long Division* (hereafter “LD I”) and his literary double in “Long Division” (hereafter “LD II”), the latter of whom shuttles between the Melahatchie of 1985, 1964, and 2013 by way of a time-traveling hatch in the nearby woods. While the novel is not chiefly concerned with animal–human relations, it is telling that two of its most significant narrative moments are distinguished by the presence of a cat. In each instance, the cat functions as the dreaded comparison’s unthought remainder, or those ways of being human and animal that animal rights discourse fails to countenance.

The cat first appears after the City of “LD II” travels from 1985 to 1964 with his love interest, Shalaya Crump, and a Jewish teen named Evan Altshuler. Upon arriving in 1964, City encounters a “skinny black cat” named “Red Naval.”²¹ It guides him to a pair of bathrooms, where City finds a closed door labelled “WHITES ONLY—KEY IN FRONT”, and a second, open door labelled “COLORED” (142). As he scrutinizes the bathrooms, he realizes: “it said ‘colored’ on the door but it might as well have said cats, spiders, possums, coons, and roaches, ‘cause’ it was open to them just like it was open to us” (143). That the first bathroom must exclude both non-whites and non-human creatures to remain “white” evidences the racialization of speciesism. This racialization is further supported by City’s examples of non-humans, many of which, like “coon” and “cat”, are either racial slurs or part of black vernacular. Red Naval then leads City to a “clothesline with white sheets hanging on it. Right there in the middle was this one scraggly Doberman doing the do to this other fatter Doberman . . . [he’d] seen dogs doing it before, but this was different” (143). As he watches the dogs engaged in what he can only describe as an act of “love”, City becomes unexpectedly aroused. Uncomfortable with “how the dogs were making [him] feel”, he begins hurling rocks until they separate (144). It is here that the cat turns to City and says: “Wow. You a real fat asshole for that right there. You don’t know better than to throw rocks at love?” (144)?

Prima facie, the cat’s speech serves little purpose until we remember that this scene takes place in the same year that the Civil Rights Act was passed. This historical moment is particularly important for animal rights advocates because for them, it signaled the formal end of antiblackness and the point at which the “moral and political spotlight” could finally shift to animal captivity.²² Appropriately then, in introducing the time-traveling City to the horrors of segregation, the cat facilitates the transition between the disenfranchisement of black Americans and their legal recognition as “persons”. However, the cat’s speech adds another layer to this too straightforward reading, given that the slave was figured as the speaking animal *par excellence*. Paul Outka argues in *Race and Nature* that this figuration was often a strategic mechanism to “retain the ‘usefulness’ of the slave’s . . . intelligence, sexuality, skills, and so forth, while justifying the whole thing by ascribing the slave’s vocal and physical resistance to his or her animal status.”²³ Because the slave’s object status was inadequate to explain her “intelligence . . . and so forth”, animalization provided a more plausible explanation for its “vocal and physical resistance”. In this manner, the speaking animal became part of the form and function, and living legacy, of racial slavery.²⁴ And by inserting it into the plot at this pivotal moment, the novel challenges the narrative of racial progress that some animal rights advocates have relied upon to date.

This reading becomes clearer when we consider that the talking cat in “LD II” is a re-imagining of the person who becomes City’s most intimate companion in “LD I”. Initially, LaVander (“Red Naval” in reverse) is City’s rival in the quest to become an “exceptional African American” (33). But by the time they

descend into the time-traveling hatch together at the end of “LD I”, they have become much more: “With LaVander Peeler’s head on my shoulder, we started rereading *Long Division* from the beginning, knowing that all we needed to know how to survive, how to live, and how to love in Mississippi was in our hands” (267). This conclusion clarifies City’s earlier reaction to the dogs, whose “fatter” and “scraggly” bodily shapes mimic his and LaVander’s physical appearances. Unsettled by arousal, City’s rock-throwing represents not only a disavowal of his developing sexuality, but also a misunderstanding of the conditions under which this sexuality might flourish. Because the dogs’ tryst occurs under the specter of white supremacy (e.g., “white sheets”), it is tempting to read it primarily as an example of how racial slavery animalizes blackness and thereby denies any association between the latter and intimacy. In that reading, black intimacy appears as it would through a white supremacist lens, meaning nothing more than mating between dogs. Yet, the cat’s reprimand that only “asshole[s]. .. throw rocks at love” also reminds us that, despite its origins in slavery, the speaking animal represents another way of being, one through which new forms of intimacy, including love, can become available. As such, *choosing* to inhabit this way of being simultaneously enables one to relate to the origins of the speaking animal differently. Against the desire of animal rights advocates to cleave the slave from the animal, or antiblackness from speciesism, the novel proposes instead that a more thorough and emancipatory understanding of the animal can derive only from the embrace of its racial legacy. Consequently, Red Naval’s second appearance allows us to probe further the links between the animal and the Door.

In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand offers the following insight: “The Door of No Return is of course no place at all but a metaphor for place. . . . Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space. That space is the measure of our ancestors’ step through the door toward the ship. One is caught in the few feet in between. The frame of the doorway is the only space of true existence”.²⁵ For those living in the African diaspora, the Door inaugurated a sense of time and history that is experienced not as a movement forward, but as movement that is always suspended. “There is”, she explains, “a sense in the mind of not being here or there, of no way out or in”.²⁶ Clearly, Brand’s account has broad implications for how we conceive of everything from racial justice to speculative fiction. Although a deeper exploration of these issues is beyond the scope of the essay, with respect to our current discussion, I contend that *Long Division* presents the animal as a key that can unlock the transformative potential of the Door’s ordering of time.

In the final scene of “LD II”, City is about to enter the time-traveling hatch when Red Naval materializes. He brings the cat with him into the hole, where Red Naval locates a third copy of “Long Division”. Soon after, City discovers that he and the cat are not alone: “I heard more breathing and more fumbling around.. .. I gently reached and rubbed my hands up, down, and all around their noses, their eyelids, their dry lips and ear lobes. I found their thighs, their flimsy T-shirts and finally all of their crusty hands.. .. Hand in hand and deep

in the underground of Mississippi, we all ran away to tomorrow because we finally could” (262–263). Through this distinct allusion to the underground railroad, the novel situates the hatch within the history of black resistance. Like its historical referent, this version of the underground railroad shows the characters of “LD I and II” how to reconcile the desire for racial freedom with the practical work of racial justice (56). Unlike its historical referent though, the hatch trades a spatial notion of freedom for one that operates temporally. The “tomorrow” of the original underground railroad was coupled to the division between free and slave states so that movement toward freedom and the future was literalized by one’s progression toward the North. In the novel, “tomorrow” refers more directly to movement in time, but the freedom this “tomorrow” implies is not necessarily located in the future.

While the beings City encounters are almost certainly fugitive slaves, I would argue that they are also slaves in the hold of a ship. The time-traveling hatch ensures that the novel’s characters are never fully assured of the causal relations between past, present, and future. After the rescue of Evan’s family from the Klan in “LD II”, for example, Shalaya opts to remain in 1964 with Evan, which precludes her eventual marriage to City and the birth of their daughter, Baize. City later admits: “I don’t understand. . . If we changed the future, how come I’m still here?. . . Why would my mama and daddy still have me if we changed the future? It just doesn’t make sense” (257). This experience of time, which corresponds to Brand’s description of living in “the frame of the doorway”, is additionally reflected in the novel’s *mise-en-abyme* structure. At the end of “LD I and II”, the narratives are entangled to such an extent that it is nearly impossible to identify which character or plot development belongs to which timeline. In this way, the hatch could conceivably function as a metaphor for the Door and the underground railroad simultaneously. City’s “return” to the Door is neither a regression nor an attempt to pass through it, but a chance to discover what might happen if he “lingers” on its threshold (56). And it is Red Naval that finds the mechanism by which that discovery might occur. As we learn at the end of the novel, by adding to his copy of “LD”, each City can influence the events of the other narrative (260–261). Hence, in leading City to another copy of “Long Division”, the cat provides him with the means to re-write the stories of “LD I”, “LD II”, and an “LD III” that has yet to be completed. His attendance at this moment is a reminder that the animal, in all its many forms, has always been present in the “frame of the doorway”. So too, the cat’s active participation gestures toward the opportunities that might arise if and when that presence is acknowledged and affirmed.

REFRAMING THE DOOR

By way of a conclusion, I turn now to a brief reading of Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber*, which responds to a question inspired by the Door itself: Is a return through the Door possible? Set in a speculative future shaped by Caribbean histories of marronage, *Midnight Robber* meditates upon the

relationships between technology, colonialism, and the animal–human divide.²⁷ The inhabitants of the planet Toussaint are infused with nanomites (microscopic robot forms) that are controlled by an artificial intelligence network dubbed “Granny Nanny”. The nanomites monitor social behaviors, control food production, and regulate ecosystems in service of a global population management. Due to Granny Nanny’s extensive reach, compulsory labor has been eliminated in favor of arts and leisure, which the Afro-Caribbean inhabitants of Toussaint interpret as a “utopian solution to the crippling legacy of the slave trade”.²⁸ Nevertheless, as Erin Fehskens points out, the nanotech colonization of other worlds is also an “amnesiac” strategy that attempts to resolve social and political conflicts through technological means.²⁹ To maintain its utopian facade, anything the Nanny-web deems harmful is exiled to another dimension called New Half-Way Tree. This includes criminals, “restless people”, and any evidence of Granny Nanny’s ecological destruction: “You never wonder where them all does go, the drifters . . . the thieves–them, and the murderers? . . . The Nation Worlds does ship them all to New Half-Way Tree . . . on the next side of the dimension veil. New Half-Way Tree is how Toussaint planet did look before the Marryshow corporation. . . impregnate the planet with the seed of Granny Nanny . . . On New Half-Way Tree, the mongoose still run wild”.³⁰ Existing as it does on the other side of the “dimension veil”, New Half-Way Tree can be read as the literal and imagined space–time behind, or perhaps before, the Door of No Return.

Clearly, this version of the Door is not an exact replica of its historical counterpart. But given Toussaint’s utopian design, the fact that it managed to produce a similar structure is telling. According to its origin story, Toussaint was founded on the desire to escape the legacies of racial slavery. As such, anything that might threaten that escape was either eliminated or exiled. That this generally included the planet’s indigenous fauna indicates that, on some level, the inhabitants were aware of racial slavery’s co-production of the animal and human. Instead of incorporating the planet’s animals into their concept of racial freedom, they opted to construct another sort of Door as a strategy of containment, one that fails in a spectacular way. The novel makes this explicit when the protagonist, Tan-Tan, is smuggled to New Half-Way Tree after her father, Antonio, kills his wife’s lover. Before he can receive an official order of exile, Antonio chooses to leave for New Half-Way Tree on his own terms, which means taking Tan-Tan with him.

Travel to New Half-Way Tree occurs via a nanotech “shift pod”. Like Star Trek’s famous transporters, shift pods break down objects into molecules and reassemble them at another location. As Tan-Tan shifts to New Half-Way Tree, her molecules become intertwined with those of one of Toussaint’s indigenous species—the manicou rat: “it was as though her belly was turning inside out, like wearing all her insides on the outside. . . Tan-Tan felt as though her tail-bone could elongate into a tail, long and bald like a manicou rat’s. . . Tan-Tan sobbed and tried to wrap her tail tightly around herself. But the veil was gone. She had only thought she was a big manicou” (73–74). Outwardly, it appears

as though the shift pod accidentally combined Tan-Tan's molecules with those of a nearby maniocou rat. But because the pods can only rearrange an object's existing particles, or place one's "insides on the outside", the novel implies that the seeds of this inter-species transformation were always inherent *within* Tan-Tan. Her (brief) recovery of this colonial and animal history demonstrates that Toussaint's efforts to repress it were never entirely successful.

Midnight Robber illustrates the possible costs of addressing the legacies of racial slavery without attending to the racialization of animal-human relations. Because Toussaint's indigenous flora and fauna are preserved beyond the dimension veil, New Half-Way Tree exists, in part, to absolve Toussaint's inhabitants of this very responsibility. Consequently, Toussaint's utopia is animated by the same desire evident in animal rights discourse to "return" to a prior state, wherein race no longer articulates the human to the animal. Under the auspices of this fantasy, Toussaint can operate as if the elimination of racial hierarchies, the restoration of individual liberties, and the recognition of one's sentience are sufficient for mitigating slavery's most adverse effects. Undoubtedly, measures like these are entirely necessary, rational, and effective. But as Toussaint's colonial and speciesist activities reveal, when such measures fail to account for the aforementioned articulation, they risk reproducing some of the same violences that sustained racial slavery in the first instance. It is therefore hardly surprising that the novel's reconciliation between Toussaint and New Half-Way Tree begins with Tan-Tan's extended stay with the Douen, an animal species indigenous to the planet and one that speaks to boot. When read alongside Tan-Tan's shift pod experience, this reconciliation confirms that the exiles of New Half-Way Tree exist not in another time and space, or beyond the veil as it were, but as another reality internal to Toussaint itself.

Long Division and *Midnight Robber* together expose the shortcomings of the dreaded comparison as it is deployed in animal rights discourse. More specifically, situating this analogy as adjacent to racial slavery, rather than emerging from it, imposes significant limits on our notions of the human and animal. And as evidenced by the "new abolitionism" of animal rights advocacy, Toussaint's racial utopia, and the post-civil rights Mississippi of "LD I", these limits often extend to our visions of human and animal freedom. Nevertheless, the novels also demonstrate that disregarding entirely the links between human and animal oppression can produce the same kinds of restrictions. What they propose instead, then, is a kind of an(im)alogical thinking, which we can now define as an engagement with animal-human relations as we have inherited them from racial slavery, with the parenthetical "im" serving as a reminder of this inheritance. If, as *Midnight Robber* suggests, race has bound the animal and human together at a *molecular* level, then to think the animal-human divide from the position of the racial slave is already to employ a kind of animal, or an(im)al, logic. It is only in this context that the comparison might be transformed from "dreaded" to welcomed.

NOTES

1. PETA, "Peta Sues SeaWorld".
2. Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, is considered foundational for the contemporary animal liberation movement. Likewise, animal sciences scholar Temple Grandin is credited with revolutionizing conditions in industrial slaughterhouses by attending closely to the animals' sensory worlds.
3. "Slavery Protections".
4. See Kim, *Dangerous Crossings* and "Moral Extensionism", and Boisseron, *Afro-Dog*.
5. Spiegel, *Dreaded Comparison*, 24.
6. When Anna Sewell's best-selling novel *Black Beauty* debuted in 1877, in the very year that Reconstruction was formally abandoned with the notorious Hayes-Tilden Compromise, its depiction of the cruel treatment of horses struck such a chord that the American Humane Education Society published its own edition in 1890. Featuring an additional subtitle—"The 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' of the Horse"—this edition clearly sought to capitalize on both the success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's eponymous 1852 novel and the supposed rehabilitation of the post-bellum US South. For more on the relationship between race and species in the nineteenth century, see Fielder, "Animal Humanism".
7. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 10.
8. Best, "New Abolitionism".
9. Sexton, "People-of-Color", 48.
10. Spiegel, 25.
11. Jackson, "Losing Manhood", 96.
12. Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human", 567.
13. Jackson, 96.
14. Jackson, 98.
15. For Frank Wilderson, the phrase "ruse of analogy" refers to the political and ontological fantasies that, in attempting to produce an "enabling modality for Human ethical dilemmas", rely on the "mystification, and often erasure, of Blackness's grammar of suffering" (*Red, White, and Black* 37). See also, Wilderson, "Gramsci's Black Marx".
16. Boisseron, *Afro-Dog*, 2.
17. Brand, *Map*, 4–5.
18. Sexton, "Unbearable Blackness", 166.
19. To establish speciesism as an historically stable ideological ground, Spiegel frequently gestures toward literary and philosophical representations of the animal-human divide, taking care to include writers and philosophers from antiquity (e.g., Aristotle) through the middle ages (e.g., St. Thomas Aquinas), and up to the contemporary moment (e.g., Reagan). In her brief discussion of Aristotle's *Politics*, she focuses on its citation of animal domestication as an example of how slavery might benefit the enslaved.
20. Weheliye, 8.
21. Laymon, *Long Division*, 142.
22. For animal rights advocates like Best and Spiegel, moral progress is best measured by admission to and recognition from the institutions of civil society. Best proposes, for instance, that to "[build] on the . . . achievements of past abolitionists and suffragettes, the struggle of the new abolitionists might conceivably

culminate in a Bill of (Animal) Rights. This would involve a constitutional amendment that . . . recognizes animals as ‘persons’ in a substantive sense”. As such, to position the “becoming-person” of the animal as heir to abolitionism and the civil rights movement, animal rights advocates must proceed as if the emancipation of black slaves guaranteed their formal recognition as “persons”. Thus, Best’s suggestion that post-civil rights, the “moral and political spotlight [has shifted] to a far more ancient, pervasive, intensive, and violent form of slavery that confines, tortures, and kills animals” confirms that for him, the most pressing goals of racial justice have already been achieved.

23. Outka, *Race and Nature*, 55.
24. The fifth chapter of Boisseron’s *Afro-Dog* builds on Derrida’s arguments in “The Animal that Therefore I Am” to examine how the voice of the slave, like the voice of the animal, poses a threat to the master “since the mere sound of it indicates a breach of silence and the exposure of the white secret” (181).
25. Brand, 18–20.
26. Brand, 20.
27. “Marronage” refers to groups of escaped slaves who formed independent communities, many of which were located on the edges of established slave societies.
28. Fehskens, “Matter of Bodies”, 143.
29. Fehskens, 143.
30. Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*, 2.

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We Are Not in This World Alone: On Drawing Close, Animal Stories, and a Multispecies Sense of Place

Nandini Thiyagarajan

INTRODUCTION: THE ANIMALS IN OUR STORIES

This chapter is structured by two main endeavours: first, I outline my methodology for reading animals in literature. Second, I read birds in two texts written by Mohsin Hamid, “The Kites Are Leaving” and *Exit West* through my concept of “drawing close” in order to reveal how animals are deeply connected to our understanding of home and migration. My work looks specifically at contemporary, postcolonial, and diasporic literature that cannot be considered animal-centric. I am interested in stories that include literary animals in subtle ways, from passing encounters, comparisons that assert species boundaries, and analogies written on animal bodies to more robust animal characters who arrive with their own histories, lives, and stories in tow. I read the often-overlooked fact of animal presences in the stories we tell as both a challenge to human exceptionalism and evidence that on some level—whether or not our actions or ethics follow suit—we know that we, as humans, are not in this world alone. The presence of animals in the stories we tell demonstrates that “human nature is an interspecies relationship”.¹

That we are not in this world alone relates to how we come to know ourselves, as well as how we conceptualize our existence on this earth. Ursula Le

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Guin highlights how our “awareness of belonging to the world, delight in being part of the world, always tends to involve knowing our kinship as animals with animals”.² Though there are so many productive and necessary complications and contradictions to how we have defined ourselves against animals, as humans we have come to know who we are because we have claimed to know who animals are. We are also at a moment when we have to face the fact that we are not exalted above or isolated from other beings on this earth. Human exceptionalism will not always shield us from the devastating impact we have had on the environment. In the Anthropocene, the reverberations of our actions on a multispecies world are being reflected back to us in ways we cannot continue to ignore. Humans are densely entangled, interconnected, and interdependent with other species. We can look to stories to learn to embrace connectivity instead of isolation, being with instead of being above; the animals in our stories are evidence that we already know this.

The stories that we tell are full of animals. There is, however, a tendency to dismiss or diminish the importance of stories and storytelling for animals. I argue that stories offer some of the best tools that we have to articulate and navigate the complexity that animals encapsulate. Specifically, my methodology offers a way to read animals in stories through the concept of drawing close. Drawing close articulates the specificity of literary animals. An author chooses specific animals because of the histories, associations, memories, and relationships they evoke between humans, animals, and places. When we learn to pay attention to animals in stories, we will start to ask questions of them: What histories, geographies, and traditions come attached to that animal? How does that animal’s history in the world parallel, reflect, challenge, or complicate the narrative? Drawing close encapsulates such questions and it also goes further to attend to the animal itself. I insist that animals do not exist idly in our stories, but that we attach meaning to them in ways that draw animals and ourselves into a close relationship. This concept unpacks the huge amount of work that animals do in and for our stories.

At its roots, drawing close is a tool for understanding how animals appear in texts that are ostensibly not about them. Drawing close comes from an assertion that certain animals in texts don’t exist idly or void of meaning; but rather, when the connection is made between human and animal characters, it illuminates a set of ideas in the novel that either run alongside, contradict, or complicate the main themes. My goal is to encourage readers to pay attention to and ask questions about animals wherever and whenever they appear. My most ambitious hope is that when we learn to pay attention to animals in counterintuitive, complex ways, we will see differently the animals who live alongside us and that we might think seriously about what kinds of care, consideration, and indebtedness we owe them.

Closeness is an amalgamation of intimacy, proximity, belonging, and care that offers a space to explore nuanced human–animal relations in literature. Closeness is intimacy insofar as it runs along the lines of Ann Laura Stoler’s assertion that intimacy is “not something that can be measured by physical distance so much as the degree of involvement, engagement, concern, and

attention one gives to it”.³ It also exceeds the boundaries of intimacy because it is not always mutual, and can often be violent, oppressive, and indifferent. *Closeness*, as I understand it here, encompasses relationships across distance and time (the cat was close to me), familial relationships (close friends or relatives), and attentiveness (paying close attention). *Drawing* close indicates that closeness is active, purposeful, and cultivated for beings, whether human or more-than-human, who may be inappropriate, unaccepted, or controversial companions.

I envision the connection between the word “close” and the Latin word for “enclosure” both within and beyond the connotations of closed, closed-in, or closed-off, in order to posit that drawing an animal close encloses beings in a relationship and solidifies a bond that exists in spite of the imperfect nature of that relationship. Sometimes human–animal closeness is an enclosure, where people—and this is true for people marginalized according to race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability—are forced into proximity to the animal (or vice versa) and have to negotiate a more violent and oppressive human–animal relationship that may be close, but not kind or voluntary. Drawing another being close demonstrates that humans do not exist in isolation, but rather that we come to know and articulate ourselves through close relationships to animals.

STORYTELLING, RACE, AND ANIMALS

I pay close attention to literary animals because I want to understand what it means to find belonging with animals, how to learn to inherit animal stories, and, following Leesa Fawcett, I too wonder “what, if anything, is reciprocal” in our encounters with animals?⁴ Stories reflect and shape our ways of knowing the world and they move and affect us by transporting us into different worlds, but stories also have limits. Fawcett puts forward a narrative ethics based on wanting to appreciate the complexity of animals. Working with Fawcett’s narrative ethics, it is important to resist drawing a straight line between story, pedagogy, and direct action. I do not aim to draw such a line between story and animal rights or ethics. Certainly, there is an intimate and immediate connection between narrative and politics; we need to tell, listen, and hold on to good stories to ground and give us conviction in our politics. And yet, even though stories can inspire and lead us towards direct action in many powerful but often intangible ways, they do not, in themselves, form a straightforward path towards a more ethical way of being in the world.

To highlight what narrative *can* do, Fawcett discusses the promise in three potentials or capacities of narrative imagination set out by the philosopher Richard Kearney: “1) *testimonial capacity* to bear witness to a forgotten past; 2) the *empathic capacity* to identify with those different to us (victims and exemplars alike); and 3) the *critical-utopian capacity* to challenge official stories with unofficial or dissenting ones which open up alternative ways of being”.⁵ Though Kearney is not explicitly concerned with animals, focusing on

literary animals illuminates how his three capacities of narrative imagination can extend beyond the human.

Each capacity has potential for literary animals. Authors can bring attention to—or as readers we can prioritize—the often-overlooked histories of literary animals; stories can build empathy with animals who are very different from us; and by pointing to animal presences in our stories, we can begin to open to alternative ways of being in the world that take animals seriously. Fawcett sees a particular promise for animals in Kearney’s third capacity of narrative because she insists that, “critical-utopian narratives can disrupt the dominant story of human omnipotence, [and] challenge the notion that humans are in the story all by themselves”.⁶ I read certain literary animals as evidence that we know animals’ significance in our lives, conceptions of histories, and how we come to know ourselves, as well as our place on the earth.

Stories do a lot of work for authors negotiating their relationship to race, racialization, and history. For some, like Gloria E. Anzaldúa, writing stories is about asserting presence and rewriting misrepresentations: “I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you”.⁷ Stories also offer a way to navigate memory, a way to imagine a different kind of living or perhaps a different world. As Danez Smith explains, “I couldn’t change what happened, but I could write about it, I could disassemble it, I could take its teeth, I could make it beautiful, I could fail, I could die somewhere safe, I could imagine living”.⁸ Stories create worlds that make our realities more liveable. Julietta Singh asserts that “bodies are stories”, revealing how our bodies tell stories, how stories are etched onto our skin, and how we carry stories in our bodies.⁹ While these authors use such stories to think long and hard about race and belonging, they often include animal presences; animals exist in subtle, complex ways within seemingly human-centered stories.

With good reason, the connection between race and animals makes us feel uneasy. To glimpse the root of this discomfort, we need only look to current disputes that bring people of colour in tension with animal rights; ongoing comparisons that equate race and animals to undermine, trivialize, and belittle racialized people; or histories of the strategic animalization and dehumanization of racialized people that worked to justify colonization, slavery, and relentless oppression.¹⁰ Framing histories as animalization and dehumanization actually incorrectly assumes that racialized people formerly occupied fully human status.¹¹ Rather, nonwhite people have always been made to occupy a not-fully-human status and this in-between human and animal status did not stay in the past. The intimate relationship between race and animality is better conceptualized as a borderland, an imaginative space between humans and animals that is marked by power and categorized according to one’s belonging in civilization, progression, and history.¹² Not everyone exists equally in this borderland; nonwhite people’s belonging is based on how closely they are associated with animals and nature. As Claire Jean Kim asserts, underpinning the fraught relationship between race and animality are the ways in which “race is

forged in the crucible of ideas about animals and nature”.¹³ Race is inextricable from animality; race has been produced and constructed through animals and nature.

Histories of oppression would not teach us to see any nuance in a relationship between race and animals that often forces nonwhite people to assert difference between themselves and animals in order to gain political agency. However, the relationship between race and animals is multidimensional and densely complicated. Although a contentious relationship asserts its presence and deserves attention, there are also moments when people of colour have gained community, kinship, belonging, connections to history and tradition, and agency with and through a close proximity to animals.¹⁴ A unique human–animal relationship can also grow in the borderlands marked by a fraught proximity between race and animals. I read the presence of animals in stories that articulate questions about race, history, belonging, and colonization as evidence of such a relationship. There is something intimate and complex that authors reach for when they include animals in their stories that exists within, but also extends and challenges the boundaries of this spurious relationship between race and animals.

How does race circulate in representations of animals? Building on that question, why do stories that ostensibly seem like human-centered navigations of race, postcolonialism, and diaspora specifically look to and include animals? What do animals have to offer this conversation and vice versa? The concept of drawing close communicates what is at stake in representations of literary animals and offers tools to prioritize race, history, and belonging within readings of animals. Drawing animals close in literary contexts works on three levels: the author embeds intimate histories, memories, and stories into literary animals; the characters themselves are directly drawn close to the animals in their stories; and the reader, through a practice of attentiveness to literary animals, feels herself drawn close not only to the animals on the page but also the ones in her own life and memory. Once we learn to pay attention to literary animals in all their forms—in spite of the overwhelmingly anthropocentric apparatus of literary criticism—we may find ourselves opening up to the numerous roles that animals play in our own stories, as well as the texts we read.

PRECARIOUS HOMES AND ANIMALS AS FELLOW MIGRANTS

The animals that I analyse in Hamid’s work are black kites or *milvus migrans*. Black kites belong to the family *Accipitridae* and more specifically to the genus *Milvus*. Black kites belong to the species *Milvus migrans* and the subspecies that reside in and around Pakistan (where Hamid’s work takes place) are the *m. m. migrans*, which are migratory, and the *m. m. govinda*, which are resident birds. The subspecies of black kite that lives in Lahore, the *milvus migrans govinda*, can be found in Eastern Pakistan and further east through India, Sri Lanka, and the Malay Peninsula. The black kite is “considered the most successful raptor in the world”¹⁵ and in many ways is well suited for the

Anthropocene. These birds are both synanthropic and synurbic, meaning that they “occur almost exclusively in close associations with humans in towns and cities”.¹⁶ Black kite populations grow in areas of high human density because they thrive with access to food sources such as landfills. Although the South Asian populations of black kites are the most abundant, there is a scarcity of research that focuses on tropical regions and/or megacities¹⁷ and the few populations that have been studied are in Europe, in rural settings.¹⁸ The Black Kite Project¹⁹ studies the *m. m. lineatus* and the *m. m. govinda* in Delhi focusing on “the variation of several behavioural, life history, physiological, and demographic traits” in urban environments.²⁰

Human conceptions of kites are key parts of the birds’ ability to thrive in urban centres. Even when discussing the (relatively low incidence of) attacks on humans, people repeatedly expressed fear, “but 100% of the respondents justified and showed explicit sympathy for the kites”, referring to both the animal’s need to protect its offspring and understanding that humans have encroached on their territory.²¹ Members of the community tie empathy to religious views about kites and animals in general, explaining that for Hindus reincarnation inspires reverence for all beings and that Muslims “mainly revered kites as sort of sacred, given their role of ‘winged emissaries’”.²² In Islam, there is a belief that kites will metaphorically take their worries, fears, and prayers towards the sky, and also offer protection before a journey.²³ More than this, there is a long Islamic tradition of treating animals as equals and even exemplars, although modernity is displacing these traditions, making them more Cartesian.²⁴ The belief that kites can carry away worries and prayers forms the basis of the kite-feeding ritual, also called *cheel-gosht ka sadqah*, translating roughly to “kite-meat alms”.²⁵ For the ritual, people imbue pieces of meat with their worries or prayers then throw them off the side of a bridge and watch as kites swoop to grab the meat and eat it in mid-air. A whole community of vendors and families supported by this ritual has formed in Lahore as people move between a slaughterhouse to the bridge to sell and throw meat for the kites. Although kite populations have been successful so far, there is worry about the threat of lead toxicity and other pollutants for the birds due to their diet. The most significant threat, however, comes in the form of deforestation or cutting down large trees, which usually provide homes for the kites, in the interest of rapid urban growth.²⁶

I offer a brief outline of the species because this bird is central to Hamid’s autobiographical short story “The Kites Are Leaving” and also appears in his novel *Exit West*. Looking into this bird’s life, history, and biology illuminates the story of an animal who is both well-adapted to living in close proximity to humans and uniquely at risk of the threats that can make cities unlivable for both humans and animals. “The Kites Are Leaving” details the growing precariousness of human and animal life in Lahore, focusing specifically on a family of black kites who have lived on Hamid’s family’s compound for generations. Hamid tells of the expansive growth of Lahore—a city of three million in his childhood, but now past 11 million—making it feel like a city bursting at the

seams. In “The Kites Are Leaving” Hamid imagines what will happen to the generations of kites when the tree they live in—along with his family home—is felled for development. Although the kite populations are stable, Hamid represents the threat that the removal of mature trees poses to the kites.²⁷ Instead of framing black kites as analogies of his own sense of precariousness in Lahore, he thinks of them as “fellow migrants, unsuited and yet necessarily suited to the future, which comes for all of us, borne along by time, displaying in our features the strange signs of where we have been, of what is no more”.²⁸ I read Hamid’s conception of kites as fellow migrants as a form of drawing close. His concern for the kites is clear in “The Kites Are Leaving” and when he brings the birds into *Exit West*, they bring along with them their stories of survival, human–animal relationships, and how animals shape and are shaped by the places we call home.

As Hamid faces the impending displacement of his own family, embedded in his description of the city are narratives of extinction and displacement of flying foxes, snakes, and mongooses that are entangled in the history of Lahore. He describes how his family “let [their] trees grow full and mighty, to block out the concrete structures pressing in on us, and high on one tall tree in our back lawn, far above the treehouse wrapped around lower branches near its base, floats a nest that belongs to a pair of birds of prey that my children call hawks but in actuality are black kites”.²⁹ He details that the birds are “brown with light and dark markings the color of parched earth and damp soil, patterns like scale armor on their breasts, powerful, hooked beaks and wingspans wide enough to startle, almost equal to the outstretched arms of a man”.³⁰ The words he uses to describe the kites conjure up images of nature and the earth, as well as a power associated with mythical creatures, of which raptors are often reminiscent.

Then he approaches the material realities of these birds and considers their everyday lives, behaviours, and familial structures:

This nest has been here as long as I can remember, and the kites, too, though surely the pair that live there now, like me, are descendants of the original builders. For a few weeks in the cooler months I can hear their descendants in turn, before they fledge and fly away. The adult birds, a couple, watch me every day as I take my morning walk, as likely as not to be holding a book as I stroll, and I watch them every day from my window as they take their afternoon flights, soaring and gliding in the thermals, wingtip feathers splayed, swooping down to catch a rodent or a discarded bit of sandwich or a plastic T-Rex. They are wild and enduring, and their claim to this house is at least as old and as strong as mine.³¹

Along with their everyday realities, Hamid describes the birds’ habits as they overlap and intertwine with his. He goes further to mention how human activity shapes their lives, so they may be as likely to catch a rodent, a bit of sandwich thrown away by someone, or a plastic T-Rex that catches their eye. He does not represent the symbolic, romantic, or idealistic version of their lives,

but rather life as-is in all of the vulnerability, wonder, and disarray. In the moments when he says “like me” he invites meditations on reproduction, in the sense of human and animal families (fledglings and children) who are impacted by the generations who came before, as well as belonging to a specific place that is tied to the histories of ancestors. For Hamid, the kites are rooted to his sense of home and he explains that even multigenerational human and animal belonging to a place can be precarious and easily threatened. In “The Kites Are Leaving”, he worries about the future of the kites who keep returning to the trees in his back lawn even as he recognizes that migration is a fact of life. However, what both humans and animals lose when they are displaced are precisely connections to the land and specific familial memories of that place, long histories that we descend from, and the ability to live in concert with our lineage. Migration, in the simultaneous loss and promise it offers, is not exclusively human. When he frames the kites as “fellow migrants”, Hamid calls attention to a multispecies relationship that forms by building homes close to each other and being subjects of time and history. Understanding kites as fellow migrants takes on a new significance when we pay attention to birds’ presences in *Exit West* (published only months before the story). I argue that, especially when read together, Hamid’s vision of kites as fellow migrants and his inclusion of hawks in *Exit West* tell a parallel story of home and displacement that is distinctly animal.

MULTISPECIES MIGRATION AND BELONGING

Exit West tells a seemingly human story about global migration primarily through the protagonists, Saeed and Nadia. The novel has been described as “a near-future dystopian story about unfettered migration”; a love story that intersperses “magic-realist vignettes of migration”; and speculative fiction that tells refugee narratives in a way that “transcends the personal imagination”.³² By setting the story in an unnamed country and city, without giving a name to the militant forces threatening the safety of the civilians, Hamid challenges us to face the scope of global migration without allowing space for nation-based biases to take over. What Hamid seeks is a kind of universality around the migrant experience in the hopes that such universality can inspire empathy.³³ Although he names the cities that Saeed and Nadia migrate to, he describes the city they originate from as “a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war”.³⁴ The narrative does, however, include signifiers that tell readers that the country Saeed and Nadia live in is predominantly Muslim and that political turmoil—and not climate change—has made their home unlivable.

The choice to leave Saeed and Nadia’s home unnamed attempts to avoid biases surrounding countries with turbulent histories that might allow readers to distance themselves from stories of migration. In our current moment, defined by pervading fear of refugees and migrants, travel bans, Brexit, and detainment camps at the borders Hamid’s novel intervenes by telling a more

universal story about people searching for safety, stability, and home. Hamid also grounds the novel in a love story about a relationship that grows, shifts, and ends within Saeed's and Nadia's increasingly vulnerable lives as they make the painful decision to leave their homes and move through "doors", portals that take them to Mykonos, London, and San Francisco. We witness how Saeed and Nadia's relationship changes and eventually comes undone as they move between places that are occupied by the supposed threat of migrants and refugees, places that are unwelcoming and unsafe for people living in growing refugee camps and communities.

The magic realism in the novel revolves around the doors that connect different countries and cities. Instead of being "simple doors, on/off switches in the flow between two adjacent places, binarily either open or closed",³⁵ a normal door could become an opening to an entirely different place. Saeed and Nadia's world is not structured exclusively by borders, but rather by doors "that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away".³⁶ These doors are also governed by rules that feel very familiar to the borders that divide our world, where "doors to richer destinations, were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places, were mostly left unsecured, perhaps in the hope that people would go back to where they came from".³⁷

Structurally, the doors allow the narrative to move seamlessly between contexts, people, and countries. Without having such shifts align with breaks in the chapter, the doors enable Hamid to discuss Saeed and Nadia in one paragraph and then jump to Sydney, San Diego, Vienna, or Tokyo, for instance, in the next. The doors resemble portals often opened by technological communication or transportation. As Hamid explains, "technology feels, to me, like the doors sort of already exist, at least emotionally".³⁸ In one particularly poignant sentence, a narrative doorway shifts us from the evening in Nadia's time to "morning in the San Diego, California, locality of La Jolla, where an old man lived by the sea".³⁹ We learn that this unnamed man is a military veteran who hopes to join the defence mounting against migrants who have been appearing in his locality, but is turned away by a young officer who does not have time or patience for him, and he finds that he—like Nadia—has no place to go.

Within the narrative the doors ease the burden of brutal journeys between countries, crossing oceans, deserts, and hostile environments, which "is a part of the story [of migration] that often gets emphasized".⁴⁰ Travel between countries is often a part of migration that exposes people to harsh environments, the danger posed by wild animals, as well as animals trained to track people, and often underestimated forms of cruelty and exploitation. Hamid replaced such journeys with doorways because it "allowed me to focus on parts of the migration story that often get de-emphasized".⁴¹ Specifically, he is concerned with the question of "what happens before you move and what happens after?"⁴² It is precisely at these points—before and after migration—that the animal comes into view.

Exit West is bookended by birds that the narrator calls hawks. Reading the hawks in *Exit West* in relation to the kites in "The Kites Are Leaving"

demonstrates a tension between Hamid's deliberate erasure of certain place-markers in his project to universalize the migrant narrative and the specificity of place and home. The tension between Hamid's two projects—to attend both to the universal and home—can be seen in the fact that Hamid published *Exit West* and then only a few months later published “The Kites Are Leaving”, demonstrating that there is specificity and a particular concern for animals within his thinking about migration. Universalizing the migrant narrative requires, for Hamid, an erasure of place-markers, from the names of cities and countries to more particular details, such as which species of animals reside there. While Hamid erases such details in *Exit West*, “The Kites Are Leaving” articulates his concerns about his own home and the resident animals. After all, considering migration requires us to think about what we would lose, the parts of our homes that we love, and what we would miss if we were displaced.

I frame this as a tension between the planetary and place, where the planetary represents global networks of migration and the flow of people and animals across the globe and place represents home, the specific plots of land that are engrained in our memories, that hold the histories of our families, the particular places on earth where we feel we belong. At the heart of the tension between the planetary and place lies the crucial paradox of migration that requires people to move and shift in search of stability, security, and safety, but also forces them to endure great losses of history, family, and places. So, migration can be freeing and tie us to a sense of the global, but it can also reinforce the importance of place and home. Going further, I am also interested in a more capacious understanding of the empathy that Hamid seeks to inspire through universalizing the migrant narrative and I argue that the empathy Hamid cultivates extends to animals as fellow migrants and develops a multi-species vision of migration.

The hawks in *Exit West* are both parts of the narrative meant to inspire empathy by universalizing the migrant experience and they also represent specific birds (kites) who Hamid demonstrates care and concern for as fellow migrants. Through the representation of hawks in the novel, Hamid draws close both a general “hawk” who lives alongside humans—and in so doing could inspire us to wonder about the birds who live in proximity to our own homes—and a specific species of bird called black kites who live on his family's compound and are at risk of being displaced. Hamid's choice to call the birds “hawks” anticipates an audience that, like his own children, would also be more familiar with hawks rather than kites, which situates them in a specific place, culture, and perhaps generation. By calling them hawks instead of kites, Hamid enlists these birds in his project to universalize the refugee narrative by situating it in an unnamed place and offering stories of unnamed characters visited through the doors. Hamid brings forward a vision of birds of prey who appear like mythical creatures with expansive wings, keen eyes, and strong, sharp claws and beaks wherever or whenever we encounter them. Writing “hawks” can take our minds anywhere across the earth, as general birds of prey exist nearly everywhere.

Black kites take us to specific parts of the world and when we read them in conjunction with the details that we know about Saeed and Nadia's home and "The Kites Are Leaving", all of a sudden, we are in Pakistan and maybe even Lahore. Reading the novel on its own would allow us to understand the birds in *Exit West* as more general hawks. Bringing *Exit West* into conversation with "The Kites Are Leaving" uncovers a relationship between hawks and kites and illuminates how—whether they represent the planet or a specific place—animals are intimately tied to our sense of home and belonging. I am interested in how thinking about a specific place and home, even a multispecies sense of place, animates ideas about migration and the planetary. Bringing the two pieces by Hamid together offers a rare, concrete demonstration of drawing close where we get to see that the author has actually been thinking carefully about the animals that appear very briefly in his novel and that he has intimately tied something of what he considers to be home to these animals.

At the beginning of the novel, Saeed meets Nadia and cannot get her out of his head. Within an economy made sluggish by the impending unrest, Saeed's job is precarious, but on this day he cannot focus and instead considers:

A large tree, overgrown and untrimmed, [that] reared up from the tiny back lawn of his firm's townhouse, blocking out the sunlight in such a manner that the back lawn had been reduced mostly to dirt and a few wisps of grass, interspersed with a morning's worth of cigarette butts, for his boss had banned people from smoking indoors, and atop this tree Saeed had spotted a hawk constructing its nest.⁴³

Reminiscent of the tree in "The Kites Are Leaving", this old tree gives us a glimpse of the state of nature in this city on the brink of collapse. It survives in a "tiny back lawn"⁴⁴ surrounded by cigarette butts and dirt, but with a healthy dose of sunlight; this is not nature idealized, but as-it-is, urban nature in the Anthropocene. The tree is important, also, because even in its adverse living conditions it provides a home for a hawk who meticulously builds a nest. Hamid continues, "sometimes it floated at eye level, almost stationary in the wind, and then, with the tiniest movement of a wing, or even of the upturned feathers at one wingtip, it veered. Saeed thought of Nadia and watched the hawk".⁴⁵ To find a space for a home in a place that is becoming increasingly unsafe is no small feat. In the hawk, Saeed sees the potential of place and family, and he attends to the smallest details—the slight tilts, the consideration, the painstaking labour—of what it takes for this animal to construct a home. Watching the hawk prepare a nest for a family of his or her own inspires Saeed to think of Nadia, which foreshadows their relationship and their own painstaking attempts to build a home somewhere.

The novel ends with hawks, reinforcing the connection between animals and home. After parting ways with each other, both Saeed and Nadia find themselves back in the city of their birth. They meet at a café and their conversation moves between the stories of their lives and they briefly joke about what might have happened if they had stayed together. The passage feels like a

homecoming. After a turbulent story marked by instability, fear, uncertainty, and a constant sense of movement, the section at the end feels warm and grounded. Directly after this passage, Hamid writes, “the last hawks were returning to the rest of their nests and around them passersby did not pause to look at this old woman in her black robe or this old man with his stubble”.⁴⁶ As Saeed and Nadia find home again, the hawks return to their nests. In “The Kites Are Leaving”, we are left with the inverse image of kites leaving Lahore, which signals the destruction of Hamid’s own sense of belonging to a place. Hamid’s fear of his own displacement parallels his fear for the displacement of the kites because if the kites leave, it will be because his family no longer belongs there either. In *Exit West*, homecoming and a reinvigoration of a sense of belonging to a place are supported by the image of the hawks’ return. Belonging, place, and migration are densely entangled with the animals who live alongside us.

CONCLUSION: AN ANIMAL STORYING OF PLACE

Good stories make us care. (William Cronon)

I started this chapter with the assertion that the stories we tell are full of animals. I conclude by thinking through the ways in which animals are full of the stories we tell about them, as well as what it might mean to recognize an animal storying of place. “None of us see animals clearly”, writes Helen Macdonald, “they’re too full of the stories we’ve given them”.⁴⁷ We have asked questions of and confidently made assertions about animals in ways that reflect our concerns about ourselves.⁴⁸ When we encounter animals—especially literary animals—we face all of the stories we have been told about them; animals are composed of human stories.

Animals are also, however, their own sentient, cognitive beings with a sense of self and place in the world. As much as stories can fill our minds with ways of thinking about animals that serve how we want to think of ourselves, they can also build a sense of the animal that inspires us to imagine their own very different ways of being in the world. Throughout the chapter, I built an analysis of Mohsin Hamid’s work that demonstrates how animals are closely tied to our sense of place. When read through the lens of drawing close, Hamid’s stories provide the material to begin conceptualizing an animals’ sense of and relationship to home and place, which builds a multispecies frame around migration and displacement. My approach to studying black kites in Mohsin Hamid’s two texts builds on a literary analysis of animals with work in the fields of environmental humanities, urban ecology, ethology, and biology. The stories that animals are made of can change and so can our practices of reading them in literature. We can develop richer stories and reading practices by looking to knowledge provided by other disciplines and ways of knowing the world that can teach us to foreground entanglement and interdependence instead of exceptionalism.

I would like to push the idea of richer stories a little further to consider what it might look like to conceptualize an animal's sense of home by thinking of the places they inhabit as storied landscapes.⁴⁹ Thom van Dooren looks to stories and storytelling about extinction to fill out the lives and deaths of birds. He argues that stories can make animals who have either gone extinct or are on the brink of extinction lively again; they can impart a sense that the birds are "forms of life".⁵⁰ Even further, he highlights the storied nature of place and demonstrates that humans are not the only beings who can conceive of place this way: "other living beings constitute their worlds as richly meaningful, historical, and storied".⁵¹ As he argues that a relationship to place based on stories is not an essentially human capacity,⁵² van Dooren points to the possibility of animals storying the places they call home. What might animal stories consist of and how can we learn to recognize them? What is at stake in envisioning place as a storied landscape for a multitude of beings? As we face the fact that we are not alone in this world, we will have to fundamentally change how we conceptualize place and home, as well as what we owe the animals whose homes we are making unlivable; stories like Hamid's consider animals as fellow migrants through history and place are certainly a good place to start.

NOTES

1. Tsing, "Unruly Edges", 144.
2. Le Guin, "Deep in Admiration", 15.
3. Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*, 15.
4. Fawcett, "Ethical Imagining", 135.
5. Fawcett, "Ethical Imagining", 142 (original emphasis).
6. Fawcett, "Ethical Imagining", 145.
7. Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues", 30.
8. Smith, "Danez Smith & Kayeh Akbar", par. 11.
9. Singh, "Bodily".
10. See also the essays by Leung and Boisseron in this volume.
11. Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 25.
12. Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 25.
13. Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 25.
14. For scholars who explore relationships between race and animals from multiple disciplines see: Benedicte Boisseron's *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*; Radhika Govindraján's *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*; Clapperton Chakanetsa Mahvunga's *Vermin Beings: On Pestiferous Animals and Human Game*; Timothy Pachirat's *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*.
15. Kumar et al., "Offspring Defense", 2.
16. Kumar et al., "Human Attacks", 2.
17. Kumar et al., "Habitat Selection", 340.
18. *The Black Kite Project*.
19. The lack of available research of kites in Pakistan led me to extrapolate findings from The Black Kite Project because the populations of Delhi and Lahore are

- comparable, the cities are within 500 km of each other, and the religious believers of their populations comprise both Muslim and Hindu people.
20. *The Black Kite Project*.
 21. Kumar et al., “Human Attacks”, 6.
 22. Kumar et al., “Human Attacks”, 6.
 23. Kumar et al., “Human Attacks”, 6.
 24. Taneja, “Saintly Animals”, 208.
 25. Pinault, *Fortune Telling Parrot*, 112.
 26. Kumar et al., “Density, Laying Date”, 7.
 27. Kumar et al., “Density, Laying Date”, 7.
 28. Hamid, “The Kites are Leaving”, par. 4.
 29. Hamid, “Kites are Leaving”, par. 2.
 30. Hamid, “Kites are Leaving”, par. 2.
 31. Hamid, “The Kites are Leaving”, par. 3.
 32. Preston, “Mohsin Hamid”, par. 5; Tolentino, “A Novel about Refugees”, par. 6; Menger, “What it Feels like to be Other”, 1.
 33. Hamid qtd. in Chandler, “We Are All Refugees”, par. 14.
 34. Hamid, *Exit West*, 3.
 35. Hamid, *Exit West*, 73.
 36. Hamid, *Exit West*, 72.
 37. Hamid, *Exit West*, 72.
 38. Hamid qtd. in Gross, “From Refugees to Politics”, par. 37.
 39. Hamid, *Exit West*, 49.
 40. Hamid qtd. in Gross, “From Refugees to Politics”, par. 38.
 41. Hamid qtd. in Gross, “From Refugees to Politics”, par. 39.
 42. Hamid qtd. in Gross, “From Refugees to Politics”, par. 39.
 43. Hamid, *Exit West*, 6.
 44. Hamid, *Exit West*, 6.
 45. Hamid, *Exit West*, 6.
 46. Hamid, *Exit West*, 230.
 47. Macdonald, “Animals”, par. 8.
 48. Macdonald, “Animals”, par. 8.
 49. van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 79.
 50. van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 8.
 51. van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 67.
 52. van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 78.

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PART II

Medieval Literature



A Community of Exiles: Whale and Human Domains in Old English Poetry

Megan Cavell

Swimming across the cover of the book that started my own scholarly journey into animal studies—Paul Waldau’s *Animal Studies: An Introduction*—is an iconic photograph of a right whale approaching a tiny human diver in an ocean of blue.¹ While much work in the field focuses on understanding relationships between humans and animals who are either closely related to us or prevalent in our lives, I am not surprised that this book’s producers chose a cetacean for their cover image; whale and dolphin social behaviour does, after all, suggest advanced cognitive abilities,² making it easy to empathize. Indeed, in the same year that Waldau’s book was published, *Blackfish* (2013)—a documentary that exposed the treatment of isolated orcas at SeaWorld—took the world by storm.³ By emphasizing the lack of socialization and freedom of movement experienced by the film’s (naturally migratory) cetaceous subjects, and by exposing the way many of these wild animals were captured, separated from their pods and subjected to stress and isolation, *Blackfish* had a huge commercial impact on parks keeping aquatic animals in captivity. With it came new legislation and a renewed public interest in marine conservation. Cetaceans are, in other words, major players when it comes to animal studies.

But what came before *Blackfish* (and before *Moby Dick*, for that matter!)? As a scholar of both animal studies and early medieval culture, I am interested in investigating the long literary history of aquatic animals. I want to explore

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whether we can make connections between modern environmental work and texts that survive from long ago. I also want to question the assumption that allegorical depictions of animals are of no use to scholars of animal studies. And, above all, I want to problematize the binaries of both human/animal and modern/medieval, where the second element is frequently held up as a foil for the first. While it is possible that we can only ever truly know our own experiences, we can make educated guesses and produce critically- and historically-informed interpretations that give us insights into other perspectives. We can learn from other species and we can learn from the past.

With this in mind, the present chapter explores how large aquatic animals were depicted in early medieval England. The focus is on Old English poetry, which I will first contextualize with reference to its thematic interests in community, homeland and exile. These thematic interests provide a rich landscape for problematizing imposed boundaries between human and animal, while several Old English poetic genres—above all the riddle tradition—offer intriguing depictions of non-humans that actively invite animal-focused interpretations.

After mapping out the landscape of Old English poetry, I will turn to a case study: the whale-riddle on the intricately engraved, eighth-century chest known as the Franks Casket.⁴ Reading this poem's beached whale as an exile figure—not unlike the cetaceans who appear in *Blackfish*—I will place him within a tradition of isolated individuals comprising not only humans, but also beasts of burden, prey animals and all manner of natural phenomena. In examining the exile of the Franks Casket whale, I will also explore issues of habitat and domain, expressed through widespread formulaic figurations of the sea that firmly associate these animals with dominion over their watery environment, as well as representations of whales in other Old English texts.

When taken together, these texts emphasize the boundaries between land and sea, human and whale domains. And yet, they also point to a shared state of exile that can affect both apex predators. Whether it is his movement from marine habitat to stranding on land that marks the Franks Casket whale as an exile, or the interminable drifting across inhospitable water that marks the human as an exile, both creatures are united in their isolation and separation from the domain in which they belong.

THE THEMATIC INTERESTS OF OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Early medieval England stretches from the fifth to eleventh centuries CE, with texts produced in Old English from approximately 700–1150. Most vernacular poetry comes to us via four major manuscripts: the Beowulf Manuscript, Exeter Book, Junius Manuscript, and Vercelli Book, all of which were produced in the late tenth/early eleventh centuries. There is a great deal of debate about how long the poems within these manuscripts circulated before they took their present form, but for our purposes precise dates of composition are unnecessary. In addition to these main codices, Old English poems are occasionally found in other manuscripts and on material objects like the Franks Casket. On the

whole, however, we are dealing with a relatively small corpus of just over 30,000 verse lines. This closed corpus provides scholarly opportunities to trace ideas, themes and keywords throughout the entirety of surviving Old English poetry, and draw out patterns that illuminate the period's literary interests.

Such thematic and linguistic analyses enable a recognition of the special importance of community and homeland within Old English poetry, alongside a fascination with those deprived of both through their status as exiles. The importance of community is underlined by "the images of warmth and security of society found throughout Old English poetry and in antithetical images of dislocation and alienation".⁵ Although the symbolic importance of community was not explicitly rendered, societal warmth and security tend to localize around the public space of the hall, which Kathryn Hume describes as "a circle of light and peace enclosed by darkness, discomfort and danger".⁶ Without the hall and all that it stands for—the reciprocity of a lord-retainer relationship, joys of communal celebration, protection from the elements and enemies—individuals may be all too easily swept away into exile, captivity, or death.

In addition to the central role that community plays in Old English literature, the importance of homeland should not be overlooked. The Old English term *eþel* has around 350 occurrences, as well as numerous compound forms, all of which are disproportionately more common in poetry than prose.⁷ The two main senses of *eþel* are "one's own country, one's true home" and "paradise, the Garden of Eden, heaven", the latter being an aspirational homeland for the early medieval English (*DOE*, senses 1 and 2). Nicholas Howe argues that a number of important texts from this period show evidence of a myth of migration that rewrote the gradual movement of the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Franks and others from their continental homelands to post-Roman Britain as an exodus of biblical proportions.⁸ England, thus, became a culturally constructed promised land, with the movement of the *group* essential to that myth: a homeland is only a homeland if the community is in it (60, 180).

Howe is careful to contextualize this communality as what sets apart group migration and journeying on an individual scale, the latter of which almost always amounts to exile in Old English poetry (60). Exile, or the state of being *eþelleas* (without a homeland), is at the heart of a number of poetic genres, from elegy to epic. Stanley B. Greenfield argues that the Old English exile motif manifests across the poetic corpus through descriptions of figures who are isolated from their community, deprived of material or figurative treasures, possess a sorrowful state of mind, and exhibit movement into or within exile.⁹

It is the Old English elegies—nine poems found in the Exeter Book—that are best known for their use of the exile motif. Standing out for their especially poignant use of this motif are *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Wife's Lament*, with their first-person tales about the emotional burden associated with the loss of human community. These poems' speakers lament that they must travel the paths of exile to journey *wineleas* (friendless)¹⁰ or *winemægum bidroren* (deprived of close kinsmen).¹¹ Often these journeys take the speakers through uncharted territory—whether wilderness or sea—and it is the

unfamiliar landscapes that emphasize the extent to which they have lost their homeland.

The exile motif does not occur in the elegies alone, but can be found throughout the poetic corpus, affecting characters with a range of non-normative identities (with regard to gender, religion, race, and class). It is unsurprising, then, that non-human animals also find representation as exiles in this poetry. I have written elsewhere on the use of the motif in the early medieval bovine riddles, especially *Riddle 72* of the Exeter Book, in which an isolated ox is snatched from his joyful youth and forced into the perpetual drudgery of ploughing.¹² Likewise, *Riddle 15* makes use of the exile motif in depicting a prey animal (either a fox or porcupine/hedgehog) chased from domestic harmony by a predator intent on murdering her young. Other riddles tackle natural phenomena like storms and objects made from wood or antler in similar terms of loss of community or home, sorrow, and undesired movement. In fact, the riddle genre—with its individualized portraits of a wide variety of non-humans—is particularly useful when it comes to problematizing human/animal binaries.¹³ By bearing detailed and empathetic witness to the joys and—more often than not—sorrows of non-humans, the several hundred riddles that survive in Old English and Anglo-Latin together form “a programme of resistance to anthropocentrism”, as Corinne Dale recently argued.¹⁴ To the early medieval riddle collections that circulate in manuscript form, we may add one intriguing riddle from a wholly different material context: the beached whale whose poetic depiction frames the front panel of the Franks Casket.

THE FRANKS CASKET

The eighth-century Franks Casket is housed in the British Museum, with one panel residing in the National Museum of Bargello in Florence. It is a beautiful work of art, carved with intricate images that depict scenes from the Roman, Jewish, Christian, and Germanic traditions, as well as inscriptions in the runic futhorc and Latin alphabet. Notably for our purposes, the material used to create the chest is whale bone.

Whaling did occur in the early medieval period, though few detailed sources from England exist beyond the response of a fictional fisherman in Ælfric of Eynsham’s tenth-century *Colloquy*, a bilingual dialogue designed to teach Latin to native speakers of Old English. The fisherman says he prefers to fish in the river, outlining the dangers of hunting a whale: “who is able to drown or kill not only me but also my companions with a single blow” (Latin: *qui non solum me sed etiam meos socios uno ictu potest mergere aut mortificare*/Old English: *þe na þæt an me ac eac swylce mine geferan mid anum slege he mæg besencean oppe gecwylman*).¹⁵ This fictional fisherman tallies with Vicki Szabo’s argument that the scavenging of injured or beached aquatic animals was more common than whaling in the medieval world.¹⁶

However the Franks Casket whale’s bone was obtained, it can be added to the list of animal body parts whose use in the construction of objects was

ubiquitous in the early medieval world: bones, horns, antlers, fur, feathers, sinews, and skin were all exploited for human purposes. When it comes to textual production, the main writing utensils were made from feathers, with inkwells from horn, glass, or occasionally antler. Writing surfaces were almost always made from skin—parchment or vellum generally from sheep, cattle, and goats—something that would have been wholly apparent to readers handling irregular and imperfect material texts.¹⁷ The look and feel of pages would differ based on whether they were the side of the skin that originally bore the animal’s hair or the flesh side, while some might bear traces of the manufacturing process—with holes where the skin was accidentally cut during its preparation and sometimes stitches when such cuts were detected early enough. All this is to say: the whale bone of the Franks Casket is clearly part of a tradition of exploiting animal bodies for the purposes of literary production, even if it does stand out as a little more unusual and its acquisition as a little more opportunistic.

It was not unusual for literary texts to speak of the violence their production relied upon, and in fact there is a whole subset of riddles whose depictions of book-making pull no punches. Exeter Book *Riddle 26*, for example, opens with *Mec feonda sum feore besnyþede, /woruldstrenga binom* (A certain enemy robbed me of my life, stole my world-strength).¹⁸ As the riddle progresses, it becomes clear that the thieving enemy is the human who killed the speaker in order to turn them into a gospel book. The dead animal becomes a martyr who recounts the book-making process in detailed and disturbing terms to witnessing readers...readers holding a similar object produced through this very process.

These texts throw into relief the riddling verses about a beached whale that appear on the front panel of the Franks Casket. The whale bone is carved with scenes from the Germanic legend of Weland the Smith and the Christian Adoration of the Magi, surrounding which is the following inscription:

Fisc flodu ahof on fergenberig;
 warþ gasric grorn, þær he on greut giswom.
 Hronæs ban.¹⁹

(The flood lifted the fish up on the mountain-cliff; the terror-king became sorrowful where he swam on the sand. Whale’s bone.)

Although this whale-riddle does not speak explicitly of the violent process of harvesting the bone used to make the Franks Casket or its production process, Thomas A. Bredehoft argues that we should consider a more enigmatic reading of the solution: *hronæs banā* (whale’s bane/killer), rather than *hronæs ban* (whale’s bone).²⁰ This interpretation relies on what Bredehoft dubs a “retrograde” reading of the runic inscription—a reading that doubles back when it comes to the end of *ban* to pick up the single “a” twice (9–11). Cryptic clues, word puzzles, and double solutions are a key part of the early medieval riddle tradition, and given solutions need not be taken at face value. A single

inscription may well speak to both the material of the casket and the killer of the creature portrayed upon it. The beaching of this whale is, after all, certainly his bane—the cause of his sorrow and instrument of his death.

Moreover, I am not only interested in the way this whale is depicted as having lived and died, but also in the striking description of his state of mind. The beaching of this creature makes him *grorn* (sorrowful), indicating that he is aware his entrapment on the cliffside will lead to death. This particular emotional state is one of the key features of the exile motif, as outlined by Greenfield and mentioned above. In addition to the whale's deep sadness, we might detect hints of isolation from his community and a deprivation of treasures in the term *gasric*, which is usually translated as “terror-king”.²¹ In Old English poetry, kings are to be surrounded by loyal retainers, who receive treasures in return for service. This king is alone. Something must have gone very wrong at the social level for this to be the case.

Many cetaceans are social animals too, and this makes the whale's isolation important from the perspective of animal behaviour. In fact, Szabo suggests that the Franks Casket was likely made from the mandible of a sperm whale,²² a species that is particularly social. Male sperm whales are more solitary than females, but even so are sometimes found in “bachelor schools” with other young males, and both maturing and mature males have been witnessed in group strandings.²³ It is impossible to tell how nuanced the artist-poet of the Franks Casket's knowledge of a specific species' behaviour was, but general knowledge of cetacean behaviours is clear from the early medieval evidence that Szabo amasses. It should also be noted that taxonomy is a relatively modern system of designation, and there was a great deal of terminological slippage between all types of cetaceans, fish, and even fantastical sea monsters in the classical and medieval worlds.²⁴ The terror-king's isolation could potentially be interpreted through both human and (a wide range of possible) non-human perspectives, both real and imagined. The fact that the poem is engraved onto the bone of a real whale, however, creates a visceral connection to its individualized speaker.

In addition to the whale's sorrow and isolation, he is depicted as swimming pointlessly on the sand, unable to return to the water. This last image reflects the exile motif's interest in movement—either into or within exile. We have both, in fact, in this short riddle, since the whale is also lifted by the water onto the land and into his current state. Note the lack of agency in this action. The whale finds himself stranded, alone and in distress, but as an exile there is nothing he can do about it.

I am not the first to suggest that the Franks Casket whale is depicted as an exile. In fact, I became interested in this interpretation after reading Britt Mize's study of early medieval mentality.²⁵ Mize argues that passing references to emotion and subjective experience represent an essential building-block of Old English poetry. In other words, an interest in interiority—rather than an indication of empathy or respect for different subjectivities—is nothing more and nothing less than a marker of a text's poetic form. This necessarily presents

a problem when it comes to interpreting depictions of subjectivity as the unique choice of a particular poet, and it makes reading the Franks Casket whale's emotional experience from an animal studies perspective especially difficult. We simply cannot take this seemingly empathetic depiction of an animal's sorrow at face value if its presence is in part required by its poetic form. However, Mize maintains that the Franks Casket riddle's fascinating insight into the beached whale's experience can still be appreciated. Rather than celebrating the whale's subjectivity in and of itself, we should acknowledge it as part of Old English poetry's overwhelming interest in community: "the beached whale is a weather-beaten exile of sorts, out of its proper element, driven from its kind, and accordingly doomed" (239). Encountering this challenge to read the whale of the Franks Casket as an exile, I became even more convinced of this riddle's importance for the cultural study of early medieval animals: that the experience of exile is not divided along species lines in Old English poetry problematizes human/animal binaries in a productive way.

In fact, the Franks Casket challenges all manner of binaries and power structures, as Catherine Karkov's postcolonial reading of the object's images and inscriptions demonstrates.²⁶ Invoking Howe's discussion of the migration myth, Karkov highlights its link to exile especially and argues that Old English poetry's fascination with invasion and colonization of other people's lands reflects the understanding that some early English people considered themselves "exiles in a new promised land" (41).²⁷ Karkov argues that, like these human "exiles", the Franks Casket "itself, the whale, crossed the water to come aground in England. The front panel [...] presents us with multiple narratives of home and exile that may double but are also very different from each other" (45). These other narratives are the images depicting the captivity and escape of the legendary Weland the Smith and the wise men's worship of Christ. Both stories involve travel between lands, flight from danger, and, interestingly, a blurred boundary between human and non-human animals. Weland is depicted making a cup from the skull of the murdered son of his captor, King Nithhad, while Christ's body "will be broken and consumed as was that of the prince – or the whale from whose bones the casket was made" (we assume).²⁸ These acts of cannibalism and consumption involve a violent rejection of human/animal separation, as does Weland's second depiction: from the bodies of dead birds, he fashions wings to escape.

BEYOND THE FRANKS CASKET

This panel reminds us that Weland is something of an exile himself, imprisoned on an island by his enemy. Other exiles associated with both birds and crossing bodies of water appear in the elegies mentioned above: *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. A passage from the second poem exemplifies the elegiac juxtapositions of bird and human communities that highlight the protagonists' isolation as they drift at sea:

Hwilum ylfete song

dyde ic me to gomene, ganetes hleoþor
 ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
 mæw singende fore medodrince.
 Stormas þær stanclifu beotan, þær him stearn oncwæð
 isigfeþera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal,
 urigfeþra; ne ænig hleomæga
 feascaftig ferð frefran meahte.²⁹

(Sometimes I had the swan's song for my amusement, the gannet's noise and the curlew's sound instead of the laughter of men, the seagull's singing instead of mead-drinking. There storms beat the stone-cliffs, where the icy-feathered tern responds to them; very often the wet-feathered eagle screams; no protecting kin could comfort the destitute spirit.)

The seabirds represent an alternate community, to which the Seafarer has no access, while witnessing these animals calling to each other reminds the man of his own lack of companions.³⁰ In this case, the references to sound and song make it clear that the Seafarer lacks both the celebration and communication that were essential to Old English depictions of life in the hall. Here, the man is at sea, exposed to the elements and inundated with the calls of birds he cannot understand or interpret.

A later passage describes an out-of-body experience, during which the Seafarer's mind flies like a bird *ofer hwæles eþel*³¹ (over the whale's homeland). The weariness of elegiac exiles is heightened by their awareness that they are travelling not in their own homelands, but through the domain of other animals, whether birds or whales. In fact, there is a great deal of poetic evidence for associating these animals with dominion over the sea, which is alternately dubbed the *hwæles eþel* (whale's homeland), *hwælmere* (whale-sea), *hwælweg* (whale-path), *bronrad* (whale-road), *bronnere* (whale-sea) and *brones næsse* (whale's promontory) across the Old English poetic corpus.³² As Heide Estes puts it, these terms for the sea suggest that

the Anglo-Saxons recognized that they passed across it and not through it, as visitors rather than inhabitants, and viewed the sea as the rightful domain of whales, and not of humans. [...] The idea that humans shared the ocean with its creatures, and even that whales and other animals were its legitimate inhabitants, gains credence in juxtaposition with the ideas expressed in the *Exeter Book* riddles.³³

To the Exeter Book riddles, we may add the Franks Casket whale, whose beaching in a human domain is equivalent to the stranding of human exiles in his own domain of the sea.

Indeed, the fact that humans do not really belong in the whale's habitat is made even clearer in a final Old English poem with a similar subject to the

Franks Casket's riddle. *The Whale* (recorded in the Exeter Book) derives from the *Physiologus*—a Greek poem from the first several centuries CE, which was translated and adapted in numerous languages throughout the late antique and medieval periods. The Old English version is a lengthy description of the supposed behaviours of whales, accompanied by their allegorical interpretations. One of the most fantastic passages involves human travellers who mistake a whale's back for an island:

Is þæs hiw gelic hreofum stane,
 swylce worie bi wædes ofre,
 sondbeorgum ymbseald, særyrica mæst,
 swa þæt wenap wæglibende
 þæt hy on ealond sum eagam wliten,
 ond þonne gehydað heahstefn scipu
 to þam unlonde oncyrrapum,
 setlaþ sæmearas sundes æt ende,
 ond þonne in þæt eglond up gewitað
 collenferþe; ceolas stondað
 bi stape fæste, streame biwunden.
 ðonne gewiciað werigferðe,
 faroðlacende, frecnes ne wenað,
 on þam ealonde æled weccað,
 heahfyr ælað; hæleþ beoþ on wynnum,
 reonigmode, ræste geliste.³⁴

(Its appearance is like a rough rock, as if it crumbles by the water's edge, surrounded by sand-dunes, the largest sea bank, so that it appears to wave-travelers that they look upon some sort of island with their eyes, and then they tie the high-prowed ships to that false land with anchor-ropes, fasten the sea-steeds at the edge of the ocean, and then advance onto the island bold-hearted; the ships stand securely by the shore, surrounded by the stream. Then, weary-hearted, the wave-goers make camp, they do not expect danger, on that island they kindle a fire, light a high-blaze; the men are joyful, weary-minded, pleased with their bed.)

Immediately following this passage, the whale—said to be *facnes cræftig* (skillful in deceit) (line 24b)—dives to the bottom of the sea in order to drown the sailors and their ships. The relationship between whale, sailors and ships merits some attention because of the former and latter's category slippage. The living whale figuratively takes on the form of material land—an *ealond* (island)—while the material ships figuratively take on the form of living animals—*sæmearas* (sea-steeds).³⁵ The ships are zoomorphized to become horses, like the ones humans might ride across an actual road instead of the whale-road. While this figuration is positively portrayed, the whale's transition from animal to

material land is, on the other hand, not simply a mistake but a deception; the cunning whale is *unland*, “false land”, or literally “un-land”. The confusion of boundaries between living animal and material object/land relies on a complex hierarchy that places human above domesticated animal and domesticated animal above wild animal. The “domesticated” ship-steeds are useful to humans because they do as they are commanded, while the wild whale’s agency is seen as detrimental to humankind. This is further complicated by the fact that the action is carried out within the whale’s habitat, rather than the humans’ domain.

While the whale is the focus of this poem, we do see something of the humans’ emotional experience—as we might expect from a poetry so invested in subjectivity. They are simultaneously *collenferþe* (boldhearted), *werigferðe* (weary-hearted), *on wynnnum* (joyful), and *reonigmode* (weary-minded). The weariness suggests that these people have been on a long sea journey, not as exiles perhaps (since they are portrayed in a group), but as travellers. Their joy and bold-heartedness implies, however, that they believe they have returned to the security of their own domain—to land. They are wrong, of course, and the whale reminds them just who is in charge by submerging them in his watery habitat. I cannot help but read this scene in the light of *Blackfish*, where the isolation and mistreatment of captive orcas led to violent behaviour and the tragic deaths of several keepers.

Yet, here we are dealing with a wild cetacean whose supposed behaviour marks him out as an allegorical devil; it is Satan’s desire to deceive unwary humans that leads victims to be dragged to the depths of hell (lines 31b-49a). The allegory draws us away from the animal himself, even though the majority of the poem concerns his apparent physical and behavioural characteristics. While it is all too easy to dismiss medieval depictions of animals on the grounds that their allegorical nature precludes their usefulness to the study of actual animals, Onno Oerlemans reminds us that an allegorical representation “still relies to some degree on an awareness of the animal and its kind or species. [...] Even in fables some small sense of the actual animal must enter into the allegory, leave a trace. The animal chosen to represent some aspect of human behaviour is not an arbitrary choice”.³⁶ The same argument can be made of the *Physiologus* whale.

What survives of “the actual animal”, then? Did the Old English poet think that whales were inherently deceptive? And that they frequently mimicked islands, to the detriment of seafarers? That element of deception can perhaps be traced to Mize’s argument that subjectivity is essential to Old English poetry. Indeed, this deception does not appear in other versions of the *Physiologus*, which matter-of-factly describe the whale diving when he realizes he has been set on fire (fair enough!).³⁷ It is perhaps a combination of the whale’s allegorical interpretation and this poetic form’s interest in interiority that leads to a uniquely deceptive whale in Old English then. Stories about whales, turtles, and large fish imitating islands have circulated widely throughout many cultures and periods.³⁸ The origin of this peculiar behaviour is unclear, although it is worth noting that Saint Ambrose’s fourth-century *Hexameron* describes the

whales of the Atlantic ocean as similar to mountainous islands, and the near-sublime fear that such a sight elicited in early whale-watchers.³⁹ Linking this passage to the *Physiologus* tradition, Szabo notes: “While the whale’s malicious intent which lies behind these described behaviours is of course fictitious, actual observation of whales seems to be found in both descriptions. Surfaced whales’ long, broad backs, when seen from a distance, could appear to be islands”.⁴⁰ Even fantastic portrayals, then, hold links to, and so rely on, depictions of actual animal lives; reading fantastic embellishments in ways that hold on to that actuality is essential.

* * *

Building on formulaic depictions of the sea as the whale’s domain, *The Whale* makes it clear that Old English poets considered large aquatic animals to possess dominion over their underwater habitat. This power could be lost, however, by whales in exile, like the beached protagonist of the Franks Casket riddle. In moving from whale to human domain, the Franks Casket whale’s exile is the complete inverse of human exile at sea. But, while the circumstances may be different, the experiences are fundamentally similar: isolation, deprivation, sorrow and futile movement. It would seem that whales and humans have a great deal in common in Old English poetry. And in their shared isolation, we might glimpse some form of boundary-blurring community.

While we should be wary of allegories that trivialize the experiences of other animals, we should not allow this to divert us from the truth that allegorical forms do “express glimmers of likeness, connections that lie below the surface”.⁴¹ These hidden likenesses and connections stand at the very core of medieval literary practice, since texts from this period were always intended to be read both literally and allegorically. I would never claim that early medieval poetry has a shared agenda with modern environmental work—the Franks Casket and *Blackfish* are performing very different functions—but I do hope to have highlighted the complexity of human/animal relations that this period’s literature (especially its rich corpus of riddles) celebrates. Old English poetry actively invites critical readings that delve below the surface, into the water, to meet animals in a domain we must recognize as their own.

NOTES

1. Photo by Brian J. Skerry.
2. Marino et al., “Cetaceans Have Complex”, 966–72.
3. Cowperthwaite et al., *Blackfish*.
4. For images, see British Museum, “The Franks Casket/Auzon Casket”.
5. Magennis, *Images of Community*, 3.
6. Hume, “Concept of the Hall”, 64.
7. Cameron et al., *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)*, s.v. *eþel*.
8. *Migration and Mythmaking*.

9. "Formulaic Expression", 125–31.
10. *The Wanderer* and *The Wife's Lament*, in Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 135, line 45b, and 210, line 10a. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.
11. *The Seafarer*, in Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 143, line 16.
12. "A Poetics of Empathy?" The riddle numbering system used here is that of Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*.
13. Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, 121.
14. *Natural World*, 2.
15. *Ælfric's Colloquy*, 30, lines 117–18. On early whaling, see Szabo, *Monstrous Fishes*.
16. *Monstrous Fishes*, 6.
17. For a theoretical approach to interactions with imperfect parchment, see Kay, *Animal Skins*, 3–7.
18. Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 193, lines 1-2a.
19. Transliterated from runes in Dobbie, *Minor Poems*, 116.
20. *Visible Text*, 10.
21. The second element of this compound is more certain: *ric* is a form of *rica* (king/ruler). The first element, *gas*, may be related to Icelandic *geisa* (to rage) and *geisan* (impetuosity). See Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *gasric*, *rica*.
22. *Monstrous Fishes*, 55, n. 79.
23. Whitehead, "Sperm Whale", 922–3.
24. See Szabo, *Monstrous Fishes*, 31–65; and Esser-Miles, "King of the Children of Pride", 275–301.
25. *Traditional Subjectivities*.
26. "Franks Casket Speaks Back", 37–61.
27. My only critique of Karkov's argument is that the group migration she speaks of is different to the *isolation* of exile, even if a removal from one's homeland is central to both.
28. "Franks Casket Speaks Back", 43.
29. Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 143–4, lines 19b-26.
30. For an ecologically-informed discussion of *The Seafarer's* birds, see Warren, *Birds in Medieval English Poetry*, 25–63.
31. Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 145, line 60a.
32. Esser-Miles, "King of the Children of Pride", 296. The sea is also the road/path of swans and seals, and the bath of gannets and fish, though these formulaic iterations are less numerous than those relating to whales.
33. *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes*, 37.
34. Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 171–2, lines 8–23.
35. See Paddock, "Beastly Spaces", 89–90.
36. Oerlemans, "Animal in Allegory", 298.
37. Paddock, "Beastly Spaces", 86.
38. Szabo, *Monstrous Fishes*, 47–52; Bane, *Encyclopedia of Beasts*, 44, 57, 124, 169.
39. *Exameron*, 166, section 5.11.32.
40. *Monstrous Fishes*, 48.
41. Oerlemans, "Animal in Allegory", 300.

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An Ontological Turn for the Medieval Books of Beasts: Environmental Theory from Premodern to Postmodern

Susan Crane

My essay asks a medieval Book of Beasts about its theory of being: what principles organise the living world? what are this world's internal dynamics? what is the place of the human among all creatures? These questions continue to be pressing for environmental theory today, as we seek to de-center the human and move beyond modernity's conception of "nature" as raw material for exploitation. For this postmodern project, the time before modernity can offer useful guidance. Asking a premodern Book of Beasts about its theory of being can support and even instruct postmodern environmental theory.

An influential discussion in philosophical anthropology can bring to light the latent theoretical work in a Book of Beasts. Over the past dozen years, anthropology's "ontological turn", moving also across science studies and historical and literary studies, has focused on humankind's most basic intuitions about the organisation of the living world.¹ Briefly to introduce this turn, it proposes that all human societies apprehend the nature of being by choosing from just a few generative designs. For example, a theory of being that links up living creatures in material networks of connection and opposition (ontological *analogism*) differs from a perception that creatures are linked together by cognition and cross-species communication (ontological *animism*). These

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incompatible theories of being make many appearances in medieval Books of Beasts, alongside a more familiar ontological *dualism* that divides humankind fundamentally from other creatures.² The ontological schemas are to be understood as fundamental inferences, preliminary even to evidence-gathering, but useful in their very simplicity for clarifying how natural evidence gets apprehended in different places and times.

The Books of Beasts took shape over several medieval centuries; today they are among the best-known works of the European Middle Ages. Each surviving Book of Beasts is unique, because each manuscript is handmade by a thoughtful and sometimes innovative compiler, copyist, and illustrator. Alongside their uniqueness, the manuscripts do fall into groups. The oldest group, called *Physiologus*, emerged in the fourth century CE, listing a few dozen creatures and providing a spiritual interpretation for each one. A later group of about 50 manuscripts, my focus in this essay, draws on *Physiologus* and several additional sources in its entries for over 120 creatures. This group, dating from the late twelfth century through the thirteenth, calls itself *Bestiarium*—the *Bestiary*.³ Many manuscripts of this group are lavishly produced and decorated, including the Bodleian Library manuscript that illustrates this chapter, Bodley 764, produced in England around 1240–1260.⁴ Bodley 764 and its manuscript group articulate a heterogeneous theory of being that can illuminate and challenge contemporary environmental theory.

On first reading, the *Bestiaries* are head-spinningly heterogeneous, swarming with disparate, incompatible observations on nonhuman animals. In the past, scholars have tended to focus on the *Bestiaries*' spiritual interpretations for animal behaviours—taken from *Physiologus*—but the animals' behaviours do not always get a spiritual interpretation, and their behaviours are often dissonant with one another. The *Bestiaries*' opening entry on the Lion illustrates this dissonance. Roughly the second quarter of the entry provides spiritual meanings for leonine traits. In Bodley 764, when the Lion is tracked by hunters, he wipes out his tracks with his brush-like tail; “so our Redeemer, the spiritual lion of the tribe of Judah . . . hid the tracks of His love in heaven, until, sent by the Father, He descended into the womb of the Virgin Mary”.⁵ But the Lion entry also offers a wealth of information unrelated to spiritual messaging. (Fig. 1).

Lions fear roosters, especially white ones. They cure themselves of illnesses by eating an ape. They spare victims who prostrate themselves. Lions with straight manes are fierce, those with curly manes are peaceable. They kill children, but only when they are exceptionally hungry (25–26). These diverse observations have raised questions. Are we expected to supply spiritual glosses, or to trust that they could be supplied, when they are absent? Or is the *bestiarist* less concerned with consistency and meaningfulness than with collecting bits of information, wherever they can be found, however disparate they may be?

I believe these are the wrong questions. They derive from a presupposition that the only organising principle for the *Bestiary* is, or should be, the Christian principle expressed in the entry's passage on the “spiritual lion of the tribe of



Fig. 1 “Lion with Ape, Men, and Rooster”. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folio 2. By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

Judah”: we can read the created world, like a book, for spiritual meanings. These meanings do not inhere in the material world; they inhere in the mind of God and the spiritual awareness unique to humankind. This dichotomous conception of earthly materiality versus human spirituality is still familiar to us, in its secularised modern version, as “nature” (out there, separate from us)

versus “culture” (in here, unique to us). This dichotomy, however, is not the Bestiary’s only organising principle. Instead, the Bestiary depends on three organisations of being, only one of which is the dualist split between nonhuman materiality and human spirituality. When all three become visible—dualism, analogism, and animism—the massive complexity of the Bestiary begins to make sense.

These three theories of being, anthropologists argue, are not reductive after-the-fact simplifications but prior, intuitive “framing devices” or “cognitive schemata” that are foundational to making sense of the living world.⁶ Each framing device (each “ontology”, in the anthropological sense of the term) offers a clarified world of beings and a set of strategies, different in each case, for maneuvering through specific situations ranging from what to eat to what to believe.

The aspiration of anthropology’s ontological turn could hardly be higher: it claims that each of its framing devices is equally credible, and thus it “unsettles our basic assumptions about what could exist”.⁷ It breaks with an older ethnography for which there were many “cultures” but only one “nature”. In that ethnography, many differing human societies all occupied a single nonhuman realm—a realm that (Western) anthropologists understood well, and others (on other continents) misinterpreted in exotic and fascinating ways. What if, instead, the character of human and nonhuman being is not fully verifiable? What if the living world’s inconceivable complexity generates, in specific times and places, quite different and incompatible natural realities? Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls this ontological claim “an anti-epistemological . . . counter-cultural . . . philosophical war machine”.⁸ Philippe Descola, another early proponent, takes a more professorial tone: “It is time . . . that we take stock of the fact that worlds are differently composed; it is time that we endeavour to understand how they are composed without automatic recourse to our own mode of composition”.⁹ As I turn to detailing the differently composed worlds in the Bestiary, I ask you to suspend the question of whether each of its three “differently composed” worlds sounds equally plausible, and to hold in mind the premise of the ontological turn that no human community has achieved total clarity on how the living world is structured.

FROM TAXONOMISING TO ONTOLOGISING

The Bestiary’s taxonomic thought provides a stepping stone to its ontological thought. Taxonomising and ontologising both ponder the living world in an effort to discover its design. The difference between these two vital undertakings lies in the relatively fine-grained classificatory work of taxonomy, versus the deeper, more preliminary distinctions of anthropology’s “framing devices”. As I began reading the Bestiary several years ago, its taxonomic thought offered a coherence for its heterogeneous contents.¹⁰ Modern scientific taxonomies can organise animals in diagrams—trees and tables—by restricting their criteria to morphological distinctions such as arrangement of teeth and number of

toes. Premodern and folk taxonomies range more widely as they classify. For example, the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis groups creatures by habitat (land, air, water), but also by disposition (wild beasts versus beasts of burden), and also by size (large and small). The Bestiary's organisation takes its first cue from these categories in Genesis, and its taxonomising does not stop there; its entries go on to contrast and group living creatures on many further scales of classification such as their enmities and allegiances, edibility, medicinal properties, cognition, and spiritual significance. The Bestiary's taxonomic efforts are so multifarious that a modern two-dimensional "tree" diagram could not possibly encompass them.

Taxonomy did offer me an answer to "what is happening" in the Bestiary, "what scales of classification are operating here", but it did not offer an answer to "*why* is this happening here": "why are *these* scales of classification operating, and not others?" The move from *what* to *why* entails a shift from taxonomy to ontology, which provides an answer to the *why* of the Bestiary's complex taxonomy. The answer surprised me. The Bestiary's taxonomy is so massively complex because it supplements the most familiar ontological model of the Middle Ages, the Christian dualism of animal materiality versus human spirituality, with two further ontological schemas: analogism, drawn from classical and medieval natural science, and animism, drawn from classical animal lore and mythology. These latter two ways of theorising the design of being are much less familiar today than animal/human dualism. Our unfamiliarity with analogism and animism makes their textual traces look irrelevant. Divorced from their ontological frameworks, an observation that lions fear white roosters, that swans are good omens for sailors, or that bees get together and elect a king, can appear just random or fanciful. Another substantial reason that scholars have missed the analogism and animism in Bestiary manuscripts is that these theories of being are incompatible with Christian dualism and its post-enlightenment grandchild, "nature" versus "culture".

Ontological theorising takes place on a level deeper than taxonomy's inductive process, a level "where basic inferences are made about the kinds of beings the world is made of and how they relate to each other".¹¹ For example, "notions like 'nature' or 'culture' do not denote a universal reality but a particular way, devised by the Moderns, of carving ontological domains in the texture of things. Other civilizations have devised different ways of detecting qualities among existents, resulting in other forms of organizing continuity and discontinuity between humans and nonhumans, of aggregating beings in collectives, of defining who or what is capable of agency and knowledge".¹² For each unique civilisation, these ontological frames would need much detailing, but their very simplicity gives them purchase on details. The payoff of an ontological approach lies in "creating the conditions under which one can 'see' things in one's ethnographic material that one would not otherwise have been able to see".¹³ For my work on the Bestiary's multifarious taxonomy, anthropology's "ontological domains" were a revelation. In a flash, they corralled its myriad animal characteristics, and divided them into three alternative theories of being.

DUALISM, ANALOGISM, AND ANIMISM

First, dualism: Thinking taxonomically in order to think ontologically has long been recognised as a project of the Bestiary—but only with regard to the animal-versus-human dualism of its Christian interpretations. When the fox plays dead in order to lure carrion crows into range of its teeth, “The birds see that it is not breathing... with its tongue hanging out, and think it is dead. They fly down to perch on it, and it seizes them and devours them. The fox is the symbol of the devil, who appears to be dead to all living things until he has them by the throat and punishes them” (65). In this example, the taxonomic data (the fox is a beast, a predator, it feeds on careless birds) signifies how vulnerable humans are to fleshly temptation. The deceptive fox and the hapless birds belong to a great system of signs designed to teach us about our souls and our salvation. As the medieval philosopher Alan of Lille put it, “All the creatures of the world are like a book, and a picture for us, and a mirror”.¹⁴ In the Fox entry and many like it, the Bestiary expresses an ontological antecedent for modern dualism: already in medieval Christianity, humankind has exceptional status, elevated above the rest of the material world, and crucially distinct from the rest in possessing *logos*, *ratio*—mind, language, eternal soul. By the eighteenth century, the Bestiary’s Christian bifurcation between nonhuman and human was secularising into modern nature/culture dualism, which continued to exalt humankind in fundamental contrast to all else, still basing that elevation in the possession of *logos*.

Next, analogism: Alongside the Bestiary’s Christian dualism is a quite different, ancient system of being that webs all creatures, including humans, together in one sociocosmic order. Analogism discovers networks of influence, attraction, repulsion, and similitude that coordinate all materiality, even the stars and planets, in a dense web of interconnections. In contrast to reading a book of nature for spiritual meanings, matter-to-spirit, analogism reads creation horizontally. Bodies interact. Analogism pervaded classical, medieval, and Early Modern science, as Michel Foucault detailed in *The Order of Things*. Beings mirror and touch one another across space and time: “the universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man”.¹⁵ Medieval physicians looked to the planets and the zodiac for guidance in diagnoses and treatments. The Bestiary’s stag is the adversary of serpents, the newt is contrary to the scorpion, the hydrus to the crocodile, the basilisk to the weasel, “for the Creator of all things has made nothing for which there is not a counterforce” (184).¹⁶ For lions, apparently, white roosters occupy this oppositional role. Such interconnections may be mysterious and difficult to discern, but they can be informative—medicinal, admonitory, instructive, predictive. Deer “eat an herb called dittany, and by doing so draw out arrows which have wounded them” (51). A sick lion eats an ape. The stag’s enmity to serpents inheres in his physical body, so that burning either of his horns will repel snakes (52). Because dogs can heal their own wounds by licking them,

“the tongues of puppies are a very good cure for wounds of the intestines” (76). When mating, women and other female creatures should be careful where they look, because females “produce offspring according to the image they see ... as they conceive” (106). Throughout the Bestiary, many such folds in nature are preserved from classical sources and Isidore of Seville’s early medieval *Etymologies*, installing ontological analogism alongside Christian dualism.

In just one entry, for Crow, the Bestiary demurs while recording an analogist practice: “Soothsayers say that it [a crow] can reveal the purpose of men’s actions: it can disclose the whereabouts of an ambush, and predict the future. This is a great offence, to believe that God entrusts His counsels to crows” (160).¹⁷ But elsewhere in the Bestiary, analogism’s prognostications are not critiqued. The Swan entry, drawing on Isidore of Seville, records that “as Ovid’s friend Aemilius Macer wrote, ‘When you are telling omens by the appearance of birds, to see a swan always means joy; sailors love it because it never dives beneath the waves’” (134). (Fig. 2).

The swan, as a buoyant swimmer that does not dive to catch fish, somehow accomplishes or predicts a ship’s buoyancy. Bodley 764 endorses this passage by retaining it even while adding a spiritual interpretation to the Swan entry,



Fig. 2 Swan entry with source texts. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folios 65v–66. By permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

drawn from Hugh of Fouilly's *Book of Birds*.¹⁸ Hugh's full text also begins with Isidore's swan passage, but Hugh cuts Isidore's information on the swan omen, replacing it with his Christian interpretation in which the swan's white feathers covering black skin signify a hypocrite's virtuous demeanor concealing his sins of the flesh. Ovid's analogist friend, who prognosticates with swans, "offends against" the Christian interpreter Hugh, for whom swans may be objects of human contemplation, but not clues to human destiny. Yet Bodley 764, when adding Hugh's spiritual meaning for the swan, also retains or restores the predictive function of swans that Hugh deleted, as if it posed no problem to juxtapose an analogist swan with Hugh's Christian dualist swan. In analogism, human fates and bodies are enmeshed in the bodies of other creatures. One cannot logically believe this is true and simultaneously believe in an organising dichotomy that sets the ensouled human above and apart from the nonhuman. Yet Bodley 764 preserves both ontological schemas—and even preserves a third, animism, that is incompatible again with the first two. Before dealing with the puzzle of the Bestiary's heterogeneity, I'll briefly delineate this third schema.

In ontological animism, mindedness, subjectivity, and agency characterise living creatures; species are imagined as social groups; and cross-species social interactions are celebrated. In contrast to dualism's split between human cognition and animal lack, animism draws different forms of life into cognitive relationship. Mediterranean mythology's inspired world is a distant ancestor for the Bestiary's animism; a more proximate ancestor is classical natural science as preserved in Bestiary sources by Solinus, Ambrose and Isidore. From Ambrose, the Bestiary brings a hive of bees that "choose a king, create their own people, and although subject to a king are nonetheless free. For they maintain his right to judgement and are devotedly faithful to him because they recognise him as their elected leader, and honour his great responsibility" (178). From Solinus and Isidore, the Bestiary adopts "Elephants have a lively intelligence and memory.... The goodness of mercy is within them. For when they see men wandering in the desert, they lead them back into familiar ways.... If they fight in a battle, they always take great care of the weary and the wounded" (40, 42–43). And, looking back to the Bestiary's opening entry, "The merciful nature of lions is confirmed by numerous examples: they will spare men lying on the ground, and will lead captives whom they meet to their home. They will attack men rather than women. They only kill children if they are exceptionally hungry" (25). Such passages illustrate that in animism, minds touch across species lines, minds communicate, and not along predetermined, instinctual pathways. Minded animals, like humans, do act in ways said to be characteristic of their species, but they also interact situationally, individually, and with discrimination. Dogs are loyal and trustworthy; moreover, when their masters have been attacked, "dogs have often provided persuasive evidence which has led to the conviction of the criminal, and their silent testimony can usually be believed" (75). Of course, a rigorous Christian philosopher could have none of this. Thomas Aquinas anticipates the Enlightenment's rationalist

philosophers (Descartes, for example) in comparing nonhuman animals to mechanisms such as clocks. A dog may appear to be capable of thought and initiative, Aquinas writes, but “the same appears in the movement of clocks and other works of human art... That is why we call some animals clever or intelligent, not because they are endowed with reason or choice”.¹⁹ Yet the Bestiary often distributes cognition, affect, and virtue across species lines.

For some anthropologists of the ontological turn, animism attributes identical consciousness to all creatures.²⁰ For others of this turn, animism is less universal and less uniform. Terry Turner’s review of Amazonian ethnographies shows that they document a textured animism in which homogeneity of spirit is no more implicit than homogeneity of bodies.²¹ Ernst Halbmayer, Laura Rival, and others concur that Amerindian animisms range “from fully personalised to the non-personalised along dimensions of animacy, agentivity, consciousness [and] the ability to communicate”.²² When the Bestiary speaks animistically, it aligns with this more textured, species-inflected animism.

The Bestiary’s theory of being is not persistently animistic, but neither is it persistently committed to analogism or dualism. When its three ontological allegiances come to light, the Bestiary becomes more meaningful, but no less disorienting. A closer look at its formal strategies will clarify both its own heterogeneity and the heterogeneity of contemporary environmental theory.

FORMAL HETEROGENEITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEORY

The Bestiary’s ontological juxtapositions raise problems of theory and problems of form. From a theoretical perspective, its three frames for being—dualism, analogism, animism—are incompatible with one another, producing a difficult reading experience. Redoubling this difficulty, the Bestiary’s compositional form emphasises the text’s theoretical disjunctions. Only rarely does the text provide cross-ontological commentary (such as the condemnation of Christians who might believe that a crow’s cries or entrails can predict the future). The Bestiary’s apparently haphazard compiling of material from diverse sources has tempted some scholars to disregard or downgrade the status of animist and analogist passages. In my view, what may look like thoughtless cutting and pasting is in fact an aesthetic strategy: it is a deliberate formal choice that insists on the heterogeneity of the Bestiary’s contents, and presses us to accept this heterogeneity’s intellectual challenge.

The Bestiary’s form is compilatory. Virtually every passage re-deploys, chunk by chunk, earlier texts including Isidore’s *Etymologies*, Ambrose’s *Hexameron*, the spiritual interpretations of *Physiologus*, and classical nature lore from Solinus’s *Collectanea*. (Fig. 3).

Each of these source texts has its own investments: natural history for the classical writers, the preservation of classical learning and language theory for Isidore, moral and mystical instruction for Ambrose and *Physiologus*. The Bestiary, rather than smoothing over the diversities of its sources, leaves the joints showing in a visibly composite structure. Is its structuring merely “cut

3

Bestiarum uocabulum
 ipse conuenit leoni
 q̄s parit. & tigris. &
 leop. & uulps. & ca
 nis. & simit. & ceteris
 uel que uel unguib; se
 uiunt ceteris serpen
 tib;. Bestie autē dicit
 aut qua leuante Fere appellat eo qd̄ uacu
 rati uacant; libere & desiderio suo ferant.
 Sunt enī libere eo; uoluntate. & huc atq;
 illuc uagantur. & quo antea dixerit eo fe
 runtur. Leo enī uocabulum ex greca origine
 miserum est in latinum. grece enī leontio
 cati. & est nomen nocturni quia ex parte
 corruptum est. Leo enī grece latine ter uir
 ueratur eo qd̄ princip; est. omnū bestiarū.
 Qui genit; trapharum dī. equib;. uentis
 & uida. crispā imbelles sunt. Longi & comā
 simplici. acres animos eo; front; & cauda
 indit. uirtus eo; in pectore firmat. Leo
enī capite. Roratum rimant supinū. fer
nes magi. Leo nature sue ut sup; sero
ciat. & sui aliarum ferarum genib; uisite
ri uelut. & q̄ ter quadam plurimoy dedit

Isidore,
 Etymologies
 12.2.1-4

Ambrose,
 Hexameron
 6.3.14

4

Ambrose,
 Hexameron,
 continued

Physiologus,
 chapter 1

Lionem tres principales
 naturas habet. Prima natura est qd̄
 cacurina inoniam amat re. Et si uolū
 gerit ut queratur a uenatorib;. uenit ad e
 um. & uenatorum. & cum cauda sua p̄
 regum uocatur uestigia sua q̄m; terri. li
 ner scatur uenatores p̄ uestigia ei; inueniāt
 cubile ei;. & capiunt eum. Sic & saluay uir
 scilicet spūalis leo de tribu iuda. nāq; uelle
 filius dauid uocatur uestigia sue carnis
 in eis. donec missus a p̄e descendere in u
 terum uingrat mare. & saluay gen; hu
 manum qd̄ perat. Et hoc ignoant dī
 uolū scilicet humani generis inuincat q̄
 purum hominē auisus est temptare. Et
 hoc ignoantes qui sursum erant angeli
 & ascendente ad p̄m. dicebant ad eos quicū
 eo ascendebant. Quis est iste rex gl̄e. Sola
 natura ei est. quā cum dormit oculos ap
 tot hie uidet. Sic & dicit ut corporatē
 dormient in cruce sepulcat. & dicit ad
 uigilabat. sicut dī in carnal; carnal; ego
 dormio & eo meū uigilat. Et ipsam. Et
 ce si dormiatur neq; ponitur qui adhibet
 ist. Terna natura ei est. cum leua partē
 catulos suos generat eos mortuos & cōdit

Col trib; dieb; donec ueniens pater eo; in
 die insufflat in faciem eo; & uiuificat eos.
 Sic ouis pater dūm uisū ih̄m xp̄m uerba
 die suscitatur a mortuis. dicitur iacob. Do
 mib; tanq̄m leo. & sicut catulus leonis
 suscitabitur. Circa hominē leonem nata
 est ut nisi lesi nequeat nasci. Ad q̄m exē
 plum irrationabiles homines respicere debet
 qui n̄ lesi nascuntur. & in uocem opprimē
 cum uulcat xp̄iana lex terros dimittit. I
 ueros. Pater enim leonum mīa exēplū af
 fidius. p̄ hanc enī parum. capriyos obuios
 rep̄tate p̄mum. In uros uolū qm̄ in fem
 nal; ferunt. Infantes n̄ nisi in magna fame
 p̄mum. Pater omnes parturū asāgna.
 Prīmū quō alterius dieb; p̄mū. alius ci
 bum capunt. Et frequē si digestio n̄ est
 insecuta. solit; cibationi supponunt diem.
 eo qd̄ tunc carnis; plus uisū deuocant. &
 gaudant. Tunc qd̄ carnes uisū am̄p
 uenatoras q̄; uisū uenat; inserat in ora un
 gūib;. eal; hōne cētatur. Sane & cum
 fingendum est. in facere idē facim; Se
 nectam leonum defecto. p̄bat denunt.
 Adhū uenit. Ne hū tantum. & hōnes.
 & camel;. & elephantes. & si nocentes. & ci
 gides. & lerne. Et uir p̄mo catulos quinq;

Physiologus,
 chapter 1,
 continued

Isidore,
 Etymologies
 12.2.6
 and B-Isidore

Solinus,
 Collectanea
 27.15, 13-14,
 16-17

Solinus,
 Collectanea,
 continued

Ambrose,
 Hexameron
 6.3.14, 6.4.26,
 6.6.37

Solinus,
 Collectanea
 27.21-22

Leo obum faldit hesterum. & ipas sue
 esse reliquas atter. sicut. Que autem ei
 resistere fera audeat. aut uoc; tantū nari
 talit; inest. terro. ut multa aufmanūm q̄
 p̄ reuerentem possit euadere eius impetum.
 uigilant; eius sonitū uelud fidam ut ipam
 nra atq; uita desinam. Leo oger simia
 querit ut deuoret eam quod uolūt sanari.
 Leo gallum & magne album uocat. Leo
 quidem rex ferarum uergo supponit dai
 leo cragatur & ueneno serpentū occidit.
 Leonophones uocari accipiunt modica be
 stias. Que capte erunt ut earum cineris
 asigne carnes possit uideat. p̄ corrupta
 autem semitarum leones necit. si q̄
 uisū uisū q̄ uisū sumptent. Propena le
 ones natural; eas perunt odo. atq; ubi
 facultat; data est a motu quidem abstinere
 sic dilatatat; exantant; p̄mū uisū.




Fig. 3 Lion entry with source texts. The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Bodley 764, folios 3–4v. by permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

and paste”, a haphazard assemblage, as yet uncompleted? I believe a better term for the Bestiary’s structure is “bricolage”, the French term for craftsmanship that re-combines pre-existing bits and pieces of material to build a new thing, differently imagined, to meet a new need. In some concrete examples of bricolage, on the island of Guadeloupe, a boat’s bow pushed ashore became the foundation for a house, with portholes and paint to coordinate its disparate parts.²³ On Lindisfarne, a boat’s hull might be inverted to roof a shed, with walls and a door assembled beneath it.²⁴ Or, a rowboat could be re-conceived as a bookcase, by turning the hull from horizontal to vertical and adding some shelves.²⁵ Bricolage produces a new thing whose component parts now operate differently from before. On the one hand, bricolage does not disguise the disparate nature of its component parts; indeed, the product of bricolage continues to express the history of its construction. On the other hand, each disparate component can no longer be judged according to its former use: the house’s bow need not be seaworthy; the bookcase’s hull need not be caulked and sealed.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, father of structuralism and grandfather of the ontological turn, enlarged the term bricolage from its reference to craftsmen using found materials to construct a new thing—a house, a shed, a bookcase.²⁶ He proposed that bricolage could also refer to the working methods of many pre-modern and non-modern students of nature. Such naturalist “bricoleurs” collect bits of knowledge about their surroundings and create composite maps of living things. We could easily imagine the bestiaryist in these terms, sitting at a table piled with source texts, assembling bits and pieces from them to produce a taxonomic bricolage—a new dwelling for thought, put together from materials at hand.

At a deeper intellectual level, Lévi-Strauss continues, the interpretive task of the mythologist (who might today be called the ontologist) resembles the taxonomic task of the naturalist bricoleur.²⁷ The naturalist arranges worldly phenomena such as plants, stars, animals, and spirits in taxonomies of relationship and difference, and the mythologist/ontologist discerns basic principles of existence that underlie natural taxonomies: “mythical thought”, Lévi-Strauss concluded, is “an intellectual form of bricolage”.²⁸ The Bestiary’s compiler constructs a multifaceted intellectual bricolage, drawing on three theories of being to frame up his complex taxonomy.

The Bestiary’s bricolage leaves visible the incompatibility of its component parts. Three ontological schemas inhabit this new dwelling for thought. Aquinas’s Christian dualism is resisted in the Bestiary’s animate, relational canine (“dogs have often provided persuasive evidence which has led to the conviction of the criminal”), yet the Dog entry also provides a dualist gloss for the dog’s healing tongue (“so the wounds of sin are cleansed by the instruction of the priest when they are laid bare in confession”), and it also provides an analogist comment on the healing tongue (“the tongues of puppies are a very good cure for wounds of the intestines”) (75–76). This ontological multiplicity constitutes the Bestiary’s first intervention in contemporary environmental discourse, for which the dominant trope is that we are prisoners of dualism. As the

trope goes in Descola, Latour, and Kohn, modern dualism “will have to be, if not wholly discarded,.... at least demoted from its imperial position”; “once freed from Bifurcation, nothing will keep you from reconnecting with existents”; “finding ways to move beyond this problem [our dualistic metaphysics] is one of the most important challenges facing critical thought today”.²⁹ Are we truly so in thrall to dualism? Consider Dipesh Chakrabarty’s observation that anthropogenic climate change “collapse[s] the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history”, reconstituting humanity as a “geological force”: this is a profoundly analogist view, in which humanity is physically netted into the material world, rather than standing apart from it and ruling over it in a dualistic relationship.³⁰ Moving from analogism to animism, consider a second example: according to Descola, even when Europeans believe their cats and dogs to be virtually human, their belief cannot challenge the ontological authority of European dualism.³¹ And yet, in the fields of biology and ethology, humankind has by now lost its monopoly on a wide array of conscious capacities, including self-recognition, ethical awareness, toolmaking, induction and deduction. Scientific behaviourism, which assumed that nonhuman animals are not cognitive, “has now become”, writes Bruno Latour, “a treasure trove of funny anecdotes”.³² When we get beyond the commonplace that modern dualism is holding us captive, the Bestiary’s ontological analogism and animism can look prescient, helping us to see the heterogeneity in our own ontological moment.

A second conversation with today’s environmental theory could arise from the Bestiary’s refusal to hybridise its competing ontological schemas. In rhetorical terms, the Bestiary’s bricolage is paratactic. Its text blocks are barely coordinated with one another, in that they follow one another additively, without logical coordinations such as contrast, cause and effect, or subordination. Dualism, analogism, and animism stand in juxtaposition, but rarely in relation, to one another. The text’s paratactic form poses a radical challenge to environmental theory: the Bestiary articulates three “realities”, three “lifeworlds”, not a coordinated, hybridised or uniform theory of being. In so doing, the Bestiary’s very form sustains the core insight of the ontological turn, the insight Viveiros de Castro calls an anti-epistemological, counter-cultural, philosophical war machine. Animism, dualism, and analogism generate three realities that are alien to one another, yet each is an equally genuine manifestation of particular thoughts, observations and material conditions. Anthropology’s ontological turn takes each alien lifeworld on its own terms, and not merely as a social construction awaiting its scholarly deconstruction.

Accepting the validity of plural realities could illuminate past worlds as well as future ones. For the past, an ontological approach to history such as Greg Anderson’s work on classical Athens demonstrates how much “we need a historicism that can make sense of each non-modern lifeworld on its own ontological terms, as a distinct real world in its own right”.³³ For the future of environmental theory, it is instructive that each of the Bestiary’s ontological schemas has a curious trick of appearing not just incompatible with, but even

exclusive of the other two. The Bestiary's bricolage leaves visible their incompatibility, but at the same time their ongoing juxtaposition denies their claim to be mutually exclusive. As they interrupt, precede and succeed one another, the Bestiary's alien realities, when taken as genuine alternatives, make new realities conceivable. Perhaps, for example, the future will birth a theory of being that is less centred in cognition and more in sentience, or one that assigns ethical standing to non-sentient creatures. The Bestiary's jostling ontological schemas offer a premodern avatar for this postmodern project.

NOTES

1. E.g. Turner, "Crisis of Late Structuralism"; Kelly, "Ontological French Turn"; Anderson, "Retrieving Lost Worlds".
2. Descola, *Beyond Nature* and "Modes of Being", uses the terms *dualism* and *naturalism* interchangeably; I avoid the latter term since it overlaps confusingly with stylistic naturalism in literary studies. Anthropologists' fourth ontological schema, *totemism*, is only rarely discernible in the Bestiaries. For totemism in other medieval texts and arts, see Crane, *Performance of Self*, 107–25, and "Lytel Erthe", 21–9.
3. Medievalists call this MS group the "second family" Bestiary. MSS of this group translated into English include Barber, *Bestiary*; Clark, *Medieval Book of Beasts*; and White, *Book of Beasts*. Online "second family" manuscripts include the Aberdeen Bestiary, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/>, and the Peterborough Psalter and Bestiary, <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/gs233db8425>
4. Bodley 764 is available in facsimile, *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile*, and in translation, Barber, *Bestiary*.
5. Barber, *Bestiary*, 24. Subsequent page references are provided in parentheses in my text.
6. Descola, "Modes of Being", 274.
7. Graeber, "Radical Alterity", 22.
8. Viveiros de Castro, "Ontological Wolf", 2.
9. Descola, "Modes of Being", 279.
10. Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 69–100.
11. Descola, "Modes of Being", 273.
12. Descola, "Modes of Being", 271.
13. Holbraad and Pedersen, *Ontological Turn*, 4.
14. "Omnis mundi creatura / quasi liber et pictura / nobis est, et speculum": Alanus, "Omnis mundi", 579A, my translation.
15. Foucault, *Order of Things*, 17.
16. In the Latin MS, *sine remedia*: without an antidote, counterforce, remedy. The basilisk-weasel opposition comes into the Bestiary from classical science, via Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, instantiating classical analogism (Isidore, *Etymologies*, 138–39). Barber's translation "Creator" for the manuscript's Latin "parens" (father, author, cause) obscures the classicism of this analogist claim. Already in Isidore's seventh-century Christian work, divergent ontological claims are colliding. The Book of Genesis does not suggest that Creation's design is analogistic.

17. I revise Barber's translation from "they" to "soothsayers" (Latin "augures" in the manuscript). Classical augurs, or soothsayers, used the cries and entrails of crows in prognostication.
18. Clark, *Medieval Book of Beasts*, details the source texts for the Bestiary manuscript London, British Library MS Add. 11283. My annotations on Figure 2 are indebted to Clark, 171–72, and Hugh, *Medieval Book of Birds*, 241–42; my annotations on Figure 3 are indebted to Clark, 119–22.
19. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 128–29. The Bestiary also revises dualist commentary in texts taken from Ambrose and Isidore to enhance the commentary's animist potential: see Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 91–98.
20. E.g. Descola, *Beyond Nature*, 129–35.
21. Turner, "Crisis of Late Structuralism".
22. Halbmayer, "Debating Animism", 14; see also Rival, "Materiality of Life"; Harvey, *Handbook of Contemporary Animism*.
23. <http://www.guadeloupe-leguide.fr/terre-de-haut.html>
24. <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2017/12/04/lindisfarnes-traditional-sheds/>
25. <http://www.architectureartdesigns.com/13-diy-repurposed-boats-ideas/>
26. Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 9–22.
27. Ontological framing can draw on social formations and ritual practices as well as on natural taxonomies, but the latter offer the most plausible and intuitive basis for ontologising: Descola, "Constructing Natures", 84–86; Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 1–22. An ontological schema populated by living beings appears to derive its principles of being from being itself—a powerful authenticating move.
28. Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, 21.
29. Descola, "Modes of Being", 279; Latour, *Modes of Existence*, 205; Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 7, 223.
30. Chakrabarty, "Climate of History", 201, 206.
31. Descola, *Beyond Nature*, 233–34.
32. Latour, "Foreword". In Vinciane Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* xii.
33. Anderson, "Retrieving Lost Worlds", 789.

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Chaucer, Lydgate, and the Half-Heard Nightingale

Carolynn Van Dyke

Whatever their symbolic associations, many nightingales in English poetry serve a particular function: they carry people into nightingale dreams. A famous nineteenth-century nightingale puts John Keats's persona into a "drowsy numbness" in which he hears its "self-same song" in far lands and ancient times. Four centuries earlier, the waking narrators of several Middle English poems are drawn by real birdsong into dreams about talking nightingales. In Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, a nightingale sings the female protagonist into a dream that prefigures a love affair in which she will sing like a nightingale.¹

Jeni Williams attributes the great popularity of nightingales in myth and literature to a rich tradition in which they represent cultural formations of power and gender.² That cultural history has been a story of alternatives: the lamenting Philomela or the exulting *Luscinia* ("bird of light"); the voice of sensuous love or of spiritual ecstasy; the male singer of folklore or the female voice of written tradition.³ But the nightingale supports those binaries through more fundamental polarities of its own, manifested both in literary texts and in scientific reports. Inseparably material and imagined, observed and anthropomorphized, the literary nightingale inhabits the borders between states of being.

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THE APPARITIONAL VOICE

Thomas Alan Shippey is only partly correct that nightingales “appear so often in English and European poems that their associations ... have sunk to the level of banality”; in most texts that mention them, the birds do not literally appear.⁴ They sing unseen in the works cited in my first paragraph, for instance, and their bodies and behavior are rarely depicted in medieval texts—not even in bestiaries, which illustrate them (if at all) as “nondescript” and leave them largely unmoralized.⁵ Literary nightingales are abundant but difficult to visualize. Therein they resemble their biological kin. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds describes *Luscinia megarhynchos* as common in most of Europe but elusive and unremarkable, “with a robust, broad-tailed, rather plain brown appearance”. Two Anglo-Saxon poets, less circumspect, call the bird’s coloring “dirty” or “contemptible”.⁶ The inconspicuousness is partly deliberate: the nightingale “is skulking” and “likes nothing better than hiding in the middle of an impenetrable bush or thicket”, according to the RSPB.⁷

That nightingales nonetheless announce their presence is well known. The early-medieval poets who disparage nightingales’ coloring add a quick antithesis: “so brown and dim that little body was, / But none could scorn thy singing” (*Spreta colore tamen fueras non spreta canendo*).⁸ Pliny the Elder, a first-century naturalist, expresses astonishment at “so loud a voice and so persistent a supply of breath in such a tiny little body”; a twenty-first century reference work notes the contrast between the nightingales’ “rather plain ... appearance” and “their remarkable singing abilities”.⁹ It is not surprising, then, that for medieval poets, the nightingale’s song matters far more than the bird itself. As Josepha Gellinek-Schellekens observes, “The nightingale becomes ‘voice’ incarnate”.¹⁰

Mladen Dolar takes the title of his 2006 monograph on theories of the voice from an aphorism of Plutarch: “A man plucked a nightingale and, finding but little to eat, said: ‘You are just a voice and nothing more’”.¹¹ Dolar does not mention nightingales again, but *A Voice and Nothing More* opens questions with particular relevance to nightingale vocalizations. Foremost among those is the complex relationship of voices to bodies. Dolar embraces Slavoj Žižek’s formulation of that relationship: “An unbridgeable gap separates forever a human body from ‘its’ voice. The voice displays a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see...”.¹² Earlier work by Roland Barthes defines the singing voice in similar terms. Unsure whether or not others perceive the songs of a particular baritone as he does, Barthes asks, “am I hearing voices within the voice?”, only to answer with rhetorical questions: “but isn’t it the truth of the voice to be hallucinated? Isn’t the entire space of the voice an infinite one?”¹³

Dolar, Barthes, and Žižek implicitly or explicitly limit their consideration to human voices, but Žižek’s “unbridgeable gap” might separate any body from its vocalizations, especially an unseen bird from its piercing calls. Even when we see a singing nightingale, the disproportion noted by Pliny provides at least

what Žižek calls “a minimum of ventriloquism”.¹⁴ Listeners familiar with the nightingale’s mythic and literary past, as were the English poets I have cited, will surely hear, with Barthes, “voices within the voice”. Ornithologists sometimes hear something similar: Christopher Perrins writes of *Luscinia megarhynchos* and the hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) that “it is often easy to imagine that many birds are singing at one time, when in fact the singer may be just a single individual”.¹⁵ To modify Barthes’s proposition, the truth of the nightingale’s voice, in nature as in literature, is to be indeterminate.

If the origin of nightingale songs is often unclear, their meaning is fundamentally ambiguous. Dolar’s question on that topic—is the voice meaningful in itself or an incidental medium for linguistic meaning?—might seem irrelevant to voices easily dismissed as meaningless.¹⁶ But some animal ethologists argue “that all animal signals must, by design, have meaning”.¹⁷ The biologist Eugene Morton and several colleagues categorize the calls of many species according to various acoustical gradients, correlate them with the responses of animal “recipients” or “assessors,” and argue that those responses are the vocalizations’ meanings. They conclude that, for instance, short, repeated atonal calls with chevron-shaped frequency (rise and fall or fall and rise) announce the sender’s presence and communicate its neutral interest in something; high, tonal calls, including birds’ prolonged vocalizations, indicate friendliness, fear, or appeasement. And Enrique Font and Pau Carazo write that other animals extract information from such calls not deterministically but in accordance with their own needs and interests.¹⁸ As my summaries may suggest, the meanings that such studies ascribe to a given call or signal are admittedly imprecise and unavoidably anthrosemiotic, shaped by human interpretation. But the studies reveal that after controlled and repeated observation, naturalists place nonhuman calls near a borderline between genetically programmed behavior—what we might call “instinct”—and intentional signification.

Nightingales’ utterances are not usually referred to as “calls”. Insofar as birds’ vocalizations are meaningful, they approach another boundary as well: the division between sound and music. The very word “birdsong” blurs that boundary, but nightingale songs have long been regarded as particularly musical. Pliny’s eloquent tribute to the bird’s “consummate knowledge of music” is justly well known:

The sound is given out with modulations, and now is drawn out into a long note with one continuous breath, now varied by managing the breath, now made staccato by checking it, or linked together by prolonging it, or carried on by holding it back; or it is suddenly lowered, and at times sinks into a mere murmur, loud, low, bass, treble, with trills, with long notes, modulated when this seems good—soprano, mezzo, baritone; and briefly all the devices in that tiny throat which human science has devised with all the elaborate mechanism of the flute.¹⁹

Of course, that passage is unmistakably anthropomorphic. In merging birds with human musicians, Pliny's metaphors might be dismissed as flights of fancy. Indeed, some medieval scholars insisted that birds could not produce music: "The key feature that defines music in the Middle Ages", writes Elizabeth Leach, "is its expression of a rationality, which human beings alone of all the sublunary animals also possess". Pleasing sounds might qualify as music "only when they [were] both produced and received by an intellectually engaged rational animal"—that is, a human being aware of the science of music.²⁰ As Leach also writes, however, "Theorists would not be at such pains to stress the rationality that must inform human musical practice if the sound of birds' songs were not ostensibly musical".²¹ In fact, late medieval commentators sometimes praised singers by likening them to nightingales, implying that birdsong is actually superior to ordinary human singing.²² The comparison remained metaphorical, but, in medieval musicology as in poetry, the metaphor was persistent.

Like the possible meaningfulness of animal vocalizations, the liminal musicality of birdsong has been reframed but not resolved by studies of actual birds. In the 1950s, a Finnish zoologist transcribed the song of the thrush nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*) with musical notation, "concluding that the bird went through his phrases in a loosely patterned order ... [providing] a sense of periodic progression through the repertoire".²³ In contrast, an animal behaviorist reported in 2012 that he could find little evidence that the adjacent tones of nightingale wrens match possible harmonic intervals.²⁴ Two years later, however, David Rothenberg and four colleagues looked beyond intervals and phrase units to the "overall patterns" of thrush nightingale songs, "including dynamic transitions from the expected to the unexpected".²⁵ They argue that changes in rhythm, amplitude, and tone "may possibly constitute ... 'musical' feature[s] that [are] able to evoke emotions, expectations, and anticipation in thrush nightingale listeners"—reactions detectable, they propose, by non-invasive fMRI scanning.²⁶ Such testing might confirm "a powerful parallel between music and birdsong".²⁷ We already know, they observe, that "the same reward related brain circuit that is active in humans listening to music—the mesolimbic reward pathway—is activated in birds listening to birdsong".²⁸

Aside from the unnerving prospect of a sentient songbird strapped to an MRI table, any parallels between the brainwaves of avian and human listeners would not determine whether or not the stimulus is music: disagreement on that question is hardly unknown in (human) concert halls. What we can conclude from the work of Rothenberg and his colleagues is that, for ethologists, as for medieval musicologists, complex birdsong hovers on the border between behavior and art. To modify Barthes's formulation that the truth of the human voice is to be hallucinated, the truth of the nightingale's musicality is to be conjectural.

Like other scientists, modern musicologists accept conjectural truths. Indeed, they embrace truths of that kind, treating them as hypotheses to be tested and reformulated. And it could be argued that lyric poets do something similar when they embrace what the imagination conjures—for instance, a

vision of avian communication. Somewhat like scientists, good poets present such visions with honest tentativeness, subjecting them to the test of informed reading. Certain medieval poets even incorporate a framework for readerly assessment into their texts: they position their imagined truths between a persona's waking perception and his or her dreams. In poems by John Lydgate and Chaucer, the meaning of a nightingale, like that of the animal sounds studied by ethologists, is apparitional—possibly though unprovably real.

LYDGATE'S "SEYING": THE POLYSEMIOUS REFRAIN

Fundamental to many poetic conjectures about the nightingale in the high Middle Ages was a convention that its song consists of two syllables, pronounced as "oh-see". As Rosemary Woolf explains, "The word 'occi' [a common French spelling] seems to have been onomatopoeic in origin, but in due course to have become associated with the Old French verb *occi*, to kill".²⁹ Poets construed the verb in various forms and contexts. A troubadour poet who hears a nightingale sing "Ocy, Ocy" commands the bird to tell his beloved that she has kill-kill-killed me ("Que ocy, ocy, ocy / M'a") if she does not soften her hard heart.³⁰ In Huon de Mery's *Tournament of the Antichrist*, a nightingale cheers on an allegorical army by chanting flee! flee! kill! kill! ("fui ! fui ! oci ! oci !").³¹ So widespread were such renditions of the nightingale's song that John Clanvowe could mock them in the persona of a Cuckoo who, debating with a Nightingale, accuses her of "crakel[ing]" in her throat and adds, "I have herd thee seyn, 'ocy! ocy!' / How mighte I knowe what that shulde be?"³² But in the work of a skillful poet, "occi" can acquire great metaphoric resonance, linking a bird's piercing call with a sudden perception or an overflow of feeling. And in his under-appreciated *A Seying of the Nightingale*, John Lydgate compiles several such interpretations to demonstrate the meaning-making power of their common vehicle.

The poem, 377 lines of rhyme-royal stanzas, begins with the narrator listening to a nightingale—specifically, to "þe menyng (the meaning) of hir melody".³³ Steeped in the culture of so-called courtly love, the narrator believes that her refrain "ocy, ocy" means that Venus should instruct her son, the god of love, to take vengeance on false and fickle lovers.³⁴ But Lydgate immediately complicates that interpretation, launching a narrative in which he undermines the premise that nightingale melody has any unitary "menyng".

Lulled asleep by birdsong, the narrator dreams that an "vnkouþe messagier" (strange messenger) is sent from "þe god of loue"—"Nought frome Cupyde but fro þe lord aboue"—to correct his understanding of the nightingale. Contrary to your "[f]eynt and vntruwe ... exposicion" (weak and false interpretation), says the messenger, the nightingale's "ocy" conveyed impatience toward worldly folk, whom the Lord should slay for their unkindness in ignoring the great love he showed when he was slain for their sake.³⁵ In short, *ocy* was not a lover's complaint but a Christian lesson.

Lydgate follows that major resignification with subtler modifications. Lest we take the didactic message to be a human interpretation, the heavenly messenger attributes it to the nightingale's own intention: "sheo cryep 'slee al þoo þat beon vnkynde, / ... / Why list þee lord, for mannes saake sterve...?" (She cries, "slay all those who are unkind, ... Why did you, lord, want to die for man's sake?").³⁶ Lydgate then amplifies the bird's sentiment into an account of the crucifixion, shifting from a didactic interpretation to a mystical one. Christ's five wounds are five roses, the messenger proclaims, to be gathered in memory in lieu of the flowers in the "gardin of þe rose".³⁷ Mysticism then gives way to typological figuration. Continuing his narrative, the messenger interlaces it with Old Testament events that medieval interpreters treated as foreshadowing the crucifixion; thus the prophet Isaiah's question to a bloodied conqueror (probably Jehovah) is directed simultaneously to the crucified Christ.³⁸ Christ's answer extends for sixty-five lines in which the nightingale goes unmentioned,³⁹ but it ends with a surprise. After asking, rhetorically, "Who felt euer in eorþe so gret peyne / To reken al giltles as did I?" (who on earth ever felt such great pain, accounted completely guiltless, as did I?), Christ adds, "Wher-for þis bridde sang ay, 'occy, occy / Such as been to me founde vnkynde'" (this bird kept singing, "occy, occy" any who are found unkind to me).⁴⁰ That interpretation of the song repeats that of the messenger, but the context is dramatically different: reaching back through two hundred lines of interpretation and beyond the narrator's dream, Christ sees and hears the same bird that prompted the dream. That is, Lydgate turns the nightingale from the occasion for a religious lesson into a fact of Christian history.

The poem is unfinished, but not, I think, by much. By now the dream framework has dissolved. Christ's speech leads to some third-person narration that might be voiced by the messenger or by the nightingale⁴¹; there follow twenty stanzas of comments on Christ's death and birth that seem to issue directly from the poet (who was also a priest). Lydgate then brings the poem full circle—back to a garden, but not the one in which the narrator fell asleep. This is the garden "[w]ere as þat god of loue him-self doþe dwelle" (where the god of love himself does dwell), far from the "mortal vale"—as described in "*Canticorum* þe book" (the Song of Songs). In that biblical garden, "the time of the singing of birds is come".⁴² In Lydgate's version, too, this is where "ful lowd þamerous nightingale (the amorous nightingale very loudly) / Vpon a thorne is wont (accustomed) to calle and crye / To mannys soule with hevenly ermoney (harmony)".⁴³ Recalling but revising the song heard by the waking narrator at the beginning of the poem, here the nightingale's "menynge" refers not to slaying but to love. For medieval Christians, the bird's "amorous" song to "mannys soule" probably recalled the widespread understanding of the erotic speeches in the Song of Songs as Christ's expression of love for the human soul. That is, Lydgate's nightingale channels Christ's love.

Heard by Christ in an earlier passage, the nightingale cannot be the symbolic equivalent for Christ. Nor is it the avatar of Venus, as the narrator initially assumed, or a preacher calling for vengeance on ungrateful humankind, as the messenger

implied. By providing those variant meanings for *ocy*, Lydgate ensures that they all remain conjectures, aural apparitions, received in dream or religious vision. But in attributing them all to *the* nightingale—a single bird—he also illustrates the power of bird-calls to create meaning. The full title of his poem, as provided by the scribe of Trinity College MS. R. 3. 20, is “a seying of þe Nightingale ymagyned and compyled by Lydegate daun Johan þe monk of Bury”. The utterance of Lydgate’s nightingale is indeed both imagined and compiled, a half-heard sound that migrates through realms of human and divine meaning.

CHAUCER’S CRISEYDE: EMBODIED DREAMS

The transliterated call attributed to nightingales by Clanvowe and Lydgate probably originated in a narrative by Chrétien de Troyes. Now preserved in a section of the Old French *Ovide Moralisé* (c. 1245), Chrétien’s poem recounts the myth of Philomela, arguably the nightingale’s archetypal apparition in Western culture; indeed, *philomela* is one word for “nightingale” in Latin and some other languages. As Ovid and other classical poets tell the story, Philomela is raped and rendered voiceless by the husband of her sister Procne; after taking a brutal revenge, the sisters pray to be transformed into birds. Chrétien’s version ends with Philomela, transformed into a nightingale, singing “occi! occi!”—presumably to decry the vengeful slaying in which she participated, or to demand further retribution for her own rape and dismemberment.

Geoffrey Chaucer drew on Chrétien’s narrative for the story of Philomela in his *Legend of Good Women*.⁴⁴ But Chaucer makes no use of the bi-species and polysemous *occi*. Whereas Lydgate rings changes on that auditory apparition, Chaucer renders nightingales’ singing both more avian and more profoundly human.

In several ways, Chaucer goes out of his way to de-mythologize the Ovidian story. His “Legend of Philomela” follows Chrétien and Ovid in recounting Tereus’s betrayal of Philomela’s sister Procne and his brutalization of Philomela herself. But he stops short of the sisters’ revenge and their subsequent transformation into birds; his Philomela remains human but “dounge”, unable to voice even the two syllables that mediate between animal sound and word.⁴⁵ Chaucer clearly expected his readers to know the events that he omits, for he alludes to them casually in the second book of *Troilus and Criseyde*. As Pandarus lies half asleep on a May morning, Procne the swallow laments the reason that she was “forshapen”—literally, malformed. She chants so near to Pandarus that he awakens, rises, and proceeds cheerfully with his plans for the day.⁴⁶ Pandarus’s failure even to acknowledge the pathos and brutality of the Philomela story may seem heartless, but the passage’s tone transforms tragedy into a well-worn cultural meme. Initially a “sorrowful lay”, Procne’s song becomes “chetrynge”—chattering, the unmusical sound characteristic of swallows—and her topic sounds prosaic: “how Tereus gan forth her suster take”. If other literary birds transport waking listeners into visionary dreams, this one functions as an alarm clock.

As if to complete the de-mythification, Chaucer follows his noisy Procne with an anonymous and fully avian version of Philomela. As Criseyde lies in bed after learning that Troilus loves her,

[a] nyghtyngale, upon a cedre grene,
 Under the chambre wal ther as she ley,
 Ful loude song ayein the moone shene,
 Peraunter in his briddes wise a lay
 Of love, that made her herte fressh and gay.
 That herkned she so longe in good entente,
 Til at the last the dede slep hire hente.

And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette
 How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,
 Under hire brest his longe clawes sette,
 And out hire herte he rente, and that anon,
 And dide his herte into her brest to gon—
 Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte—
 And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte.

Now lat hire slepe, and we oure tales holde
 Of Troilus.

(A nightingale, on a green cedar, under the wall of the room where [Criseyde] lay, sang very loudly toward the beautiful moon, perhaps, in his bird's manner, a song of love, which made her heart light and gay. She listened to that intently [or with good intentions] so long that finally deep sleep overwhelmed her.

And as she slept, she immediately dreamed how an eagle, with bone-white feathers, set his long claws under her breast, and he quickly tore out her heart and put his heart into her breast—at which she neither feared nor felt any pain—and away he flew, with heart left for heart.

Now let her sleep, and [let us] continue talking about Troilus.)⁴⁷

Influenced by Latin *Luscinia*, Western poets commonly treated nightingales as female; Chaucer's pronouns, reflecting his knowledge that it is chiefly male nightingales that sing, further naturalize this bird. Its song bears meaning only "peraunter" (perhaps), and the narrator's hypothesis ("a lay / Of love") is not anthropomorphic: in late spring, male nightingales do perch in trees and sing to attract females. And although the singer inaugurates a dream, as does Lydgate's nightingale, he does not enter it; he sings Criseyde asleep "in his bird's manner".

But another kind of bird then executes a graphic metamorphosis. The eagle "feathered white as bone" in Criseyde's dream, a creature almost unknown in nature, is not apparitional but visionary. Its silent invasion of her breast is not just unreal but surreal, viscerally corporal but impossibly painless and unthreatening. And its literalized exchange of hearts surpasses anthropomorphism and metamorphosis by inter-grafting two species: as Lesley Kordecki points out, "Criseyde is now actually an eagle-hearted woman".⁴⁸

Kordecki frames her remark as a parenthetical aside, but she effectively foregrounds the interpretive challenges faced by readers, including, presumably, Criseyde herself: the dream's combination of predatory imagery and acceptant mood might portend violent rape or erotic transport.⁴⁹ Chaucer's narrator provides no interpretive guidance, turning abruptly from the sleeping Criseyde to "continue talking" about Troilus. When Criseyde awakens, nervous about Pandarus's next visit but ready to laugh at his jokes, she shows no sign of having been affected by the dream. But readers who recall the poem's prologue⁵⁰ will know that the dream of bodily penetration and exchanged hearts is broadly prophetic: Troilus and Criseyde will become lovers.

The dream and its material aftermath invert the sequence in Keats's and Lydgate's poems, where real birdsong leads human hearers into nightingale dreams. Criseyde's eagle dream precedes, even promotes, its human enactment. And the meaning of birdsong will inform the ensuing human acts.

In its details, the preceding metaphor for the consummation turns out to be a false lead. Although the narrator archly positions Criseyde as a raptor's helpless prey, Criseyde herself assures Troilus that she has "er now . . . ben yolde" (already submitted).⁵¹ The lovers embrace not like predator and prey but like honeysuckle vines enwrapping each other, while the physiological surrealism of the eagle-dream is displaced by gently naturalistic images: the long, smooth, white sides that Troilus strokes, the snow-white throat and small breasts that he greets.⁵² And Criseyde, silent object of that hallucinatory eagle, now echoes the natural song that gladdened her sleep:

And as the newe abaysed nyghtyngale,
That stynteth first whan she bygynneth to synge,
Whan that she hereth any herde tale,
Or in the hegges any wyght stiryng,
And after siker doth hire vois out ryng,
Right so Criseyde, whan hire drede stente,
Opned hire herte and told hym hire entente.
(And as the suddenly unnerved nightingale that first stops when she begins to sing when she hears any shepherd talking or any creature stirring in the hedges, and afterwards her voice rings out securely, just so Criseyde, when her fear ended, opened her heart and told him her intent.)⁵³

Like the nightingale whose singing induced Criseyde's dream, the one that she resembles here is a material bird, and it merges with her not through metamorphosis or even conventional metaphor but in connaturality—in this case, patterns of behavior common to birds and people.⁵⁴ Previously wary of self-disclosure (as is Criseyde), this bird now sings out an invitation, as do male nightingales (and Criseyde), to a possible mate. If the corresponding human voice does not issue from an eagle's heart, it comes, like the nightingale's, from the body of an animal.

Criseyde's nightingale song bisects the poem.⁵⁵ No birds appear in the long second half; indeed, as the lovers separate, their own bodies become

apparitions. Criseyde, whose image had been the object of Troilus's yearning, is increasingly a figment of his memory, repeatedly evoked and addressed in her absence and finally, on the day of her promised return, hallucinated.⁵⁶ Having accepted another lover, she in turn apostrophizes Troilus and her former city; she also conjures her own postmortem self, an object of calumny "unto the worldes ende".⁵⁷ The *Troilus* nightingale, like its literary kin, has bridged states of being: waking reverie and dream-vision, melody and song, and traditional femininity and biological masculinity. Here, at the narrative apogee, the nightingale bridges species as well, conjoining with a woman not through metaphoric fusion, like that of Pliny's tiny flutist or Lydgate's avian prophet, but through natural resemblance.

We must assume that nightingales are part of the "wrecched world" that Troilus despises when his soul rises toward "the pleyn felicite / That is in hevne above".⁵⁸ But the evidence of literary history is that their biological progeny have continued to generate possible meanings, conjectural musicality, and some deeply resonant expressions of love.

CONCLUSION

If English nightingales "will be extinct within 30 years", as *The Telegraph* reported in 2011, it is fortunate that the internet preserves their recorded vocalizations.⁵⁹ Users can even produce new nightingale songs: nightingale-song.com, a freeware program based on sound sampling, "translates words from any language into nightingale songs".⁶⁰ To my ears, the output is more nightingale than human. But the program is oddly engaging, for it exploits two complementary aspects of nightingale vocalization: its actual complexity and its tantalizing approximation of human meaning. The interplay of those characteristics has produced a rich literary tradition that may, sadly, outlive *Luscinia megarhynchos*. But the creature itself, elusive source of *quasi*-music, will remain central to its literary apparitions.

NOTES

1. John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", in Garrod, *Poetical Works*, 207–9; John Lydgate, "A Seying of the Nightingale," in Glauning, *Lydgate's Minor Poem*; Sir John Clanvowe, "The Boke of Cupide, God of Love, or, The Cuckoo and the Nightingale", in Scattergood, *Works*; Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barney.
2. Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales*, 14.
3. Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales*, 12–14 and 16–74; Gellinek-Schellekens, *Voice of the Nightingale*, 8.
4. Shippey, "Listening to the Nightingale", 46.
5. I quote from David Badke, "Medieval Bestiary: Nightingale", January 2011, <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast546.htm>. Jill Mann makes a similar point in *From Aesop to Reynard*, 154 and 157.

6. “spurca colore” (Aldhelm, c. 650–709, Riddle xxii); “spreta colore” (Alcuin, c. 735–c. 804, *Carmina* lxi). I cite both from Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales*, 237; translations are my own.
7. “Nightingale Bird Facts: *Luscinia Megarhynchos*”, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/nightingale. Other sources also call nightingales ‘skulking’—for example, George and Yapp, *The Naming of the Beasts*, 176.
8. Alcuin, *Carmina* lxi; compare Aldhelm, “spreta colore tamen, sed non sum spreta canendo” (“even though I have spurned decoration, I have not spurned singing”). Translations are from Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales*, 237 and 242.
9. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, X.xliii; “*Luscinia megarhynchos*”, *Encyclopedia of Life*, <http://www.eol.org/pages/1051449/overview>.
10. Gellinek-Schellekens, *Voice of the Nightingale*, 177.
11. Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. III (London: Heinemann, 1949), cited in Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 12.
12. Dolar, *A Voice*, 70, citing Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001), 58.
13. Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice”, 184.
14. Žižek, *On Belief*, 58.
15. Perrins, *Firefly Encyclopedia*, 524.
16. Dolar, *Voice*, 17 and 23–32. For Dolar (as for me), the voice holds intrinsic meaning, but his argument draws from psychoanalysis: the voice is “one of the paramount ‘embodiments’ of what Lacan called *objet petit a*” (11).
17. Font and Carazo, “Animals in Translation”, e3.
18. The acoustical gradients are frequency (pitch), tonality (harsh or tonal), and loudness. See Owings and Morton, *Animal Vocal Communication*, especially 105–114; Morton and Stutchbury, “Vocal Communication in Androgynous Territorial Defense”, 2 and 5–6; Font and Carazo, “Animals in Translation”, e3.
19. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, X.xliii.
20. Leach, *Sung Birds*, 1.
21. Leach, *Sung Birds*, 40.
22. Leach, *Sung Birds*, 56.
23. Olavi Sotavalta, “Song Patterns of Two Sprosser Nightingales”, *Ann. Finnish Zool. Society*, 1956; reported and reproduced in David Rothenberg et al., “Investigation of Musicality in Birdsong”, 73–74.
24. Araya-Salas, “Is Birdsong Music?” 309–313.
25. Rothenberg et al., “Investigation of Musicality”, 72.
26. Rothenberg et al., “Investigation of Musicality”, 76, 78.
27. Rothenberg et al., “Investigation of Musicality”, 72.
28. Rothenberg et al., “Investigation of Musicality”, 81.
29. Woolf, *English Religious Lyric*, 232.
30. From a poem by the fourteenth-century “poet musician” Trebor, quoted by Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 222.
31. Cited by Glauning, *Lydgate’s Minor Poems*, 37.
32. Clanvowe, “Boke of Cupide”, in Scattergood, *Works*, 118–25.
33. Lydgate, “A Seying”, Glauning, *Lydgate’s Minor Poems*, line 13.
34. John Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 14–28.
35. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 42–44, 80, and 85–98.

36. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 106–12.
37. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 113–23. “The garden of the rose” (line 53) alludes to the setting for erotic love in the vastly popular thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*.
38. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 133–75.
39. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 183–210.
40. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 215–17.
41. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 232–35. Glauning attributes them to the nightingale (*Lydgate’s Minor Poems*, p. xlv).
42. See, in the King James Version, Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 2:12 and 4:8 through 5:1 (Glauning, *Lydgate’s Minor Poems*, p. xlv). Scholars believe that the *zamir* whose time is come in the Hebrew original of the *Canticle Cantorum* (2.12) is the nightingale; see Jehuda Feliks, “Nightingale”, 263–64. The Vulgate Bible refers at that point to *tempus putatonis*, using a different root for *zamir*. Perhaps Lydgate saw the Hebrew text and knew enough Hebrew to recognize the alternative root; more likely, he saw in the *turtur* or *columba* in “*Canticorum*” a cognate of the nightingale—a literary apparition.
43. Lydgate, *A Seying of the Nightingale*, lines 351–57.
44. On the tale in the *Ovide Moralisé*, see Krueger, “*Philomena*”, 87–102. “*Philomela*” and “*Philomena*” both appear in classical and medieval sources. Chaucer’s sources for the “Legend of *Philomela*” are traced in explanatory notes by M. C. E. Shaner with A. S. G. Edwards in Benson, 1072–73.
45. Chaucer, “The Legend of *Philomela*”, line 2380.
46. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 2.64–70.
47. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 918–33.
48. Kordecki, *Ecofeminist Subjectivities*, 2.
49. The most defensible reading, in my view, is Kolve’s discussion of the eagle as a “primal signifier”, “something in need of interpretation”—interpretation that the text may nonetheless baffle with conflicting signals (*Telling Images*, 13).
50. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 1.1–56.
51. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 3.1191–97 and 3.1205–11.
52. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 3.1230–32 and 3.1247–49.
53. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 3.1233–39.
54. I borrow this use of “connaturality” from Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard*, 168; she attributes it in turn to Peter Dronke and defines it as “an underlying natural harmony that links [bird and human]”.
55. Winder notes that “the midpoint of the 8239 lines of *Troilus* ... comes at iii.1271” (*Oxford Guides*, 185); that line, part of *Troilus*’s response to the “entente” that *Criseyde* expresses in her nightingale song, follows the simile by thirty-three lines.
56. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 3.1737–42, 5.218–38, 5.526–81, 5.617–27, and 5.1157–62.
57. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 5.1051–84.
58. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 5.1814–19, 1835–41.
59. Copping, “Nightingale Headed to Extinction”.
60. Phylloxera and bubu from bubuland, www.nightingale-song.com, accessed 30 January 2018.

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Huntings of the Hare: The Medieval and Early Modern Poetry of Imperiled Animals

Karl Steel

“There is no beast in the world, I believe ... that suffers half so much sorrow, as does the innocent hare, go wherever he might” (ll. 55-60; There is no best in þe word, I wene ... that suffuris half so myche tene/As doth þe sylly wat—go where he go): so complains a hare in a late Middle English poem, “As I was going through a Forest” [“Bi a forest as I gan fare”].¹ Each of the poem’s two surviving versions tells the same story, each in the hare’s own miserable words: hares are harried, with no place to rest, certain to be trapped and strangled by women and their servants if they set feet on a farm, or to be hunted by gentlemen and killed by greyhounds, then served up as a meal, and their skin thrown to puppies as a toy. Whether treated as just a garden pest, or pursued for fun by nobles, the hare tells us it can do nothing but anticipate its end, bemoan its fate, and then die.

The hare’s lament seemingly cannot be read as anything but a joke, because it contradicts every dominant medieval understanding of nonhuman life. What right does a creature have to complain about the uses God made it for? The Bible’s first creation story establishes the baseline medieval intellectual position on animals, when God twice puts them under human dominion (Genesis 1:26

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and 28), and the compounds that dominion, after Noah's flood, by granting humans permission to eat animal flesh, so long as they leave the blood for God (Genesis 9:3). Augustine of Hippo—a fifth-century North African Bishop whose works would become core texts of medieval Christianity—further refines the Biblical dominion over animals in his interpretation of the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”. According to Augustine, the commandment had no bearing on soldiers doing their jobs in battle, nor on rulers executing criminals, nor especially on the lives of animals, which were made for us, and whose lives merited no more regard than those of plants.² Whatever the commandment might seem to say, most forms of killing were therefore perfectly acceptable. To be sure, by late in the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church had insisted that Christians forgo meat on Fridays, during Lent, and on many other holy days, eventually requiring abstention for nearly a third of the year.³ But this periodic meatlessness owed nothing to sympathy for animals: rather, Christians were required to eschew animal flesh because they thought it so pleasurable. Not liveliness, but being subject to “noncriminal putting to death”⁴ is thus at the heart of the animal condition under a human regime, in the Middle Ages or otherwise. Given the systems that subordinated animals to human uses, and marked meat as the most delicious food, what effect could the hare's pleas have except to call attention to a life made only for eating?

Yet the hare still talks. Even more than the actual content of the hare's speech, its coherent voice is its most direct assault on the dominant medieval system of human supremacy. Mainstream medieval thinkers repeatedly denied that actual animals had anything to say. They classified sounds into those that were divisible into syllables, like a human speaking words, and those that were not, like a dog barking. Nonhuman sounds that could be so divided, birdsong in particular, would be further divided into meaningful and nonmeaningful voices, to ensure nonhuman animals remained outside of language.⁵ All mortal beings inside language were believed to have a rational soul, and therefore to be the appropriate subjects of charity, meant to be helped along towards heaven's eternal felicity, while those beings outside language had no purpose but to be used during their brief and temporary lives for whatever purposes rational beings might require. It is telling, then, that a common term in medieval Latin and other languages for animals was not some version of the word “animal”—which derives from the Latin *anima*, soul, and could thus just mean any living thing—but rather “mute animals”.⁶ In the medieval sense of the word, to be mute is not to be silent, but to be speechless: noisy perhaps, but, again, a noise whose supposed meaninglessness signals that the creature was nothing but what could be called a temporarily living resource.

It would be simple, then, to take the medieval hare-hunting poem as only an absurdity, a literary exercise, or a bit of fun for the armchair hunter anticipating his next outing, because nothing in dominant culture could imagine animal ownership of their bodies, or complaints over their fate, as anything but absurd. Yet the very existence of animal complaints betrays an ongoing interest in animals as living beings with their own, independent existence and concerns. These works, in which animals bear witness to their enforced submission, are

always works in which animals, despite it all, *bear witness*. Among the surprisingly large number of such works is the late antique *Testament of the Little Pig*, in which the pig—an “underminer of houses...rooter up of land...fearful, fugitive”—is condemned to death by a cook, but is first granted leave to dictate its will, in which it bequeaths its “bristles to the Cobblers and Shoemakers”, “loins to women”, and so on. A fifth-century churchman complained that the work distracted schoolboys; multiple medieval manuscripts preserve it; and it would be first translated into English in 1607 as part of the entry on pigs in Edward Topsell’s massive *History of Four-Footed Beasts*.⁷ The “Testament of the Buck”, whose earliest written form may date to 1525, features a cervid in similar straits, who likewise distributes his body to dogs and to aristocratic humans, but without the pig’s slightly naughty humor.⁸ “The Passion of the Fox”, first printed in 1530, is an elaborate dream narrative in which a man encounters his dead pet in the possession of Morpheus, witnesses its escape, and then reads its testament, which tends towards thin satire: “my flattery...to the brewer/my obedience to every good wife...my leaps and skips of great quickness/I give to servants in their business”.⁹ The same period also saw the Scottish poet David Lyndsay’s long court satire, the “Testament and Complaint of the Parrot”, whose hero bestows to the Goose “my eloquence and tongue rhetorical”, and its bones to the Phoenix.¹⁰ The “Hunting of the Hare” also recalls an Old English riddle featuring an oyster, which protests being snatched from the comfort of the ocean to be torn open by a human who will swallow it raw,¹¹ and the “Lament of the Roast Swan,” from a twelfth-century collection of secular Latin songs, the *Carmina Burana*, whose swan laments its lost beauty and lost freedom of flight.¹²

One seventeenth-century broadside, titled “The Hunting of the Hare”, strays farther than most animal complaints into sympathy. This is not the 1620 work by the same title, a ballad that sings of the joy of following the hounds and ends with the huntsman “feast[ing] both himselfe and his Guests/and carows[ing] to his Careere”,¹³ but yet another, perhaps from the same period, also featuring an animal testament. In it, the hare, caught at last, begs the hounds for her life; though the huntsman gives her a second chance, she is taken again. As the hounds pity her, to a limit (“Alas, poor Hare, it is our Nature, / To kill thee”), she bequeaths her subtle scent to debtors, her ears to counterfeiters, and her “Rump” to “Tower-Hill” in London, where many traitors were executed.¹⁴ Then, surprisingly, the hounds’ master calls off the dogs, and the hare joyfully offers to lead the whole hunting party to a nearby tavern.

Despite the ballad’s final enlistment of everyone in a drinking party, its sympathetic moment of canine solidarity for hare—“Alas poor Hare!”—suggests that animal complaints might be taken as more than simply joking reinforcements of dominant thinking about animals. To reconsider my opening suggestion, animal complaints could be read seriously, not simply as versified, slightly disguised doctrine, not simply as bad jokes, but as poetry, with all the strange effects and identifications that poetry might elicit. Even animal complaints that appear with a mass of other satiric material, like the *Carmina Burana*’s swan

poem, still bear witness to a consideration of animal life as something that might belong to the animal too. Reading such poems might let an animal voice crowd in on our lonely humanity, hinting at the multifariousness of animal life outside our smug certainties of dominion; or our reading might blend these animal voices with our human ones, turning what would seem to be just a silly protest against the general truth of animal submission into a more general recognition of the liveliness and vulnerability that humans and animals both share, because we too are dependent, mortal things.

The contrast between doctrine and poetry is one I borrow from Jacques Derrida's late, groundbreaking work on the intellectual and moral indefensibility of the concept of the "animal". Derrida observed that mainstream philosophy, so committed to a binary distinction between "human" and "animal", uses animals only for exemplary purposes, or to contrast with the supposed freedom of human rational judgment, without any awareness that animals might be agents themselves, regarding us too¹⁵; the same charge can be leveled at mainstream medieval thinking. To produce such abstract, inert uses of the "animal", philosophy, Derrida argued, had to deprive itself of "poetry".¹⁶ Donna Haraway's equally influential work on dogs makes a similar argument about the generally exclusionary relationship between philosophy and play.¹⁷ What poetry and play each enable is an element of surprise, uncertainty and the irreducibility of experience to a set of abstract maxims. Each allows for more than just propositional thinking, and for a relationship of human to nonhuman oriented around something other than natural, unquestioned dominion, or certainty about who possesses reason and language, and who lacks it.

Sliding our attention away from dominant medieval thinking on animals and into poetry can reveal a host of medieval works more willing to put this dominion under question, or to expose it to weird possibilities. For example, a late thirteenth-century Middle English poem on the "Names of a Hare in English" attests to how animals draw our attention not only for what we might do with them, but also for what they are, in themselves, without us.¹⁸ The poem warns of the bad luck of encountering a hare while walking. Drop whatever you're carrying, it says, and then recite these 77 names: some of the names are careful observations of hare-like behavior, a kind of bravura natural history, and others just insults: in Middle English, "The chiche, the couart, / The make-fare, the brekefforewart, / The ffnattart, the pollart", or, as Seamus Heaney's translation renders these lines, "The gobshite, the gum-sucker/the scare-the-man, the faith-breaker, / the snuff-the-ground, the baldy skull".¹⁹ The poem ends with a wish that the next time the hare is encountered, it will be dead, served in a chive sauce, or in bread. But before it gets to that point, the hare's life has been allowed an independence that the temporarily unfortunate human encounters as a threat. What has been threatened is the human belief that they dominate animals absolutely, or, to put this another way, what has been realized is that there might be other forms of human/nonhuman relations than domination or struggles for mastery. Curiosity or uncertainty or the weird negotiation of a more equal encounter might be just as possible reactions.

With that in mind, we can return to the Middle English hare-hunting poems, to try now to take both them and their animals as a medieval reader might have, by reading them allegorically, and then by wondering what that allegory might do to the reader's own confidence in their human superiority. Allegory was one of the standard medieval methods for dealing with its literary animals; but it need not simply deliver the animal up to human intellectual control, because even an allegorical animal signifies in a different way than an inanimate object. That is, an animal offers itself to interpretation in its liveliness, its desires, and its bodily vulnerabilities. One of the hare poems ends with the following stanza:

Thus I droop; I dread my death
 Alas I die long before my day [of death]
 for health and suffering, away it goes
 and this world, away it goes
 [Thus I droupe I drede my deth/Alas I dye long or my day, / for welle and woo
 a way it gothe/And this word hit wends away].²⁰

The stanza could easily be taken as one of hundreds of similar statements in medieval memento mori warnings: whatever pleasures you have in this world, whatever pride you have in your own beauty, riches and political power, know that all this is fleeting, for all that is good, or bad, passes away, for death takes everything. Thus the hare's melancholy certainty of its coming death could be a warning to any human to be aware of the ephemerality of their lives.²¹ Traditional allegorical interpretations of hunters as devils would have lent force to this anthropocentric reading. Yet the very identification with the hare on the point of its vulnerability could have simultaneously nudged a human reader out of their anthropomorphic orbit, not least of all because neither hare-hunting poem ends with a hope for anything outside mortality.²² Recognizing what a human's life and the hare's life share, down here in the flux of this world, could conceivably lead humans away from their sense of superiority, and into a shared sympathy, however grim, with all that lives and worries. An allegorical interpretation, in other words, can ultimately lead the reader away from allegory's abstractions, and back into awareness of the body and the needs shared by all life.

"The Preaching of the Swallow" in the late medieval collection by the Dunfermline poet Robert Henryson perfectly exemplifies poetry's capacity for more than human sympathy, even in material that otherwise seems to be directed only at training humans.²³ Fables were essential elements in medieval literacy education, whose stock remained consistent throughout the Middle Ages, and indeed, through the early modern period and into the present day: children then as now are familiar, for example, with the fable of the city mouse and country mouse. Fables require their young readers to identify with animals, not so much to feel themselves to be animals, but rather to experience through their traditionally fixed traits concentrated forms of various virtues and

vices. The wolves of fables are less wolves than they are epitomized ravenousness and cruelty; the frogs and foxes, deception; the lions, imperiousness; the city mouse, vanity, the country mouse, happy humility; and the sheep, always, meek helplessness. Henryson's fables distinguish themselves from the many proceeding collections through their elevated language, and the space they devote both to the tales, and to the epimythia, the morals that follow them. A schoolmaster himself, Henryson demonstrates in his fables the rhetorical techniques of amplification that he no doubt taught his pupils, but here rendered with a sophistication comprehensible only to adults possessing at least his education. Henryson's fables, that is, are doing far more than calling on children to flee vices, follow virtues, and take on a slightly cynical stance of social prudence (Fig. 1).

The 266 lines of his "Preaching of the Swallow"—not including its epimythium, which runs for another 72 lines—begin with set of philosophical maxims about the limits of human understanding compared to divine knowledge, before praising the meaningful order of creation, in which all creatures are made for man's benefit (1671–72); then follows portraits of each of the seasons, rivaling the famous opening to Chaucer's *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*; and finally, the poet himself arrives—here as a character, highly unusual for a fable—who sets out to watch springtime agricultural labor. As he watches the farm work, he spies on a crowd of small birds being harangued by a swallow, warning them of the coming danger. The farmers are growing hemp, he cautions, to snare you: we should uproot it "with our nails sharp and small" (1749), and eat it before it grows. But the other birds laugh at the



Fig. 1 Robert Henryson's "Preaching of the Swallow", (c) The British Library Board, Harley MS 3865, 43v, after 1571

swallow's foresight, and the poet goes home. When June arrives, he returns, eavesdrops again, and the avian performance repeats itself. Then winter arrives, and when the birds swoop down on exposed grain, they are predictably trapped; meanwhile, the swallow continues its unheeded warnings. The horrifying result merits quoting in its original Middle Scots:

Allace it wes rycht grit hertis sair to se
 That bludie bowcheour beit thay birdis doun
 And for till heir quhen thay wist weill to de
 Thair cairfull sang and lamentatioun.
 Sum with ane staf he straik to eirth on swoun,
 Sum off the heid, off sum he brak the crag,
 Sum half on lyfe he stoppit in his bag. (1874–80)

[Alas, it was a great pain to the spirit to see the bloody butcher beat the birds down, and to hear, when they knew they were going to die, their sorrowful song and lamentation. Some he struck with a staff unconscious onto the earth; some he beheaded; some of their necks he broke; some he stuffed half alive in his bag].

Henryson's fable anticipates Martin Luther's 1534 letter to his servant Wolfgang Sieberger: to warn Sieberger against the frivolity of trapping birds, Luther wrote a short legal complaint in the collective voice of the birds, outraged that Sieberger has deprived them of "the liberty of flying in the air and picking up grains of corn".²⁴ Luther's letter, however, is but a slightly imperious thwarting of his servant's enjoyments, with little concern for the birds themselves. Henryson's work by contrast is a moral tragedy, watched in horror by the poet himself, who has included himself as a character, on the inside rather than outside the fable. No distant judge, no mere schoolmaster, Henryson's stand-in is as helpless a witness to what befalls the birds as the swallow. He and this tiny, wise bird alike know what awaits the others, and their shared grief—for each is appalled by what they witness—overcomes any contempt either might have felt for the catastrophes suffered by the willfully ignorant. What matters here is not the possession of language, or the absence of an immortal soul; nor does the whole scene's fictionality impede the feelings and shock of recognition the fable elicits. That shock occurs not because the birds are "humanised" or because the narrator is "avianised", but because the fable recognizes a shared feeling of exposure to the elements: birds and narrator alike go about through the year, worrying about what awaits. And what matters too is a recognized feeling of shared vulnerability, common to everything that lives and cares about its life. It is on this basis that the fable appeals to our sympathy, and our horror. Language here is not a medium of rational deliberation, but rather a medium of communion, recognition, and community.

One of Derrida's most influential challenges to the long history of philosophical disdain for nonhuman animality was his engagement with the eighteenth-century utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Bentham had observed that the true question for animal rights was not whether they could

reason, or had language, but whether they could suffer. This framing of the question, Derrida declared, upends the whole edifice of philosophy, because what occupied the center of attention was no longer human capacity and animal incapacity.²⁵ Philosophers could no longer declare that animals could neatly be cut off from moral consideration simply because they lacked what we believed ourselves to have: free choice of the will, spoken (or any) language, tool-use, laughter, laws, and so on. For, what mattered was not any possession of any given trait, but a shared *inability*, what Derrida called “a nonpower at the heart of power”,²⁶ namely, the inability to avoid suffering, helplessness, dependence, and mortality. Derrida had long been interested in how all claims to pure linguistic concepts depend on ever-shifting networks of meaning; all claims to certainty in a concept must always be “deferred” onto other, equally dependent meanings, so that perfect certainty never arrives. Here, however, Derrida extends his interest in dependency from language to living bodies and their needs and sensations, with explosive results. For this dependency is the animal existence that humans share, and whatever our insistence of the powers of reason, or the possession of an undying, invulnerable soul, which so often tries to transcend that dependency, we remain down here, ourselves like other animals also exposed to a sometimes hostile world, which we require to have any existence at all.²⁷ This shared condition of dependency and danger is what draws Henryson’s narrator into the world of the swallow and his doomed companions, and what short-circuits the engine by which the fable tradition, and the intellectual habits it inculcated, tended to divide thinking humans from merely instinctual beasts.

My final examples belong to Margaret Cavendish, a giant of seventeenth-century speculative natural science, whose vast output includes poetry in a Lucretian vein on atoms, and a novel of astounding political and scientific speculation, *The Blazing World*, whose conclusion features an interplanetary invasion that destroys all of England’s enemies. Her poems “Hunting of the Hare” and “Hunting of the Stag” are just as ambitiously oppositional: they run counter to nearly the whole tradition of hunting poems, or perhaps find amid the jolly conservatism of these other works otherwise inert materials of animal sympathy, charged in her hands with undisguised protest on behalf of their subjects.²⁸

Her poem on the hare is straightforwardly a poem of anti-hunting advocacy. She imagines a hare, Wat (a traditional name for this animal) secure in its own environment:

Pressing his Body close to Earth lay squat.
His Nose upon his two Fore-feet close lies,
Glaring obliquely with his great gray Eyes.

He waits for the sun to set, goes about his business in the dark, and then, at sunrise, returns, “down in his Form he lies”. His world welcomes him and gives him a hare-shaped home. Interrupting this cycle are the hunters and their

dogs. Cavendish captures Wat's sudden terror, not just in what he does—portraying him, that is, not just from a human perspective, attentive only to his leaps, his running, his doubling back, and his exhaustion—but also in what he thinks (“To hide himself, his Thoughts he new employs”). She is at once outside, watching the hunt, and inside the hare himself in his flight. Covered with dust, and exhausted, Wat pauses to clean himself, a pathetic episode cut off, again, by the dogs, whose joy and swiftness in the hunt Cavendish cannot help but admire. She reserves her contempt for the human hunters, who in their success shout over Wat's tiny body, “As if the Devill they did Prisoner take”. She levels her final contempt on “Man”, for a combination of carnivorousness, which makes “their Stomachs, Graves, which full they fill/With Murder'd Bodies”, and their outrage against the cruelty of lions, wolves, bears, and tigers mere hypocrisy. Believing the lives of all creatures are his to take, Man is but a tyrant, and, still worse, a tyrant who believes himself to be only the gentlest of creatures. Meanwhile, the hare runs, hides, and dies, for the sport of men.

Cavendish follows this poem immediately with the “Hunting of the Stag”, which, unlike the hare poem, offers her no platform outside the jumble of human violence from which to make her condemnation. No external stance of superiority, whether as a smug human, or even as a righteous woman, will do; all the poem offers instead is an inescapable identification with the grace, power, and terrified death of its subject. For the poem starts and ends with the stag, his life, his joy in his body, and, at last, his collapse under the relentless expertise of dogs and hunters. Cavendish begins with a portrait of the stag's beauty (his “Neck was long, and Hornes branch'd up high”), which the stag himself joins in, fatefully: “Taking such Pleasure in his Stately Crowne, / His Pride forgets that Dogs might pull him down”. Cavendish pauses to enumerate the forest's trees, describing at some length the stag's home as the stag knows and experiences it; then, some 50 lines in, the hunters and dogs appear, chase the stag into a river, from which he emerges, exhausted, its towering antlers inexorably visible, a beacon to the dogs: at last caught, he fights courageously, but then “Fate his thread had spun, so down did fall, / Shedding some Tears at his own Funeral”. With this, the poem, with the stag, just concludes. Cavendish's poem has much in common with more traditional hunting poems: its thrill at the stag's speed and bravery, and its admiration at the skill of the hunting pack could belong to any contemporary poem that simply delighted in the joy of the hunt. What finally differentiates Cavendish's work from this more conservative material is its ending. There is no final thrill at the success of the hunt, of course; but neither is there any final condemnation. The poem just stops. It is as if the voice of the poem were conterminous with its subject's life, as if, in other words, there were no human position outside the stag that the poet inhabits. Our reading selves, Cavendish's voice and the stag are all one, so that the end of its life is truly the end of a world, which existed as the stag and his sylvan environment together, and whose sensible conjunction vanished when he did.

Literary animals should be recognized as more than mere symbols. Enabling that recognition requires habits of reading disoriented from interpretation, because interpretation tends towards reframing animal experience in terms of human priorities, while recognition grants that experience value in itself. With Cavendish, that recognition can go so far as to collapse any difference between living poet and dying animal. Even the most resistant material, like the Middle English hare-hunting poems that began this essay, can offer a chance to recognize the animal life at hand, and the world that matters to it. These Middle English hunting poems, and others like them, may want to be just jaunty paeans to the fun of hunting and eating, but their very attentiveness to animal life, and their willingness to imagine the animals speaking, or moaning, throws the texts off of any straightforwardly anthropocentric track. No longer just objects, the animals of works like these, in however constrained a fashion, may be heard calling out to us, either to rescue them, or to climb into the poem with them, to join them in recognizing the animal vulnerability, and the joy in a world that we and they all ineluctably share.

NOTES

1. Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, 107–10; Hartshorne, *Ancient Metrical Tales*, 165–68.
2. Augustine, *City of God*, I.20, 26.
3. Laurioux, *Manger au moyen âge*, 103–13; Chevalier, “L’alimentation Carnée”, 193–94.
4. Derrida, “‘Eating Well’, or The Calculation of the Subject”, 278.
5. For an efficient introduction to medieval linguistic theory in relation to animals, Zingesser, “Pidgin Poetics”, 62–80.
6. For early modern terminology for animals, also applicable to the Middle Ages, see Shannon, *Accommodated Animal*.
7. d’Ors, “*Testamentum Porcelli*”, 73–83; Topsell, *History of Four-Footed Beasts*, 513–14.
8. Padelford and Benham, “Rawlinson Manuscript”, 350–52; for discussion, and also a list of poetic testaments, some human, some animal, see Wilson, “Testament of the Buck”, 157–84.
9. Hazlitt and Huth, *Fugitive Tracts*, Text V [no page numbers].
10. Lindsay, *Poetical Works*, ll. 1080–135.
11. Williamson, *Complete Old English Poems*, 588, Riddle 74.
12. Symonds, *Wine, Women, and Song*, 152. The poem’s original Latin, which begins “Olim lacus colueram”, is famously included in Carl Orff’s 1935–36 cantata, the *Carmina Burana*.
13. “Maister Basse His Careere,/or/the New Hunting of the Hare [Pepys Ballads I.452]”, UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive, accessed September 30, 2018, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20213/image>
14. “The Hunting of the Hare/with Her Last Will and Testament,/as ‘Twas Perform’d on Bamstead Downs/by Cony Catchers and Their Hounds [British Library C.20.f.9.202–203]”, UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive, accessed September 30, 2018, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30850/citation>
15. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore*, 13–14.

16. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore*, 7.
17. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.
18. Ross, "The Middle English Poem on the Names of a Hare", 347–77; for corrections to Ross, Laing, "Notes on Digby 86", 201–11.
19. Heaney, "The Names of the Hare", 197–98.
20. Hartshorne, *Ancient Metrical Tales*, 165.
21. Rooney remarks on precisely this point in her *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 117.
22. My approach here is indebted to feminist care ethics and other, allied work that focuses on compassion. See, for example, Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*; Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* and Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*.
23. Henryson, *Complete Works*.
24. Luther, *Letters*, 300–301.
25. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore*, 27–28.
26. Derrida, *Animal That Therefore*, 28.
27. For a foundational treatment of animal philosophy, exposure, and dependency, see Wolfe, "Exposures", 1–41.
28. Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, 110–16.

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PART III

Early Modern Literature



Human, Animal, and Metamorphic Becomings

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The question of the dividing line between the human and the animal has been at stake since the very beginning of so-called Western metaphysics. From the story of the relationship between the warrior king Gilgamesh and the wild man Enkidu onward, the essence and future of human civilization seems to hinge on whether the human male has the capacity to distinguish himself from animal being and to harness it in the service of leadership.¹ Often in these narratives of human–animal distinction, a principle of femininity plays a role, if not the decisive one. I will return to this question later. Although most salient for some of the discussion in this essay, “human” and “animal” are not the only terms in this unstable struggle of distinction. The third term, most often, has been the divine, whether in the person of a singular divine principle or as a general force determining the lives of earthlings.

Western premodernity, as many have argued, seems to have allowed for a transmutation of bodily forms, at least in theory (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* would constitute the paradigm for this theoretical horizon). Marie de France’s narratives abound with such tales, and many of them seem to suggest that transformation to or from other-than-human animal existence does not, a priori, condemn the human to a lesser state.² Indeed, Caroline Bynum has argued that, in Ovid for example, beings retain their subjectivity regardless of their form.³ And as historians have shown, European premodernity was, at times, juridically willing to address the question of intentionality in non-human agents

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of transgression.⁴ Vanita Seth's examination of the "wild man myth" likewise suggests that premodern Europe conceded lively subjectivity to multiple forms of life, and these were, in themselves, plastic to a degree, ranging across animality, humanity, and divinity.⁵ She argues, in fact, that it is not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that European taxonomies definitively closed the door on hybridity, consigning nature, and thus the body, to a static and inert existence, while relegating divinity to a distant cause.

If the Middle Ages, so the story goes, retains the capacity to imagine beings crossing "the" orders of being—the capacity, in other words, to imagine metamorphosis—then the Renaissance, as a chapter in western humanist history, is most well-known for its decentering of a theocentric universe and the installation of the human ("man", in effect) at the center of worldly concerns. Along with this humanist centering comes, as well, perspectival vision, representation calibrated to the human point of view. This story culminates, using the broadest of brushstrokes, in the beginnings of scientific modernity. Francis Bacon, Galileo Galilei, and René Descartes each in their way further sidelined the divine in order to focus on the sciences of the physical and natural worlds, from a human (and incipiently secular) point of view.

In the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, often considered a defining statement of the early modern humanist orientation toward "man", Pico della Mirandola declares that human exceptionalism consists *not* in human superiority but in human malleability, the human's positioning as a sort of halfway point on a continuum between animal being and divinity, partaking of the nature of both yet capable, unlike beasts and angels, of self-fashioning. He calls man "an indeterminate form", mimicking the words of God as He creates Adam and addresses him for the first time: "We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire... I have placed thee at the center of the world" (4–5). As Jacques Derrida quips, "From within the pit of ... an eminent lack ... man installs or claims in a single movement *what is proper to him* (the peculiarity of a man whose property it is not to have anything that is exclusively his)".⁶ Nevertheless, Pico calls man a "chameleon", unable, even as he distinguishes between animal orders of being and the divine, to find a metaphor for humanity that does not rely, for its meaning, on the animal kingdom.⁷ Time and time again, philosophical discourses on the human resort to animal metaphors for their meaning, even as they seek to find "the" dividing line between them. For Akira Lippit, who examines the "animetaphor" of the animal in the human, that metaphoric status of the animal testifies to an originary attachment of the human to the animal at the very heart of what is considered most human and least animal in the human, language.⁸ In the effort to determine what is "proper" to the human, Pico, like the hegemonic traditions of humanism that will follow in his wake, resorts to metaphor, figurality, and thus *not* what is proper but what is borrowed, transported from elsewhere; that is, from the animal, in order to define the human.⁹

It is Descartes who famously signs the warrant consigning animals to the losing side in this dualism between animal and human, which is also, for him, a dualism of body and soul or mind. On the one hand, shared embodiment produces sufficient resemblance between human and animal, insofar as “the” body is a living machine, and thus justifies vivisection in the service of comparative anatomy and physiology; on the other, that same dualism definitively excludes animal being from the considerations accorded the human, especially thought and second-order consciousness (the awareness that one is thinking).¹⁰ In “The Animal That Therefore I Am”, Derrida remarks, almost in passing, that he “will pay attention to a certain evolution from Montaigne to Descartes, an event that is obscure and difficult to assign a date to, to identify even, between two configurations for which these proper names are metonymies” (375). Later on he marks this evolution as the distinction between “response” and “reaction”, but the philosophers’ names also serve as metonymies for what Derrida argues is a profound bifurcation in the history of western metaphysics around the question of the dividing line between human and animal. Taking my inspiration from this remark, I analyze early modern texts for what might be called a shadow tradition that has not, as yet, erected a definitive barrier between the “orders of being” that go by the names “human” and “animal”. What, I ask, would philosophies of animal being look like had Michel de Montaigne, rather than Descartes, inaugurated a certain modernity in the thinking of animal being?

Genealogical narratives such as this are fables in the sense that Derrida gives to this term when he meditates on the nature of stories about “the beast and the sovereign”: they are narratives that willfully exemplify or allegorize, not to mention anthropomorphize.¹¹ They tell stories rather than purport to recount history, all the while offering up critical historical interpretations.¹² Here, then, is my genealogical fable: I want to posit that the particular way of thinking in the West called human exceptionalism is, while not recent, at least recently hegemonic. The metonymic name for the break that eventually results in the hegemony of the belief in human exceptionalism is Descartes. His *Discourse* and *Meditations* posit the non-human animal as a machine.¹³ But more, Descartes posits the body itself as an animated machine. The animal body, any animate body, is an automaton made of bones and flesh. Thus, what makes humans human—what we’ve come to call the *cogito* or reason—shows up, literally, as a *deus ex machina* to save the day.¹⁴ It is only by virtue of positing a soul that the human is saved from the fate of the parrot—to parrot the human. Animal spirits move the body like a clock. Ironically, as others have noted, while divesting animal life and the body of inspirited agency, Descartes also opens up the possibility of agential machines, the cyborg of Donna Haraway’s manifesto.¹⁵ As against this conception of embodiment, philosophers such as Montaigne confer upon non-human and human “nature” a wealth of eccentric intelligences, in addition to “soul, and life, and reason”.¹⁶ For it is Montaigne who says, famously, “when I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?” (331), according to her both intention and

agency. Not only, then, is the non-human companion afforded an interiority aberrant in the Cartesian universe, but she also has a gender.

An unusually detailed and sympathetic travel narrative about living among Indigenous South Americans, Jean de Léry's *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578) offers another exemplary pre- or anti-Cartesian scene of encounter. Léry idealized the people and the surrounding non-human environment that Europe had just "discovered" on the other side of the Atlantic, and he imagined, like Montaigne, that the peoples of the so-called New World were closer to nature than were his compatriots.¹⁷ Like Montaigne, Léry could imagine the non-human animal belonging to an order of being not significantly different from his own.¹⁸ In *Unrequited Conquest*, Roland Greene makes the point that for early European travelers, Brazil seemed a world of objects. He notes, however, that a logic of counter-objectification is also at work in the Brazilian encounter; in the colonial lyric economy of subject-object relations, these positions are open to destabilization, from the infamous instances of a European becoming "meat" to the unsettling reversal that occurs when Léry and his companions encounter a lizard:

We saw on a little rise a lizard much bigger than a man's body ... its head raised high and its eyes gleaming, it stopped short to look at us.... After it had stared at us for about a quarter of an hour, it suddenly turned around; crashing through the leaves and branches where it passed—with a noise greater than that of a stag running through a forest—it fled back uphill.... It occurred to me since, in accord with the opinion of those who say that the lizard takes delight in the human face, that this one had taken as much pleasure in looking at us as we had felt fear in gazing upon it.¹⁹

Greene examines how the passage cites and mimics Petrarch's *canzone* 23, the *canzone* of the metamorphoses, where the poet-subject is the voyeuristic Acteon caught in his (female) object's gaze and transformed into a stag.²⁰ In this passage, as Greene remarks, "agency and subjectivity are ceded to the lizard."²¹ The apotropaic effect that the Frenchmen have had on the lizard—it stands still to stare at them—reverses itself and freezes them in turn ("we looked at each other stunned, and remained stock-still", 123). Léry's text imagines a subjective reciprocity between human and lizard where fear and desire commingle in a mesmerizing exchange of gazes and emotions.²² The self-objectifying projection that consists in imagining the lizard to be gazing at a human face as upon a beautiful surface not only accords agency and subjectivity to the lizard, but also renders passive the human object of that gaze—and, moreover, in the lyric tradition from which this passage derives its erotic force, feminine. As Greene writes of Léry's impulse, "the kind of objectification that Columbus and many others apply to the Indians, these Europeans adapt to themselves, dissolving their own bodies into discrete aesthetic and functional parts with a relish that suggests the unrequited desire of becoming an object" (128), the object of a gaze that is not human.

As the example of L ery’s Petrarchan adaptation demonstrates, the commingling of orders of being sustains itself through the Ovidian tradition of metamorphosis, especially in the early modern continental lyric. Indeed, metamorphic transformation—and its metaphoric deployment—would seem to support Derrida’s argument that poetry, rather than philosophy, is the place where animality enters discourse, in the form of what he calls the *animot*, both homophonically “animals” in French and, orthographically, a combination of animal and word (*mot*), or animated word.²³ In that tradition, animals, plants, things, and gods continue to transform into one another, in a relation of both identification and desire. It is in this respect that one can argue that anti- or pre-Cartesianism, as figured in the metaphors (which is also a metaphysics) of ontological commingling, is queer. In a conventional, heteronormative logic, identification and desire complement each other according to the dualisms of sexual difference, such that one identifies one’s sex in and through desire for the supposed opposite. By contrast, metamorphosis, as a figure or trope, troubles this alignment both sexually and ontologically, since its logic is that one becomes what one desires or what one resembles, or becomes the ontological complement of what one desires or resembles. This is precisely what Petrarch does in *canzone* 23. The longest poem in the *Canzoniere*, *canzone* 23 is a kind of poetic manifesto, “a spiritual autobiography of the poet-lover figured forth in a series of Ovidian transformations”, with metamorphosis signaling an ultimately cyclical series of self-transformations involving mobility and voice.²⁴ A distinctive feature of the poem is that, until the envoy, the poet is most often the mortal punished by a divinity, or the feminized object of violent and punitive transformation: first, like Daphne, he is transformed into a laurel; then, like Cygnus, into a swan; like Battus, a stone; like Byblis into a fountain; like Echo into a disembodied voice, and then, upon returning to flesh to feel more pain, he is, like Actaeon, transformed into a stag which, were it not for the poem’s envoy (where he undergoes another set of transformations), he ought still to be (“and still I flee the belling of my hounds”, “Canzone”, 66). Here again, then, metamorphosis—or the exchange and transformation of forms between human and animal (and thing, in Petrarch’s case)—troubles gender or sexual difference as much as it troubles ontological discreteness. As with L ery, becoming object/animal entails, as well, a feminization.

The relation between femininity and animality continues to be a clich  of metaphysical hierarchies in the western philosophical tradition. World folk tales abound that offer an allegory of the difficult civilizational triumph of “man” over Nature, for example in the story of the “animal bride”, where a woman who is also an animal marries a human man. Women and animals have also been partners on the same side of the philosophical dividing line between owner and owned, soul-possessing and soul-bereft.²⁵ This collocation is not without ambivalence. Indeed, metamorphosis, animality, and femininity converge in lively early modern debates concerning the relative status of humans and animals, most often figured through the story of Circe’s encounter with Odysseus and his men in Book X of Homer’s *Odyssey*. And although most

accounts moralize the transformation she effects in the crew by turning them into pigs (e.g., as does Pico), accepting the hierarchical ladder that assigns animals the lowest rungs, Niccolò Machiavelli's "Golden Ass" stages the talking back of the animals, who affirm the condition of animality as far more desirable than the constraints, as well as the vices, associated with human society.

This "Circe-effect", or the transformative power of the feminine in its relation to metamorphic becoming-animal, is echoed lyrically in early modern deployments of the Ovidian episode of Diana and Acteon, in which the goddess Diana transforms into a stag the human hunter-voyeur who catches sight of her bathing naked surrounded by her nymphs.²⁶ Diana is, like Circe, a principle of powerful femininity that defeats her human male twin (both are hunters), by transforming him into animal prey. The trope finds one of its most interesting—and queer—deployments in the sixteenth-century lyric poetry of Louise Labé.

Labé, wrestling with a Petrarchan tradition that excludes feminine agency in the poetic and erotic encounter, takes up the tools—one might call them weapons—of classical mythology to fashion and perform a persona that marks her as both feminine beloved and poetic agent. In the lyric tradition of love poetry within which she writes, the lover and the beloved occupy two opposing poles: the male lover and poetic subject, on the one hand and, on the other, the female beloved object. Labé's poetry, instead, manipulates the play of subject and object resulting from transformations and exchanges—metamorphoses—between human and animal in these primal scenes of encounter. Sonnet 19, for example, features Diana and her entourage resting after having struck down "many beasts".²⁷ The unidentified subject appears in the fourth line, wandering along "dreaming" and "without thinking", much like Actaeon, who "wanders uncertainly in the forest" ("per nemus ignotum non certis passibus errans").²⁸ A voice speaks to her, identifying her as a Nymph, and asks her "what did you find, friend, along your way,/ who took your bow and arrows as prey?" ("Qu'as tu trouvé, o compagne, en ta voye,/ Qui de ton arc et flesches ait fait proye?" ll. 9–10). She responds by explaining that she "animated" herself at a passerby, shooting all her arrows at him and the bow as well, but he collected them all and, taking aim, made hundreds of breaches (openings or wounds) in her. In this narrative, the poetic subject is both virgin huntress (part of Diana's retinue) and Acteon, the human male hunter stumbling upon Diana's grove. Labé's narrative thus echoes the Ovidian scene by occupying both positions at once: a lover wounding his prey/beloved with the arrows of Cupid, and the fatefully wounded prey it/herself.

Like Actaeon, then, the Nymph is turned into prey by another, who, rather than flinging the droplets of water that transform him into a stag to be breached by the teeth of his hounds, takes up the Nymph's arsenal and wounds her hundreds of times with it. Labé's narrator, like the Petrarchan poetic persona, undergoes multiple metamorphoses in the poem, but does so in order, metaphorically, to occupy both the position of the poet/lover/subject *and* the (more gender appropriate) position of beloved/animal/object. In its morphic

flexibilities and gender/species fluidities, therefore, the tropological movement is queer. What Labé seems to want to establish, however, is the conventionality of the heterosexual love relation from the position of a non-normatively sexed poetic voice.

The animal persists as a sort of remainder in this lyric scene of metaphoric and metamorphic transformation. She (“beast” in French is feminine) is not a “mere” conceit, as the commingling of identification, desire, and resemblance in the repetition of animal references—beast, animation, prey—shows. The beast is doubly, if not triply, prey—the object of Diana’s arrows but the object, as well, of the arrows of the speaking voice of the poem *and* the passerby. In the dizzying exchange of forms and weapons described in this encounter, she who wounds the beast becomes the beast who is wounded. And although the understanding of the conceit is that the encounter is erotic (the many arrows breaching the Nymph are Cupid’s), what seems most insistent in the invocation of the metamorphic transformations is death, or the mortality of the animal or human prey. The poem begins with Diana having killed many beasts, while subsequently the first-person speaker (the Nymph) has tried and failed to wound a passerby (*un passant*), after which she is wounded hundreds of times by that same passerby. Killing and wounding/being wounded are thus the dominant themes of the poem.

Lippit, in an effort to understand what is at work in the relationship between the animal and metaphor—a relationship literalized performatively, I have argued, through the metamorphic trope—writes that “the animal functions not only as an exemplary metaphor but...as a kind of originary metaphor...the animal is already a metaphor, the metaphor an animal. Together they transport to language, breathe into language, the vitality of another life, another expression: animal and metaphor, *animetaphor*” (1113). This animetaphor reveals its catachrestic status in definitions of the human, such as Pico’s, that cannot find the proper property of the human except by using an animal-metaphor: the chameleon. This very capacity (or in-capacity, *impouvoir*, as Derrida calls it) of the animetaphor—to figure something beyond or outside of language, to designate a limit in the sufficiency of (what is proper to) the human—is what resists the Cartesian takeover with the force of an alternative poetic tradition figured in the early modern instances I’ve noted.²⁹ But what these texts also register (however “unconsciously” perhaps), and what Labé forcefully articulates, is that animetaphor also marks a place of self-division in the human and a place where allegiance to the human hesitates. This is a hesitation that metaphysics cannot grasp in its efforts to establish human exceptionalism. That self-division or hesitation, which gets called sexual difference or gender (but could also be called, in accounts such as Léry’s, “race”), links human and animal being in intimate and inextricable ways. Labé, in the dizzying and self-referential play of transformations, suggests that one of those ways is mortality, a material link that challenges the idealism of metaphysics.³⁰ While drawing agential power for the staging of the scene from the projection of a divine (and

immortal) feminine, the poet nevertheless figures the place of the humanimal join—male and female—as vulnerability, the capacity to be wounded and to die.

Thus, in this speculative genealogy of the past—what I have elsewhere called figural historiography—there are articulations of the human that do not, ultimately, seek to produce human exceptionalism as a difference from the animal (an exceptionalism that has, in the vagaries of dominant western philosophical thinking, also extended itself to forms of the human that are seen to diverge from a norm or ideal).³¹ In reading for these alternative articulations—realized, I argue, most acutely in early modernity through literary and speculative tropes such as metamorphosis—it is possible to discern, retrospectively, a proleptic critique of Cartesian dualism before (and against) Descartes. And the form it takes, most insistently, is figural, metaphorical, animetaphorical: a straining toward the limits of language for the join between inscription and vital matter, “realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic, of life and/or death”.³² Léry, Montaigne, and even sometimes Derrida, posit (hetero)sexual difference in the human–animal divide when they figure animal being. Thus their “subjectivity” as male-marked humans remains intact, even as they are willing to welcome a “heterogeneous multiplicity of the living” into the fold of being.³³ Labé, on the other hand, by developing a poetics that pries loose rigid subject/object distinctions, affirms queer continuities of resemblance, identification, and desire among shifting forms of life.³⁴ The fluid and dynamic continuities enacted in that poetics, between animals and women, *animots* and the poet, unfurl speculative possibilities in the European past that continue to find their realizations in postmodern posthumanist speculative fiction—the work of Ursula K. Le Guin being perhaps the most famous example—and increasingly, it would seem, in philosophy and science as well. Evolutionary biologists now posit that organic life originates in symbiosis prior to the individuation of beings. They also now notice the departures from heterosexual norms in the other-than-human world. Ethologists studying animal behavior tend to underline resemblance and likeness rather than difference in the cognitive and affective realms of sentient life. Thus, scientific perceptions of sex-gender diversity and cross-species continuities now prevail. And in the philosophical domain of ethics, it has become increasingly difficult to argue the exceptionalism of human claims to rights, freedoms and personhood.³⁵

NOTES

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.
2. *Lais de Marie de France*.
3. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*.
4. Ferry and Germé, ed., *Des Animaux et des hommes*, especially 319–335, where there are transcriptions of early modern court cases involving pigs and insects, among other non-humans.
5. Seth, “Difference with a Difference”; see also Seth, *Europe’s Indians*.
6. Derrida, “The Animal That Therefore I Am”, 389.

7. della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 5.
8. Lippit, "Magnetic Animal".
9. See, for early modern English discussions of this hegemonic tradition, Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*.
10. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*.
11. Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*; see especially the Second Session (32–62).
12. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History".
13. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*.
14. See especially Part V of *Discourse on the Method*.
15. Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs".
16. Montaigne, "Apology for Raymond Sebond", 330.
17. Montaigne, "Of cannibals".
18. Magnone, "Bien Manger, Bien Mangé".
19. Lery, *Voyage*, 82–83.
20. Petrarca, "Canzone 23".
21. Greene, *Unrequited Conquest*, 123.
22. See my discussion of Petrarch's *canzone* 23 in "Ovidian Subjectivities in Early Modern Lyric".
23. Derrida, *The Animal*, especially 40–41 and 47–48, where he denounces the philosophical distortion that consists in referring to "the" animal and explains the reasons for his use of the word "animot". For further exploration of the term, see Senior, Clark, and Freccero, "Editors' Preface: *Ecce animot*".
24. Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis", 335. Durling comments that "Metamorphosis is ... a dominant idea in the *Rime sparse*. ... Ovid is omnipresent" (*Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, 26–27).
25. See, among others, Belcher, *African Myths of Origin*. In the motif-index of folk literature, "Animal Bride" is Arne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) number 402. See https://sites.ualberta.ca/~urban/Projects/English/Motif_Index.htm. For a discussion of the association of women with animals, see Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. The woman-animal link continues to haunt literary imaginings; Lönngren, *Following the Animal*, traces the persistence of this trope in Northern European literature.
26. The enzymologist William Jencks coined the term, "Circe effect", to describe the attractive action of some enzymes toward their substrate. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circe>. Wikipedia felicitously uses the term "lure" to describe this action, thus pointedly invoking the femininity of Circe's power. It is this property of enzymes that, in part, leads Lippit to speak about the magnetic effect of the animal.
27. Labé, *Oeuvres completes*, ll. 1–3, 131–32.
28. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, ll. 175, 136–137.
29. Derrida talks about "not-being-able" in the context of Jeremy Betham's argument that the ability to suffer, rather than the ability to reason, should constitute the basis for "rights" (*The Animal*, 27–28). As Derrida points out, the ability to suffer is not a power. For a redefinition of this "inability" as power, see Dufourmantelle, *Power of Gentleness*.
30. See Shukin, *Animal Capital*, on this question.
31. Freccero, "Figural Historiography".
32. Derrida, *The Animal*, 31.
33. Derrida, *The Animal*, 31.

34. One might call this a kind of object-oriented ontology *avant la lettre*, except that it performs its metamorphic transmutations in more dynamic ways.
35. I am thinking in particular of Lynn Margulis's theories of endogenesis, the idea that life is formed through the collaboration of cells from the first eukaryotic cell on "up"; for sexual and gender diversity in nature, see especially Joan Roughgarden. Frans de Waal is probably the most widely popularized ethologist demonstrating the cognitive and emotional resemblances between humans and animals; see also Marc Bekoff and Barbara Smuts. Peter Singer, Mary Midgley, Tom Regan, and Steven Wise are a few of the philosophers and legal theorists arguing for rights, freedoms, and personhood for non-humans.

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Sheep, Beasts, and Knights: Fugitive Alterity in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* Book VI, and *The Shepheardes Calender*

Rachel Stenner

The dedication of Edmund Spenser's most influential work, *The Faerie Queene* (1590 and 1596), states that the poem intends "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline".¹ Each of the work's six books allegorically represents a virtue that the hero-knight emblematises for the reader's edification. The fundamental premise behind Spenser's romance is the humanist belief that literature and culture mould us to their shapes and forms. By this logic, we are creatures who are always in a process of becoming, governed by moves and moments. The consequence of this, as Spenser recognised, is that virtues are not states of being but performances. Moves have their countermoves, which the bravest knight must parry. In romance, beasts and monsters, not other knights, frequently perform those countermoves. As Spenser's knights slug it out with a vast array of non-human life, at stake is the very definition of the human.

This chapter reads Book VI of Spenser's unfinished romance, "The Legend of Courtesie", alongside his anonymously published debut, *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), a set of twelve pastoral eclogues. Book VI seemingly rests on a series of polarisations: human/animal; culture/nature; civilisation/savagery; and, less obviously, romance/pastoral. These dualisms lend themselves to the

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interests of animal studies but critics have not yet brought this framework to the Book. The first task of this chapter is to draw critical attention to the significance of Book VI's animals, particularly its pastoral flocks of sheep and the terrifying monster that is the Blatant Beast. I initially argue that the animals support the Book's conceptual and generic polarisations; in this respect, they perform a function that is continuous with the allegorical mode of the poem as a whole.

However, Spenser does not rest on such easy distinctions. This becomes evident when we turn to Book VI's destabilisation of its own categories via its other important animals: a bear and a tiger. Spenser insinuates into his representations an alterity and hybridity which resist taming and trapping. The significance of this resistance is that it is offered not only by the other animals, but by the humans too, occurring when they occupy momentary imaginative spaces, perform temporal moves, or swerve in signification. With these deft gestures, the poem reaches for a fugitive alterity.

I conceive "fugitive alterity" as structurally similar to Lyndgren Johnson's idea of "fugitive humanism". Johnson develops this notion to describe alternatives to the exceptionalism—both white and human—on which liberal humanism has historically depended. Central to humanism's exclusionary thinking is not only the binary human/animal, but black/white. Johnson's term describes a "mode of being" that "does not reject" but "casts doubt on the exclusions of humanism".² Through her analysis of African American literature, Johnson argues that "while African Americans certainly fled [...] forms of violent dehumanization", namely slavery, "they also often fled some of liberal humanism's most cherished assumptions" (18). Comparably, Spenser posits for his figures an alterity which eludes the oppositions that otherwise undergird his poetic logic. With this state, Spenser proposes a mode of being which humans and non-humans share. Perhaps that is why it is occupied only ever fleetingly, or in moments of escape and resistance to taming: fugitive alterity is forever on the run.

It is not just *The Faerie Queene* but Spenser's entire oeuvre that is neglected by animal studies, despite its panoply of non-human life. As remarked by the editors of a recent special edition of *Spenser Studies* (*Spenser and "The Human"*) his writings offer "a vital, yet oddly neglected, archive for any engagement with early modern debates on what the category of 'the human' does and means".³ This thinking about a posthuman Spenser replaces an older school of criticism that first addressed Spenserian animals through genre or mode, such as bestiary and fable, then historicised his animal symbolism and its early modern contexts.⁴ In a landmark essay, Joseph Loewenstein introduced an ethical component to the discussion when he wrote that Spenser has "virtually no affective", but instead a "highly theoretical", engagement with fauna.⁵ This opened up to critique the knotty area of Spenser's characteristic modes of allegory and prosopoeia. Both of these anthropomorphic poetic techniques arguably "strip away creaturely life (human and non-human) to bare significance", and thereby perform what Karen Raber terms an "erasure of nature".⁶ Bruce Boehrer, though, sees this as an anachronistic critique of Spenser, arguing that "his verse

[...] betrays no such distrust of anthropomorphic figuration, which may indeed amount to an imperfect effort at imagining nonhuman consciousness but which nonetheless remains preferable to a scientific method that, by denying the very possibility of nonhuman consciousness, makes no such effort at all".⁷

The way that literary modes and rhetorical tropes function, then, is central to discussion about Spenser's representation of animals. This chapter continues that discussion, by arguing that animality is engaged in relation to the modes of pastoral and romance, to both affirm and undermine those modes' characterisation of humanity. If we accept that *The Faerie Queene* dwells on more than human life, then Spenser's allegorical method—his way of analysing that range of life—might hoist us on an anthropomorphic petard. But Boehrer's phrase "imperfect effort at imagining" is significant. The fugitive alterity that Book VI gestures towards is a state that the poem imagines to be shared by different species. Spenser makes this state visible, even if he cannot define it. Thus this chapter is also in keeping with recent work by Pia Cuneo and others that finds in early modern literature not the compulsive reinforcement of a species divide, but instances where associations with animals can "transcend the boundaries of known identities" or "create wholly new ones".⁸

ANIMAL OPPOSITIONS

In the "Legend of Courtesy", Spenser is centrally concerned with the origins of nobility, and its expression through courtesy, the quintessential courtly virtue. The preceding book, the "Legend of Justice", is the most overtly political part of *The Faerie Queene*; it allegorises the problems of colonial administration through military might in Ireland. Book VI follows by considering courtesy, and its associated process of acculturation, as a way of taming that which is deemed to be outside civilization. Courtesy is the fairest virtue, claims the proem (the book's preamble), and Book VI debates whether this noble attribute can branch forth on a "lowly stalke" (VI.proem.4), or is restricted to the elite. The hero, Sir Calidore, is ostensibly a paragon of manners, "gracious" speech (VI.i.2), and attractive comportment, but his questionable behaviour tests the operations of courtesy in the material world. Calidore's quest is to trap the Blatant Beast. This is a horrific canine creature whose name and etymology link him to the Latin "blatero", meaning to vainly babble; in this respect he indicates *antilogos*, the unstoppable corruption of language.⁹ After some initial skirmishes in which the reader witnesses oafishness alongside courtesy and sluggish wits alongside refined manners, Calidore's plot disappears, to be replaced by the adventures of his proxy Calepine. Calidore reappears in Canto ix, chasing the Blatant Beast apparently into another poem.

In this much discussed extended episode, the reader temporarily leaves romance and enters the realm of pastoral. Calidore abandons his quest, retreats into a community of shepherds, and falls in love with the beautiful Pastorella, daughter of their leader Meliboe. At the heart of this section, Calidore encounters the shepherd Colin Clout (a character who appears as Spenser's persona in

The Shepherds Calender) piping to the Graces in a visionary scene that Calidore's interruption completely destroys. The crisis of Book VI occurs when brigands invade the shepherds' community, kill Meliboe, and capture Pastorella. The brigands, and a band of cannibals in another episode, are closely associated with the colonised Irish. Calidore defeats them and rescues Pastorella, but the reader is left with a feeling of irrevocable destruction. At the end of the Book, which is the end of the poem as Spenser published it in 1596, this feeling is compounded by the ongoing catastrophe of the Blatant Beast. Despite Calidore eventually resuming his quest and successfully capturing him, the Beast has escaped and is wreaking havoc throughout society.

Critical discussion of Book VI has focused on four main areas: Irish colonisation; the nature of courtesy; the apparent disjunction between romance and pastoral; Spenser's analysis of poetic vision.¹⁰ With the exception of two essays, one about literary forests, the other about animal similes, critics of this text have not addressed its representation of human–animal relations or of nature more generally.¹¹ However, Book VI's animal presence offers an opportunity to rethink the series of ontological and modal polarities on which the Book is constructed, and their ethical counterparts in terms of attitudes to nonhuman life. The starting point is the opposition of the sheep and the Blatant Beast.

The most immediate contrast comes from the stability of the sheep's symbolism; they are predictable animals that are locatable within human culture. There is an affective connection between them and the shepherds; they suture the human community and they secure the poetic project of pastoral. This is an utterly anthropocentric relationship in which the sheep are subservient to their human masters. The Blatant Beast is of an entirely different order. Like many creaturely adversaries in the courtly mode of romance, rather than being subservient he is wild. Yet the Beast, more troublingly, represents a poetic force that threatens the very genre in which he operates. His compulsive destruction targets primarily Spenser's generic protagonists, "Good Knights and Ladies true" (VI.i.7), and their prized courtly virtue of courtesy. Moreover, with his attack on "gentle Poets rime", he "rends" the borders separating Spenser's fiction from its historical moment; as the reader learns in the Book's closing stanza, "Ne may this homely verse [...] escape his venemous despite" (VI. xii.41). He is untamable and unknowable, productive not of harmony, but of aural chaos, and he possesses a troubling hybridity in which humanity is implicated. Despite all this, the beast initiates a space in Book VI that is resistant to taming and trapping and, ultimately, hints at an anti-colonial energy. Significantly, other animals and the knights share this space, but to find it requires reading against the Beast's structural function in the Book. It requires readers to hear a counterdiscourse. The Beast is part of Spenser's central oppositions, and the means by which he posits a fugitive space beyond them.

Spenser establishes the Blatant Beast in contradistinction to the sheep hermeneutically. The latter possess an established, if layered, cultural and textual symbolism. This is in direct contrast to the Beast's whirling multiplicity. The sheep signify members of a Christian congregation and the audience for poetry.

Their symbolism derives from Christian iconography of Christ as the lamb of God, as well as the pastoral trope of the shepherd as a poet with his sheep as the audience. Specifically, Spenser invites Book VI's readers to consider its pastoral in terms of *The Shepherdes Calender* by giving that text's protagonist, Colin Clout, a cameo within the book. In the *Calender*, Spenser pays considerable attention to the symbolism of sheep, repeatedly invoking it to articulate pointed commentary against clerical abuses. Colin himself explicates the imagery:

O soueraigne *Pan* thou God of Shepherds all,
 Whiche of our tender Lambkins takest keepe:
 And when our flocks into mischaunce mought fall,
 Does saue from mischief the vnwary sheepe:
 Als of their maisters hast no lesse regarde,
 Then of the flocks, which thou doest watch and ward ("December", ll.7–12)

Pan is the pagan deity of pastoral poetry, and here also the poet taking care of his audience, "our flocks". The loaded nouns "God", "Lambkins", and "flocks", with their accompanying verbs "takest keepe", "fall", and "saue", make clear that Pan is also Christ, the Christian God, and the clergyman who watches and wards his congregation. Through the stability of their iconography, reinforced by intertextuality, the sheep of Book VI signify poetic and Christian community.

The reader is thus on familiar symbolic terrain when they follow Calidore into the shepherds' landscape. As Raber teaches, in early modern literature, "sheep represent the purest form of innocent life, destined for service to humanity".¹² Spenser constructs the sheep as animals that belong within human culture and are characterised by their predictable and enclosed plurality. Their landscape contains "shepherds singing to their flockes, that fed / Layes of sweete loue" (VI.ix.4). By nibbling peacefully, and giving the shepherds time to pipe, the sheep facilitate poetic creation. They also receive the songs, which in turn create a harmonious aural atmosphere that Spenser's alliteration supports. Moments after this introduction, Calidore approaches "the folds, where sheepe at night doe seat, / [...] the little cots, where shepherds lie" (VI.ix.4). Spenser's present tense description of the dwellings implies the habituation of the community's daily rhythms, which the balanced construction of his anaphora and parallelism then reinforces. The sheep are always plural but their proverbial docility here locates them in stillness. They might feed on the "open fields", but they remain close enough to the shepherds to form an audience, and return at night to the fold.

The reliability and localisation of the sheep contrast with the unpredictable ranging of the Blatant Beast, the reader's overarching impression of which is mobile chaos. When Calidore arrives with the shepherds at the beginning of Canto ix, the reader has not seen him since Canto iii when he set off "through

woods and hills” on his pursuit of “the Monster in his flight” (VI.iii.26). It is important for Spenser’s strategy that the Beast can neither be effectively restrained nor perfectly imagined; even his trail is interminable, an “endlesse trace” (VI.i.6) for both knight and reader. Immediately before Calidore’s arrival on the hills, the narrator reminds the reader of the expansive romance topography of the chase: “through hills, through dales, through forests, and through plaines” (VI.ix.2). The tumbling isocolonic structure of this description has a cumulative effect that is only just contained within the decasyllabic line, and problems controlling the Blatant Beast intensify whilst Calidore is on retreat with the shepherds. The narrator at this point is explicit about the Beast’s wildness, stating that he “all this while at will did range and raine, / Whilst none was him to stop, nor none him to restraine” (VI.xii.2). “Raine” implies that the Beast’s “will”, rather than any human keeper, has sovereignty, a condition in which he is completely uncontained. Not only does this invert the hierarchy between humans and other animals that is fundamental to the shepherds’ community, but it establishes the Beast’s “raine” as a dangerous rival to that of the Faerie Queene herself. This is an inversion that threatens the romance’s entire edifice: far from mastering the monsters of Faerie Land, the poem momentarily allows the monster to take the throne. This is a hint of the resistant counterdiscourse that Spenser elsewhere articulates.

The structural and generic disorder associated with the Beast is characterised through his predominant physical feature, his mouth. The number of his tongues fluctuates from one hundred to one, before multiplying to “a thousand tongs [...] / Of sondry kindes, and sundry quality” (VI.xii.27). The reader cannot clearly imagine him within this shifting multiplicity. This adds to the elusive impression that Spenser creates of his endlessly pursued creature. When the narrator mentions the “sondry kindes” of the Beast’s tongues, he activates several meanings of the word to suggest the animal’s monstrous hybridity. “Kindes” can indicate literary forms, aptly invoking the idea of a cacophonous mingling of literary genres, but it also means shape or appearance, natural instincts or a species group.¹³ Unlike the recognisably ovine specificity of the sheep, the Blatant Beast’s many tongues, which suggest languages as well as the organ of the mouth, are those of dogs, cats, reptiles and, significantly, bears and tigers. The primary effect of this mixture is to create a hideous Babelian sound-image, made of barking, “wrawling”, and growling (VI.xii.27). Yet the reader learns that “most of them were tongues of mortall men” (VI.xii.27): the Beast’s body splices the human with other species. When he wreaks “spoile, [...] hauocke, and [...] theft” (VI.xii.23) upon humanity, people are implicated because they are part of his unnerving physicality. This reinforces the idea that Calidore is trying to vanquish something inside himself—corrupt speech, or slander, being antithetical to courtesy.¹⁴ The Blatant Beast repeatedly bolsters the core oppositions of the Book. However, the most provocative analogy between the knight and his opponent will prove more complicated than such binary thinking would suggest.

The corrupt humanity that the Beast exposes, and his aggression towards the romance mode, contravene the relationship between the sheep and the shepherds, which is characterised by affective connection. Spenser builds again on the groundwork of *The Shepherdes Calender* where in nearly every eclogue there are anthropomorphic instances of sheep repeating the emotional or psychological state of the shepherd-poet. Instead of the *Calender's* emotional mirroring, in *The Faerie Queene* the shepherds' affective connection with the flock is based on the rhythms of pastoral life. The sheep's needs govern the shepherds' activities but reciprocity exists between them too. The reader learns, for instance, that the shepherds return home when the evening dew descends, "for feare of wetting" the sheep "before their bed" (VI.ix.13) and implicitly risking discomfort or illness. When the shepherds later share "their labours [...] / To helpe faire *Pastorella*, home to driue / Her fleecie flocke" (VI.ix.15), the reader infers that these rituals of nurturing the animals build bonds within the community. *Pastorella's* name itself invites readers to interpret her as the embodiment of pastoral. When the shepherds help her with her work, the cohesiveness between them and the sheep enables Spenser to demonstrate metapoetically that animals function in pastoral to shore up the mode. Unlike the Blatant Beast's attack on romance tropes and values, and his destructive exposure of humanity, the sheep are cooperative and affirming actors that help to suture pastoral society. Through their effect on the poem's inner and outer communities, the sheep secure poetry while the Blatant Beast destroys it.

These creatures thus have entirely divergent effects on poetic creativity and reception. This correlates with the cascading polarities that they support: cultured/wild; symbolically stable/unknowable; contained/uncontrollable; comfortably recognisable/terrifyingly hybrid; affirming of community/destructive of community. Spenser stages a series of relations between humans and the natural world that undergird Book VI's central tensions, namely, the modal opposition of pastoral and romance, and the ethical opposition of courtesy and barbarity.

LIFE BEYOND POLARITIES

Inevitably, such oppositions are less determinate than they seem. The Blatant Beast and the sheep are the most significant animals within Book VI but Spenser includes a range of animal life. This more extensive presence begins to deconstruct the above binaries, and allows for the emergence of an alternative, resistant space that the knights and the Blatant Beast share. Here I build on observations that critics including Richard McCabe make about the readiness with which the conceptual pairings of Book VI undo themselves.¹⁵ There is one animal event that particularly destabilises the cultured/wild dyad.

Within the parallel plot of Serena and Callepine, the latter kills a bear and symbolically achieves the quest that Calidore cannot. Like the Blatant Beast, the bear is characterised by violence, and his primary physical feature is his mouth. He enters the poem carrying in his teeth a blood-smearred baby: "A

cruell Beare, the which an infant bore / Betwixt his bloodie iawes, besprinkled all with gore" (VI.iv.17). Spenser's trope of the mouth as an indicator of savagery then repeats in the bear's markedly oral manner of death. Calepine thrusts a stone "into his gaping throte" (VI.iv.21), choking and strangling him. Yet the bear is also strongly associated with, rather than destructive of, romance tropes, the mode that Book VI ostensibly valorises as representative of culture and civility. Having rescued the baby, Calepine immediately stumbles upon a woman in need of a baby to fulfil a prophesy that the son of her husband, Sir Bruin (meaning "bear"), will "Be gotten, not begotten" (VI.iv.32), that is, be found, not fathered.¹⁶ In the kaleidoscope of Spenser's allegory, the bear substitutes the knightly stepfather and the son's arrival will have fulfilled the prophesy. When the son is also miraculously saved from certain death by another knight (Calepine), he acquires the perfect romance origin-story. The bear thus proves to be a deconstructive element within the dualisms that the other animal agents establish: like the Blatant Beast he is wildly destructive, but like the sheep he is a creature of culture. This is a conclusion that McCabe also reaches in his discussion of Spenser's colonial discourse; the bear is "indicative of the savagery latent within the civil knight".¹⁷ In Book VI, then, animals both ground and undermine a series of polarisations. But Spenser goes a step further, presenting yet a third perspective on human and non-human existence.

When Calepine relinquishes the child, he positions him as an example of noble qualities being found in low degree, stating that often those "whose lineage was vnknowne" have grown into "braue and noble knights" (VI.iv.36). The episode's apparent arbitrariness is thus wrested into the service of Book VI's interrogation of nobility. But the Book contains several examples of this supposed anomaly, including the Savage Man to whom Spenser shortly returns. This has caused commentators to puzzle over the apparent superfluity and absurdity of the passage.¹⁸ It should, though, be reconsidered for its effect on Calepine and the fugitive alterity that Spenser outlines, which in turn links back to the Blatant Beast. By moving the baby from an animal "parent" to a human one, Calepine takes him from the wild and brings him into civilization. By the same token, the only "blood" relative that the poem provides for the child is the bear. Like the Beast, the baby is hybrid, although far from monstrous. He will take that "trace" (VI.i.6) with him into his projected future as a knight, which, as Spenser reveals in the briefest of glimpses, is a successful one. The baby will live to do "right noble deedes", but his future as a romance hero remains unrealised within *The Faerie Queene*; his life story is "showne" only "elsewhere" (VI.iv.38), fleeing the poem and the reader's temporality.

The baby's hybridity, and his swerve towards potential future romance narratives, are outside the polarities in which the rest of the Book is invested. He has, though, correspondences with the Blatant Beast and with both Calepine and Calidore. Calepine's pursuit of the bear occurs when he is stripped of the key signifiers of his knightly, and therefore romance-hero, status: he is not wearing his armour. When knights unguardedly remove their armour, it usually signals a symbolic fall. Spenser illustrates this powerfully in Book II when

Verdant is found without his “warlike Armes” in the Bower of Bliss, lulled into “wastfull luxuree” (II.xii.80). This spectacle provokes the Knight of Temperance into notorious fury. Calepine, when free of the “burden” of “his heauy armes” (VI.v.19), experiences an unprecedented lightness and speed. In this new state, he succeeds in killing the bear. Of course, this positions Calepine anthropocentrically, yet he is also closer to nature. The narrator makes this clear when he describes him as “like an Hauke, [...] feeling herself freed / From bels and iesses, which did let her flight” (VI.iv.19). Freed from her restraints, the hawk’s flight is not hindered (“let”). By describing Calepine’s newfound and liberating physical agility, Spenser implies that knighthood itself is a restraining system of entrapment and conformity. Calepine achieves his version of Book VI’s quest denuded of the trappings of romance culture; he is still of romance, but occupies a space of alterity within it.

When Calidore later kills a tiger, Spenser inserts him into that space too. At this point he is fully immersed in his pastoral life, having replaced his knightly equipment with “shepheards hooke” (VI.x.36). It is this weapon that he uses to slay this particular “beast” (VI.x.35) as Spenser calls it, an animal that is also characterised orally by its “greedy mouth, wide gaping like hell gate” (VI.x.34). Following my argument that the sheep are positioned within human culture, it would hardly be fair to say that Calidore is removed from culture at this point. However, only when he is not dressed as a knight does he metonymically complete his quest. Like Calepine, he has entered an othered romance state: achieving the quest by proxy, and without his central knightly signifiers. Paradoxically, the state that Spenser creates for the knights aligns them with the fugitive Blatant Beast who functions, in part, as a site of the natural world’s resistance to taming.

Unknowable, chaotic, destructive of poetic community, and troubling of the romance mode are the obvious characteristics of the Blatant Beast. An alternative perspective is that he is the centrepoint for a counterdiscursive resistant politics. This reading builds on a crucial feature of his role. Contrary to what readers might expect, the poem is not wholeheartedly critical of the Beast: Spenser makes him into an agent of correction. When he describes the Beast rampaging “through all estates” (VI.xii.23), Spenser alludes to the world of estates’ satire, a genre in which the ills of society are remedied at all levels. Spenser additionally gives him an active iconoclastic role imaging religious reform by directing his powers against the clergy, and by adopting the tropes of anti-Catholic satire (although these satirical flashes are grimly satisfying at best). When Calidore finally—but temporarily—traps the Beast, he finds him in a monastery, searching out the monks’ “cels and secrets”; the narrator comments, “what filth and ordure did appeare, / Were yrksome to report” (VI.xii.24). The Beast’s quest returns the reader to other strands of Spenserian anti-Catholicism, most notably Book I’s “Legend of Holinesse”. As Kenneth Gross also finds, *The Faerie Queene* reserves a recuperable space for the Blatant Beast; indeed Spenser displays a “covert identification” with his “scandalous work”.¹⁹ Moreover, the Beast’s position has a resistant drive. As agricultural

animals, the sheep are domesticated and controlled. When he ranges, untamable, and exerting his “will” (VI.xii.2) and his reign over the landscape, this is what the elusive Beast resists. Such resistance is also what the symbolic nakedness of Calepine, particularly through the hawk simile, indicates.

Elsewhere, Spenser renders suspect the means of taming or trapping people and animals within cultural, and generic, frameworks. In a moment that demonstrates the “sustained interest in domestication, training, and taming”, that Loewenstein finds in Spenser’s writings, the vocabulary of the shepherds’ leader, Meliboe, creates compromising intertextual resonance.²⁰ Describing Meliboe’s capture of fauns, birds, and fish, Spenser uses the words “baytes and nets” (VI.ix.23), and emphasises them via their location on the stanza’s pivotal fifth line. On a literal level, Meliboe is describing his hunting tools but these words also suggest deceit and trickery. They possess moral significance which, in the context of Spenserian pastoral, invokes the censure of clerical abuses in *The Shepheardes Calender*, particularly the fabular “Maye”, in which a fox ensnares a foolish kid. Beyond problematising Meliboe’s character, the effect on the reader of Book VI is to elicit sympathy for the hunted animals and, again, position them in an othered space that resists the Book’s polarities: these creatures are neither tamed like Meliboe’s sheep, nor destructively wild like the Blatant Beast. The signifiers of romance, material and moral snares, and the act of taming are cultural trappings that Book VI’s resistant counterdiscourse rejects, using the fleeting phrases and actions of people and animals to do so.

With the baby, knights, hunted animals and Blatant Beast, Spenser offers a series of movements or spaces that produce an alterity resistant to Book VI’s motivating polarities. For the baby, this is a residual hybridity; he is a child of the wild, re-placed within culture whose graduation to the status of romance hero belongs only to a deferred future. For the knights, it is an othering swerve within the mode that they occupy. The hunted animals are not tamed, nor are they chaotic; they resist the options for animal life that Book VI elsewhere proposes. All of these figures are aligned with aspects of the Blatant Beast in ways that derail a simple nature/culture binary. He may enact a wildness that is alien to the pastoral sheep but he is also a creature of the highly coded romance mode. The Beast emblematises a resistance to taming and capture and this is what holds together the other figures and their diverse situations. Either through a momentary, transitory movement or by sidestepping the dualisms of Book VI, they present options for otherness and hybridity that Spenser asks the reader to entertain. In so doing, the reader must contemplate an anti-Orphic chaos and resistance to established cultural forms, but these qualities offer an appealing counter-discourse within the logic of the Book.

By distributing his resistant moves and spaces between his human and animal actors, Spenser avoids resorting to a misleading idealisation of nature as a free and uncultured space. It has to be said, for example, that the recuperation of the Blatant Beast comes at the expense of the bear and the tiger. The knights still kill the animals to perform their identity, just as the shepherds tend their flocks primarily in support of themselves. But Spenser has cracked open the

possibilities for how creatures can be together in the world; the animal presence in Book VI becomes less about the human versus the non-human than about a shared alterity.

In reaching this conclusion, I am building, in particular, on the critique by Anne Fogarty which positions the Beast as a “haunting spectre of unaccommodated Otherness”.²¹ Yet the otherness of Book VI is not a spectre from which we should hide, but a companion towards whom we can turn. Spenser’s sense of shared alterity is not about embodiment, language, reason, or any of the other areas of early modern debate over human and animal life. It is a fluid move, or a moment, or a way of being, outside of established codes. As such, it may outline an alternative to what Raber terms the “politics of speciesism, which dictates that bestialization necessarily involves the victimization of the object animal”.²² Fugitive though it may be, the shared otherness that Spenser posits is resistant to constraint.

And here we must account for readings, Fogarty’s included, that see the Blatant Beast as analogous to the colonised Irish.²³ Spenser was a colonist who has been accused of racism by subsequent centuries, largely owing to his dialogue, *A View of the Current State of Ireland* (written 1596–8), which illustrates brutal strategies for the suppression of the Irish.²⁴ In Book VI, the Irish are present most explicitly as the “saluage nation” (VI.viii.35), cannibals who nearly eat Serena. This renders them subhuman in the eyes of the poem, their practice being described as “beastly pleasure” (VI.viii.43). Here Spenser clearly engages colonial discourse to dehumanise the subject group and, as Boehrer discusses, his relative anthropocentrism is entirely characteristic of the early modern period: full human status is certainly withheld from the Irish in this instance.²⁵ However, with the Blatant Beast in mind, Book VI demonstrates some (grudging) respect for Irish resistance, even in the act of characterising it as monstrosity. McCabe points out that Books V and VI together describe “the progress from military conquest to civil reclamation”.²⁶ An actor that refuses to become civilized refuses the “civil reclamation” of a conquered state. The Beast’s resistance, then, is also anti-colonial resistance and by analogy this applies to the knights.

The animal dynamics of Book VI thus create a politicised resistance that rejects trapping or taming, and at the broadest level rejects the colonising move of unjust possession. But this resistance is always fugitive. Spenser’s poetry exposes the generic, ethical, and ontological polarities through which it is constructed and not only helps readers to interrogate those polarities, but proposes alternatives to binary thinking. His analysis of civilization is implicated in this process, and fundamental to this is the recognition of the potential likeness between humans and other animals. However, whilst Spenser can imagine, he cannot fully construct that radical space which would “transcend the boundaries of known identities”.²⁷ Spenser makes visible the otherness that we might grasp for, but we can touch only for seconds.

NOTES

1. All quotation of the poem is from Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, here “Letter to Raleigh”, 714; all quotation of *The Shepheardes Calender* is from Spenser, *Shorter Poems*.
2. Johnson, *Fugitive Humanism*, 15, 10.
3. Ramachandran and Sanchez, “The Human”, ix.
4. Representative examples are: Watson, “Shepherds, Wolves”; Henry, “Getting Spenser’s Goat”; Tannier, “Animals”.
5. Loewenstein, “Gryll’s Hoggish”, 244–6.
6. Campana, “Inhumanity”, 246; Raber, *Animal Bodies*, 164.
7. Boehrer, “Equal”, 338–9.
8. Cuneo, ed., *Animals Early Modern*, 11.
9. Collins, “blaterō, -āre, vi to babble”.
10. Representative examples are: McCabe, *Monstrous*; Wareh, “Competitions”; Cassanova, “Narrative Time-Out”; McEleney, “Unhappy Ends”.
11. Weixel, “Squires of the Wood”; Henry, “Getting Spenser’s Goat”.
12. Raber, *Animal Bodies*, 161; 161–8 for discussion of early modern sheep husbandry. See Walters, “Too Human” on farm animals’ shaping of culture, and Hadfield, *A Life*, 218–9 for the sheep on Spenser’s Irish estate.
13. *OED*, “kind, n”.
14. Cf. Gross, “Reflections”.
15. McCabe, *Monstrous*, 236.
16. *OED*, “bruin, n”.
17. McCabe, *Monstrous*, 189.
18. Bellamy, “*Faerie Queene*”, 287.
19. Gross, “Reflections”, 102.
20. Loewenstein, “Gryll’s Hoggish”, 245.
21. Fogarty, “Colonization of Language”, 104.
22. Raber, *Animal Bodies*, 29.
23. Fogarty, “Colonization of Language”, 92.
24. See Hadfield, “Postcolonial”.
25. Boehrer, *Shakespeare*, 77. For recent discussion of the cannibals see Welch, “Anthropology and Anthropophagy”.
26. McCabe, *Monstrous*, 239.
27. Cuneo, ed., *Animals Early Modern*, 11.

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My Palfrey, Myself: Toward a Queer Phenomenology of the Horse-Human Bond in *Henry V* and Beyond

Karen Raber

In Act 3 of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the French Dauphin gives a famously foolish speech concerning his relationship to his horse: he will not exchange the animal, he announces,

with any that treads but on four pasterns. Ca, ha! he bounds from the earth, as if his entrails were hairs; le cheval volant, the Pegasus, chez les narines de feu! When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes.¹

Throughout the rest of this scene, the constable and the Duc d'Orleans try to repress the Dauphin's exuberant idolatry via an escalating war of words, puns, and innuendo, but only manage to spur him to greater absurdities concerning his "prince of palfreys":

Dau: It [his palfrey] is a theme as fluent as the sea. Turn the sands into eloquent tongues and my horse is argument for them all. 'Tis a subject for a sovereign to reason on, and for a sovereign's sovereign to ride on, and for the world, familiar to us and unknown, to lay apart their

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particular functions and wonder at him. I once writ a sonnet in his praise, and began it thus, “Wonder of nature!”

Orl: I have heard a sonnet begin so to one’s mistress.

Dau: Then did they imitate that which I composed to my courser, for my horse is my mistress.

Orl: Your mistress bears well.

Dau: Me well, which is the prescript praise and perfection of a good and particular mistress.

Cons: Nay, for methought yesterday your mistress shrewdly shook your back.

Dau: So perhaps did yours.

Cons: Mine was not bridled.

Dau: Then belike she was old and gentle, and you rode like a kern of Ireland, your French hose off, and in your strait strossers. (3.7.33–54)

And so on it goes, as the scene descends from the heights of poetry into a testy, bawdy prose exchange. The Dauphin’s attachment to his mount is clearly received by his companions as inappropriate, part of his infantile failure as a leader who, instead of engaging the invading English force at Harfleur, sends Henry a mocking “gift” of tennis balls. Enraged at the insult, Henry threatens to turn “his balls to gun-stones” that will make widows and mourning mothers of France’s women (1.2.283–87). The friction we have already witnessed in Act 2, between the Constable who warns the French King to take Henry’s threat seriously, and the Dauphin who unwisely dismisses the English army altogether, breaks out in 3.7 into offensive allusions to the Dauphin’s sexual tastes, and even, on the Constable’s part, the charge of incompetence. Orleans defends the Dauphin, “He never did harm that I heard of”, which the Constable parlays into “Nor will do none tomorrow [on the battlefield]” (3.7.100–101). Of course, both the Constable and the Dauphin will be defeated at Agincourt, drowned “fetlock-deep in gore” (4.7.78) and the noble French cavalry will be routed by a much smaller, weaker English army whose mounts are “poor jades ... drooping the hides and hips” (4.2.46–7).

Such critical attention as this passage has attracted generally confirms Peter Erickson’s judgment that the Dauphin is here proven a “travesty of masculinity” that confirms the play’s endorsement of muscular English heteronormativity.² And indeed, the Dauphin’s adoration of his equine partner seems to reflect if not the fully bestializing erotic attachment that his companions hint at, then at least an infantile fixation on an inappropriate love object. Orleans and the Constable quickly move this uncomfortable moment toward what they seem to consider more suitable ground—jokes about prostitutes, the missionary position, and sexual diseases that substitute allusions to human mistresses for the love between a man and his equine partner. In other words, their banter deflects the discussion away from the Dauphin’s troublingly intimate and excessive celebration of his palfrey—what Mel Y. Chen might call his “improper affiliation”—only to make it the horse-shaped elephant in the room.³

The constable and Orleans react to the Dauphin's orientation toward the animal with their defensive reorienting conversational interventions.⁴ For them, the animal must be either merely a conveyance, or a metaphor through which heterosexual desire can be discursively invoked. They are moved by discomfort to restore a degree of marginality or transparency, and thus *invisibility* to the lauded horse as a social actor. I use here the language of orientation, visibility, and discourse to gesture toward what I read as an important crux in this scene, and in critical treatments of it: this discussion among men about a horse struggles with the problem of language's connections to bodily investments in erotic and sexual being, and it registers the complicating role of other regimes than language—like the visual or the sonic, both of which the passage touches on—by specifically repressing them. The Dauphin's poetic celebration threatens to confuse human sexuality with animal love, and to make poetic language a vehicle for elevating erotic experiences that do not conform to the traditional patriarchal schemas of (male) human lover and (female) human love object. The Dauphin's encomium hints of the blazon and anaphora as if to demonstrate his animal's inspirational influence in advance of the unspoken sonnet, but is also replete with images of blocking or usurping: the hoof more musical than Hermes' pipe, the wonder that arrests all "functions" of the world, and, of course, the implied silencing of Orleans and the Constable were the sonnet to be declaimed in due course. Little wonder, then, that the Dauphin's audience is unhappy with him.

Criticism that ties the Dauphin and his horse-love to issues like masculinity's implication in social and national identity inadvertently repeats the moves of the Constable and Orleans, refusing the scene's invitation to think more carefully and concretely about the Dauphin's attachment to his animal. Sexual orientation, Sarah Ahmed argues, is a matter of how we reside in space, of how, and who or what we inhabit spaces with, and what habitual actions shape our bodies and worlds. To orient oneself is, as she puts it, to turn toward objects that "help us find our way". If we think with and through orientation, Ahmed suggests, "we might allow moments of disorientation to gather ... Queer objects might take us to the very limits of social gathering, even when they still gather us around" (1, 24). I think any reading of the palfrey episode in *Henry V* that tries to plot it on a rigid axis of masculine/feminine, hetero/homosexual, or even bestial/human would only continue to cooperate with Orleans and the Constable in limiting the objects and bodies that the Dauphin prefers to gather or affiliate with. If our critical attention does not resist the process of erotic normalization—that is, if we take the Dauphin lightly, refuse to give his speech any real weight—we risk straightening out this scene and overlooking the more provocative, perhaps disorienting, nature of the Dauphin's relationship with his animal.

In this chapter, I instead intend to take the Dauphin's claims about his horse both seriously and literally, to offer the beginnings of a prospective queer phenomenology of the human-equine encounter in Tudor and Stewart England. I will do so in part by setting this speech in the context of other early modern

human-horse encounters. I also build on the recent insights of animal-centered phenomenology, keeping in mind that the queer orientation Ahmed tracks often omits divergences toward the non-human. Thus, instead of examining the social, economic, political, or other inscriptions and meanings of the Dauphin's mount, this chapter asks: What specific and distinct coordinates of desire, pleasure, and affiliation are established in the horse-human dyad? How are both the horse and the human body mapped as they connect and disconnect with one another? What aspects of both bodies enable such a queerly eroticized relationship?⁵

In addressing the problem of how gendered bodies are socially inscribed or constructed, Elizabeth Grosz argues that we must first understand "what these bodies are, such that inscription is possible, what it is in the nature of bodies, of biological evolution, that opens them up to cultural transcription, social immersion and production".⁶ We might extend Grosz's formulation to non-human entities like horses, which are a particular example of such evolution: no other creature is capable of quite the same bodily relationship to a human partner. Dogs and cats, for instance, are predator species; for them, cooperating with a human being is in a sense a peer-to-peer interaction designed to fulfill more efficiently their predatory imperatives. Horses, on the other hand, are prey, and so encounters with human beings in the course of training require overcoming their evolutionary fear-response to a predator species in order to allow a human not merely to approach them, but to mount and direct their instinct to flight in order to move quite differently through the world. A horse's capacity to accomplish this remarkable feat is tied to a number of factors—herd sociability that can be extended to non-equine "friends" for instance, but mainly their highly developed talents for perception that can be harnessed to the training relationship. Vicki Hearne terms this "skin grammar", the finely tuned perceptual grid the horse applies to its rider: the conversation that ensues between horse and human queers both language and knowledge.⁷ Horses and humans share the capacity for interspecies corporeal synchronizing through manipulations of space and movement; further, the process of harmonizing and synchronizing brings pleasure to *both* participants.⁸ Even the animal's capacity to flood its system with endorphins, which in wild contexts allows an injured horse to remain functional enough to escape a predator, allows it to be more effectively domesticated by giving humans a means to soothe and calm a frightened animal of such size and power—the horse's physiology thus provides a powerful aphrodisiac that also lends itself to the development of mutual trust. At the same time, the horse's bodily structure also makes these animals compelling objects of human desire: few other animals require the extensive physical connection necessary for the training relationship with equines. Fewer still reward that connection with the kind of transcendence that the Dauphin celebrates—bounding from the earth, soaring, becoming animal in defiance of gravity itself.⁹ Even the sheer mass of an equine body can itself be a source of sensory trauma or delight, depending on the events negotiated by horse and rider.

In the two sections that follow, I pursue the issue of the marvelous and compelling equine body that the Dauphin so disconcertingly “turns toward” and lovingly anatomizes in his unspoken sonnet. I catalogue some of the equine qualities early moderns attended to that make it “natural” for him to do so, accounting for the material aspects of the human-equine encounter that might explain the frequency and extent to which, as in the Dauphin’s case, equine bodies colonize or usurp the erotic positions, roles, or imagined subjectivities otherwise ordinarily ascribed to human partners.¹⁰

SHAPE

When the Dauphin names his animal a palfrey, he evokes a very specific image. A palfrey was usually smaller than a destrier, or battle mount, and was generally considered more beautiful, having a rounded, compact, “baroque” figure and musculature that made it capable of smoother gaits.¹¹ By the time Shakespeare writes his play, this type of horse was associated with displays of manège riding, the early modern term for the high arts of dressage, the formal training of the horse to the highest levels of muscular discipline and control. The standard for the palfrey’s beauty is everywhere confirmed in treatises on riding and breeding: Michael Baret, for instance, describes the ideal “handsome” horse, as one with ribs that “bear out in rotundity like a barrell” and requires it also be “round-backed”.¹² Thomas Blundeville prefers the Neapolitan to the Spanish jennet (a small ambling riding horse) because the latter’s “buttocks be somewhat slender”; he generally approves animals that are “full of muscles or brawnes of flesh” with short backs and “great round buttocks”.¹³ In Gervase Markham’s advice to horse purchasers, he refers again and again to the many “swellings” that comprise a perfect equine form: “see that [the breast] be broad out-swalling”, he advises in that the animal have “out-swalling forthighs”.¹⁴ Of the horse’s hind end, he recommends the following:

Then look upon his Buttocks, and see that they be round, plump, full, and in an even level with his body: or of long, that it be well raised behind, and spread forth at the setting on of the tail, for these are comely and beautifull. (124)

Likewise, the hind legs must be “thick, brawny, full and swelling” (123). *Roundness*, then, is the quality that defines an aesthetically pleasing, valuable, and healthy animal. Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* registers this standard (and the requirement for a “broad buttock”) in its description of Adonis’s mount:

Round-hoof’d, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide:
Look, what a horse should have he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back. (295–300)¹⁵

Renaissance sculpture and painting revel in the sensuous fleshy curves of the baroque horse's body, focusing as obsessively on round shapes as do the manual authors. Kenneth Clark claims this feature distinguishes Renaissance from medieval art, observing that "The splendid curves of energy [in these paintings of horses]—the neck and rump, united by the passive curve of the belly, and capable of infinite variations, from calm to furious strength—are without question the most satisfying piece of formal relationship in nature".¹⁶ Albrecht Durer's two studies of horses, *Large Horse* and *Small Horse* (both engravings from 1505), for instance, emphasize the roundness of the traditional baroque horse; *Large Horse* in particular depicts the animal standing with its haunches presented to the viewer on a small stone or elevated piece of ground, while the rest of the animal's body is angled away from the viewer. *Large Horse* thus reflects a fascination with those "round, plump, full" buttocks, with its massive, muscled hind end thrusting outward from the engraving.¹⁷ Indeed, it is difficult to find a Renaissance representation of a horse that doesn't include gracefully or powerfully rounded musculature, as much a byproduct of artists' obsession with curvaceous bodies as of the prevalence of baroque breeds in the period.

We could read this focus on the beauty of curvaceous posteriors as a manufactured cultural preference, one that grows out of the prior distinction or class associations of the breeds in question. But there is another way to think about all these swellings and roundnesses. Baret in particular insists on the role of geometry in determining the perfection of the horse's physical being, and indeed the curve represented a monumental challenge to early modern mathematicians—only in the seventeenth century did analytic geometry establish the formula to describe one, a humanist achievement in charting God's elemental design of the cosmos.¹⁸ Baret's references to geometry thus situate the curvy equine as the epitome of divine order.

Current work in neuroscience suggests that the attraction, perhaps even the erotic magnetism of curves for the human observer, may in fact be hardwired in the human brain. University of Toronto psychologist Oshin Vartanian conducted a series of experimental brain scans involving variously curved objects, and found that "Our preference for curves cannot be explained entirely in terms of a 'cold' cognitive assessment of the qualities of curved objects. Curvature appears to affect our feelings, which in turn ...drive[s] our preference".¹⁹ Such a bias toward curves may have evolutionary origins in our avoidance of sharp objects, which tend to activate the amygdala, the part of the brain that identifies threats; whatever the origin, the bias is linked to affective stimulation. And equine curves present a viewer or a rider with a range of affordances, in this case telegraphing the potential pleasures of human-equine anatomical engagement. The fleshy roundnesses, those fatty and muscular swellings Baret, Blundeville, and Markham dwell on, both mirror and complement a rider's own curving anatomical structures; they invite eyes, hands, and legs to linger, to touch, to assert pressure, or to surrender space to another's form. They seduce with their promise of amplified power, driving forward

through the rider's legs and seat. Curves, we might say, are thus primordial, visceral sources of relational and erotic gratification.

MOTION

The Dauphin's adulation of his horse extends to its "musical hoof", which, he says, makes the very earth sing in response to its touch. Elisabeth LeGuin has compared the training of horse and rider to Renaissance musical education, noting that the achievement of perfect kinesthetic harmony between these two distinct bodies requires the same coordination and synchronized rhythm as does playing an instrument.²⁰ William Cavendish, for instance, uses the analogy of lute-playing to illustrate the "good music" that good horsemanship produces: "he that has not a musical head", concludes Cavendish, "can never be a good horseman".²¹ The Neapolitan horseman Federigo Grisone writes in his *Rules of Riding* "you will accompany him [your horse] in a timely manner, conforming to his motion, just as he responds to your every thought and command, so that it is necessary that your body fits his back evenly, and you are always attuned with him and that you govern him with the same harmony as in music".²² The several gaits of the horse (walk, trot, canter, gallop) and variations in breed size and shape require a repertoire of riderly adaptations to different cadences: LeGuin points out that in the production of an artistic equine ballet, it is the horse's bodily intelligence that calls the tune, and "if the rider does not listen", that is, follow and enhance the motion with his own corporeal discipline, the result will be forced and effortful.²³

Supplemented movement such as that made possible by an equine partner is, however, a remarkably queer thing. Through riding, relatively slow human bipedal propulsion is swapped for quadripedal speed, which can be suddenly adjusted, its direction and rhythm modified in an instant, allowing huge alterations in the experience of time and distance. One famous early modern literary example of the way equine movement perplexes the usual rational frameworks for recognizing relative speed is Spenser's Red Cross knight, who in *The Faerie Queene* travels at an irreconcilably disparate speed from his companion, Una: the knight "pricks" or spurs swiftly across a plain, while she rides slowly behind followed by her dwarf—and yet both somehow remain together.²⁴ The knight, the image affirms, lives in rapid martial bursts determined by his mount's collected or extended speed. Una moves instead at a lithic pace like the "rock" of the Church that she stands for allegorically. Part of the reason this kind of allegorical interpretation, a commonplace in the criticism, makes sense is tied to the horse's material capacity to move at variable velocities, creating a kind of relativity paradox.

To experience breathless speed on horseback involves entering the alien space and time in which an equid naturally dwells and being defined by it. At the core of Hotspur's rash, impatient nature in *1 Henry 4*, for instance, the need for speed inscribed by his character's nickname as his defining quality, is his identification with his mount, the roan he imagines riding to battle Prince

Hal “hot horse to horse”. I’ve written elsewhere about the desire that gathers prince, nobleman, and both horses into a queer erotic entanglement; here, it is worth noting in addition that for a human rider to be identified as hotly spurring requires a collapse of bodies, a merging of human and equine that dissolves species distinctions, but in so doing shows the potential for riding (and the animal’s movement) to reshape a human partner.²⁵ Maxine Sheets Johnstone argues that motion is the first behavior that informs any creature of its world: “We come straightaway moving into the world; we are precisely not *stillborn*. In this respect primal movement is like primal sensibility ... we *literally discover ourselves in movement*”.²⁶ A rider extends this primal sensibility to the experience of quadrupedal motion, absorbing and controlling a degree of speed over terrain only available to the horse-human dyad, discovering an identity that does not resolve to the usual definition of limited and isolated human embodiment.

The Dauphin registers the experience of equestrian movement as oceanic, naming his palfrey “a theme as fluent as the sea”. And like the ocean, equestrian motion implicates human bodies in an unfamiliar and even hostile environment. In the same way that sailing and swimming do, riding a horse requires adaptation to the pulse of a foreign medium, navigating the swell and retreat of wind and waves as they are manifested in the complex tempos of equine gaits.²⁷ The horse generates the power of lifts, surges, cascades; the skilled equestrian human body determines when and where these occur, what their rhythm is. Yet what might appear an act of domination is also an act of surrender—the human body must follow for the process to be successful and pleasurable, and must submerge its will in order to do so. Nor should the pleasure of synchronizing motion be understood as purely available to the rider: Gala Argent notes that “intraspecific corporeal synchrony” is tied to the primal mare-foal communion.²⁸ The foal learns to remain close to its mother’s side, to coordinate its steps and motion with its mother, and later with the herd. *Intraspecific* becomes *interspecific* through entraining, leading to the same harmonizing with human bipedal motion, but only through the *willing* co-creation of movements. Play with a horse if you have a chance: note its capacity to read bodily twitches, jinks, leaps, even smiles, and it quickly becomes clear that the animal can distinguish the joy of a game from any other kind of interaction.²⁹

Shakespeare is not alone in remarking the oceanic movement of a horse. When Philip Sidney’s Pyrocles first appears in *The Arcadia*, for instance, he emerges from the sea where Musidorus believes his ship lost, riding the mast of his wrecked vessel: “But a little way off they saw the mast, whose proud height now lay along ... upon the mast they saw a young man – at least if he were a man – bearing show of about eighteen years of age, who sat as on a horse back, having nothing upon him but his shirt ...”.³⁰ Sallie Anglin notes that Pyrocles’s appearance is striking and erotic for his near-nakedness, his hair “stirred by the wind” and his feet “kissed” by the ocean itself. Pyrocles is, she argues, depicted as having achieved “in extremis, a momentary union with his environment”, a

union conveyed by the passage's allusion to horsemanship.³¹ For Pyrocles, to be as "fluent as the sea" allows him to ride ships as well as steeds.

But if one can indeed ride a horse like one rides the waves, it is also true that riding can result in shipwreck. That which elevates can of a sudden descend and dis-integrate; the ecstasy (literally, the effect of standing outside of oneself) of boundary-crossings in the entrained relationship is vulnerable to assaults from without and breakdowns from within. Steve Mentz locates a "marine element" in the Dauphin's title, which is written as "Dolphin" in some versions of the play. The character's protean and playful nature (remember those tennis balls!) gestures, Mentz argues, toward the possibility of a more-than-earthbound future for humanity.³² That said, playing around with the massive equine who creates the waves the Dauphin rides so well is a precarious activity. The Dauphin does in fact take a kind of tumble in the play—not perhaps from his horse, but from the heights of poetry in which he praises its accomplishments when he is dragged down into the mire of sexual innuendo that marks the Constable's and Orleans' earthbound prose. Like a drowning man, the Dauphin *tries* to ride out the storm, fighting it as he sinks: he parries the Constable's joking reference to a bridled and so presumably more proper female human sexual partner by warning "they that ride so and ride not warily, fall into foul bogs. I had rather have my horse to my mistress" (3.7.59). The conversation's descent into scurrility mimics the sexually corrupt, fallen state of mankind that makes such a descent inevitable—human mistresses, bridled or not, can still pass along sexual diseases in their "foul bogs". But in hinting that the Constable's mistress will give him the clap, the Dauphin too has taken a catastrophic spill, one that has shattered his transcendent union with his beloved mount. Rather than riding the heights of queer affiliation, making his own unique rhythms in his paean to his horse, the Dauphin struggles in broken prose to come out on top of his companions.

A rider can be elevated by his horse; he can be carried above the earth, defying gravity aboard a Pegasus or a Bucephalus, matching the light fall of its hoofbeats with his supple hip and hand. But the unwary or unskilled rider might also plunge earthward, coming "down, down like glistering Phaethon" as Richard II puts it, to end up as "bemoiled" as is Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, when she tumbles down a "foul hill" and is pinned under her mount.³³ Early modern authors unhorse any number of characters to demonstrate their internal, often sexual, disorder: examples include Dametas in the *Arcadia*; in the *Faerie Queene* Paridell, Scudamore, Sangliere, and Archimago; and in Shakespeare, both Richard II and Richard III in their respective plays, Talbot in *I Henry VI*, and Falstaff in *Henry IV Part I*, to name just a few. Falls like these punctuate early modern literature to illustrate human failures of control over the passions, and to such an extent that the horses involved therefore might be read as primarily bearing the added burden of human exceptionalist ideologies.

But again, refusing to account for the embodied experiences on which these ideologies are built risks erasing the phenomenological engagement between

equine and human that makes such thinking possible and meaningful in the first place. A fall is always also simply a fall, a sudden physical return to a limited, frail, vulnerable body at the mercy of its mount's footing or behavior. It is rare that horsemanship treatises address the danger of falling off (one wonders at the degree of defensiveness that governs such an omission), but the French equerry Antoine Pluvinel recommends that a rider squeeze his knees to the saddle "with all one's strength so that, should the horse become animated, he does not throw my ass [mon âne], I mean my man, to the ground".³⁴ The coy joke here, the confusion of ass (the beast, not the body part) and man, reflects the lowering effect of such ignominious events both on altitude and on status. Together and in unison, horse and human are one superior quasi-divine body; divided, the separate parts become equally bestial, the rider returned to something even less stable than slow bipedalism.

Perhaps the most famous fall in early modern literature is Montaigne's, recounted in his essay "On Practice": out riding one day on his "undemanding but not very reliable horse" one of his men mounted on a huge "fresh and vigorous" farm-horse ends up crashing like a "colossus" or a "thunderbolt" into Montaigne, "a small man on a small horse".³⁵ Horse and rider are upended, and Montaigne nearly killed. The event prompts Montaigne's reflection on the body's independent agency and mobility when it tries to save itself as it falls. He draws a direct line between its flailing, uncontrolled gestures as it heads earthward and the body's capacity for autonomous sexual arousal: "Every man", he remarks, "knows ... that he has a part of his body which often stirs, erects, and lies down again without his leave" (422). Overpowered and unhorsed, struck as if by lightning, and reminded of his "small" stature by a colossus, Montaigne undergoes a kind of life-threatening *coitus interruptus* that imagines *both* horse and human bodies to be alien and hostile environments. Montaigne's experience amounts to a kind of shipwreck, a catastrophe that impresses upon the human experiencing it the body's indifference to subject, object, or context: humans, his example suggests, are not merely adrift in a perplexing world of more or less suitable targets of desire, but disoriented by the recalcitrant microcosms of their own bodies.

So to conclude: literary texts like *Henry V* involve what Ahmed might call a species of social gathering—of readers, of characters, of described, implied and present bodies. What we as critics or scholars choose to turn toward or away from in them limits the kinds of phenomenological engagements we recognize and value, and by extension the nature of our understanding of the body's full range of communions and affiliations. By refusing to allow the Constable and Orleans to narrow the range of participants at this gathering, by entering and occupying the territory of the Dauphin's erotic delight in his mount, we can instead acknowledge the qualities that make the horse, to slightly misquote the Dauphin, a "Queer Wonder of nature".

NOTES

1. Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, (3.7.11–17). All references to this play are by act, scene, and line number to this edition.
2. Erickson, *Patriarchal Structures*, 54.
3. Chen, *Animacies*, 104: “I do not imagine queer or queerness to merely indicate embodied sexual contact among subjects identified as gay and lesbian Rather, I think more in terms of the social and cultural formation of “improper affiliation”, so that queerness might well describe an array of subjectivities, intimacies, beings, and spaces located outside of the heteronormative”.
4. I am borrowing Sarah Ahmed’s language in describing queer orientations from *Queer Phenomenology*, esp. 1–24.
5. It is worth noting that scholarly attention to the queer nature of male relationships to horses in the middle ages and Renaissance post-dates a body of writing on women’s queer engagement with equines in subsequent periods: see for instance, Weil, “Purebreds and Amazons”; Landry, “Horsy and Persistently Queer”; and McHugh, *Animal Stories*. There are many reasons for this belatedness, but it seems linked in part to the problem of centering the animal to which this essay is a response: women riders of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not only more present in the literature and culture than they are in early modern texts, but are more clearly marked as anomalous, whereas male riders in all periods are (invisibly) “masculine”, drawing less critical attention—yet in both cases the *rider’s* identity, the rider’s pleasures, the rider’s freedom or constraint, is the driver of critical commentary.
6. Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 2.
7. Hearne, *Adam’s Task*, 110, 108–116.
8. Argent, “Toward a Privileging of the Nonverbal”, 116, 121.
9. On the mutual development of a complex bodily language, see Brandt, “Intelligent Bodies”.
10. A continuation of this work would address heat and color (the “ginger” vs. “nutmeg” debate that enters the play’s debate later on); size (the relative queerness of human connections to large animals vs. small); number (both the union that makes two into one, and the phenomenon of the herd effect in battle, or the dissolution of the one into many), among other dimensions.
11. “The baroque horse”—the term is a later creation meant to describe a set of animals rather than a breed—is a compact animal often of the Spanish, Italian, or other Iberian breeds. Renaissance horses used by knights generally fell into a few categories, with the destrier functioning as the larger battle mount, but the courser as the swifter, smaller but still highly trained animal. Both might be described as “baroque”, depending on breed origin, but the Spanish and Neapolitan horses would have been more typical of the type with smaller refined heads, rounded bodies and powerful haunches. Whether there is a substantial difference between a palfrey and a courser in Shakespeare’s text is questionable: the Dauphin calls his horse by both terms and Adonis’s “courser” is clearly a baroque type.
12. Baret, *An Hipponomie*, 110.
13. Blundeville, *The Four Chiefest Offices*, 8–9.
14. Markham, *The Perfect Horseman*, 120, 124.
15. Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*.

16. Clark, *Animals and Man*, 36.
17. *Small Horse* is depicted from the side, giving a perfect silhouette of the baroque type (short, rounded, high- and arched-necked); in it, the animal has one knee lifted as if to trot out of the engraving's frame, while the soldier present in both images is, in *Small Horse*, obscured by the animal in motion. In *Large Horse*, the animal is more docile and static, his accompanying human resting a spear vertically on the ground.
18. Representing two-dimensional curves (with straight edge and compass) was commonplace among Greek and other early mathematicians; however, three dimensional and probable trajectories of curves were a problem only solved in the seventeenth century, beginning with Descartes' 1637 *Géométrie*. Baret includes a chapter on "Proportion" (*An Hipponomie*, 115–19) that makes the case that all creation rests on the conjunction of "Arithmeticke and Geometry" (117); where proportion is achieved, beauty results and is instantly recognizable to humans in the visual shape of the animal (113).
19. Jaffe; see also Vartanian et al.
20. Le Guin, "Man and Horse in Harmony".
21. Cavendish, *A General System of Horsemanship*, 93.
22. Grisone, *The Rules of Riding*, 109. Tobey makes the comparison between the noble horse master's role and that of the dance master: both taught a practice that was meant to be both physical and aesthetic, emotional, and even intellectual (31).
23. LeGuin, "Man and Horse in Harmony", 184.
24. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* begins with Red Cross "pricking on the plaine", his "angry steede" "chid[ing] his foming bitt" (41); the implied speed of both is repeatedly confirmed.
25. See for example, my essay on equine erotics, "Equeer".
26. Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement*, 117.
27. For an elaboration of the "entraining" that results in this oceanic experience, see Game, "Riding: Embodying the Centaur". As Game writes, "learning to be carried along in the flow, learning to become in tune with or in the train of" requires "get[ting] into these waves" in a horse-human rhythm (3). See also Argent, 121.
28. Argent, 116.
29. According to recent research, horses are capable of reading expressions on human faces: see Amy Victoria Smith, et al., "Functionally relevant responses to human facial expressions". Massumi makes a convincing case for animals' capacity for play (both intentional playfulness and play as performance) in *What Animals Teach Us About Politics*, esp. 1–17.
30. Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, 66.
31. Anglin, "Material Romance", esp. 89.
32. Mentz, "Half Fish, Half Flesh".
33. Bevington, *The Complete Works*, (3.3.178); (4.1.67).
34. Pluvinel, *Le maneige royal*, 26.
35. Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, 418–19.

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What Can Beast Fables Do in Literary Animal Studies? Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and the Prehumanist Human

Erica Fudge

In his 2002 *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*, John Simons wrote of the beast fable:

Although the fable is a narrative which operates entirely via the representational strategy of anthropomorphism, there is no stage at which a reader can doubt, or is invited to doubt, that what he or she is being offered is a tale which explores the human condition. Thus, the role of animals in the fable is almost irrelevant. They are merely vehicles for the human and are not, in any way, presented as having physical or psychological existence in their own right. ... From the point of view of this study, therefore, the fable has little to offer and can teach us nothing about the deeper relationships between the human and the non-human.¹

Likewise, in an article first published in English translation in the same year as Simons' book appeared, Jacques Derrida looked back and considered how to engage with the many animals that peopled his own writing. One thing was clear, he argued: "Above all, it would be necessary to avoid fables. We know the history of fabulation and how it remains an anthropomorphic taming, a

Throughout this chapter, the spelling and literation of original early modern sources have been silently modernised.

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moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse *of* man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for man and as man”.² Coming from very different perspectives, then, both outline what is presented as an unproblematic position: “a reader” can be in no doubt, generalises Simons; “We know”, says Derrida, assuming a communal understanding about fables.

In this chapter, I want to make the case that beast fables might actually have more of a part to play in thinking about human–animal relations than Derrida and Simons suggest. I will propose that their readings of the role of fables postulate a notion of species difference that is ahistorical and that both are reinforcing rather than challenging human exceptionalism. I will take as my evidence a particular conception of humans and animals that was dominant in early modern England and from that starting point, I will probe the assumption that beast fables have little to say about actual animals and actual humans. To do this I will reassess what the human is assumed to be in such a dismissal, what the animal, and how the relationship between the two might be working in fables, using Ben Jonson’s 1606 play *Volpone* as a focus. My hope is that in making a case for the need to rethink beast fables through a reading of this early modern text what I am also doing is engaging in a debate that is about the relationship between humans and non-human animals that remains relevant today. To underline this I will turn briefly at the end of the chapter to look beyond the early modern period to posthumanist ideas as a way of thinking through how the historical analysis might also impact upon contemporary literary studies that attend to what Cary Wolfe has called “the question of the animal”.³

THE BEAST FABLE

In ancient Greece and Rome, as Leslie Kurke has shown, the beast fable was a popular form that was regarded as distinct from and beneath the “respectable genres” of the period.⁴ Despite this, their use by orators in persuading audiences saw fables used in political debate into the medieval period at which time they were also taken up as part of the school curriculum as a means whereby Latin was taught.⁵ So by the time Erasmus was outlining the ideal *Education of a Christian Prince* in 1516, the didactic value of beast fables was well established. Not only did they help the child learn Latin, they impressed morality upon his mind (and almost always the educated child was male) in a particularly fruitful way. “When the little pupil has enjoyed hearing Aesop’s fable of the lion being saved in his turn by the good offices of the mouse”, Erasmus wrote, “and when he has had a good laugh, then the teacher should spell [the meaning] out”. The meaning here, appropriately for the royal pupil, is about rule:

the fable applies to the prince, telling him never to look down on anybody but to try assiduously to win over by kindness the heart of even the humblest of the common people, for no one is so weak but that he may at some time be a friend who can help you or an enemy who can harm you, however powerful you may be yourself.⁶

In this reading, the fable of the lion and the mouse has direct application, but to the ruler not to the beasts. This is, as Derrida argued, “a discourse of man”.

Ben Jonson would have encountered beast fables during his time as a pupil at Westminster School, and a crucial piece of fox-lore provides the plot of his 1606 play *Volpone*. This comes from a story that can be found in a twelfth-century bestiary that T.H. White translated as follows:

[the fox] is a fraudulent and ingenious animal. When he is hungry and nothing turns up for him to devour, he rolls himself in red mud so that he looks as if he were stained with blood. Then he throws himself on the ground and holds his breath, so that he positively does not seem to breathe. The birds, seeing that he is not breathing, and that he looks as if he were covered with blood with his tongue hanging out, think he is dead and come down to sit on him. Well, thus he grabs them and gobbles them down.⁷

Peter Harrison has argued that in the medieval period the study of animals might better be regarded as an “aspect of biblical hermeneutics,”⁸ and in this context, the narrative of the fox and the birds was perceived to have a religious meaning. “The Devil has the nature of the same”, the bestiary entry writes of the fox:

With all those who are living according to the flesh he feigns himself to be dead until he gets them in his gullet and punishes them. But for spiritual men of faith he is truly dead and reduced to nothing.⁹

Studying the fox and the birds is a reminder to readers that sinfulness is a constant presence; that the Devil is always waiting to pounce.

In *Volpone*, this story of temptation is transferred to contemporary Venice, and the wealthy title character—whose name is Italian for fox—is faking serious illness in order to gull three citizens all of whose names are avian—Corvino (crow), Corbaccio (raven), and Voltore (vulture). Each of these citizens is attempting to woo the apparently dying Volpone with gifts in order that they should be named as the sole beneficiary of his estate in his will. As if to ensure the audience has spotted the link to the bestiary narrative of the fox feigning death to catch the gullible birds, direct reference is made to it in the play itself. At the first knock on his door, Volpone states:

Now, now, my clients
Begin their visitation. Vulture, kite,
Raven, and gorcrow, all my birds of prey,
That think me turning carcass, now they come.¹⁰

And later, when an inquiry is made about the “arms” that are engraved on the large “piece of plate” that has been brought by Voltore as an inducement, Volpone notes that it should show “a fox / Stretched on the earth, with fine delusive sleights, / Mocking a gaping crow”.¹¹

But it is not only that the “birds of prey” offer money. Corbaccio disinherits his own son Bonario in order to make Volpone his sole heir, assuming that Volpone will die before he does; and Corvino sends his wife Celia “to sleep by” Volpone and “restore” him, assuming that Volpone is impotent.¹² Both, however, are fools, and, once alone with Celia, Volpone leaps up from his feigned sick bed and attempts to rape her, but Bonario, who has overheard, steps in and saves her and reports the fraud to the city authorities. When Volpone arrives at court faking illness once again, however, he convinces the judges that he would have been incapable of the attempted rape and is released. Celia (named from the Latin for “heavenly one”) and Bonario (which means “honest, good”) are instead taken into custody for telling lies.

This, as Stephen Greenblatt has noted, feels like it should be the “finale” of the play, with the great manipulator triumphant and the virtuous characters banished from the scene.¹³ But there is another Act to go—there must be a moral to this fable. And in Act 5, Volpone decides to take his pretence to its logical conclusion and let it be announced that he has died and that he has bequeathed all of his wealth to his servant Mosca (which means “flesh fly”) rather than to any of his “clients” so that that he, Volpone, can entertain himself watching the impact this has on the “birds of prey” who have gathered around him. However Mosca, the true parasite of the play, refuses to go along with his master’s plan and decides to actually take the wealth from him, and Volpone finds himself a non-person (he has been declared dead) and realises too late that he has made “a snare for mine own neck! And run / My head into it wilfully”.¹⁴ The fox has undone himself and can only stop his parasite by revealing the whole tale in court, and it is notable that it is when it diverges from its bestial original in the final Act that the plot Volpone has woven unravels. It is when he tries to improvise—to step away from the guidance of the beast fable—that he fails. Finally, then, Jonson fulfils the bestial narrative in a way his title character had not intended: Volpone is caught out by his crimes and it is Celia and Bonario (the heavenly and the good) who are freed. The fox is out-foxed and Jonson fulfils the promise made in the “Epistle” that accompanied the printed edition of the play, that it would “imitate justice and instruct to life”.¹⁵

Given the play’s use of animals to speak about human concerns, one might assume that Jonson’s beast fable would reflect the assumptions made by Simons and Derrida with which I began. In *Volpone* we seem to have a clear sense that the play is “a discourse of man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for man and as man”. But I want to suggest that there is another way of reading the play’s relation to the fable conventions. What, for example, is “the human” that Simons refers to? Who is this “man” of Derrida’s discussion? And how do these fit *Volpone*? Behind both of these singularly singular concepts—“the human”, “man”—lie assumptions that need to be unpacked, and in unpacking those assumptions a very different sense of both humans and animals emerges, one which reminds us how historically constituted both are in a way that might make the beast fable a strange ally to literary animal studies.

THE PARAGON OF ANIMALS

So, what kind of human was Jonson thinking with when he wrote *Volpone*, and what kind of animal? The two—humans and animals—were inseparable in the philosophy he had been schooled in, because in that philosophy humans required animals to be present so that they could enact their humanity. The narrative that underpins this perspective originates in the Bible.

In the beginning God gave Adam absolute power over the rest of creation, power that received its clearest expression in Adam's naming of the animals. Genesis 2.19 (KJV) reads: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof". In this world of absolute order nature is not wild, it is available for human use and, indeed, that is its purpose. The naming of animals is an action that places those animals within a human ordering structure: in figurative terms, Adam puts the animals in their place because their place is his to designate. The story, of course, does not end there. The Fall which followed Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil undid this order, and as punishment nature no longer yielded its goods up to humanity freely. Instead, labour was required: "cursed is the ground for thy sake", said the Almighty to Adam, "in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground". (KJV: Genesis 3: 17 and 19—Eve was cursed with another kind of labour, of course). Thrown out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had to train, dig, cage, and prune—in short, they had to struggle against a wild nature. And because all humans "have *Adam* for our common parent", as Alexander Whitaker, the religious leader of the English settlers in the Virginia colony put it in 1613, the curse placed upon Adam and Eve was also placed upon future generations.¹⁶

But the Fall, and the concomitant wildness of the natural world, was also seen to have a positive role. It was through exercising control over wild nature that humans were believed to approach a return to Eden and a reinstatement of their original being. As Nicholas Morgan wrote in his horse-training manual, which was printed three years after *Volpone* was first performed:

man must consider that by his disobedience, he hath lost all obedience, which by original creation was subject unto him, and that now the obedience of all creatures must be attained by Art, and the same preserved in vigour by use and practise.¹⁷

The art of horse training should be read as a model of a humanity's exercise of control over nature in a fallen world more generally. Vigorous use—labour—was required to regain order. Morgan notes, however, that the outcome of such work is never permanent. Like any attempt to control the wild in a fallen world, it cannot achieve perfection: animals that are made tame can always

become wild once again, and thus the struggle against wildness is a continuous and inevitable part of human experience. It is also viewed as a necessary part of that experience, for it is in the act of training, digging, caging, and pruning that the true potential of humanity can be expressed after the Fall. As John Donne noted in 1610, “our business is, to rectify / Nature, to what she was”.¹⁸

But it was not only the external world that rebelled against humanity. The internal world of the self also grew wild after the Fall. As John Davies wrote in his 1599 poem *Nosce Teipsum* (“Know Yourself”):

I know my Soul hath power to know all things,
Yet is she blind and ignorant in all;
I know I am one of Nature’s little kings,
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.¹⁹

What these little kings are in thrall to is the stuff of the world that too easily draws them, and the impact of this thralldom is potentially catastrophic. As Robert Burton put it in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1624): humans give “way to every passion and perturbation of the mind: by which means we metamorphose ourselves, and degenerate into beasts”.²⁰

This metamorphosis must be regarded as a real and not as a figurative conception, and the orthodox early modern understanding of reason explains this. From Aristotle, thinkers took the belief that humans possessed three souls: the vegetative soul, which was the source of nutrition, growth, and reproduction, and was shared by humans, animals, and plants; the sensitive soul, possessed by animals and humans alone, which was the source of perception and movement; and the rational soul which was found only in humans and housed the faculties that made up reason.²¹ Thus, when humans followed their passions (greed, lust, anger, etc.), instead of making rational choices, the sensitive soul took precedence and their truly human capacity was inactive. And in this moment when reason was in abeyance, humans were simply animals: as George Gascoigne declared in 1576, recognising how alcohol had the capacity to wipe out reason, “*all Drunkards are Beasts*”.²² Thus, just as a horse could become wild if the training ceased, so the human self could become wild without true rational control. Or, as Donne put it: “How happy is he, which hath due place assigned / To his beasts, and disafforested his mind!”²³

But it was not just that humans could become animals: it was worse than that. Humans had the potential to become lower than the other animals because those other animals lacked rational souls and so could never make reasoned choices and thus were only ever acting according to their natures (i.e. naturally) when they followed their passions. Humans, on the other hand, had the God-given capacity to act with reason, but too often failed to use it. So those humans who failed to act like humans were not simply beasts, they were worse than beasts because they undid their own status. As Hamlet says of his mother’s speedy re-marriage: “a beast that wants discourse of reason / Would have mourned longer”.²⁴ Gertrude isn’t simply failing to mourn like a human

should, she is failing to mourn like an animal would, and that makes her failure much worse.

In the context of such a view of human nature, a beast fable might be interpreted as having a particular import. Here actual animals (the ones that possess only vegetative and sensitive souls) are materially absent, but their conceptual presence is crucial to meaning. Thus, when the fabled fox pretends to be dead to capture the birds—when it gets what it wants through its cunning and their foolishness—the interpreter of the fox's action should read this as revealing the fox acting according to its nature (it is not being devilish, it is simply being a fox) and the birds (who lack reason) as capable of following only their stomachs as they approach a potential meal. Human actions, of course, should be informed by—controlled by—reason, and if a human is acting immorally, this is a sign of poor choice which reveals how truly beastly humans could become. “*All Drunkards Are Beasts*” is not a comment on animals, it is, of course, a comment on humans.

Volpone can thus be read as being a play full of humans who are not properly human and who, because of that, become the worst kind of animal. This is, undoubtedly, a beast fable that is, as Derrida wrote, “a discourse of man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for man and as man”. But animals do not disappear as animals in this early modern conception. Not only are the humans of the play's world staged very explicitly as animals, through their names and through the self-conscious references to the beast fable in the text. In addition, Jonson makes clear, as Burton would do a few years later, that this conception of humanity can only be understood through an attention to actual animals—those creatures who possess only vegetative and sensitive souls. The degeneration is not metaphorical.

But we can do more with this early modern conception: by reading *Volpone* as a text that might be relevant to thinking about human–animal relations we are, I suggest, brought face-to-face with a sense that the category “human” is not historically transcendent—that humans were not made once and for all time (as Genesis, and as perhaps Simons and Derrida seem to suggest in their conceptions of “the human condition”, and “man”). Rather, this early modern beast fable reveals that being a human is a product of a group of ideas that are in action at a particular moment; that the human is situated, constructed, and so can change. From this perspective, a blanket dismissal of beast fables from literary critical analyses of human–animal relations might be less useful than it initially appears to be as such fables have in the past made visible how humans were once viewed as inseparable from animals, that there once was what Juliana Schiesari has termed “a continuum of life in which humans also partake reciprocally in animal characteristics”.²⁵ Having that as a model of interspecies engagement might offer another way of reading beast fables that makes “the human”, and “man”, figured as distinct from animals, more problematic categories than Simons or Derrida seem to acknowledge when they dismiss the genre.

OLD AND NEW CONTINUUMS

In the *Origin of Species* (1859), Charles Darwin cited on six occasions the phrase “*Natura non facit saltum*” (nature does not make leaps). This idea reflected his hypothesis about the natural world—that “natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favourable variations, it can produce no great or sudden modification”. But the Latin quotation was also used by Darwin to present evolutionary theory in familiar terms. “*Natura non facit saltum*” was, he wrote, “that old canon in natural history”,²⁶ and versions of the idea can be found from classical times and into early modern England. The poet George Herbert, for example, celebrated a sense of the smooth graduations to be found in nature in his poem “Providence” (first published in 1633): “Frogs marry fish and flesh; bats, bird and beast; / Sponges, non-sense and sense; mines, th’earth and plants”. For him, “Man is the world’s high Priest”: where animals are mute, humans can sing God’s praise, and the human who fails—who does not use this special gift—“Doth not refrain unto himself alone, / But robs a thousand who would praise thee fain, / and doth commit a world of sin in one”.²⁷ As in *Volpone*, Herbert’s human has a capacity to be more than animal, but can fail to utilise this power.

Darwin’s theory of evolution, of course, did not attempt to offer such a moralising conception of natural order. Rather, evolution was presented as an inevitable process, beyond the will or agency of the individual creature. But Darwin wasn’t only writing in response to such established conceptions of the natural world. He was also, I suggest, writing in the context of an idea of the human that came to dominate philosophical discussion after *Volpone* had been written and first performed, and that continues to hold power today. This is a construction of the human that underpins what posthumanist thinkers often term “humanism”. In Wolfe’s definition, humanism’s conception of “‘the human’ is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature ... but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether”.²⁸ Humanism, in short, sets aside the “continuum” of humans and animals found in *Volpone*, it denies how far humans are in “thrall” to physical things.

A key origin of this thinking is the mid-seventeenth-century work of René Descartes who saw what Derrida has termed “abyssal differences” separating humans from animals.²⁹ Where pre-Cartesian thinking posited a link between human and animal, Descartes proposed reason as an innate, inalienable property of the human that allowed for his/her utter separation from animals which, he wrote, lack not simply reason but full consciousness. Animals act in the world “in the same way a clock, consisting only of wheels and springs, can count the hours and measure time more accurately than we can with all our wisdom”³⁰: they are automata, incapable, in Derrida’s terms, of responding, capable only of reacting.³¹ The difference from Jonson’s conception is that in Descartes’ thought the gulf between humans and animals is unbridgeable. An actual metamorphosis from rational human to drunken beast, for example, is

no longer possible. It is from this post-Cartesian perspective that a beast fable can be read as being solely about “man”. Only when such an absolute distinction between humans and animals is assumed do the species slippages that underpin Jonson’s play disappear from view.

Posthumanist ideas too often project “humanist” ideas backwards onto the period before Descartes and so miss the much more indistinct notion of the human that can be found there.³² Thus, for example, in *What Is Posthumanism?* Wolfe proposes that we should remove “meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on”, and instead rethink human experience “in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings”.³³ We might view this as having links to Burton’s claim that humans “metamorphose [themselves] and degenerate into beasts”—although for Wolfe letting go of reason has a positive rather than only a negative potential. And Wolfe proposes another connection to earlier ideas when he writes that such rethinking of the value of reason should lead humans to an increase in “vigilance, responsibility, and humility”.³⁴ This is not the same humility that Davies experienced when he recognised humanity’s thralldom, of course, or when Morgan acknowledged that his training of his horse would never be completed, but it is not wholly dissimilar either. What is proposed by them all—Wolfe, Burton, Davies, Morgan—is another way of living, without leaps, without abyssal differences—*Natura non facit saltum*, you might say.

Given posthumanism’s emphasis on the connections between humans and animals that can be found in Wolfe’s and others’ work,³⁵ what might the beast fable do? The question needs to be addressed because to continue to deny the relevance of beast fables on the grounds offered by Simons and Derrida would seem to suggest that humans are always and forever distinct from animals; that the line between them and us can never be crossed. Posthumanist rethinking of the species continuum might offer a way to retrieve beast fables for use in contemporary literary animal studies as well as in early modern ones. Two very brief outlines of recent critical analyses that show how this might work will have to suffice here.

Susan McHugh has reclaimed George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* for literary animal studies by noting the “flexibility of species differences” that the novel contains, when pigs and humans become indistinguishable and yet dogs can be just animals to other humanised animals.³⁶ This suggests, she writes, that an interpretation that focuses only on the text as an allegory of Soviet political—that is, human—history³⁷ is incomplete because the distinction between the animal story and the human story that is supposed by such a reading does not really exist. For McHugh, the line between human and animal, as between animal and animal, is too blurred to allow readers to view *Animal Farm* as being only about humans. The animal story is a human story, but it is also an animal story. And the apparently human story is also animal.

Chris Danta has also turned to beast fables, likewise claiming something that resonates with early modern ideas: that “fables cast the human down by casting the human as an animal”.³⁸ His context is inevitably very different to

the one I have proposed for Jonson's play. Where pre-Cartesian thinkers saw themselves on a continuum with beasts, always potentially metamorphosed by their own moral failures, Danta's starting point is the idea of "animal uplifting"—that is, the attempts through various kinds of genetic or prosthetic enhancement to dissolve "the ontological boundaries between the different species so that the nonhuman animal can be viewed and measured in terms of the human".³⁹ This attempt, maintaining humans as the standard by which everything is judged, is a product, he argues, of humanist thinking and it is the very literary "play with the vertical order of things" that he finds in beast fables that offers a way of thinking against such scientific developments. After Darwin, Danta writes, the "fable implicates readers in the biological order by forcing them to contemplate and confront the existential fact of their apehood".⁴⁰ The boundary between humans and other animals (all other animals) is blurred, and the beast fable is for this reason offered, once again, as a key source for re-encountering animals in literary studies.

Where McHugh's and Danta's readings are informed by post-Darwinian and posthumanist ideas, the early modern writers I have cited should be recognised as pre-Cartesian—or perhaps prehumanist. But the two groups—the pre and posthumanists—have, as I have sketchily hinted at, a surprising amount in common. Through attending to work by writers like Jonson, Donne, Burton, and Morgan as much as to fiction by Orwell, or Wells, Kafka, and Coetzee (some of Danta's foci), it becomes clear that a blanket dismissal of fables, such as Simons and Derrida propose, is problematic in that it assumes a conception of "the human" that is singular, ahistorical, and permanent. Such a reading we might term "humanist". As this brief exploration hopes to make clear, that thing called the human is not and never has been permanent, and it might be that it is in the beast fable—the most anthropomorphic of all genres, the place where animals speak in human voices in order to voice human concerns—that we are offered the best starting point to engage with that idea.

NOTES

1. John Simons, *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 119.
2. Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", *Critical Inquiry* 28:2 (Winter 2002), 405.
3. Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.44.
4. Leslie Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 156.
5. Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5–6.
6. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1513), trans. Neil M. Cheshire and Michael J. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12.

7. T.H. White, *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (1954). (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 53–4.
8. Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 269.
9. White, *Book of Beasts*, 54.
10. Ben Jonson, *Volpone* (1606), ed. Brian Parker and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1.2.87–90.
11. Jonson, *Volpone*, 1.2.92–6.
12. Jonson, *Volpone*, 2.6.35 and 28.
13. Stephen J. Greenblatt, “The False Ending in *Volpone*”, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75 (1976), 91.
14. Jonson, *Volpone*, 5.11.1–2.
15. Jonson, *Volpone*, “Epistle”, 39.
16. Alexander Whitaker, *Good Newes from Virginia* (London: F. Kyngston, 1613), 24.
17. Nicholas Morgan, *The Perfection of Horse-manship, drawne from Nature; Arte, and Practise* (London: Edward White, 1609), 5–6.
18. John Donne, “To Sir Edward Herbert, at Juliers” (1610) in *John Donne: The Major Works*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), lines 33–4.
19. John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London: Richard Field, 1599), 8.
20. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Henry Cripps, 1624), 5.
21. See Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Humans, Rationality and Humanity in Early Modern Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 8–13.
22. George Gascoigne, *A delicate Diet, for daintiemouthde Droonkardes* (London: Richard Jhones, 1576), 6.
23. Donne, “To Sir Edward Herbert”, lines 9–10.
24. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (c. 1601), ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden, 2006), 1.2.150–1.
25. Juliana Schiesari, “Rethinking Humanism: Animals and the Analogic Imagination in the Italian Renaissance”. *Shakespeare Studies* 41 (2013), 61.
26. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), ed. Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 346 and 154.
27. George Herbert, “Providence” (1633) in *George Herbert: The Complete Poetry*, ed. John Drury and Victoria Moul (London: Penguin, 2015), lines 135–6, 13 and 18–20.
28. Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010), xv.
29. Derrida, “The Animal”, 402.
30. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (1637) in *The Philosophical Writings of René Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. Volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 141.
31. Derrida, “The Animal”, 400.
32. See Erica Fudge, “The Animal Face of Early Modern England”, *Theory, Culture and Society* 30:7–8 (2013), 177–198; essays in Jean E. Feerik and Vin Nardizzi, ed., *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano, “Introduction: Renaissance Posthumanism”, in Campana and Maisano ed., *Renaissance Posthumanism* (New York: Fordham University Press. 2016), 1–36.

33. Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, xxv.
34. Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, 47.
35. See, for example, Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
36. Susan McHugh, "Animal Farm's Lessons for Literary (and) Animal Studies", *Humanimalia: A Journal of Human/Animal Interface Studies* 1.1 (2009), 29: <https://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/issue01/mchugh.html>
37. See Mitzi M. Brunsdale, *Student Companion to George Orwell* (London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 128–9 for such an analysis.
38. Chris Danta, *Animal Fables after Darwin: Literature, Speciesism and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3.
39. Danta, *Animal Fables*, 2.
40. Danta, *Animal Fables*, 19.

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PART IV

Literature of the Eighteenth Century



“Real” Animals and the Eighteenth-Century Literary Imagination

Laura Brown

Literary animal studies is bound up with “real” animals in ways that can be implicit, explicitly political, or simply assumed.¹ Critics who study the appearance of animals in eighteenth-century literature consistently assume that they can understand, represent, or speak for “real” animals today by projecting the imaginary animals of literary texts as somehow providing access to “real” animal being. This historical period is especially bound up with the problem of the “real” because animals are newly alive for the literary imagination due to the striking shifts in human–animal contact and awareness that mark this era.

The eighteenth century offers a distinctive setting for an examination of the “real” in the representation of animals, because this period sees significant innovations on two fronts whose concurrency cannot be coincidental. On one hand, animals are made materially and newly actual to readers through a range of contemporary documents and discourses: through the physiological representation of muscles, organs, and skeletal systems in the rise of comparative anatomy; through the documentation by travelers and naturalists of the behaviors and social lives of the great apes; through the rise of natural history and the development of modern systems of biological classification; and through contemporary philosophical arguments about the possibilities of animal language-learning or intelligence. Meanwhile, on the other hand, a different portrayal of animals occupies the eighteenth-century literary imagination, through an expanded variety of forms, devices, and roles that engage animals as literary materials in lyric poetry, pastoral and georgic, and prose fiction. The discursive

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and formal structures that signify nonhuman bodies, affects, actions, and voices create another sort of engagement with animals from that reflected through comparative anatomy or biological classification.

For critics of eighteenth-century literary animals, then, the “real” is a consistent backdrop and point of reference. For example, Heather Keenleyside moves directly from rhetorical analysis to interdependency, arguing that “rhetorical conventions make real-world claims” that are relevant to “cultural and intellectual debates that are still with us—about the specificity of animals and the nature of species, about persons and their relationship to other sorts of creatures, and about what life is, which lives count, and how we might live together”. Tobias Menely makes a similar direct connection, arguing that the animal “voice” as represented in discursive form—in literary texts or political tracts—passes “from one sign system to another” in a “constitutively open” process of communication that results in a direct “claim to rights” on the part of animals.²

Meanwhile, Kari Weil’s critique of deconstructive approaches to the animal suggests that the aim for literary animal studies should instead be “to proceed ... to acts of engagement with others [the animals] who have been oppressed”. And Erica Fudge offers, as a rationale for engagement, the idea that animals are “change-provoking” beings who make impacts on human economic and social realms as well as “the realm of ideas: concepts of human status in religious, humanist, legal, and political writings”. In this context, Fudge’s work explicitly takes up the challenge of engagement and advocacy: “in the early modern period, as now, animals were not easy beings to contemplate. They raised the specter of human limitation; they provoked unease about the distinct nature of humanity; they undid the boundaries between human and beast even as they appeared to cement them”.³

The impulse to identify imaginative literature with the “real” is expressed most directly by Marion W. Copeland, who uses literature itself—or storytelling—as an immediate conduit between human and animal. She argues that literary animal studies must provide a theory that enables readers to find ways, through a direct intimacy provided in “animal-centric” literature, to “enter the world” of the animals “whose welfare and survival we profess”. Citing the “insistence” in literary animal studies “on the sentience of the nonhuman animal”, Copeland concludes that this sentience is an indication “that other-than-human animals have ... language and imagination that allow them ... to tell stories consciously based on their life experience”. For Copeland, then, “a non-human, talking fictional character ... is to be understood as ... a reflection of a reality and hence a form of literary realism”.⁴ In other words, the literary animal can be seen as a heuristic for the “real” animal, in the same way that Samuel Richardson’s characters may be seen—in Michael Gavin’s words in his recent essay on the “real”—as “heuristics for understanding the world”: “people in the world conform to [the characters in literature] as conceptual artifacts, giving Richardson [and his readers] a specialized access into their hearts and souls”.⁵

These are striking claims, both for the literary imagination and for the project of literary criticism. And they suggest the power of the “real” for critics and for readers of eighteenth-century texts, as well as the complexities and even the dangers of invoking or assuming access to the “real”, then and now. As we have seen, the eighteenth century is characterized by striking new physiological and anthropological representations of animals, and, at once, by provocative new aesthetic or poetic engagements with imagined animal beings. The coincidence of these two, distinct forms of engagement with the animal is an opportunity to think in new ways about the “real”: tracking differences and corollaries across these very disparate modes of discourse offers a significant new perspective on a reliance on ideals of the “real” when making sense of representations of animals.

Four texts from this extended scenario of innovation in representations of animals enable us to define the key terms of engagement between human and animal in this century: Edward Tyson’s anatomical study *The Anatomy of a Pygmy* (1699); Thomas Brown’s lyric poem “On a Lap-Dog” (1721); James Burnet, Lord Monboddo’s linguistic and proto-evolutionary treatise *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1774); and the anonymous first-person narrative *The Biography of a Spaniel* (1797).

I

Edward Tyson’s *Orang-Outang, sive Homo Sylvestris: or, the Anatomy of a Pygmy* (1699) represents “the formal entry of the anthropoid ape into the consciousness of Western civilization”, according to H. W. Janson’s seminal study.⁶ Tyson’s book provides a detailed technical account of his exploratory dissection of a chimpanzee (or “pygmy” in contemporary usage), “a Creature . . . very remarkable, and rare”, and a review of the physiological proximity of this animal body to the human anatomy.⁷ This text associates this proximity with two extended implicit analogies: first, with a set of detailed, correlated illustrations of this animal’s inherent modesty, sympathy, or benevolence—portraying the ape as the anticipatory exemplar of the eighteenth-century doctrine of natural sensibility; and second, with a fully elaborated demonstration that apes are the actual beings manifested as “the *Satyrs*, the *Fauni*, *Pan*, *Ægipan*, *Sylvanus*, *Silenus*, and the *Nymphæ*, as also the *Sphinges*” of classical mythology (Preface). Anatomical observation is thus melded with the two most prominent cultural and aesthetic modes of the moment—the sentimental and the neoclassical—inserting the ape into each of these systems not just as an example, but as a retroactively defining model.

The central task of Tyson’s main treatise is the detailed comparative anatomical examination of the chimpanzee, giving “as particular an Account as I can, of the formation and structure of all the Parts of this wonderful *Animal*; and [making] a *Comparative* Survey of them, with the same Parts in a *Humane Body*” (2). Tyson proceeds to describe, step by step, the results of his own dissection, and to mingle those details with reports about “*Ape* and *Monkey-kind*”

derived from many other sources—including other contemporary anatomical observations, works of classical philosophy, and anecdotes from travelers and naturalists. The overall structure of the *Anatomy* moves methodically from outer to inner—from the “*Skin ... of the whole Body ... the Head ... the Palms of the Hands ... the Soles of the Feet ... the Fingers and Toes*” (25), to the “*Intestines*”, the “*Liver*”, the “*Heart*” with its “*Auricles, Ventricles, Valves, and Vessels*” (50), and so on, meticulously including every substantial physiological part, ending with a graphically presented list of forty-eight specific items where “*The ... Pygmie more resembled a Man, than Apes and Monkeys do*”, and thirty-four items where “*The ... Pygmie differ’d from a Man, and resembled more the Ape and Monkey-kind*” (92–95). This conclusion confirms the extraordinary similarity that has been pursued throughout the anatomy and that is introduced in the first paragraph of the Preface, where the “pygmy” is described as a “Creature so very remarkable ... and so much resembling a Man” (Preface).

Meanwhile, in the opening pages and then commingled with the physiological detail throughout the anatomy, Tyson’s text offers a set of anecdotes that persistently supply the ape with “soft, tender Passions”. These anecdotes constitute a compendium of direct accounts of living beings, which taken together represent the “Soul” of the “pygmy” (20). In the opening pages, the redacted stories of apes’ “tender Passions” are preparatory to the systematic anatomical detail that follows. While Tyson notes that his sources do not always agree about the ape’s nature, it is the representations of sensibility and modesty from these accounts that come together to portray a distinctive character, even an identity, for the animal. The effect throughout the *Anatomy* is to give the being whose “inward *Viscera*” (Preface) are on detailed display a set of affectively charged behaviors, which are implicitly offered as a corollary experience to the portrayal of those “*Viscera*”. For example, Tyson quotes at length from an earlier physician/explorer’s account of the ape’s modesty and human-like emotion:

I saw several [Bornean orangutan] of both sexes walking erect, first that young female satyr ... with great modesty hiding her private parts ... and also her face with her hands from unknown men, weeping profusely, groaning, and performing other human actions, so that you would say nothing human was lacking except speech.⁸ (20)

And this opening section ends with another long quotation from an English translation of the travels to China of Louis Daniel le Comte, whose stories also provide a view of the natural affections of the “Savage Man”: “They do especially appear to be of a very kind Nature; and to shew their Affections to Persons they know and love, they embrace them, and kiss them with transports that surprise a Man” (24).⁹ These narrative views of the “pygmy’s” nature push the animal even further toward the human and provide him with an extended discursive familiarity. The portrayal of the “pygmy” here mixes the affects of

strangeness with the affects of familiarity in a way that demarcates an alien being and highlights a recognizable mode of human identity, both at the same time.

Meanwhile, this work’s use of classical mythology gives the “pygmy” this same composite valence of strangeness and familiarity at once. The four treatises on the ancients that are attached to *The Anatomy of a Pygmy* together make up about a third of Tyson’s entire work. These essays use extensive comparative citation from classical authors and their immediate and modern commentators to assert that many mythological figures were a species of great ape. The claim is introduced thus:

This great [anatomical] Agreement, which I observed between [the “pygmy”] and a *Man*, put me upon considering, whether it might not afford the Occasion to the Ancients, of inventing the many Relations, which they have given us of several *sorts of Men*, which are no where to be met with but in their Writings. For I could not but think, there might be some Real Foundation for their *Mythology*. . . . *Homer’s Geranomachia* therefore, or *Fight of the Cranes and Pygmies*, I have rendered a probable Story. *Aristotle’s* assertion of the being of *Pygmies*, I have vindicated from the false Glosses of others. The conjectures of other Learned Men about them, I have examined: And . . . I think I have fully proved, that there were such *Animals* as the Ancients called *Pygmies, Cynocephali, Satyrs, and Sphinges*; and that they were only *Apes and Monkeys*. (Preface)

The extensive engagement with classical materials in this section of the text thus has the effect of recreating a classical past in which the “remarkable, and rare” ape is an almost ubiquitous presence in classical literature. The animal of the *Anatomy* emerges directly from and explicates a canonical human history.

In the *Anatomy of a Pygmy* the engagement with the animal is marked by a distinctive combination of convergence and incongruity, and results in a corollary, ongoing ontological uncertainty. Formally, this text merges the representation of concrete, thorough anatomical detail with anecdote, affect, and mythology. The result is subtly paradoxical: a convergence of unfamiliar physiological tangibility with familiar cultural intertextuality. The anatomized actual animal may seem to reside on the side of physiological tangibility, but that physiological being cannot be extracted from the cultural imaginary—as manifested either in the cult of sensibility or in the canon of classical literature. In other words, for the *Anatomy* the animal and the human cannot be separated, and in the same way the “real” cannot be separated from the imaginary. This indistinguishability entails an ontological as well as an epistemological uncertainty that operates across the unfamiliar and the familiar, the animal and the human, and across two dimensions of the “real”— the physiological and the imaginary.

II

Thomas Brown's "An Anacreontic: On a Lap-Dog" (1721) is a local instance of a challenging literary experiment in the portrayal of human–animal intimacy. "On a Lap-Dog" represents a significant early eighteenth-century subgenre—the lapdog lyric—which, as I have argued elsewhere, expresses this period's new experience with cross-species intimacy, associated with the rise of pet keeping and of the modern notion of the "companion animal".¹⁰ In that sense, this subgenre resides in documentable social history and reflects a critique of historical changes in human–animal companionate relationships and in the portrayal of cross-species "love". The lapdog lyric is an ironic form: it includes praise poems and mock-epitaphs to lapdogs, as well as envious reflections on the lady's favorite lapdog; it is framed by direct address—either to the woman pet-keeper or the animal; and it focuses on the female body and on an ambivalent account of cross-species "love". Always offered from the perspective of the male observer and ostensibly directed at the flaws of female character or the excesses of female sexuality, the lapdog lyric depends on assumptions of gender antagonism and conventions of literary anti-feminism, but these gender conventions open up a surprising opportunity to stage a distinctive and challenging representation of human–animal substitution or exchange.

Brown's "On a Lap-Dog" efficiently delivers the full set of conventions that characterize the lapdog lyric. In its opening lines it addresses the dog: "*Nice*, pretty *Nice*". (Note that "Ní-ce" has two syllables in this poem.) It establishes its tongue-in-cheek ironic stance in the jealous suitor's "Praise" for the dog. And it explicitly posits a distinctive form of "love":

Nice, pretty *Nice*, thou
 Can'st not; but, ah! cou'd'st thou know
 How thou dost my Envy raise,
 And (because she loves thee) Praise.¹¹

The poem is presented in the voice of a male observer, whose "Envy" for the nonhuman object of the woman's love registers the disturbing impact of a human–animal substitution, where the lapdog is taking the place conventionally occupied by the human suitor. In this context, the poem also offers an insinuation of sexual intimacy—conventional to the lapdog lyric, which invariably includes either a lap, a bed, a kiss, or a lick:

Thou wou'd'st not change for what is New,
 For *Mexico*, or for *Peru*.
 In that Lap, ah! *Nice*, rest,
 And think! *Nice*, think thou'rt blest. (lines 5–8)

This "Lap" reflects the lapdog lyric's systematic evocation of the woman's body as the requisite venue for cross-species "love".

The ironic epitaph “Upon my Lady M-’s Lapdog” in *The Grub-Street Miscellany* for 1731 illustrates the way this engagement with cross-species intimacy becomes explicitly sexual:

Beneath this Stone, ah woful Case!
 Poor little *Doxy* lies,
 Who once possess’d a warmer Place
 Between his Lady’s T-hs. (1–4)¹²

In this case, though, Brown’s “On a Lap-Dog” takes up the challenge of animal–human substitution by offering a bribe. As the dog lies in “that Lap”, the male speaker/suitor makes what he seems to believe is a tempting offer:

But if thou wilt thy Station change,
 And in another Precinct range,
 In Tap’stry, thou, or Silks, shalt lie,
 Under the richest Canopy;
 On Citron, Cedar, or on Gold,
 Or what thou dost most costly hold.
 If thou wilt but in Exchange thy Place resign,
 Let but thy Privilege be mine,
 This shall, and more than this, be thine. (lines 9–17)

Here the poem imagines an “Exchange”—or a re-exchange—across human and animal—based on a “costly” payment. “Station” and material wealth—“Silks” and “Gold”—are specifically human categories and ambitions, incongruous to animals. The re-exchange of “Station” that the poem proposes, and the comical image of the dog under the “Canopy”, highlight human–animal incongruity while they also invert conventions of human-over-animal hierarchy. The imagined bribe heightens the incongruity of this exchange. Meanwhile, the male speaker’s corollary fantasy of slipping into the lapdog’s “Place” on the lady’s lap, and appropriating the animal’s “Privilege” portrays the human–animal “Exchange” from the opposite direction: the speaker is seeing himself as a dog in the sexual venue of the lady’s “Lap”.

The regress of “Exchange” or re-exchange moves “On a Lap-Dog” toward an ontological uncertainty that has marked the animal–human transformation story since Circe.¹³ Another lapdog lyric, John Hewitt’s “Upon *Cælia*’s having a little Dog in her Lap” (1727), expresses the exchange as a clear inversion—in explicitly natural-historical terms. This speaker explicitly prefers to be a “four-footed” being rather than “human”:

’Tis four-footed *Cloe*, your Smiles can engage,
 Whilst a Shape that is human must bear with your Rage,
 Since, thus, my Addresses by *Cælia*’s refused,
 Pray, who wou’d be Man? when a Dog’s so well us’d?¹⁴

To ask “who wou’d be Man”—or what “being a man” might have to recommend it as a state of being—implies a preference for “four-footed” nonhuman over bipedal “human” being. This ontological uncertainty is implicit in all of the portrayals of human-to-animal substitution in the lapdog lyric. Questioning the value of human being, and opting out of human being in its most basic, bipedal, format—even as a satiric joke—creates an ontological challenge that is a typical trope in this poetry.

The complex scenario of exchange that “On a Lap-Dog” develops in its portrayal of human–animal intimacy is the equivalent of the convergence scenario that shapes the *Anatomy of a Pygmie*. Both works pull the unfamiliar and the intimately familiar into a discursive co-existence. The historical event of the rise of the companionate animal is the basis for the lapdog lyric’s “love”. But that love, by putting the dog and the suitor into the same lap, generates a convergence of animal and human that challenges the stable definition of being. The resulting ontological question—“who wou’d be Man?”—challenges, in turn, the stable assignment of “real” identity, to human and to animal.

III

The Scottish philosopher James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, in his treatise *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (second edition, 1774) uses a portrayal of the ape to support his innovative evolutionary theory of language. Monboddo argues that languages are “not natural to man”, but that languages develop within social communities. In Book 2 of the treatise, he seeks to support that claim by demonstrating that “the Orang Outangs are men”; if they are men, and (demonstrably) have not yet acquired the art of speech, then language is produced developmentally.¹⁵ Chapters 4 and 5 of the treatise support this argument by citing various reports of the ape’s proximity to humans: its similar appearance to man, their parallel anatomies, its human-like behaviors including manners of eating, drinking, and sitting at table, and its ready acquisition of certain human skills.

At the core of Monboddo’s demonstration of the humanity of the orangutan is the merging of human and animal through the cultural construct of natural sensibility. Monboddo’s account depends upon his notion “of the inward principle, which directs the motions and actions of the animal, and is the source of all its sentiments, inclinations, and affections” (337). Apes and humans demonstrate a “conformity . . . of the natural habits and dispositions of the mind” (338), which Monboddo illustrates through a series of anecdotes and observations showing that:

the Orang Outang is an animal of the human form, inside as well as outside: That he has the human intelligence, as much as can be expected in an animal living without civility or arts: That he has a disposition of mind, mild, docile, and humane: That he has the sentiments and affections peculiar to our species, such as the sense of modesty, of honour, and of justice; and likewise an attachment of

love and friendship to one individual, so strong in some instances, that one friend will not survive the other. (289–290)

On modesty, this text includes an account of the female orangutan “conceal[ing] with their hand, those parts, which modesty forbids to shew” (272, 279, 291). On melancholy, Monboddo cites a traveler who describes the orangutans he saw in New Guinea as “very melancholy, gentle and peaceable” (302–303). On the orangutan’s “sweet temper”, he cites a naturalist’s description of “one of the small kind, who ... was grave and composed, ... [and] behaved, in every respect, like a man” (280). On honor and justice, Monboddo quotes a letter from a traveler to Africa describing instances in which these beings, exposed to crowds or insult, “take it so much to heart, that they languish and die” (287). And on affection, he presents the testimony of “a gentleman who was an eye-witness of it”: “an Orang Outang, which was on board his ship, conceived such an affection for the cook, that when, upon some occasion, he left the ship, to go ashore, the gentleman saw the Orang Outang shed tears in great abundance” (343–345).

These stories supporting the proximity or exchangeability of animal and human lead to a distinctive conditional statement:

If ... the Orang Outang be not a man, then those philosophers of Europe, who, about the time of the discovery of America, maintained, that the inhabitants of that part of the world were not men, reasoned well; for, certainly, the Americans had not then, nor have they yet, learned all the arts of which their nature is capable. But I think the Pope, by his bull, decided the controversy well, when he gave it in favour of the humanity of the poor Americans: And for the same reason, we ought to decide, that the Orang Outangs are men. And, indeed, it appears to me, that they are not so much inferior to the Americans in civility and cultivation, as some nations of America were to us, when we first discovered that country. (347–348).¹⁶

The “if ... then”, “ought”, and “not so much ... as” conditionality of this passage links animals and humans in an exchange that operates across the orangutans, the Native Americans, and “us”—the “discoverers” of a world already populated by animals and humans. Here we can see Monboddo engaging with—and in part seeking to remedy—the claims that indigenous people were not even human, which were used to justify imperialist expansion and colonial exploitation in this period and well beyond. By this complex conditional reasoning, for Monboddo there are two alternatives: we are either all humans or all animals. Again, like the *Anatomy* and like “To a Lap-Dog”, the engagement with the animal in *The Origin and Progress of Language* generates a scenario of exchange that leads toward infinite regress, and throws ontological stability into permanent uncertainty. What is the nature of being if both humans and animals appear as each other?

And finally, the images of exchange that define the terms of this text's engagement with the animal generate a recognition scene—a positive answer to the ontological complaint from the lapdog poem—“who wou'd be Man?”:

Is it then a wonder, that this man of nature, the Orang Outang, should be so different from us? Or, is it not rather a wonder, that we should find in him any of our own features? Yet the fact truly is, that the man is easily distinguishable in him; nor are there any differences betwixt him and us, but what may be accounted for in so satisfactory a manner, that it would be extraordinary and unnatural, if they were not to be found. (356)

Here this text's “real” human author, as if looking into a mirror upon the face of the animal, “easily” distinguishes his “own features” in the animal that he has had in view—an animal that has been created through the portrayal of natural sensibility. “Who wou'd be Man?” is superfluous here, since he is already the animal, just as the “real” animal is already the human.

IV

A century after *The Anatomy of a Pygmy*, the *Biography of a Spaniel* (1797) defines its engagement with the animal through a transcendental exchange. The author of the *Biography* is most likely a “Mrs. Showes”, who published three other novels with the Minerva Press. This work belongs to a distinctive, coherent subgenre in the literary history of human–animal engagement that I have elsewhere described as dog narrative—a sustained tale with an itinerant dog protagonist, which typically proposes a transcendence—either realized within the narrative or projected beyond it—that connects the human and the animal.¹⁷ The *Biography of a Spaniel* is framed by the representation of this transcendent realm. Its opening scene takes place in the “Elysium of dogs”:

In the midst of one of the large seas our astronomers have lately discovered in the moon, lies a large island, that, for ages innumerable, perhaps from the beginning of time, has been the appointed Elysium of dogs—those constant and faithful companions of man. ... Once, as a party of them were assembled on the flowery banks of their ocean, they perceived the shade of a new comer, gently wafted by a silver wave to a coral beach They ran to receive and to introduce him ... [and invite him, according to] “the laws of our republic ... to give an account of your terrestrial pilgrimage ... the history of your life”. (1–3)

The spaniel's story follows. The narrative returns to this Elysium at the end, as the story is concluded by the “united voices” of all those dogs on the moon.

The venue of the Elysium of dogs becomes iconic for the dog narrative. A copperplate engraving of the Elysium by James Hopwood was printed as the frontispiece of the 1803 edition of the *Biography of a Spaniel*. And a half-century later the main character of Margaret Scott Gatty's *Worlds Not Realized*

(1856), an animal-advocacy novel, highlights this Elysium, describing his response to Hopwood’s picture:

Over this picture I used to pore with the deepest interest, trying by looking into it to discover what sort of a place the moon-paradise was; and wondering by what means the poor dog, who, according to the book, had just been shot dead in the street, could have got there! ... sometimes I pleased myself by thinking, that as nobody knew what was in the moon, there was just a loop-hole of possibility that the dog-paradise might be there after all.¹⁸

The Elysium is the emblem of and the reward for animal sensibility and loyalty, which coexist incongruously both with the stark reality of the dog’s death—the “dog had just been shot dead in the street”—and with the ongoing social satire in this text. While the *Biography* is framed by the island in the moon and by the corollary sentimental evocation of canine loyalty, sentiment is not a prominent affect in the body of the narrative. The spaniel narrator acquires his first master when the French grenadier, Lafleur, buys him “in exchange for a brass tobacco box” (9); he finds his second master in short order when Lafleur proceeds to sell him to a puppet-show man for two ducats. Then the spaniel proceeds variously from master to master—rich and poor, beggars and minstrels, soldiers and gypsies. These experiences offer frequent opportunities for social satire across a wide scope of classes, professions, and manners. But the spaniel’s story swerves from satire back to sentiment at its conclusion, when the dog is reunited to his “inexpressible joy” (85) with the aged, blind Lafleur, and thence becomes the sudden model of loyalty and self-sacrifice as he is “shot dead in the street” alongside his master.

This final scene reflects the sentimental portrayal of a convergent human-animal mortality: a joint cross-species death, a trans-species union of souls, and a glimpse of a prospective inter-species afterlife. The dog narrator has bitten a boy who sought to steal him away from his destitute and blind master; the boy’s father, the mayor of the town, sends two armed “ministers of justice ... to punish my crime”:

I had time enough to escape; but, instead of doing so, I crept closer to my master—who, when he was told the danger I was in, bent over me But his effort was vain—for the mercenary slaves fired; and the same ball that passed through my head, penetrated his heart.—“Bury us together!”—was the last sound I heard with my mortal faculties, and likewise the first my aerial substance comprehended. Our shades met—we tried to embrace, but an invisible power tore us asunder; yet as the spirit of my friend ascended, it called to me, and said—“We shall meet again!”

CONCLUSION

“Yes, so you will”, re-echoed the united voices of the whole society [of the Elysium of dogs], who, with silent admiration, had listened to the stranger’s relation. (92–93)

Though their souls meet for a moment, their full reunion is distanced by “an invisible power”. But the “united voices” of the speaking animals in the Elysium of dogs, who form the frame and serve as the audience of the narrative, affirm their inter-species afterlife in a final chorus—“so you will”.

The terms of engagement with the animal in the *Biography of a Spaniel* offer human–animal convergence—in death—as their just-withheld teleology and retrospective premise. Human and animal will “meet again” on the moon, in the Elysium of dogs, in a dream, in an almost-realized realm of “united voices”. This convergence is the endpoint of an infinite regress that matches the conditionality of Monboddo’s “if-then” account of the exchangeability of animal and human in *The Origin and Progress of Language*. The *Biography’s* convergence—both asserted and uncertain—advocates for a startling ontological premise by which the “real” animal is defined by the human’s mortality.

Taken together, these texts offer a surprisingly consistent rendition of the problematic of the “real” for the literature of this period. On the one hand, these works seem to witness actual animal bodies and lives. The physiological detail in Tyson’s *Anatomy*, the historical connections between humans and animals in “To a Lap-Dog”, the direct testimony of travelers in both Tyson and Monboddo, the dog’s death in the street in the *Biography of a Spaniel*—all line up with an observable, replicable, concrete, even stark “real”. But the “real” animals of these texts are constantly compromised by their exchangeability and convergence with the human, by their constitution from the cultural imaginary of sentiment, by their transcendence of the realm of mortality, and by their fantastic island on the moon. They are showing their readers, and their critics today, the subtlety, the incongruity, and even the ontological risks of our claims to grasp and to utilize them as “real” animals.

NOTES

1. Claims of access to “real” animals have been powerfully expressed as forms of advocacy or intimacy by Shevelov, *Love of Animals*; Singer, *Animal Liberation*; Regan, *Case for Animal Rights*; Haraway, *When Species Meet*; de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers*; Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds*.
2. Keenleyside, *Animals and Other People*, 1; Menely, *The Animal Claim*, 6, 1.
3. Weil, *Thinking Animals*, 17; Fudge, “Introduction”, in *Renaissance Beasts*, 3, 13.
4. Copeland, “Literary Animal Studies”, s91–s105, s91–s105, s98.
5. Gavin, “Real Robinson Crusoe”, 301–325, 320.
6. Janson, *Apes*, 336. My account of Tyson draws upon my study of apes in *Homeless Dogs*, ch. 2.
7. Tyson, *Orang-outang*, Preface.

8. This is my translation of Tyson’s Latin quotation from Jakob de Bondt. See Iacobi Bontii (Jacobus Bontius), *Medici Civitatis*, 5:84. The last phrase here—“nothing human was lacking”—alludes to Terence’s “Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto”, a well-known catch phrase of the cult of sensibility.
9. le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires*. The 1737 English translation is virtually identical to that quoted by Tyson. le Comte, *Memoirs*, 509–510.
10. Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, ch. 3.
11. Brown, “Lap-dog”, lines 1–4, in *Works*, 333.
12. Mr. Bavius, “Lapdog”, lines 1–4, in *Grub-Street Miscellany*, 45.
13. For the history of the Circe story, see Alkemeyer, “Remembering”, 1149–1165.
14. Hewitt, “Upon Cælia’s”, lines 1–4, in *Miscellanies*, 29.
15. James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Origin and Progress*, 347. Although by the time of Monboddo’s writing other differentiated terminology for the great apes is more available, Monboddo uses the term “orangutan” to refer broadly to the anthropoid ape. The beings whom he is most centrally describing are the African chimpanzee and gorilla. For a summary of Monboddo’s chapters on the great ape, the relationship of his ideas to those of Rousseau and Hobbes, and his significance in the rise of evolutionary thought in England, see Lovejoy, “Rousseau and Monboddo”, 275–296. Lovejoy notes Monboddo’s focus on the natural benevolence of the orangutan (285). My account of Monboddo draws upon my *Homeless Dogs*, ch. 2.
16. Here Monboddo refers to the Papal Bull of Pope Paul III of 1537, which recognized Indians and all other indigenous peoples as humans, rather than brutes, and therefore protected from exploitation.
17. Brown, *Homeless Dogs*, ch. 5.
18. Gatty, *Worlds Not Realized*, 168–169.

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Mary Leapor's Creatureliness in "An Essay on Woman" and Other Poems

Anne Milne

WHO WAS MARY LEAPOR?

Mary Leapor (1722–1746) was born at Marston St Lawrence near Brackley, Northamptonshire, on the estate of a local judge and MP, Sir John Blencowe, where her father, Philip Leapor (1693–1771), was employed as a gardener. As a young woman, Leapor worked as a domestic servant in several local households but after her mother's death she returned home to care for and work for her father (who by this time had set up his own nursery business). Leapor was often in poor health and died of measles at age 24. A subscription was raised by Leapor's friend and patron, Bridget Freemantle, enabling her poetry to be published posthumously as *Poems on Several Occasions*, in two volumes in 1747 and 1751, which were well-received and well-reviewed. Profits from the sales accrued to Philip Leapor who died in 1771 at the age of 78.¹ After a positive review of the first volume of her *Poems on Several Occasions* appeared in 1749 in the *Monthly Review*, Samuel Richardson "became interested in Leapor...[and asked the poet Christopher Smart]...to write an epitaph for her gravestone". While Smart did not write the requested epitaph, Richardson edited and printed the new volume of Leapor's poems (with Isaac Hawkins Browne) in March 1751.² Interest in Leapor's poetry was extended further by the inclusion of 117 pages of her work in George Coleman and Bonnell Thornton's anthology, *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755). This anthology was the first "printed collection of verse...devoted exclusively to poetry by women" and is

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225

strongly indicative of a more general curiosity about women writers, a number of whom (e.g. Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn) were already well known.³ The interest in Leapor in the eighteenth century may also be connected to a more general interest in “primitive” poets, who were often referred to as “natural geniuses” characterized (often erroneously) as peasants without access to education. Casting her as bird-like, another Leapor-booster, John Duncombe, effused about her localized natural genius in his long verse essay, *The Femiiniad* (1754):

Now in ecstatic visions let me rove,
By Cynthia’s beams, thro’ Brackley’s glimm’ring grove;
Where still each night, by startled shepherds seen,
Young LEAPOR’S form flies shadowy o’er the green;
Those envy’d honours Nature lov’d to pay
The bryar-bound turf, where erst her Shakespear lay,
Now on her darling Mira she bestows;
There o’er the hallow’d ground she fondly strows
The choicest fragrance of the breathing spring,
And bids each year her fav’rite linnet sing.
Let cloister’d pedants in an endless round
Tread the dull mazes of scholastic ground;
Brackley unenvying views the glitt’ring train,
Of learning’s gaudy trappings idly vain;
For, spite of all that vaunted learning’s aid,
Their fame is rival’d by her rural maid. (lines 213–228)⁴

Such effusion was fairly short-lived, however, and despite Coleman and Thornton’s enthusiasm and revised editions of *Poems by Eminent Ladies* published in 1757, 1773, and 1785, the anthology did not sell well.⁵ Ultimately, Leapor’s work and reputation was sidelined for about 200 years by a market oversaturated with publications, as well as changing public tastes in the later years of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (including a rejection of neoclassical form and the growth in popularity of the novel).

In the late twentieth century, it was another editor, Roger Lonsdale, who is largely responsible for reviving interest in Leapor’s poetry by including 16 of her poems (the largest number by any one poet) in his groundbreaking anthology, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (1989). As a result of Lonsdale’s attention to Leapor’s work, several of her poems (often “Crumble Hall” and “An Epistle to a Lady”) were widely anthologized and interest in the work and life of this remarkable young labouring-class woman increased. Identity politics and patronage dominated scholarly research on labouring-class poets between the 1980s and 2000s.⁶

It is challenging at this point for any critic to select one distinct new direction from the variety of proposed new directions that have been actively discussed since the mid-2000s. But an apparent critical divide has been identified

between those who focus on the cultural and political phenomenon of the labouring-class poet as a "natural genius" or "autodidact" in the eighteenth century and those who prefer to work within a literary historical context that enables close readings of poems written by labouring-class poets with an emphasis on examining and promoting their literary merit.⁷ Both approaches are necessary in recovering and piecing together a cultural and literary historical record. One of the benefits of this discussion is that many more poems by labouring-class writers have been located (especially occasional poems published in local newspapers) and a wider variety of labouring-class poems have been critically assessed.

My own cultural-studies approach in the 1990s and 2000s followed from the work of Donna Landry in her 1990 book, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739–1796*. Like Landry, I foregrounded feminism, politics, and theory in my discussion of the poetry of labouring-class women (including Leapor). My discussion in *Lactilla Tends Her Fav'rite Cow: Ecofeminist Readings of Animals and Women in Eighteenth-Century Laboring-Class Women's Poetry* (2008) moved beyond Landry's into the realm of ecocriticism, animal studies, and ecofeminism to highlight the interlocking oppressions between sexism, classism, and speciesism. My readings of the work of five labouring-class women poets, including Leapor, focused on the representation of animals and bioregions both in the poetry and in the cultural landscapes and workplaces these writers inhabited. As it relates to intersectionality, interlocking oppressions leverage an existing or latent connection between oppressed groups to realize or activate cooperative and/or collaborative goals. My contention is that in representing animals, labouring-class women poets move beyond sympathy and simile towards what Anat Pick theorizes in the twenty-first century as "*attention* or 'regard without motive'" to emphasize that "the creature [whether human or animal] is first and foremost a living body—material, temporal, and vulnerable".⁸

Engaging with creatureliness seems a logical extension of this earlier work and I use creatureliness to help me reread some of the poetry I have previously discussed. A focus on the embodiment of the speaker in my reading of "Man the Monarch" (through Leapor's use of the anti-blazon and the agential freedom enjoyed by marginal animals in the poem) and my later reading of "Silvia and the Bee" (where Silvia is figured as nature, not culture) can serve as starting points for this updated discussion (see Milne 2008, 2015). In re-examining Leapor through a creaturely perspective, I try to distinguish between two significantly different aspects of Leapor's poetry. The first concerns moments when she *discusses* creatureliness as she sees it played out in front of her. The second involves texts in which Leapor poetically (though not necessarily deliberately) *exposes* her own creatureliness; I will concentrate especially on those moments occurring in many of Leapor's poems where she addresses or ventriloquizes a "creature" through her invented persona or avatar, Mira.⁹

WHAT DOES CREATURELY MEAN?

Samuel Johnson's definition of the terms "creature" and "creaturely" in his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) offers the twenty-first-century critic a lot of possible directions from which to explore the creaturely in poetry written in the eighteenth century. Johnson assigns seven meanings for "creature" and all of them are worth considering in the context of Mary Leapor's poetry. They can be organized into several groups or configurations that range from the neutral "anything created" (#2) to the compartmentalized "an animal, not human" (#3) and its opposite, "a general term for man" (#4) to the endearing idea of "creature" as "a word of petty tenderness" (#6). But there is a darker side. These meanings "A being not self existent, but created by the Supreme power" (#1), "a word of contempt for a human being" (#5), and "a person who owes his rise or his fortune to another" (#7) reveal that reading Leapor's poetry through a creaturely lens still necessitates a focus on power. When Johnson defines "creaturely" as "having the qualities of a creature" (509), it seems that any number of critical approaches may be tried.¹⁰

Contemporary literary critics working on the creaturely also reflect a wide range of definitions for "creature". Tobias Menely favours a definition similar to Johnson's "A being not self existent, but created by the Supreme power" (#1) and "a person who owes his rise or fortune to another" (#7). Julia Reinhard Lupton calls the creaturely a politico-theological category suggesting in her work on Shakespeare's Caliban that while the creature is actively passive, or, "passionate" and the term creature indicates

a made or fashioned thing...with the sense of continued or potential process, action, or emergence built into the future thrust of its active verbal form. ...The word *creature* marks the radical separation of Creation and Creator...between anyone or anything that is produced or controlled by an agent, author, master, or tyrant.¹¹

Lupton's reading of *The Tempest* includes Caliban "within the cosmos of [the Biblical] Adam, but as its chaotic exception", refusing to be excluded.¹² Indeed, this kind of self-determined creaturely stand-off supports Menely's assertion that "'creature' *fissures* the border that divides the human from the animal" especially when *fissure* is considered in usages beyond "a cleave or split".¹³ As "an incomplete fracture of a bone, without separation of parts" and "a diminutive of the bend sinister in heraldry"—often a euphemism for illegitimacy, the creaturely *fissure* offers a viable site for remediation and recovery.¹⁴ Illuminated thus, studies of literary animals and representations of human animality perform a recuperative activism. Menely charges poetry with a particularly astute power to internalize what he calls "the animal claim", through reading "the significance of [the animal] voice and the creatural imaginary".¹⁵ Julia Reinhard Lupton similarly describes Caliban's poetic responses to the island as *wonder* (and this may resonate in what I will find in Leapor's *wonder*

using her poetic persona, Mira). Lupton calls Caliban a "*wonder who wonders*" and extends these wonders to the creature itself: as a poet/creature Caliban is "a created thing who is himself on the verge of creating".¹⁶

Anat Pick's work on the creaturely becomes particularly interesting in this context. Pick homes in on several other of the different senses of the creaturely favoring "creature" more as "anything created" (Johnson's #2) and "a word of petty tenderness" (#6). Indeed, without abandoning the focus on human domination over and violence against animals, Pick proposes a "creaturely poetics" as a new direction for critical inquiry about the representation of humans and animals. She sets aside two historical approaches: "extentionism" or the liberal extension of moral consideration by humans to animals that emphasizes "shared capacities and characteristics between human and animal"¹⁷ and a posthumanist "inside" approach that focuses on "the self and the subject", to redirect what Cary Wolfe calls the "fundamental repression" of the animal and the human dilemma of being "constituted as human subjects within and atop of a nonhuman otherness".¹⁸ Pick offers *attention* or "regard without motive" as an outside approach, a lateral or horizontal alternative to the hierarchical or vertical conceptualization noted by Wolfe.¹⁹ Pick's primer for "reading through a creaturely prism" encourages engagement with a process she calls "contraction" as a way of reclaiming "dehumanization as a strategy of oppression" as partly positive. This is accomplished through making ourselves "less human whilst seeking to grant animals a share in our world of subjectivity" as we "retrieve...disavowed animality as central to the ethics of memory".²⁰ Pick's dark optimism takes the human through a difficult dehumanization process requiring a self-confrontation with violence and the vulnerability of human and animal bodies. Indeed, Pick and many other critics interested in the creaturely have turned to Walter Benjamin's political creature who comprises "too much body", "too much soul" and suffers from a "creaturely melancholy...because the creature...measures the difference between the human and the inhuman while refusing to take up permanent residence in either category".²¹

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT LEAPOR IS CREATURELY?

Even readings of Leapor's work that eschew political or theoretical approaches seem to sense the creaturely in her poetry. For example, David Fairer's reading of Leapor's "The Enquiry" (1748) helpfully locates the poem as a reworking of Alexander Pope's opening epistle to "An Essay on Man" from 1733; but, in championing Leapor's literary merit, he asserts that she is not merely imitating Pope, but challenging him through her "inquiring mind" to unsettle and "put [his] confident truth at risk".²² Leapor's challenge to Pope extends to form and, according to Fairer, through form, "[s]he loosens the logic of Pope's tight scheme".²³ Patricia Meyer Spacks makes a similar observation, noting that Leapor "[d]aringly writes 'An Essay on Woman' inviting a comparison to Pope's 'Essay on Man' although her work has virtually nothing in common

with his aside from its use of couplets”.²⁴ Though she highlights a decidedly more feminist reading of Leapor’s work than Fairer’s, Spacks foregrounds the intertextual nature of Leapor’s poem noting that the poem’s “divergence from Pope’s model in itself conveys criticism” before Spacks asserts her own reading of that divergence and criticism.²⁵ Here, both Fairer’s and Spacks’s readings support Tobias Menely’s list of the qualities defining human creatureliness: responsive to a prior voice, a voice not necessarily human; receptivity to the signs of others; and, uniquely caught up in the indeterminacy of “reflection”.²⁶ Spacks’s full treatment of Leapor’s strategies in “An Essay on Woman” connects form and content. For example, she notes Leapor’s use of “grotesque blazon”. In addition, Leapor’s “refusal of the personal” by “speaking in the third person, as ‘Mira’” becomes a poetics of “eliciting uneasiness” and creating a “cognitive dissonance [that] leaves the reader no comfortable position”.²⁷ Such discomfort plays well to Pick’s “gesture...of *contraction* [where we] make ourselves ‘less human’ as it were, whilst seeking to grant animals a share in our world of subjectivity”.²⁸ Pick’s “creaturely poetics” “translates Viktor Shklovsky’s famous notion of ‘defamiliarization’—art’s making the common uncommon by way of an estranged eye—into the terms of the discourse of species”.²⁹ Such a “creaturely poetics” is at the core of Leapor’s creaturely avatar, Mira, whom Leapor utilizes in many of her poems. She often characterizes or caricatures herself as Mira, embodied as unappealing. In this way, Leapor simultaneously generates a self-portrait and a body politics of “seeing herself as others see her” that implicates readers, especially readers with the inclination to disparage a labouring-class woman writer.

But Leapor also situates Mira in the broader community of women. In “An Essay on Woman”, Leapor generates her discourse of species through varied species of women, a grounded and creaturely sisterhood so to speak, united initially in “Wealth[s]” (line 3),³⁰ “Glories” (15), “Triumphs” (16), “Charms” (16) including superiority to nature, only to be “Dissolve[d]” suddenly (17) by “mighty Hymen” who presides over marriage and “turns the Goddess to her native Clay” (18). The “thousand Ills” (36) that censure “*Pamphilia’s Wit*” (27) in the middle section of the poem culminate in a final assessment of woman as “a Slave at large” (60). While “An Essay on Woman” appears to have no non-human animals in it, women fragment to visible and audible parts of a whole: “Eyes” (both “bright” (26) and “malignant” (29)), “Whisper” and “Ear” (33), “Eyebrow” and “Sneer” (34). And, animality is fully evoked as a lesson on Pride, where “Virgins” with a “Thirst of Gold” are invited bestially “[t]o feast with *Cordia* in her filthy Sty / on stew’d Potatoes, or on mouldy Pye” (43–44). But Leapor’s creaturely sisterhood also includes her own avatar, Mira, as well as the Muses, to whom the speaker appeals to “save your *Mira’s* walls” (50). That “your” clearly identifies Mira as subject of or dear to the Muses enables Leapor’s “estranged eye” to victoriously amass a result greater than the sum of its parts. If “*Unhappy Woman’s* but a Slave at large” (60, my emphasis); then, surely, a Muse-saved Mira given “pleasing Indolence, and

Ease; / A Fire to warm me, and a Friend to Please" (51–2) is a species of woman of a different kind and one who, notably, manages to write it all down.

THE CREATURELY PLAYED OUT IN FRONT OF HER: "SILVIA
AND THE BEE" (1748)

In "Silvia and the Bee", a beautiful young woman is seen as "like" a flower by a bee who approaches her with ambivalent (simultaneously "bee-like" and "male-predator-like") intent. Silvia's response is to kill the bee. As I have said elsewhere, "Silvia and the Bee" "illuminates Silvia's visceral and localized discomfort with a status that defines her as nature rather than culture". I interpret Silvia's response as counter-intuitive and violent, albeit language-based, "both a rejection of metaphor, of her "likeness" to a flower as well as a recognition of the pervasive and oppressive political power of that metaphor".³¹ Read thus, Silvia's violence is an assertion of herself as a body-in-nature with the potential to act out of place and deny the speaker's admonition to "blame no more the erring Bee / who took you for the Rose" (47–48). While I read Silvia's "simultaneously natural and unnatural" expression of self as localized in Leapor's biography—her self-struggle as a local poet and as a presumably sexualized young woman—Silvia's expression of violence towards the bee is also creaturely in its very unreflective immediacy even as it stands ultimately as a denial of her creatureliness.³² In killing the bee, Silvia un-mends and illegitimizes a potential relationship with the bee that, in the context of the creaturely, one could actually see as natural. In her refusal to become like the rose for the bee and her in denial of the bees' agency and need to behave like a bee (or the bee's inability to behave unlike a bee), Silvia fundamentally misrecognizes her creaturely self-as-rose: a missed opportunity.

THE CREATURELY AND THE COMIC: "CORYDON. PHILLARIO OR,
MIRA'S PICTURE. A PASTORAL" (1751)

For Ann Messenger, the gap between Leapor's reality as a labouring-class woman and the "high literary art she aspired to" is widest in "that most artificial and conventional yet most ostensibly earthy of modes, the pastoral".³³ While I am concerned with exploring rather than the closing the gap articulated above, I concur with Messenger that Leapor writes a number of "successfully comic" pastorals.³⁴ But Messenger reads "disturbing tones" in "Corydon. Phillario. Or Mira's Picture. A Pastoral" even as she supports Richard Greene's analysis that Leapor is "staking her claim to real dignity" by attacking the male gaze and "shatter[ing] the artificiality of pastoral convention" by "giv[ing] a vision of reality as invalid as her culture's privileging of ephemeral female beauty".³⁵ Michael Meyer emphasizes the poem's comic qualities because its "poetic self-presentation as text...parodies and transcends male discourse, and

as Stephen Van-Hagen points out, the poem reveals “nothing reliable about Mira herself but everything about the ignorance of those around her”.³⁶

What all this discussion of “Mira’s Picture” both references and evades (even as it trails appropriate critical anger and compassion) is how Leapor’s speaker creates “Mira’s picture” through the perspectives of others. This imperative to “picture” Mira reflects critical curiosity about Leapor’s actual appearance because there is no physical portrait of her in existence. Critics wanted to know what Leapor looked like and whether “Mira’s Picture” reflects her actual appearance. The most famous description of Leapor was printed in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1784 as an account by her former employer, Richard Chauncy, who “represented her as having been extremely swarthy, and quite emaciated with a long crane-neck, and a short body, much resembling, in shape, a bass-viol”.³⁷ While it is easy to read Chauncy’s description as dismissive and negative, it validates the creaturely Leapor as fully embodied: dark, thin, short, both and simultaneously seen as animal (crane) and inanimate object (bass-viol). This is also the case with Phillario’s response to seeing Mira “walk[ing] from yonder hill” (29) as he chats with the “Shepherd Swain” (2), Corydon. Leapor ventriloquizes both men to comment on Mira’s appearance. Phillario refers to Mira variously as “soil’d” (40–1), with darker Skin than a Crow (44), and Brows “[n]ot quite so even as a Mouse’s Hide” (54), assessing shoulders raised “Behind her Ears” as if “they fear’d some Treachery at hand” (57–58). He sums up with an assessment of sentient Teeth that “seem prepar’d to quit her swelling Gums” (62). As in “An Essay on Woman”, Leapor allows herself the creaturely means to embody nature (dirt and mountains) and other animals (rook and mouse). Even her teeth are agential. Her footnote to the poem allows that such creaturely poetics are “a Caricature” demonstrating adeptly that the comic mode itself can be creaturely.³⁸

SPEAKING FOR ITSELF: “THE INSPIR’D QUILL. OCCASION’D BY A GIFT OF CROW-PENS” (1748)

Leapor’s quill-speaker in “The Inspir’d Quill” underscores, exaggerates, and extends what Pick calls “the animality of writing” and of writing as a “corporeal rather than a psychological event” (80–81). Leapor appropriates the popular eighteenth-century form of the it-narrative “in which inanimate objects or animals serve as central characters [and] [s]ometimes...enjoy a consciousness—and thus a perspective of their own”.³⁹ She uses a detached speaker’s voice (a quill pen) to self-deprecate. A long creaturely rehearsal of the quill’s transmigration documents its corporeal transformations from “wealthy Squire” (29) to a Beau “with slender Purse and shallow Brains” (48), to a Lap-dog (61), and a Lawyer (72). Unable to preserve “my Ears and Nose” (90), the speaker retains his voice but is “[d]egraded [further] to a simple Crow” (93). The poem’s speaker is then shot, his “ghastly Corse” (100) erected as a scarecrow, and finally a feather from that corpse is “confine[d]” (106) “[w]ithin the

compass of a Quill" (107). The poem concludes with the quill pen's petition to the "[d]ear Madam" (125) who has presented Leapor with the gift of Crowpens. The quill asks to be released from its "hated Cell" (112) where it is condemned to "scrawl unprofitable Rhyme" (119) and to be reassigned to writing bills, receipts, and letters, offering ironically and hilariously to write its own "Recommendatory Letter" (137) to (presumably in the Lady's hand) release itself from servitude to the poet.⁴⁰ Leapor's creaturely double-voicing in "The Inspir'd Quill" emphasizes not just the labouring-class poet's "unprofitable" misery, but the generation of animal products from the perspective of the animal product. The quill laments the poet's lack of physical as well as mental finesse suggesting that even in the animal product, there is an embodied sentience. When the quill fears that the poet will "quickly break my Back" (123) it signals the quill's sense that it possesses a "spine", walks upright, and exemplifies the literal "animality of writing". As is often the case in Leapor's work, the irony of this poem also turns on the fact that the incompetent and abject poet berated by the contained quill speaker is actually the labourer producing lines for that speaker and enabling the quill to speak against her.

IS THE LABOURING-CLASS POET INHERENTLY CREATURELY?

It has become a commonplace to discuss labouring-class poets as neither labouring-class nor poet, caught in a space between these two apparently distinct and exclusive categories. The general trajectory for this discussion is towards assessing the labouring-class poet as an unresolved subject, as abject, subaltern, the kind of *creature* who, as Julia Reinhard Lupton suggests in modern usage, "borders on the monstrous and unnatural, increasingly applied to those created things that warp the proper canons of creation".⁴¹ Such a critical narrative casts the labouring-class poet pathetically, in Lupton's terms, as "a being of subjected becoming".⁴² I suggest that the space between labouring-class and poet can be enacted as a different kind of creaturely space, as a *fissure*, an "incomplete fracture...without separation of parts".⁴³ I concur with Lupton who ascribes a kind of urgency to this project, a project in which creatureliness is not something to be overcome, but rather given voice to.

NOTES

1. Gillespie, "Leapor, Mary (1722–1746)"; Winn, "Mary Leapor", 287.
2. Lonsdale, *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*, 195.
3. Lavoie, "Poems by Eminent Ladies", 9.
4. Duncombe, *The Femiinad*.
5. Lavoie, 277.
6. A fruitful dynamic dialogue has taken place in the ongoing recovery and reassessments of Leapor's poetry in works by Richard Greene, who published his *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* in 1993, and by William Christmas, Donna Landry and others. In 2003, editors Richard Greene

and Ann Messenger published *The Works of Mary Leapor*, including both volumes of Leapor's poetry and her unpublished play, *The Unhappy Father: A Tragedy* (1745). Stephen Van-Hagen's 2011 *Focus on the Work of Mary Leapor* consolidates much of the critical work done on Leapor and introduces readers to a range of assessments of poems from both of Leapor's collected volumes. The Spring 2015 special issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* called "New Directions on Mary Leapor and Ann Yearsley" edited by Kerri Andrews, provides ample evidence of an active and ongoing discussion.

7. Indeed, most current critical work turns on the issue of literary merit. For example, according to Kerri Andrews, David Fairer has strongly advocated for a move away from biographical readings and from treating the work of labouring class poets as "a repository for cultural data and emblems for gender or class identities". Andrews, "New Directions", 15. David Fairer locates his concern in a kind of critical flight response: "While we may hope to claim them for a critique of ideology, make their radical voices ours, or our radical voices theirs, the thought arises that in doing so we may be avoiding an individuated analysis of their poetry, perhaps because in our heart of hearts we are unsure whether their texts, or our agenda, can withstand scrutiny. Fairer", "Flying Atoms in the Sightless Air," 143.
8. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 5.
9. Assigning a classical name to a poet-speaker or addressed subject was a common neoclassical poetic convention. David Fairer points to the etymology of Mira, from the Latin *miror*: "1. To wonder, marvel, admire, think strange or make strange at; 2. To be fond of, to be taken with; 3. to admire so as to imitate". See Morell, "Miror", 389. Fairer reads Mira as "a cause of wonder in others" and one "who has the capacity to wonder at the world around her", 148. Greene and Messenger assert that Mira is merely "an anagram of her first name". Greene and Messenger, *The Works of Mary Leapor*, xxiv.
10. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1:509.
11. Lupton, *Citizen-Saints*, 161.
12. Lupton, 162.
13. Menely, *The Animal Claim*, 14, my emphasis.
14. "Fissure, n.1a,2a,2c." In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, January 2018.
15. Menely, 16.
16. Lupton, 170–171. Lupton also generates a correspondence and a distinction between Caliban and Miranda (Prospero's daughter in the play), whose name also means 'wonder' (see 170–172).
17. Pick, 2.
18. Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 193.
19. Pick, 5
20. Pick, 6. Pick studies and illuminates creatureliness in the context of dehumanization and the Holocaust. While I am interested in how her focus on materiality and vulnerability may be helpful in reading Leapor's poetry, there are obvious anachronistic challenges in using Pick's work to do this.
21. Lupton, 164.
22. Fairer, 148.
23. Fairer, 150.
24. Spacks, *Reading Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 167.
25. Spacks, 167.

26. Menely, 16.
27. Spacks, 169.
28. Pick, 6.
29. Pick, 195–6, n. 3.
30. All quotations from Leapor's poems are from: *Poems upon Several Occasions. By Mrs. Leapor of Brackley in Northamptonshire*. J. Roberts, 1748 and *Poems upon Several Occasions. By the Late Mrs. Leapor, of Brackley in Northamptonshire. The Second and Last Volume*. Vol. 2. J. Roberts, 1751. Line numbers are in parentheses.
31. Milne, "The Place of the Poet in Place", 134. Ann Messenger shows how Leapor challenges the pastoral conventions contained in stanzas 9, 10 and 11 asserting that Leapor is critical of Silvia for "allowing her vanity to be fed by the clichéd compliments of her admirers". Messenger points out that Leapor also "satirizes these human male behaviours as pastoral conventions". See Messenger, *Pastoral Tradition and the Female Talent*, 182.
32. Milne, 134.
33. Messenger, 174–5.
34. Messenger, 175.
35. Messenger, 186. Fairer and Gerrard concur with Greene's analysis though they categorize "this amusing [self] portrait of [Leapor] as a literary rustic [as] an exercise in caricature" based on Leapor's note at the end of the poem, Fairer and Gerrard, *Eighteenth Century Poetry*, 326. Leapor's note reads, "*This Description of her Person is a Caracature*", Vol. 2, 298.
36. Meyer, "Mary Leapor: The Female Body and the Body of Her Texts.", 75; Van-Hagen, *Focus on the Poetry of Mary Leapor*, 52.
37. Quoted in Greene, xxii.
38. Leapor, Vol. 2, 298.
39. Blackwell, "Introduction: The It-Narrative and Eighteenth-Century Thing Theory", 10.
40. There's an obvious critique here of a class system that forces "quills" to petition "ladies". William Christmas emphasizes Leapor's political strategy in his reading of another of her poems that uses an object-speaker's voice. He suggests "The Ten-Penny Nail" as one "of those conventional poetic forms through which a plebeian author speaks desires that are potentially disruptive to the existing social order" Christmas, *The Lab'ring Muses*, 168.
41. Lupton, 161.
42. Lupton, 161.
43. Lupton, 180.

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Poetics of the Hunt: Re-reading Agency and Re-thinking Ecology in William Somerville's *The Chase*

Richard Nash

In recent years, there appears to have been at least a mild resurgence of critical interest in some of the less frequently studied literary work of the mid-eighteenth century, particularly in poetry. Some of that resurgence may be, in part, attributable to questions posed and opportunities for further reflection offered by critical approaches aligned with animal studies and new materialist philosophy. The kinds of questions these approaches raise resonate strongly with our own contemporary period's increasing attention to ecological concerns, and one of the consequences of those concerns is a re-thinking of our notions of literary heritage, and an attendant re-valuation of prior literary production. Much of that recent work understandably directs attention to the era of sensibility and the emergence of a concern for ethical treatment of animals that resonates powerfully with the “question of the animal”.

The subtitle of Tobias Menely's valuable monograph, *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice*, neatly speaks to the creaturely kinship joining humans and other animals to which the poetry of sensibility gives poetic voice. More recently, John Morillo's *The Rise of Animals and the Descent of Man, 1660–1800* finds in the era of sensibility a movement toward the posthumanist theoretical positions of our current moment: “British animal discourse's complex negotiations with sensibility, as well [as] with [...] multiple philosophical and theological traditions, enable it to move away from Descartes, and

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haltingly toward posthumanism in the work of those rare few able to imagine animal feelings as a warrant for revising human actions” (xi). Morillo’s gradualist historical argument, which seeks to find a continuity between sensibility and posthumanism, locates that continuity in a shared imagination of human agency responsive to animal feeling. Even more recently, in a related vein, Christopher Loar offers the claim that “the georgic focuses its attention on the way that humans collaborate with non-human materials ... [assembling] a social world that includes both human and nonhuman actors”.¹

Each of these works contributes something valuable and original both to an expanding critical discourse of animal studies and also to a correspondingly invigorated renewal of critical interest in eighteenth-century verse. And yet they all struggle in different ways with the various challenges such a critical project confronts in seeking to construct a satisfying historical narrative connecting current posthumanist thought with the unrelenting anthropocentric commitments of a poetry of sensibility. Following Stefan Herbrechter, Morillo conceives Herbrechter, Morillo conceives posthumanism as “a counter-tradition that developed within humanism” (xviii), one that enables it to appear “on the intellectual horizon during the eighteenth century” (xxix). The study of human–animal relations that ensues tends to emphasize a kind of gradual emergence in a fundamentally progressive historical account leading to our current (implicitly better) understanding of human–animal relations. While Menely is as committed as Morillo to linking current posthumanist animal rights discourse to the era of sensibility in which such legal arguments first emerged, his intricately figured conclusion links the language of sensibility to the legal status of creatures without recourse to an explicitly Kantian tradition. For Menely as for Cary Wolfe, the future of such concerns remains to be articulated: “any posthumanist theory of justice, any ‘affirmative biopolitics’ [as Wolfe puts it in *Before the Law*] capable of confronting the machinations of animal capital, will return, not to the language of sensibility, but to the necessity of accounting for the communicative conditions in which we find ourselves answerable to the clamor of other beings who are like ourselves passionate and finite” (205). Less explicitly concerned than Menely or Morillo with the specific “problem of the animal”, Loar nonetheless proposes “a reparative reading” (244) of eighteenth-century Georgic poetry, that is responsive to similar theoretical concerns; he suggests that the georgic mode may offer a promising way to understand what Bruno Latour has termed “matters of concern”, around which subject, objects, causes, beliefs, and arguments assemble in ways that redefine our world.²

In what follows, I want to sketch the outlines of what might be a companion instance of “reparative reading” that focuses on the difficult case of sporting art and its accompanying literary expression that emerged in tandem with the era of sensibility.³ James Thomson’s *The Seasons* is often identified with this emergent era of sensibility, and Morillo notes his frequent condemnations of hunting, as when “the peaceful Muse” turns “asham’d” away from a description of the hunt: “’Tis not Joy to Her, / This falsely cheerful barbarous Game of Death; / This Rage of Pleasure, which the restless Youth / Awakes . . .”

(*Autumn*, 38–86). Menely's discussion of the hunting sequences of Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest* finds that "the field sports . . . reveal a troubling resemblance between humans and animals and thus between political tyranny and unjust dominion" (99). I want to complement rather than contest these readings in which we can find the poetry of sensibility giving voice to a critique of wanton sport as tyrannical overreach and unjust perversion of Christian doctrine of divinely sanctioned dominion over the brute creation. Pope and Thomson may object to sport hunting as wanton and cruel, and their verse may sympathize with animal suffering, but the overriding doctrine of their poetry remains fully committed to an anthropocentric humanist ideology. As a complement to the critique of hunting offered by the poetry of sensibility, I would like sketch a reparative reading of William Somerville's celebration of hunting in *The Chase* (1735). As fully committed to humanist anthropocentrism as either Pope or Thomson, Somerville's celebration of the hunt depicts a world that, however overtly structured by the doctrine of human dominion, becomes palpably legible to those within it, nonhuman and human alike. Such a depiction evokes a complex, interrelated, phenomenology that resonates with current new materialist ecocriticism.⁴ Here I will restrict my attention to a close consideration of a single passage, deferring to another occasion consideration of the entire poem.

Of special interest in the context of such a reparative reading practice is consideration of an encounter between posthumanist theorizing of agency and an expanded ecological awareness of our place in the world proposed in the "agential realism" of Karen Barad (most fully developed in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*). Barad is a physicist and feminist philosopher who has undertaken to theorize scientific practice in ways that reconceive the relation of observer and observed beyond the impasse of the subject/object binary familiar from empiricist philosophy of science. Her theorizing of what she terms "intra-actions" between observer and observed demands a greater responsibility in articulating knowledge claims, and locates that responsibility in the particular situatedness of the observation. This aspect of her argument has a special affinity for how a more responsible ecological location of the human in the world similarly challenges the empiricist knowledge claims foundational to modernity. One of Barad's earliest and most lucid commentators, Joseph Rouse, notes the location of her agential responsibility as follows:

Understanding and agency are traditionally located in the rational, human subject and/or the natural body she inhabits and partly controls. The self-contained character of the subject would then be defined by inherent boundaries between self and other, whether in the self's inner deliberations or in outer bodily performances. For Barad, no such inherent boundaries exist.... That recognition leaves a conceptual and practical space for understanding and being accountable to non-human agency, not because no differences between human and other agencies exist but because agency is not an all-or-nothing affair. There are many forms of intra-active involvement in the ongoing reproduction of phenomena, and many ways in which we are responsible to and for them. (Rouse, 155–56)

This seems to me an infinitely more satisfying and potentially more powerful account of our ecological location in the world than that bequeathed to us by the old empiricist epistemology that sought to preserve the trope of dominion. Certainly, it is one that harmonizes more productively with challenges to that trope that arise by taking seriously the call to re-examine “significant otherness” in Donna Haraway’s *Companion Species Manifesto*. Critical to Haraway’s project is the recognition not of “companion animals”, but of “companion species”—who may or not be companion animals. Troping right along with Haraway’s riff on the etymology of “*companion*” (“to break bread with”), I am always eager to identify mice among our more significant “companion species”. For while the canine-human connection is probably the foremost way we think about companion species, the real challenge is to find ways to think about companionship that look beyond amity to include agonistic, or at least symbiotic, relations. It is a delightfully delicious irony to contemplate that in spite of its name, *Mus Domesticus* is seldom regarded under the logic of dominion as belonging to the category of “domesticated animal”. Yet it is virtually impossible to imagine any narrative of human evolution and its agricultural technologies that operates without the co-evolutionary partnership of *mus domesticus* breaking bread with us. As various fables of country rat and city rat remind us, we have counted on sharing our crumbs and granaries since before we began recording our fables in writing. The profound point of thinking ecologically about companion species is that it requires us to move from the myth of dominion as an explanatory account of our place in the world to a more responsible account—one where we are not simply responsible *for* the world, but *to* it. While the myth of dominion requires the suppression of rebellions (house mouse) and the repulsion of invaders (field mouse), to think responsibly with companion species is to redefine what counts as home and how we share in home ownership. This seems to demand of us that we begin to think differently about “world”: what it means, whose it is, how we inhabit it.

Two aspects, in particular, of Barad’s philosophical reorientation seem particularly compelling to me in this context: her refocusing on “phenomena” as “intra-actions” in ways that foreground, rather than occlude, “prosthetic performativity”; and, in tandem with this account of “agencies of observation”, her argument that such “phenomena” are always “material-discursive” entities—a category that corresponds to the “material-semiotic actors” of Latour and Haraway. On the first point, as Rouse notes in discussing Barad’s coining of the term “intra-action”, her account of experimental observation in physics relocates that observation from an inherited schema in which the world is observed by an imaginary detached observer, to one in which the observer performs with the observed within a prosthetic apparatus that enables articulations:

A defining feature of a phenomenon is that the intra-action between an “object” and its surroundings leaves discernible marks on those surroundings so as to constitute them as a measuring apparatus. What is measured by those marks, how-

ever, is not a property of the object in isolation but of the phenomenon as a whole.... Moreover, ... this ontological holism of phenomena is not limited to microphysics. Macroscopic phenomena, such as intra-action of an organism with its surroundings, also display comparable tradeoffs, such that concepts such as “gene” or “adaptation” are properly ascribed to whole intra-active phenomena rather than as predetermined properties of definite objects. (148)

On the second point, our knowledge of this world we inhabit must be shaped by the discursive preconditions for mapping our location in such a world: “Barad argues that phenomena are always ‘material-discursive’ (1998, 104–110). . . . The interpretive aspects of the ‘agential’ side of the phenomenon always implicate the phenomenon within a field of discursive practice” (Rouse 152). The conjunction of these two features should prompt us to consider Barad’s “phenomena” as quite literally “world-making”: “On Barad’s ... conception, the world is articulated by overlapping, intra-acting phenomena, but most of these fail to disclose any pattern of local intelligibility. These confused intra-actions that seem to manifest only undifferentiated complexity still mark the limit case of a phenomenon, however” (Rouse 149).

Among the most exciting features in this notion of “world” in an agential realist philosophy of phenomena is how it resonates with Jakob von Uexküll’s notion of *umwelt*, as recovered in Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open: Man and Animal*. What I take to be the fundamental insight of the ecologist von Uexküll is the observation—at once strange and yet immediately self-evident—that we do *not* share a world with other creatures. Rather, other creatures who inhabit a shared ecology are also participants in that system, perceiving and responding to it, via the mediation of sensory apparatuses so distinct from our own as to make their worlds and ours quite different. In the example that Agamben foregrounds, von Uexküll’s experiments on a tick demonstrate that the tick’s behavior can be accurately mapped according to three sensory ranges—a sensitivity and responsiveness to a particular range of odors, temperature, and textures—and that furthermore the organism operates in what would seem to us quite fantastic ways in the absence of appropriate stimuli within this range—he documents, for instance, an 18-year state of suspended animation, from which the tick emerges when presented with appropriate stimulation. In coining the term *umwelt*, von Uexküll is careful to distinguish it from “environment” (“*umgebung*”), though, as Agamben notes, the latter term is merely a special (i.e. human) case of the former:

Uexküll begins by carefully distinguishing the *Umgebung*, the objective space in which we see a living being moving, from the *Umwelt*, the environment-world that is constituted by a more or less broad series of elements that he calls “carriers of significance” (*Bedeutungsträger*) or of “marks” (*Merkmalsträger*), which are the only things that interest the animal. In reality, the *Umgebung* is our own *Umwelt*, to which Uexküll does not attribute any particular privilege and which, as such, can also vary according to the point of view from which we observe it. There does not exist a forest as an objectively fixed environment: there exists a

forest-for-the-park-ranger, a forest-for-the-hunter, a forest-for-the-botanist, a forest-for-the-wayfarer, a forest-for-the-nature-lover, a forest-for-the-carpenter, and finally a fable forest in which Little Red Riding Hood loses her way. (Agamben 40–41)

We find in Agamben's return to von Uexküll's *umwelt* a model for more complex world-making that shares much with the agential realism Barad has generated from Bohrian physics. Barad's notion of agential realist entanglement is about the inextricable ontological mixtures of nature/cultures (*Meeting ix*). Von Uexküll's *umwelts* reorganize our world in terms of overlapping *umwelts*. Each of these concepts challenges the received traditions we inherit in modernity. But in doing so, they prompt us to revisit the early modern period, attuned to less hegemonic voices in which we can hear non-modern formulations. I want to suggest that when we think of Early Modern depictions of the natural world in terms of *umwelts* and entanglements, a poem like William Somerville's "The Chase" recommends itself as more interesting—and perhaps more important—than we have tended to realize.

Damning with faint praise, Samuel Johnson accorded Somerville a minor place in the literary canon, and he has been steadily losing ground ever since. But I share with Johnson the opinion that when he wrote of his life's passion, his poetry is informed with both his enthusiasm and his knowledge of the subject. Indeed, I would go further than the lexicographer and say that the most valuable moments in the poem derive from a tension between the tacit knowledge practices he describes and those more conventional doctrines that he asserts; and that these moments often involve knowledge practices beyond the reach of Johnson's critical acumen. Somerville overtly asserts rather conventional doctrines of dominion, human exceptionalism, and animal mechanism. Yet, frequently, in opposition to such didacticism, his descriptive writing conjures up a richer, more complexly figured world that is easier to reconcile with Baradian entanglement and von Uexküll's *umwelts*. Here, in brief, is the opinion of Johnson:

Somerville has tried many modes of poetry; and though perhaps he has not in any reached such excellence as to raise much envy, it may commonly be said at least, that "he writes very well for a gentleman". His serious pieces are sometimes elevated; and his trifles are sometimes elegant. . . .

His great work is his Chase, which he undertook in his maturer age, when his ear was improved to the approbation of blank verse, of which, however, his two first lines give a bad specimen. To this poem praise cannot be totally denied. He is allowed by sportsmen to write with great intelligence of his subject, which is the first requisite to excellence; and though it is impossible to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers or pleasures of the chase, he has done all that transition and variety could easily effect; and has with great propriety enlarged his plan by the modes of hunting used in other countries.

Two years before the publication of *The Chase*, a small anonymous pamphlet, *An Essay on Hunting*, authored "By a Country Squire", appeared. It was

never very widely read, and even bibliographies of hunting literature of the late eighteenth century tended to allude to it apologetically as something that they had heard of but never actually seen.⁵ Unlike the many more widely read hunting texts that recycled familiar material derived from Markham and Blundeville, *An Essay on Hunting* is rather splendidly original throughout. I suspect, though I am not yet ready to argue for a definitive attribution, that *An Essay* was written by Somerville. Those autobiographical details that I have followed up on would be consistent with Somerville. More interestingly, however, the author speaks of his longstanding interest in the philosophical puzzle of scent.

Now, I have found exactly two texts that treat scent seriously as a philosophical puzzle: *An Essay on Hunting* and Somerville's *The Chase*. I'm not sure if I more would like to believe that Somerville wrote both texts or that there were two country squires interested in this issue. In either case, the congruence of thought between the two is noticeable, and all the more noticeable not only because it is unusual to find such a discussion, but also because the expression is here in many ways more compatible with what we might think of as a twenty-first-century ecological world view than with the overt doctrine of Christian dominion that we associate with this period, and which the poem itself frequently asserts. Moreover, I want to contend that Somerville's philosophy of scent and what it says about the "sagacity of beasts" serves to articulate a world much more in keeping with agential realist notions of entanglement and with von Uexküll's *umwelts* than with empiricist accounts that we might expect to find expressed in a poem in which rational man exercises dominion over the lower creation.

The digression on scent begins near the end of the first book, and is introduced by a scene in which the predations of a fox have been discovered and the huntsman calls out his hounds and successfully seeks justice:

Soon as the morn
Reveals his wrongs, with ghastly visage wan
The plunder'd owner stands, and from his lips
A thousand thronging curses burst their way:
He calls his stout allies, and in a line
His faithful hound he leads, then with a voice
That utters loud his rage, attentive cheers:
Soon the sagacious brute, his curling tail
Flourish'd in air, low-bending plies around
His busy nose, the steaming vapour snuffs
Inquisitive, nor leaves one turf untried,
Till, conscious of the recent stains, his heart
Beats quick; his snuffling nose, his active tail,
Attest his joy; then with deep op'ning mouth,
That makes the welkin tremble, he proclaims
Th' audacious felon; foot by foot he marks
His winding way, while all the list'ning crowd
Applaud his reas'nings: o'er the wat'ry ford,

Dry sandy heaths, and stony barren hills,
 O'er beaten paths, with men and beasts distain'd,
 Unerring he pursues, till, at the cot
 Arriv'd, and seizing by his guilty throat
 The caitif vile, redeems the captive prey:
 So exquisitely delicate his sense!

The “reas’nings” of this “sagacious brute”, proceed “unerring” to the meting out of justice, as a direct consequence of this “exquisitely delicate ... sense”. The animal sagacity here is deliberately contrasted to the figure who so happily anticipates Henry Fielding’s character Squire Western with his “thousand thronging curses [that] burst their way” and “utter loud his rage”. Here the human is the passionate beast, the hound the rational animal. If the era of sensibility ushered in a privileging of the truth of the heart over that of the head, a valuation of our capacity for compassion, and the importance of “feelings”, it offered a challenge to a prior generation’s doctrines that reason and rational intellect separates mankind from—and justifies his dominion over—a brute creation responsive to passionate drives. Should we, then, read Somerville as not only anti-Cartesian, but proto-PETA? Far from it. Whatever affinity there may be between Somerville and posthumanist theory does not take the form of an advocacy of compassionate kinship with hunted animals of the kind that Morillo finds in Thomson. Yet the digression that follows, as complex as any trail traversed anywhere in the poem, may follow its own “winding way” to arrive in a world as newly re-imagined as the one Barad opens for us.

This era of sensibility arrives at the dawn of (perhaps even just before the dawn of) what Derrida has identified as the war being waged over pity for “about two centuries”. His dating, of course, is loose, and, if at one point it may be linked to Bentham and the anti-cruelty movement that emerges at the end of the eighteenth century, it is clear that he has in mind this era of compassion and sensibility to animal suffering which arose a half-century or more before Bentham—that sense of animal suffering, which he Derrida has introduced in narrating his experience of shame, naked before his cat: “*the passion of the animal, my passion of the animal other*” (12). Derrida’s silent shame, naked before the other animal, inverts the explosive expostulating rage of Somerville’s squire, a passionate paroxysm triggered by the plundering predations of one animal other against the animal other he considers to be his own personal property. Derrida’s extended meditation on “The Autobiographical Animal” is an intricate tracking of the self, in which he relentlessly follows the track of his own making, the hunter hunting himself, making this his final stand at Cerisy. Surrounded by his followers, that last stand is marked—like a stag at bay—by tears: “the thought of it moves me to tears” (1); and the punning wordplay of the title “*L’Animal Que Donc Je Suis (A Suivre)*” announces that the philosophical trail being followed originates in this Cartesian separation of thought and feeling. If Somerville is nowhere named in Derrida’s philosophical genealogy, nonetheless his own tracking of the animal sought to follow Descartes

while describing a “world” that is perhaps more complexly figured than we are used to finding among his contemporaries.

Confronted with the inverted pairing of passionate squire and sagacious hound, Somerville entertains as a question the possibility of animal reason, only to abjure it in favor of thoroughgoing Cartesian separation of human reason from animal sagacity, a separation that he justifies by means of a philosophical digression on the operation of scent:

Should some more curious sportsman here enquire,
 Whence this sagacity, this wond'rous pow'r
 Of tracing, step by step, or man or brute?
 What guide invisible points out their way
 O'er the dank marsh, bleak hill, and sandy plain?
 The courteous Muse shall the dark cause reveal.
 The blood that from the heart incessant rolls
 In many a crimson tide, then here and there
 In smaller rills parted, as it flows
 Propell'd, the serous particles evade
 Thro' the open pores, and with the ambient air
 Entangling mix. As fuming vapours rise,
 And hang upon the gently purling brook,
 There by th' incumbent atmosphere compress'd.
 The panting chace grows warmer as he flies,
 And thro' the network of the skin perspires;
 Leaves a long-streaming trail behind, which by
 The cooler air condens'd, remains, unless
 By some rude storm dispers'd, or rarified
 By the meridian sun's intenser heat.
 To ev'ry shrub the warm effluvia cling,
 Hang on the grass, impregnate earth and skies.
 With nostrils op'ning wide, o'er hill, o'er dale,
 The vig'rous hounds pursue, with ev'ry breath
 Inhale the grateful steam, quick pleasures sting
 Their tingling nerves, while they their thanks repay,
 And in triumphant melody confess
 The titillating joy. Thus on the air
 Depend the hunter's hopes.

There is, in short, a physiological explanation for what at first appears to be superior animal sagacity (“Whence this sagacity, this wond'rous pow'r”), and Somerville will clarify later that beasts are not rational (in the way humans can be), and his clarification will come quite close to Cartesian mechanism. Now, I do not wish to confuse Somerville with von Uexküll simply because both concern themselves with different species having different sensory apparatuses. Nor do I wish to assert that Somerville's use of the word “entangling” is identical to Barad's. But that does make a good place to open a reading of this passage. Recall that Barad's “entanglements” are, among other things, Nature/

Culture entanglements; that the world is not a culturally constructed mobilization of a pre-existent physical entity, nor an arrangement of discrete entities bouncing off one another, but a collaborative performance within which practices of engagement render the world meaningful. Even at the level of physical entanglement, Barad wants to be careful to warn against a simple reading of entwined agency: “This book is about entanglements. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence” (*Meeting* ix).

That caveat is an important one, and all the more important when we realize that it does, in fact, correspond quite well to Somerville’s description of how “the serous particles . . . with ambient air . . . entangling mix”. For, indeed, Somerville’s philosophy here actually rather strongly counters a hegemonic empiricism like that illustrated by the purifying work of Boyle’s Air-Pump apparatus.⁶ The subsequent discussion of scent can actually be more readily reconciled (in an Early Modern context) with Margaret Cavendish’s corpuscular materialism, in which the apparently stable boundaries of physical bodies are interpenetrable.⁷ Leapfrogging from an early modern context to a more contemporary one, we might note that Somerville’s account of scent, derived experientially from his tacit knowledge of the practice of hunting, anticipates the explanation we might give today of a pheromone trail—an interconnectedness of ongoing phenomena beyond the reach of our sensory apparatus, and thus beyond our *umwelt*.

The explanation offered for the “problem of scent” quickly opens out to a rich and full description of the world. This is not only all-encompassing, but we find within it precisely the Baradian reformulation of the world—as lacking “independent, self-contained existence” and foregrounded in the articulation of a mutual entangling of blood, particles, air, vapor, leaves, temperature, condensation, breath, moisture, nerves, and affect. Here, a single system includes not only hare and hound but also the very world through which they move, and which is, by such movement through it, mobilized into being. And I would further point out that this entangled world is articulated precisely in response to a question about *umwelten*, in which the occult mystery (“dark cause reveal”) of a non-human sensory apparatus is translated into the idiom of the human *umwelt*, as a particularly rich visual imagery is invoked to illustrate the workings of this “guide invisible”.

“Thus on the Air / Depend the hunter’s hopes” is good poetry, and interesting philosophy as well. Somerville’s world is not a surrounding from which the subject is separated by the boundary of his hide. Rather, skin is a network through whose open pores a streaming trail perspires, effluvia that cling to blade and branch, impregnating earth and sky, inhaled and absorbed. Pursuer and pursued are not discrete agents agonistically deployed but parts of an ongoing and unfolding phenomenon whose intra-actions articulate “the chase”. When Derrida’s autobiographical hunt sends him tracking his own philosophical heritage from Descartes through Heidegger, he does not mention Somerville; but one can, I want to suggest, catch Somerville’s scent if we

test the air more carefully in that follower of Descartes and his resistance to the anti-Cartesian, but anthropocentric, literature of sensibility that emerged in England in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. If, in retracing our intellectual genealogy, we follow that path as well as the one Thomson charted, we may find ourselves caught up in a world that seems freshly re-imagined, in which we are not the center, surrounded by an environment, but participants in a vast and complex ecological, as well as social, network that both includes and exceeds us.

NOTES

1. Loar, "Georgic", 242.
2. Latour, "Why has Critique", 236.
3. The term "reparative reading" derives ultimately from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work, offering an alternative to the "hermeneutics of suspicion" upon which what she terms "paranoid reading" has long depended. Complementing Latour's argument that "critique has run out of steam", Sedgwick's "reparative reading" advocates a leaning into the text's possibilities, one that has led Heather Love to observe that such a practice asks us "to meet Sedgwick halfway" (237). Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Duke, 2006, discussed below) can be seen as offering such a reparative reading of post-Newtonian physics. In this particular chapter, the reparative reading I propose is twofold: on the one hand, resisting the paranoid reading of a monolithic enlightenment frequently invoked by some versions of postmodern critique of enlightenment, and similarly resisting such a reading of poetry about hunting as merely advocating animal cruelty. A reparative reading of these texts seeks to meet them halfway, and asks: what can we learn by doing so?
4. This material turn seems a particular rich and vibrant emerging discourse within ecocriticism; a useful starting point to these discussions might be *Material Ecocriticism* (Indiana, 2014), edited by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman.
5. It is one of the oddities of the current moment of digital humanities that such a work that never before had any audience at all is widely available on ECCO (though it remains possible that I may be the only person thus far to take advantage of that).
6. For a useful discussion of competing models of Early Modern Natural Philosophy, see Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan*.
7. "For, nature is in a perpetual motion, and so are her parts, which do work, intermix, join, divide, and move, according as nature pleases, without any rest or intermission" (*Observations*, 124).

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RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

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PART V

Romantic Literature



Beyond Symbolism: The Rights and Biopolitics of Romantic Period Animals

Ron Broglio

Animals do a lot of work for Romantic poets. They carry specific symbolic meanings for culture which the poets then leverage. William Wordsworth's "The White Doe of Rylstone" and John Keats's "Nightingale" are particularly good examples. Deer bear the weight of medieval religious meaning and every work of scholarship on Keats's nightingale is obliged to mention the long-standing trope of the bird as a carrier of song, poetics, and melancholia. At the outset, I would like to dismiss discussion of symbolic animals which function as literary ciphers. My intention is not to chase down how fur and feather function as placeholders for clever authors and cunning scholars. Many have already done such work and perhaps most notably in Christine Kenyon-Jones's *Kindred Brutes*. And so, I may well disappoint some readers since this chapter on Romantic period literature and animals will not discuss the "big five" poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron to which is sometimes added Blake) or other most canonical authors of the period. The placeholder game in which animals symbolically stand-in for our poetic musings and meanings too easily overlooks the animals while we get caught within the nets of our own representational systems. Instead, I would like to focus on the Romantic period as a unique moment of prominence of animals within British culture: animals become part of a debate about rights, and they are part of the newly formed biopolitical apparatus of the rising British nation. Following the animals of the British Romantic period allows us to reframe what matters within literature and culture of the period.

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253

Before turning to rights and biopolitics, it is worthwhile to frame this discussion under issues of representation. Having just dismissed using animals as symbols, it should be said that any discussion of animals is necessarily a discussion within the representational systems of culture and so never the animals-in-themselves. That is, we only ever see the animals through the lens of our representations—from poems to photographs, and from Linnaean taxonomies to wildlife films. Calling attention to the difficulties of representing real animals, Jacques Derrida describes an encounter with his cat in which the cat sees him naked.

I must immediately make it clear, the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat. It isn't the figure of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables. There are so many of them.¹

And then Derrida lists a litany of literary cats in Kafka, Hoffmann, Montaigne, Baudelaire, Rilke, Buber, Lewis Carroll, and many more. Why would he introduce literary cats when talking about “a real cat”? Derrida's point here is that any encounter with a real animal carries with it the already-existent cultural language and representation of such animals. So, every time he sees his real cat, he is seeing it through the lens of many cultural cats. Consciously and otherwise, his observations are filtered by what feline-ness is for culture. While seeing his cat may not be seeing Kafka's, Hoffmann's, Rilke's or any other cat, he sees his cat in relation to these representations. So, in short, we are caught within our own representational systems.²

All of this is a prelude to my discussion of rights and biopolitics in order to explain that, while not discussing animals as symbols, the chapter cannot get away from how animals function within language. In Derrida's essay, we never arrive at his cat, and here in this chapter, we will never fully see the animals discussed. Even when they are companions (to use Donna Haraway's term for her dogs in *When Species Meet*), we cannot fully represent, understand, or interpellate them within culture.³ It is this very otherness that makes animals radically important for culture. As I have said elsewhere, the friction of fur and feather jams the social gears and upsets our expectations that the earth and its creatures will conform to our self-authorized cultural world-making.

In the Romantic period, animals become a part of a revolution for rights. In the wake of the French Revolution, Thomas Paine publishes the *Rights of Man* in 1791 which is then followed in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Women* and Thomas Taylor's *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*. In addressing the rights of animals, the Romantic period culture is asking (as we still ask today) how animals matter in standing before the law. The question “how animals matter in standing before the law” already reveals challenges. How does the animality and materiality of the animal “matter”? Who has standing before the law? And as Derrida and Cary Wolfe point out, the “before” of “before the law” can mean an animality that is prior to the law and also an

animality which presents and represents itself to (or “before”) humans and cultural laws.⁴

These questions and dynamics are at work in a number of animal rights poems such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “To a Young Ass” (1794) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s “The Mouse’s Petition” (1797). The story behind Barbauld’s petition poem is that Joseph Priestly was conducting scientific experiments with synthesized gases to determine their properties and their effects. (For example, he discovered nitrous oxide or laughing gas.) He used mice caught on his property as the “guinea pigs” for his gas experiments. As a magazine of the time recounts, one evening while Barbauld was visiting Priestly, his servant brought to them a mouse which had been captured. Because it was too late in the evening to perform an experiment on the animal, Priestly had the mouse set aside in a cage until the next day. The following morning Priestly found a small note attached to the mouse’s cage. Barbauld had penned a petition for freedom in the voice of the mouse.

The poem is a rather straightforward, sentimental anthropomorphizing of the mouse who is in prison and appealing to the ruler for his freedom and warning that without allowing liberty, the human will become a despotic tyrant. The poem leverages the political language used to discuss the French Revolution and British rights under their king George III and places this language into the petition of the mouse. So, the mouse makes a “pensive captive’s prayer / For Liberty” as a “free-born mouse” and appeals to the reader’s scorn for the “tyrant’s chain” and “oppressive force”. The poem mentions shedding blood which recalls to the readers of the time the bloody gallows of the French Revolution, and then Barbauld proclaims “Beware, lest in the worm you crush / A brother’s soul you find”.⁵ The words recall a famous 1787 Joshua Wedgewood medallion of a black African slave in chains on bended knee appealing with the words “Am I not a man and a brother”.⁶

As many scholars point out, sentiment is a powerful mode of argumentation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, while Adam Smith is best known today for his *Wealth of Nations* which became a touchstone for explaining capitalism, his first work was *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* published in 1759. Like many thinkers of the time, Smith is trying to find a ground we all hold in common, a common moral sentiment to which we can make appeal so as to understand one another. His hope is that through a common sentiment, we can feel another’s pain and so have empathy (3). The most prominent advocate for animal rights of the Romantic period, Jeremy Bentham uses a similar appeal to sentiment in *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789). Writing on behalf of animals, he famously claims “The question is not, Can they *reason*? Nor Can they *talk*? But, Can they *suffer*?”⁷ As Derrida explains, the question of suffering changes everything. No longer are we forming questions and making judgements along the lines of capacities—such as reason and language; rather, Bentham obliges us to think in terms of non-capacity, a “not-being-able”, and a vital passivity.⁸ Derrida goes on to explicate Bentham on suffering: “Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the

finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish”.⁹ The sense of finitude that makes us human is also a finitude which we share with animals. Bentham’s appeal to the sentiment of mutual suffering is a way of extending common ground beyond the human to fellow creatures.

Before returning to Barbauld’s poem, there are two other salient aspects of Bentham’s work worth pointing out. Tobias Menely, writing on eighteenth-century sentiment and animals, points out that “as Bentham acknowledges, ethics in practice, rests on a contingent calculation of interests, a potentially uneven recognition of whose pleasures and pains matter. Ethics is “the *art* of directing men’s actions to the production of the greatest possible quantity of happiness, *on the part of those whose interests is in view*”.¹⁰ Here we see the first spectre of a problem: whose interests are being served and who decides whose interests matter? The second spectre follows the first; for Bentham there are no natural rights: “There are no such things as natural rights—no such things as rights anterior to the establishment of government”.¹¹ So, the appeal by Paine in the cause of revolution based on natural rights for humans is a mask. There are no natural rights, only people recognized by the government who, through recognition, appeal by way of the mask or figure of natural rights. Writing on personhood, Alistair Hunt says, “The point is not that personhood does not just appear as a representation [a mask or figure], as opposed to presence [as a natural right], but that such appearances require a performative power to posit personhood where no nature can supply it”.¹²

“The Mouse’s Petition” works as an appeal before the law. That is to say, the speaker in the poem, the mouse but also Barbauld who speaks on behalf of the one without language, recognizes that the (natural) right of a “free-born mouse” to live or die does not belong to the mouse but to one who can grant rights and who determines whose interests matter. It is Priestley who has the “performative power to posit personhood” and so grant a right to live. This power differential defines what philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls the state of exception: the sovereign is above the law because it determines the law and how it is applied.¹³ In relation to animals, Agamben says society functions like an anthropological machine, that is, the machinery of society always works in favor of humans over other animals (although it should be noted that not all humans are treated equally).¹⁴ Barbauld’s mouse is allowed to live. It is granted freedom. But there will be other mice, and following the anthropological machine, Priestley’s experiments will continue.

The capacity to suffer is a potent element of the work of Scottish poet Robert Burns who in 1785 writes about another mouse. (Indeed from Burns to Barbauld to John Clare and many other Romantic poets the diminutive furry form of the mouse has an unusual appeal.) In “To a Mouse, On turning her up in her nest with the plough”, the question of a sympathetic union between man and beast is written through the question “Can they suffer?” As

winter comes and the fields are barren, the mouse finds a home in the stubble of the field. The narrator's plough upturns the nest "proving foresight may be ain; / The best-laid schemes of mice an men / Gang aft agley".¹⁵ The speaker addresses the mouse and explains that if it feels pain, consider the worse fate of the labourer:

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi me
 The present only toucheth thee:
 But, Och! I backward cast my e'e,
 On prospects drear!
 An' forward, tho' I canna see,
 I guess an' fear!¹⁶

The forward and backward glance of the labourer reflects the uncertainty of his fate and the fate of his crops. Temporally he reflects back on his hardships and fears for his future. The temporal glance is doubled by a physical look backward and forward as he aligns his plow to create evenly spaced and equally deep furrows in the soil. The physical act of his plowing coincides with his anxiety over future crops and his ability to feed himself and his family. Although his overall sentiment seems to affirm the superior capacity of the human imagination to suffer, the mouse and human are aligned in their vulnerability.

The odd singularity of details in Burns's encounter with a field mouse reveals a particular intensity and affect in the lives of the working poor. Representations of farm animals (or, with Burns's mouse, animals who reside on farmed land) reveal a larger set of forces at work on beasts and citizens alike. In this respect then the special possession of time that Burns humanistically offers the poet-labourer as opposed to the mouse is not a useful tool of perception but an illusory power. Labourers were often incapable of directly challenging the biopolitical appropriation of life during the rise and reach of British nationalism; however, they could deflect or adversely reflect these powers through representing the state of affairs for themselves and the animals which were their responsibility and their livelihood.

The relationship between Burns and the field mouse is more than a sympathetic connection. While the language of rights and the rise of individual personhood is a hallmark of the Romantic period and plays itself out even in literature about animals, less well known yet equally potent forces of biopower and biopolitics are born in the Romantic period and remain prevalent today. Posthumanist theorists have been critical of a rights framework which they believe reduces the many aspects human and nonhuman life to figure or mask of an individual as it is seen through the lens of the law. As Wolfe explains, "the rights framework ends up foreclosing and undercutting that desire [to give animals standing in the human community] by reinstating a normative picture of the subject of rights that ends up being humanist and anthropocentric through and through, that ends up with a being that looks a lot like us, so that, in the end, nonhuman animals matter because they are just a diminished

version of us".¹⁷ It is for this reason that biopower becomes an important way of understanding how animals show up within culture.

French philosopher Michel Foucault provides the touchstone for understanding biopower. Biopower derives from biological forces as a source of power that gets tended by the modern State (2003, 240). The political rationale and the legal and rhetorical justification for such control are termed biopolitics. Foucault explains "Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem".¹⁸ While regulating the citizens as a mass is a general concern of government throughout the ages, Foucault claims that the eighteenth century saw a rise in technologies for regulating the life of citizens. Such regulation was not the age-old negative modality of regulating death: the right of a State to take the life of a citizen who violates its laws and the right of the State to send citizens to war. This new power included

mechanisms with a certain number of functions that are very different from the functions of disciplinary mechanisms. The mechanisms introduced by biopolitics include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures. . . . [they] intervene at the level at which these general phenomena are determined, to intervene at the level of their generality.¹⁹

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of mechanical, information, and economic technologies align to "maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis" for populations as discrete social bodies.²⁰ A critical number of biopolitical technologies emerge—such as cartography, surveys, and statistics. Under the banner of rising nationalism and under fear of the French—from the French Revolution to Napoleon—the British government corrals and co-opts these techniques, technologies, rhetorics, and ultimately powers. Not only human citizens feel this power; animals do too. From the breeding and distribution of livestock to the hunting and fishing of game animals to trapping and exterminating pests, the bodies of animals become subject to regulations determined by mechanical, informational, and economic technologies intended to establish control and homeostasis within the British Isles.

Thomas Malthus's sheer quantification of bodies in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* provides an exemplary instance of counting flesh for biopolitical ends and the building of the nation into an Empire not just abroad but at home as well. Malthus's famous formula raises great anxiety: human population grows exponentially while agriculture grows arithmetically such that human reproduction will outpace food production. Malthus created the anxiety that human reproduction and population will outstrip our ability to grow more food. Such a quantification of bodies serves as a justification for the expansion of biopolitics in a range of agricultural arenas including enclosure of common lands, agriculture, animal husbandry, and the clearances of tenant farmers in Scotland. Throughout *Principle of Population* Malthus makes individuals

responsible for their place in society. It is only by their industry that they contribute to the body politic. Every person is placed in quantitative relation to the next and is comparable to the next. Each person counts equally and must supply his or her relational “value” to society.

In *Monstrous Society*, David Collings points to a curious moment in the 1803 edition of Malthus’s essay that does not appear in subsequent editions. Here Malthus employs the figure of the harvest table but with an inversion of the figure’s normal use. Traditionally, the harvest table—both in custom and in texts about the event—is a moment when the cornucopia of earth’s bounty is on display. The landowner sits with his labourers to share a feast from the harvest. The harvest table is employed in a number of labour-class poems and is perhaps best known in poet Robert Bloomfield’s *Farmer’s Boy*:

Yet Plenty reigns, and from her boundless hoard,
Though not one jelly trembles on the board,
Supplies the feast with all that sense can crave;
With all that made our great forefathers brave.²¹

Bloomfield goes on to lament the loss of this custom as landowners sit at a separate table and eat the “refined” rather than the wholesome foods of their forefathers.

Malthus employs the harvest table differently:

A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, has no claim of *right* to the smallest portion of food, and in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature’s mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he do not work upon the compassion of some of her guests. If these guests get up and make room for him, other intruders immediately appear demanding the same favor.²²

Malthus continues by explaining that the “harmony” of the feast is placed off balance and scarcity ensues. Eventually, “The guests learn too late their error, in counteracting those strict orders to all intruders, issued by the great mistress of the feast, who, wishing that all her guests should have plenty, and knowing that she could not provide for unlimited numbers, humanely refused to admit fresh comers when her table was already full” (quoted in Collings 164). For Malthus, no longer is the landowner and community responsible for who attends the feast; instead, “the great mistress” Nature dictates the limit in numbers. Indeed, the table becomes a problem of counting rather than a place of celebrating surplus, excess, bounty, and a joyous mass of humanity. In short, Malthus inverts the festival of the feast. Now each individual must bring something to the table in order to gain admission. Malthus constructs a biopolitical individual who is responsible to the state but to whom the state bears no responsibility should the individual not meet the requisite productivity.

In each of his progressively copious editions of *Principle of Population*, Malthus adds more and more data taken from surveys and census reports to justify biopolitical control over human and animal life. His work places all citizens within a restricted economy. The general, or unrestricted economy, of heterogeneous place, personhood, and food is narrowed. In a restricted economy, all bodies within the cartographic borders of the state fall under the rubrics of citizenship and the census. All bodies count quantitatively. There is no room for qualitative differentiation, no space by which the matrix allows at the outset for a heterogeneity or general economy in which, for example, one is a fieldworker by day, a weaver in the evenings and a maker of homemade cheese to be sold at market at other times. In other words, all identity fits within a matrix of domination by information.

Particularly detrimental to workers of the period is the loss of the commons. These are areas not held by any landlord and so “common” to all citizens for use. In these lands, the labouring classes (or commoners) could pasture a cow, harvest fruits from trees, or create a small plot for gardening. Moreover, it was a place of undifferentiated, biodiverse, multispecies thriving. As labour-class poet John Clare explains in “The Lament of Swordy Well”, flowers and grasses, insects, rabbits and mice, birds and donkeys, all find a home in the commons that “made freemen of the slave” by providing where the restricted economy of planned agricultural fields and day wages cannot.²³ In his poem “The Mores”, man and beast roam freely and thrive:

The sheep and cows were free to range as then
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men
Cows went and came, with evening morn and night,
To the wild pasture as their common right.²⁴

For most workers, loss of common pasture lands means forfeiting a cow who provides milk, cheese, and butter. Without a cow, the labourer must buy items. He possesses neither the fruits of his labour (since the bodily toil is sold to landowners to work their fields) nor the capacities for sustenance that a garden and cow supply. The labourer is forced into a particular capitalist market configured through a series of restrictions. Such an economy restricts what constitutes economic activity as opposed to a general economy by which the labourer with cow and commons supplements his livelihood.

This shift from a general economy to a restricted economy is illustrated by George Willis’s report printed in Arthur Young’s *Annals of Agriculture*: “The cottager who commands milk, has within himself, a daily supply of a nutrition’s aliment for the purpose of his family, while another who has not these advantages out of his poor pittance, purchases at the village shop . . . at the same time he empties his purse”.²⁵ As Willis’s report to Young’s Board of Agriculture illustrates, the cow as a companion species and biopolitical animal reveals the stakes of the national economy. The labourer with cow and commons is on one side and the Act of Parliament which slowly shrinks the commons into farm

fields bought by wealthy landowners is on the other. At work here is a question of who can make claim to the animal's productivity and how such productivity is to be channeled within a cultural (and eventually a monetary) economy.

The work of Thomas Batchelor (also spelled Bachelor) shows how the lives of animals and labourers entwined and served as biopolitical beasts of burden. Batchelor was a tenant farmer under Francis Russell, Duke of Bedford. Russell was a member of the Board of Agriculture, which set about surveying the nation's farms county by county in order to record normative and best practices and through dissemination of knowledge increased farm yields and landowners' incomes. In short, the Duke produced data for the biopolitical regulation of agriculture. As Batchelor's poem *The Progress of Agriculture; or Rural Survey* makes evident, peasants and animals alike were caught up in a modernization that did not look out for their best interests. Much of Batchelor's poem explains how the wild and rude land has been tamed so that "around my natal soil I see / The bless'd effects of peaceful industry". Patriotic "fair Freedom" gives a "generous hand" and "guards, improves, and dignifies the land".²⁶ As the poem proceeds, extolling the virtues of the Duke of Bedford and the Board of Agriculture's methods of improvement, it comes as little surprise that Russell's favourite livestock, the sheep, holds a pride of place. After listing the treasures of other lands, such as India's spices, Gaul's wines, and East India's sugar cane, Batchelor extols the British Isles:

Yet thy own wealth attracts the richest stores
 With power magnetic to thy favour'd shores.
 And chief thy flocks, that crown each mountain's brow,
 And deck each vale, from these thy riches flow;
 These meet my view, innumerable grazing wide,
 Their unshorn lambs yet sporting by their side.
 Some destin'd soon, by unrelenting fate,
 To smoke on tables of the rich and great;
 but those of fine shape, and noblest size,
 Again must view the vernal year arise,
 Spread thy young progeny around the land,
 And yield their fleeces to the shearer's hand.²⁷

Interesting here is that the wealth of nations does not reside foremost in the labour of its people but in the value of the country's animals, "chief thy flocks". The lambs are slaughtered "to smoke on tables of the rich and great". It is surprising that the poet who praises Russell and the Board of Agriculture clearly marks class differences. Animals and labourers are joined in two ways in this passage. First, both create a material wealth that does not serve themselves but rather serves the rich. Second, the sheep replace humans as the "richest stores" of the nation and as a resource to be extracted for profit. Both human and animal bodies are put to work for the good of the nation.

Despite his praise for agricultural improvements, Batchelor realizes that the labourer's work is not his own but used to benefit the landed:

Still glow thy fields in summer's fruitful ray,
 Thy harvests flourish, all thy meads are gay;
 But not for me fair Nature spreads her store,
 Life's smiling prospects must be mine no more!

...

Monopoly has rear'd her gorgon head
 To strike the source of rural comforts dead!²⁸

The lambs give their life for the tables of the rich and the labourers give their toil to the same ends. While the Duke of Bedford invests in sheep, Batchelor laments the practice of clearing the land of its people and replacing them with sheep which are more productive and less rebellious than peasants:

Green pastures spread where harvests wont to smile,
 who change for herds, the life-supporting grain,
 With *woolly tribes* displace the reaper train,
 Who build a *palace* for the wealthier few,
 But drive to squalid [sic] huts the *ruin'd* crew.²⁹

Through a poetic syntactic chiasmus, Batchelor shows how sheep replace humans and grazing replaces harvesting. The "*woolly tribes*" of animals are put in place of the human tribes of labourers. Rather than driving sheep across the land, the landed "drive to squalid huts" the rural poor. Batchelor's poem as a "Rural Survey" counters the biopolitical mode of counting the landowner's wealth and mapping the trajectory of prosperity from raw materials and labour to seats of power.

These works are examples of a broader trend of transforming life into economic productivity through apparatuses of biopolitical control. Not discussed here but equally pressing is how the Linnaean taxonomic system and natural history joined merchant ventures to build an empire. Merchants, scientists, and soldiers forced a variety of human and nonhuman lives and ways of dwelling into British knowledge and governance. Much of the vibrant literature and cultural artefacts regarding animals of the Romantic period bear witness to these biopolitics. Yet many poets also reveal modes of resistance. As Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato explains Foucault, "Biopower coordinates and targets a power that does not properly belong to it, that comes from the 'outside' [as Foucault claims]. *Biopower is always born of something other than itself*".³⁰ This something other than biopower, as the various examples of poetic resistance I have traced here together suggest, is the capacities of biological life above and beyond apparatus of capture, beyond our representational abilities and beyond the all-too-human law.

NOTES

1. Derrida, *Animal Therefore I Am*, 6.
2. McKay, 309–311.

3. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 17–19.
4. Derrida, “Before the Law”, 188–89 and Wolfe *Before the Law*, 8–9.
5. Barbauld, “Mouse’s Petition”, 56–57.
6. Wedgewood, *Am I Not Your Brother*.
7. Bentham, *Principles of Morals*, cccix.
8. Derrida, *Animal Therefore I Am*, 27.
9. Derrida, *Animal Therefore I Am*, 28.
10. Menely, *Animal Claim*, 169. Emphasis Menely’s from Bentham, *Principles of Morals*, cccix.
11. Bentham, “Anarchical Fallacies”, 500. Quoted in Menely, *Animal Claim*, 171.
12. Hunt, 199.
13. Agamben, *State of Exception*, 1.
14. Agamben, *The Open*, 37.
15. Burns, *The Complete Works*, 106.
16. Burns, 106.
17. Wolfe, “After Animality”, 186.
18. Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 245.
19. Foucault, 246.
20. Foucault, 246.
21. Bloomsfield, *Farmer’s Boy*, 44.
22. Malthus quoted in Collings, *Monstrous Society*, 164.
23. Clare, *Major Works*, 152.
24. Clare, *Major Works*, 168.
25. Young, *Inquiry*, 560.
26. Batchelor, 75.
27. Batchelor, 83–84.
28. Batchelor, 88–89.
29. Batchelor, 90.
30. Lazzarato, “From Biopower”, 103.

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Bad Dog: The Dark Side of Misbehaving Animals

Chase Pielak

During the Romantic period, dogs were expected to perform. They accompanied young women as guards and companions, participated in hunts, and nipped at unwelcome guests. Often they entertained, and even more often they functioned as surrogates for status, displaying their owners' breeding through their own pedigrees. Nonhuman literary animals often behave as expected during the Romantic period and especially in Gothic texts, in which they fill stock character roles to engage the ominous, for example, as when they're paired in passing with owls in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), or as figures for loyalty as with Wordsworth's dog Music or Byron's Boatswain. Yet not all dogs were good dogs. One important aspect of nonhuman animal semiotics—reading animal signs—is animal transgression, meaning-making instances when creatures act in unexpected ways. Transgressive moments trace the boundaries of human expectations coded into texts. Surprising creatures threaten human relationships and invite readers to imagine the destruction of social systems through deviance, heaping further destruction onto already-problematized circumstances. Creature betrayals very often turn tail to expose human counterparts, always lurking within our language, subverting strained social systems. Bad dogs speak out of turn to tell the stories of their subversive authors. Romantic dogs can be more than mirrors for humans, perhaps most powerfully when enlisted as plot devices. Creatures invoke a means for communication outside the representational shorthand necessary for language games, communicating directly.

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265

Of course, canines weren't the only nonhuman creatures thoroughly imbricated into the human social fabric, though they were among the most visible. Kept creatures, from parrots to fish, similarly had to perform. The title of this chapter, further, is not meant to suggest that creatures might be objectively bad because they do not align with human expectations. Instead, it suggests that the creatures stand in during moments when cultural expectations are broken or otherwise destabilized. Dogs are not "bad" in any objective sense; instead, they deviate from anthropocentric expectations in noteworthy moments. Gothic literary elements prefigure the interest in interspecies relations and deviance now coming to a head in discussions surrounding the Anthropocene (e.g., in Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* and Timothy Morton's *Humankind*).¹ Deviant creatures in nineteenth-century literature frequently skulk around texts, characteristically avoiding notice because of critical uncertainty of how to systematize their deviance. But that's the point. Harriet Ritvo, for example, classically lists dogs as good creatures expected to know their place (and cats, elephants, etc. as bad creatures due to failure to acknowledge human dominion).² How are we, then, to read these bad dogs?

Emmanuel Levinas tells the story of one particular dog defying dominion, named Bobby, in his essay "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" (1975).³ Levinas rails against violence and invites readers to consider the dog that, through its consideration, gave him back a sense of humanity despite confinement in a concentration camp and his feeling of being "stripped of [his] human skin" (153). Bobby "disrupt[ed] society's games (or Society itself) and is consequently given a cold reception", eventually being shooed from the camp's gates (153). Bobby earned his "bad dog" reputation by betraying social expectations, not prisoners, thus exposing both standards set for creatures and figures for their violation. Bad dogs are named through interpretation, as much as any act the creature might undertake; moral judgment is equally subject to interpretation.

Furthermore, during the Romantic period, creature betrayal and its corresponding demands for interpretation and judgment seem to happen almost exclusively when women share similarly precarious positioning. Betrayal threatens at all of the limits of living together. The connection between animal rights and women's rights, and more generally the use of animal representations as figures for women, has been thoroughly addressed elsewhere.⁴ However, the connection between failed creature loyalty and hazards for literary women deserves additional attention.

THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO

Failed loyalty and nearly breeched secrets meet in Udolpho. Dogs are expected to keep secrets. They may only bark on command or as watch dogs, and that they must. That they might betray a crumbling system of meaning is supposed to be withheld from readers seeking affirmation of dominant social systems. Thus, the watch-dog role accounts for the largest percentage of references to

barking in the nineteenth century. (For example, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), 5 out of 12 canine vocalizations are attributed specifically to watch dogs, with an additional 2 barks unaccounted-for and apparently associated with dogs keeping watch that aren't named as watch dogs; the additional 5 barks are attributed to Manchon.)⁵ Dogs are definitely not to bark when traveling through secret passages. Instead, they are expected to somehow sagaciously recognize the difference between legitimate threats requiring bravado (e.g., when the vile Count Morano is sneaking into one's room) and moments when silence is demanded (as when sneaking behind a wall). When these instances overlap, meaning slips.

During the scene in which Manchon betrays his ignorance, Emily is escaping from Montoni's castle, escorted by Du Pont and Ludovico. Manchon threatens to betray them with his voice, when traversing the dark passage proves too much for the dog. Notably, all are already in fact threatened, and only moments earlier, Manchon heroically alerted Emily to the violation of her room. The fateful bark, however, proceeds:

Du Pont immediately extinguished the lamp. "Ah! it is too late!" exclaimed Emily, "what is to become of us?" They listened again, and then perceived, that Ludovico was talking with a sentinel, whose voices were heard also by Emily's favourite dog, that had followed her from the chamber, and now barked loudly. "This dog will betray us!" said Du Pont, "I will hold him." "I fear he has already betrayed us!" replied Emily. Du Pont, however, caught him up, and, again listening to what was going on without, they heard Ludovico say, "I'll watch the gates the while."⁶

Emily and company manage to escape despite the misplaced bark. No betrayal in fact happens, but the dog's bark reinforces for the reader the already-heightened tension surrounding Emily's precarious place. That a dog's normal and expected actions become *bad* speaks to the dissolution of order at work in the text, and more specifically to the vilification of voice. Claiming the power to say becomes a transgressive act, one that threatens to destroy the self that might dare to speak out of turn. The dog's mistake adds to the tension in the scene, but it can also be read as mirroring the precariousness of his mistress's finding her voice. Emily has, herself, after all, just rejected Morano's proposal.

Martin Danahay's assertion that nineteenth-century British dogs might inject wildness into the domestic sphere is quite right, as these pets pervert not only the fantasied safe space of a home here (clearly Montoni's castle is neither Emily's home nor safe), but also extend the domestic sphere in a much broader Foucauldian panoptic (or panauditory) sense.⁷ Actions are always being watched and heard (as the reader is invited into dark corners under blankets with a torch to expose the heroine's secret acts). Bad dogs speak out, just like Charles Lamb's dog named Test, who threatens to betray intimate social indiscretions through his voice.⁸ They are, in fact, harbingers of wildness, chaos, and social dissolution, appearing when domestic relations are violated. They

may just figure the reader, exuberantly urging on the collapsing expectations around a particular woman. These bad dogs also seem to show up when something hidden (or dark) appears, when the Romantic twilight is at its most obscuring, and the audience desperately desires to see it exposed.

BELINDA

Turning to the secret that begs to be exposed, we must speak about Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801). Readers have been entrusted with one of Belinda's suitors' secrets: Mr. Vincent's interest in gambling. The association between human and nonhuman animal becomes particularly clear in the segment holding the chapter titled, "Love me, love my dog". This is the same maxim that Charles Lamb, a decade after the publication of the novel, identifies as a popular fallacy, documenting its pervasive relevance. In Edgeworth's segment, readers meet Juba, who is, in the next chapter, trained to beg and then excoriated for it:

The dog, who was extremely hungry, turned suddenly to Mrs Luttridge, by whom he had, till this night, regularly been fed with the choicest morsels, and lifting up his huge paw, laid it, as he had been wont to do, upon her arm. She shook it off: he, knowing nothing of the change in his master's affairs, laid the paw again upon her arm; and with that familiarity to which he had long been encouraged, raised his head almost close to the lady's cheek.

"Down Juba! – down, sir, down!" cried Mrs Luttridge, in a sharp voice.

"Down, Juba! – down, sir!" repeated Mr Vincent, in a tone of bitter feeling, all his assumed gaiety forsaking him at this instant: "Down, Juba! – down, sir, down!" as low as your master, thought he; and pushing back his chair, he rose from table, and precipitately left the room.⁹

Juba acts according to his training, but not social expectations, here performing as the straw that breaks his master's back, or perhaps the mirror that exposes both Vincent's deviance from social expectations to himself and the place that Belinda might have occupied had she been his wife. This scene is central to the novel as it begins to solidify the text's eventual partnering through the shedding of possible suitors. The façade which Vincent has been upholding shatters; he no longer maintains the ability to control himself. Broken by the loss of his fortune at an Even-Odd table (a game similar to roulette), he is forced to acknowledge his losses to Belinda (even though some money has been returned to him thanks to the generous actions of Clarence Hervey). It is this scene that exposes him as an inappropriate suitor and leads to his retreat to Germany. The dog's bad actions, trained by Luttridge, the parlor owner, expose human betrayal and nonhuman animal betrayal simultaneously. Juba's performance of misbehaving is a mirror for that of Vincent, who performs quite according to his training, if not his breeding. Though all is set right at the end of the text for Belinda (as for Emily St. Aubert), Vincent is irretrievably betrayed by his bad

dog. Interestingly, Juba is not the only bad dog in the text and very probably not the dog referenced in the chapter's name.

Readers discover in the next (unnamed) chapter that Clarence Hervey, Belinda's favored suitor, is already effectively betrothed. Virginia St. Pierre/Hartley is Hervey's metaphoric canine appendage, the term Charles Lamb gives to offensive attachments who bite potential friends. Clearly this use of *dog* exactly matches Lamb's understanding in his popular fallacy, "That you must love me and love my dog". The young Virginia, adopted and groomed as the eventual mate for Hervey, is precisely the obstacle to friendship or even basic social connection that Lamb metaphorically identifies as canine. She has been named and trained, and is then finally released by Hervey. *Belinda*, the novel, seems eager to engage Gothic tropes (the loss of a mother, precarious positioning for young women, madness, the reading of "romances", and bad dogs) in order to establish a mood threatening domestic relations. Juba's silence and Virginia's silence are expected together; both betray the expected silence, refusing to be passive mirrors of patriarchal ideals. It is worth noting that as in *Udolpho*, the speech of both Juba and Virginia eventually leads to the happy resolution for all in this novel. Juba seems to betray only his master here.

"CHRISTABEL"

But there remains for us to address an ineffectual bad dog who leads to no such resolution. Coleridge introduces her early on in "Christabel" (1816):

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
 Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
 From her kennel beneath the rock
 She maketh answer to the clock,
 Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
 Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
 Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
 Some say, she sees my lady's shroud...
 Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
 Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
 The mastiff old did not awake,
 Yet she an angry moan did make!
 And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
 Never till now she uttered yell
 Beneath the eye of Christabel.
 Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
 For what can ail the mastiff bitch?¹⁰

Of course the poem relates a fragmentary story of a maiden, Christabel, who, under the nose of her father, Sir Leoline, is bewitched by a magical snake-woman, Geraldine. Leoline's dog's failure in "Christabel" to be anything other than a timekeeper (such as a guard dog) is notable, and even her moan here is

uninterpretable. (For what it's worth, the dog is never mentioned as having howled during the hour when Christabel is at Geraldine's mercy, thus neither protecting her nor acting as a reliable clock dog.) The mastiff is toothless, an invalidation of inherent canine expectation from her introduction into the poem. She is functionless, and thus to be perceived as useless. Guard dogs fundamentally need their teeth, so the argument goes, in order to be valuable. The effectively unarmed dog does far more than violate canine expectations, though. She marks the violability of the human domestic space, the dissolution of human order and expectation (here the violation of hospitality), and particularly Christabel's horrifying untellable danger. Her out-of-time howling, rather than marking time, marks only the dissolution of expectations.

“DARKNESS”

In Byron's post-apocalyptic poem, “Darkness” (1816),¹¹ we encounter an apocalyptic world. The poetic world is drained of its humanity by death, and in the world, order dissolution is rife. The last of the poem's markers of apocalypse, just before the final two humans fight, is the canine betrayal of masters, save a single dog.

Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
 And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
 The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
 Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
 Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
 But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
 And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
 Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.¹²

Among the many dogs who betray, there is one dog who does not, and that dog is faithful not to a living human but to a corpse. This is fascinating. Perhaps Byron has his own dog, a Newfoundland named Boatswain in mind, a dog faithful to its end brought on by rabies despite the disease's usual progression toward mad behavior; or perhaps Byron has in mind Wordsworth's dog in “Fidelity”. In either case, the dog, this last dog, dies. Byron's dark dog shares in the human fate, the cataclysmic apocalyptic outcome—death. Yet the dog nevertheless chooses to remain faithful, betraying human expectations in a positive manner, choosing to starve himself for the sake of a dead companion rather than to cling to feeble, solitary existence. The dog does not choose to engage in basic self-sustenance, surely the expected instinctive response. This dog's extraordinary faithfulness, a demonstration of nonhuman animal agency, speaks to shared subjectivity. Until, finally, the world has become void, echoing the chaos of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and the *Genesis* account of creation before it: “the world was formless and void and darkness hovered over the face of the deep”.¹³ The creation account is, of course, a drama of subjectivity and

betrayal, an instantiation of free will as set against expectations unheeded, called out by Milton in line one of his retelling: “Of Man’s first disobedience...sing”.¹⁴ Byron’s dog, here, betrays only expectation and gives the gift of death, self-sacrifice in light of the other, not to extend the life of the other.

This gift does not apply particularly to women, as in each of the other texts represented here. There are no women singled out as such in “Darkness” to be betrayed; all humanity suffers the same fate alongside all canines. This seems to be a covert approach to the end of reproduction, the final, biological end to humanity. Even in absentia, the precarious positioning of women is expressed through canine deviation.

Byron’s poem prefigures Mary Shelley’s apocalyptic vision in *The Last Man* (1826), which features its own bad dog.¹⁵

I rebuked a dog, that by yelping disturbed the sacred stillness; I would not believe that all was as it seemed—The world was not dead, but I was mad; I was deprived of sight, hearing, and sense of touch; I was labouring under the force of a spell, which permitted me to behold all sights of earth, except its human inhabitants; they were pursuing their ordinary labours. Every house had its inmate; but I could not perceive them. If I could have deluded myself into a belief of this kind, I should have been far more satisfied. But my brain, tenacious of its reason, refused to lend itself to such imaginations—and though I endeavoured to play the antic to myself, I knew that I, the offspring of man, during long years one among many—now remained sole survivor of my species. (vol. 3, ch. 9)

This dog, on entering the deserted city, breaks the silence with its voice, revealing to the narrator his own position as the last remaining human on the planet. The dog’s voice pronounces the world dead, betraying the fantasy of remaining social order. In contrast to Byron’s seeming affirmation of the dog dying alongside people, Shelley’s dog is rebuked for asserting that dogs yet persist beyond us. Romantic writers find a pack that is sometimes at odds even amongst itself.

When canines violate social maxims, when they imperil life, derail social restoration, hinder acts of human virtue and aid vice, and betray training or breeding, they are perceived as behaving badly; we call them bad dogs. In the Victorian era, Ritvo suggests that “animals were supposed to serve the purposes of humanity, not appropriate it to theirs”.¹⁶ Danahay notes that animal violence exposes conflicting codes of domesticity and aggression; yet deviation from normative expectations need not rise to violence in order to expose ideological conflicts.¹⁷ Other behavioral differences such as misbegotten barking seem at least as interesting. Dogs, in particular, along with other pets, increasingly became viewed as members of the family during the Romantic period, marking an emerging sense of multispecies kinship. This more intimate relationship made behavioral deviation from social expectations more obvious. As family members, dogs inject wildness into domestic spaces when they fail to act as appropriate family members. Good dogs during the Romantic period perform according to breeding and perform according to social expectations:

they're loyal, they restore social order, they act to further virtue and punish vice. Except when they don't, revealing themselves as powerful literary devices even when they are most plausible as close companions to particular human characters.

Dogs deviating from expectations serve in texts as markers of moments when their associated humans are themselves deviating from cultural expectations. Whether they're set in dangerous positions and readers ought to fear for the human creatures, or whether they're engaged in some directly transgressive act, deviating nonhuman animals appear as a sort of shorthand to alert the reader to very human cultural transgressions.¹⁸ Thus, creatures who don't speak in human language make human meaning. Their presence works in some way *in* but *underneath* language—at the aesthetic level—to destabilize culture, convention, the stable role of the human, and as it turns out the ability of language itself to tread on stable meaning, preferring instead to engage the shaky symbolic underpinnings of language. Janelle Schwartz describes this looping as “a disregarded slippage between an articulation of the material world as inscribed by the figurative and metaphorical as it is informed by matter itself”.¹⁹ She identifies the role of the vile in Romantic period theory as specifically destabilizing *human* meaning by attacking hierarchical relationships. The aesthetics of voice, the specific register connoted by bad dogs' voices, approaches the aesthetic of the vile, made stronger by the human supposition that we alone claim speech.

Considering the aesthetics of bad dogs brings to mind a short catalog of creatures apparently betraying expectations through speech and other means. In Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, a single pack of dogs appears to back off of the skeletal lover of fair Imogene, whose ballad Antonia reads (ineffectively) in order to calm herself.²⁰ Charles Lamb's imagined dog Test bites friends—helping Lamb make decisions. Don Juan's spaniel is eaten but proves to be bad meat that makes the eaters wild. Wordsworth's verse drama *The Borderers*' (1842) snapping cur is probably a figure for the antagonist Oswald.²¹ Wordsworth's hound Music (from “Incident Characteristic of a Favourite Dog” (1815)) pauses the hunt to mourn her lost friend. *Frankenstein* (1818) begins with a pack of dead sled dogs stranding Victor in the Arctic, whereas the creature's dogs apparently persist unharmed.²² Clearly the dogs didn't choose to die, instead highlighting Victor's hubris, yet even so they do not manage to perform as expected. Bad dogs aren't inherently bad; rather they serve to expose human shortcomings. As Susan McHugh argues, dogs betray “a range of metonymic possibilities” and “the prizing of metaphorical relationships in literature begins to make sense as part of a representational continuum that becomes all the more compelling and confusing as it strikes closer to home”.²³

Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*'s (1814) pug evidently occupies the place that ought to be reserved for Lady Bertram's children, exposing her ill nature for the reader.²⁴ Similarly, moving forward in the century, Charles Dickens' pug in “Our School” (1851) bites the children instead of performing its tricks, replacing the mistress of the establishment in Dickens' memory.²⁵ William Godwin's

Lives of the Necromancers (1834) features several demonic creatures and necromancers transfigured into or protected by black dogs, the very bodies of which deceive and threaten the viewers.²⁶ Bram Stoker's *Dracula's* (1897) dogs are not the friend of the human in countless ways, representing the continuation of the Romantic animal aesthetic into later literature.²⁷

While the paradigm in nineteenth-century British literature is unquestionably already that of a nation of pet owners, even as it continues to rely on animals for their use value in an agrarian sense, there remain notable outlying instances when animals function as cultural markers rather than according to some predetermined sense of worth as a member of a particular species. This recognizes individual value of particular animals performing outside a human-ascribed role. Such dogs paradoxically act as figures for the reader, choosing, demanding exposition of the darkness, speaking out of turn. Thus, the deviant dog is valued not for its protection or companionship or even for its ability to speak to its owner's social standing. Instead, these deviant animals are so twice over: for their failure to perform in their roles and in that they choose to disregard human expectations. They demonstrate the crumbling of meaning beneath language, inscribed into the dogs' voices and onto their bodies.

Wuthering Heights (1847) features a host of betraying dogs, all performing according to often ill-set human expectations (or the lack thereof); Heathcliff's puppy murder betrays his nature: "I had actually succeeded in making her hate me. ...The first thing she saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog; and when she pleaded for it, the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to her".²⁸ Heathcliff's dogs further inhospitably threaten the narrator, carefully marking their master's treatment of Isabella Linton. Even Skulker's fateful hold on Catherine Earnshaw's ankle betrays her to the Lintons. It is worthwhile to note that while the narrator is at risk from Heathcliff's dogs, the female characters in the text specifically suffer an erosion of agency alongside the maltreated creatures. Bad dogs betray humans.

Yet this chapter is not simply anthropocentric; human agency overlaps non-human animal agency. Nevertheless, these animals are named as bad dogs when they betray human expectations—even when they are, in fact, not at all bad dogs. Each of these dogs acts in a way that transgresses human boundaries first by embracing agency; each is no worse than the precariously placed women for whom they stand as metonyms. But the fundamental act of betrayal exposes and challenges human expectations, including about whether and how dogs might choose to act independently.

Bad dogs finally demand shared subjectivity, a coming together of responsibility. It is perhaps the only way during the Romantic period to imagine a forward out of the off-balance, hierarchical expectations that structure human-human and human-nonhuman animal relations. The end here feels like that of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) in which the only apparent recourse for the heroine who has claimed voice (the subjectivity to say "no") is to drift off into the ocean.²⁹ Byron's apocalypse ends the possibility of living

together alongside the possibility of life itself. And Shelley's clarifies that dogs who survive in her apocalyptic vision should shut up about it. This is surely the culminating dissolution of social order and the end of the possibility of life together; the flat precarious positioning of the human alongside the nonhuman posits the end of the possibility of betrayal. It's hard to imagine that the dissolution of all order is the only way to envision shared subjectivity, but it may be that the apocalyptic—the end of the world as we know it—is the only way to bring about shared subjectivity for all humans and for nonhuman animals alike. Deviant dogs represent tiny cracks in the order and fit within the thematic destabilizing project often shared by Gothic texts and projected forward from the Romantic period.

As we think about interspecies responsibility, to the human and to nonhuman animals, the turn toward concepts of the Anthropocene seem essential. Donna Haraway, Ron Broglio, and others have turned the discussion toward interspecies subjectivity and away from its historically anthropocentric problematic. Bad dogs precisely disregard human expectations, and instead choose to be something other. They force human thought outside of the human. Through surprise in narrative confrontations they demand thought outside the human world. When Romantic writers think through the ends of language and the possibilities of interspecies communication, bad dog performances seem to offer the possibility of knowing in a world in which human language and human social systems have finally shifted outside central significance.

NOTES

1. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*. Morton, *Humankind*.
2. Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 15–30.
3. Levinas, "The Name of a Dog", 151–53.
4. See Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* and Surridge, "Dog's Bodies, Women's Bodies", for example. D.B. Hoffman, at an early reading of this paper, suggested that becoming animal is akin to becoming child in these texts, particularly breaking around the possibilities of responsibility. Social norms often deny agency to animals and children alike, as well as to women, and this denial is problematic.
5. Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.
6. Radcliffe, *Udolpho*, 450.
7. Danahay, "Nature Red in Hoof and Paw", 103.
8. See Lamb, Elia's "Popular Fallacies", a series of short essays published in *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826, include "That You Must Love Me and Love My Dog", 2:302–5.
9. Edgeworth, *Belinda*, 26.
10. Coleridge, "Christabel", lines 6–22.
11. Byron, "Darkness".
12. Byron, "Darkness", lines 47–54.
13. Genesis 1:2.
14. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1.1.

15. Shelley, *The Last Man*.
16. Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 30.
17. Danahay, "Nature Red".
18. Wordsworth's "Peter Bell" offers another example of a human animal acting out of phase with expectations; after beating a donkey half to death, Peter Bell calls the donkey a "dog" (line 458) since it has flopped down to die by a nearby river. Only then does he realize that the starved animal is loyally waiting for "he whom the poor Ass had lost / the man who had been four days dead" (lines 577–578). Bell's threat to throw the "mulish dog" like a "log" headlong into the river betrays his poor connection with nature, with the creature, and with humanity alongside.
19. Schwartz. *Worm Work*, xvi.
20. Lewis, *The Monk*.
21. Wordsworth, *The Borderers*.
22. Shelley, *Frankenstein*.
23. McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 11.
24. Austen, *Mansfield Park*.
25. Dickens, "Our School".
26. Godwin, *Lives of the Necromancers*.
27. Stoker, *Dracula*.
28. Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, Chapter 14.
29. Chopin, *The Awakening*.

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Why Animals Matter in Jane Austen

Barbara K. Seeber

It is an almost universally acknowledged truth that Jane Austen “pays little attention to pets and animals”, a view I set out to challenge.¹ In an essay entitled “Jane Austen’s Anthropocentrism”, Joel Weinsheimer claims that “the central defect of Jane Austen’s novels is that they study man in a vacuum” and suggests that “perhaps what we lack in reading Jane Austen is a chapter on whales, one that would establish the otherness of things, their primal indifference to human feelings and judgments”.² This is a version of the familiarly patronizing view of Austen as a minute recorder of the social life of the landed gentry who avoided the larger topics such as politics—and, it turns out, whales. And while it is true that there are no chapters on whales in Austen’s fiction, there are many references to animals. For example, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood take their son “to see the wild beasts at Exeter Exchange”. *Pride and Prejudice*’s Mrs. Bennet, enthusiastic at the prospect of Mr. Bingley’s “four or five thousand a year”, offers, “When you have killed all your own birds, Mr. Bingley ... I beg you will come here, and shoot as many as you please, on Mr. Bennet’s manor”. In *Northanger Abbey*, General Tilney boasts to the heroine of his gifts of game to the neighborhood and John Thorpe appears on the scene by “check[ing]” his horse “with a violence which almost threw him on his haunches”.³ And Lady Bertram spends much of her time inside Mansfield Park on the sofa with her pug. Austen’s fiction, celebrated for its rendering of human nature, also includes the nonhuman. That the eighteenth century marked a significant shift in the human–animal relationship and the emergence of animal advocacy is, by now, well documented. It is important

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to read Austen in this context because not doing so reifies the persistent version of Austen snug “inside” the country house and not engaged with the issues of her day.⁴ The gendered corollary to dismissing the reference to domesticated and commodified animals is to minimize the scope of Austen’s domestic fiction. I argue that Austen draws parallels between the positions of women and animals, and interrogates the human–animal divide from a feminist perspective.

“DEEP-ROOTED PREJUDICES”: SPECIESISM AND PATRIARCHY

Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, which argues for the equal consideration of the interests of animals alongside humans, offers one of the seminal definitions of speciesism: “a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species”, akin to racism and sexism as a structure of thought.⁵ We can see early articulations of this insight in eighteenth-century texts on animal advocacy, which denaturalize human attitudes toward animals as a form of prejudice. For example, George Nicholson’s *On the Primeval Diet of Man; Arguments in Favour of Vegetable Food; On Man’s Conduct to Animals* (1801) casts the assumption of human superiority to animals as the result of “deep-rooted prejudices”. Similarly, John Lawrence’s *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses and on the Moral Duties of Men towards the Brute Creation* (1796) speaks of “human pride, prejudice, and cruelty”.⁶ These texts reflect the long eighteenth century’s profound shift in thinking about animals, a transition from a Cartesian view of animals as machines to a recognition of them as sentient beings with legitimate claims for ethical consideration. Humphrey Primatt’s *Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (1776) was one of the first to make an argument for direct obligation to animals on the basis of sentience: “pain is pain, whether it be inflicted on man or on beast”. Furthermore, animal cruelty was linked to other forms of oppression, particularly in the late eighteenth century when, as Christine Kenyon-Jones demonstrates, “the issue of animal cruelty became associated with questions of rights and citizenship”. The title of *The Cry of Nature; Or, an Appeal to Mercy and Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (1791) announces its author, John Oswald, as a “Member of the Club des Jacobines”, aligning the animal cause with other revolutionary causes, and Thomas Young’s *An Essay on Humanity to Animals* (1798) situates animal advocacy next to social justice claims such as “the sufferings of the prisoner ... the condition of the poor ... [and] the abolition of the slave-trade”.⁷

Austen would have been aware that the status of animals was a question of considerable political and literary import. She likely would have heard about the parliamentary debates surrounding anti-bullbaiting in 1800 and 1802 and the proposed anti-cruelty bill in 1809, which “was widely reported in the press and subsequently published as a pamphlet”.⁸ We can be certain that Austen was conversant with anti-cruelty arguments through her reading of William Cowper, one of her favorite writers whom she quotes in her fiction and

correspondence. Cowper's most famous poem *The Task* is explicit in its critique of rural sport as it "owes its pleasures to another's pain". Furthermore, the poem sees sport as opposed to an appreciation of nature: it is the sportsman's "supreme delight / To fill with riot, and defile with blood" the "scenes form'd for contemplation". Cowper also implies a connection between cruelty to animals and cruelty to humans:

"The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased
With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own."⁹

The Task was quoted in parliament by Lord Erskine when introducing a bill against animal cruelty in 1809.¹⁰ Cowper was a favorite with writers like Young and Joseph Ritson, who invoked his poetry in support of their animal advocacy. Austen was familiar with the poetry of her Romantic contemporaries, whose questioning of human dominion over animals has been explored by critics such as David Perkins in *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. A tradition of women's writing on the treatment of animals also was available to Austen. Sylvia Bowerbank's *Speaking for Nature* traces the beginnings of ecological and eco-feminist movements and demonstrates that "during the late eighteenth century, women produced an important body of texts that ... denounced the oppression of animals".¹¹

In *Letters on Education* (1790), which we know Austen read, Catharine Macaulay writes that animals are capable of a "high degree of mental" and "bodily pain", and hence deserve moral consideration as well as legal protection. Macaulay connects the position of animals to the position of women. She speaks of women's subjugation as man's "prejudice" and animals' subjugation as the "fond prejudices and pride of our species".¹² She recognizes that the disenfranchisement of women was legitimized by their alleged closeness to nature (and animals), rather than culture. Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft, an enthusiastic reader of Macaulay's treatise, writes in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that women "are treated as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as a part of the human species".¹³ Wollstonecraft and Macaulay protest that women's so-called nature is rather a product of education and insisted on women's rational capacity. But their critique goes beyond this. Recognizing that the position of women within patriarchy is rooted in the ideology of women's proximity to the natural and physical realms, rather than the rational (masculine) realm, both Macaulay and Wollstonecraft rethink the social construction of not only women's but also animals' "nature". Both challenge the object status of animals and instead accentuate their sentience. The treatment of animals is part of Macaulay's argument: "No statue, bust, or monument, should be permitted a place in the church, but of those citizens who have been

especially useful in mitigating the woes attendant on animal life; or who have been the authors of any invention, by which the happiness of man, or brute, may be rationally improved". Similarly, Wollstonecraft, in her educational writings, emphasizes the ethical treatment of animals. In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she argues that "Humanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education". Both writers develop what Bowerbank calls a "radicalized concept of compassion".¹⁴

Austen draws on these arguments about interconnected structures of oppression. Her correspondence offers startling references to marriage and maternity as animalizing women. A letter to her sister Cassandra in 1808, after offering congratulations on the birth of Edward and Elizabeth Austen Knight's sixth son, goes on to comment on a mutual friend, Mrs. Tilson: "poor Woman! how can she be honestly breeding again?" And in a letter to Fanny Knight in 1817, she writes of her niece Anna: "Poor Animal, she will be worn out before she is thirty.—I am very sorry for her".¹⁵ The novels are not quite as blunt, but the heroines find themselves perilously close to the status of animals in a culture which denied women citizenship (e.g. in terms of the right to bear arms, vote, or own property), and the novels explore the pain of their subordination and vindicate their feeling, thinking natures. Rejecting the persistent Mr. Collins, *Pride and Prejudice's* Elizabeth Bennet entreats him, "consider me ... a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart" (122). Austen develops sustained parallels between the positions of women and animals in her representation of rural sport. In *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, Willoughby is an avid sportsman—of both animals and women. Elinor concludes that his dalliance with her sister had been a form of "sport" (398). In his own words, he had been "careless of her happiness, thinking only of my own amusement" (362). His conduct toward women is repeatedly described in terms of cruelty (209, 215, 216, 363, 365). *Mansfield Park's* Henry Crawford speaks of his pursuit of Fanny Price in explicitly violent terms:

And how do you think I mean to amuse myself ... on the days that I do not hunt? I am grown too old to go out more than three times a week; but I have a plan for the intermediate days ... My plan is to make Fanny Price in love with me ... I cannot be satisfied without Fanny Price, without making a small hole in Fanny Price's heart.¹⁶

When his sister objects, he glibly replies, "if a fortnight can kill her, she must have a constitution which nothing could save" (269). That Fanny is no easy target increases her appeal; he was "determined ... to have the glory, as well the felicity, of forcing her to love him" (376). The treatment of women as prey extends beyond the predators like Willoughby and Henry Crawford, and casts shadows over the marriage plots.

Austen skillfully negotiated a variety of expectations and audiences; her marriage plots enjoy the status of romances, but also sustain contrapuntal readings, particularly by feminist and queer critics. The latter observe how Austen's

marriage plots are far from tidy. The ideological fissures in Austen's novels trouble, to quote the narrator in *Northanger Abbey*, the "hastening ... to perfect felicity" (259) which marriage is supposed to signal. In a provocative reading of Austen's famous and playful description of *Pride and Prejudice* as "too light & bright & sparkling", Joseph Litvak suggests that Austen was critical of the "marriage plot, whereby the traditional novel idealizes heterosexuality and its reproduction"; rather she "may in fact be seen as at once authorizing and enacting an *ill-mannered reading* of her own text".¹⁷ I argue that Austen's consistent alignment of women with animals is one of the ways in which she "authorize[s] and enact[s]" counter-readings of the very marriage plot that structures her novels. Furthermore, the oppression of nature and animals is implicitly critiqued by its connection to the heroines, who are rational, feeling beings but are treated as objects by patriarchal society. I will now turn to *Mansfield Park* as an extended example of why animals matter in Austen.

"I MUST BE A BRUTE INDEED": PUG AND OTHER ANIMALS IN *MANSFIELD PARK*

The connections drawn in *Mansfield Park* between patriarchy at home and imperialism abroad have been well charted in feminist criticism.¹⁸ Austen not only examines the connections between the status of the poor, dependent heroine and the status of slaves, but also links their subjugation to that of nature and animals. In their anxiety about social hierarchy, the Bertrams continually remind Fanny of her lower status, at times treating her like an animal. When Fanny arrives at the great house, Lady Bertram exerts herself to "smile and make" Fanny "sit on the sofa with herself and pug" (14). Lady Bertram's dog is an important detail. Marc Shell argues that pet owners "experience a relationship ever present in political ideology: the relationship between the distinction of which beings are our familial kin from which are not kin and the distinction of which beings are our species kind from which are not our kind".¹⁹ *Mansfield Park* is a novel about "the distinction proper to be made" (11–12) between Fanny and her cousins. This "distinction"—who rides for "pleasure" versus who rides for "health", and so on—extends outward from the domestic world to its larger context: the distinction between Mansfield Park and Portsmouth, England and Antigua. Austen uses the figure of the pet pug to destabilize these social boundaries. Pets, as Erica Fudge writes, are "animals out of place, and ... in that 'out-of-placedness' they disturb the hygiene of the boundaries that give us certainty about who we are".²⁰

In eighteenth-century literature, lapdogs, as Markman Ellis demonstrates, "emblemize the malevolent, spiteful, and hypocritical quality of their female owners, who demonstrate an 'unfeeling' nature" toward their human dependents.²¹ In keeping with this theme, Lady Bertram "think[s] more of her pug than her children" (22). She is willfully blind to her niece's suffering and complicit in the "dead silence" (231) following Fanny's question about the slave

trade. In this sense, Lady Bertram and her pug conform to the pattern described by Ellis, but Austen also goes beyond it by gesturing towards the dog's objectification.²² The fact that Lady Bertram does not name him, simply identifying him by breed, undercuts the claim to affection for the animal. Richard Nash relates the emerging practice of naming companionate animals in the eighteenth century to growing recognition and consideration of animal subjectivity.²³ Calling the dog by his generic breed indicates that he is valued primarily as a possession. This particular breed was prized in eighteenth-century England as an "imperial commodity" and "maximally exoticized because ... far-Eastern in origin".²⁴ Lady Bertram also is clueless about the dog's sex, alternately calling him male (86), female (385), and "it" (11). Furthermore, it is significant that pug has some discomforts of his own. When Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris discuss the adoption of Fanny, Lady Bertram is concerned that Fanny might "tease my poor pug" (11) as her children have done. Given that understatement is something of an art at Mansfield Park (her uncle Sir Thomas describes the systemic abuse of Fanny as "little privations and restrictions" [361]), we can imagine that Fanny's cousins' "teasing" of the dog might well have a cruel edge.

The position of the pug has some parallels with that of Fanny. Shell argues that the pet is a "crossing-over point": it is "both human and nonhuman" and "both familial and nonfamilial"; it "stands at the intersection between species [and] ... between families".²⁵ In that sense, Fanny is treated like a pet—a position both privileged and precarious. She is a member of the family, but there has to be "a difference" (21): not born into the class and wealth of the landed gentry, she "cannot be equal" to the Bertrams of Mansfield Park (12). Fanny is both inside and outside the Bertram circle. Mrs. Norris enjoins Fanny to always remember "who and what she is" (172). Fanny is and is not family; a "who" and a "what", she is and is not quite human to those who consider themselves her betters.

Her almost perpetual "gratitude" is somewhat akin to the unconditional loyalty and malleability human owners expect from their pets, and it is telling that her gratitude is often mixed with "pain" (93). Fanny's supposed lack of "independence of spirit" (367) endears her to Sir Thomas. Like a pet, Fanny lives under the duality of "dominance and affection", the title of Yi-Fu Tuan's seminal history of petkeeping.²⁶ To receive her uncle's affection, she must submit to his domination. When she refuses Henry Crawford's marriage proposal, she meets Sir Thomas's "displeasure" (364, 366) and "cold sternness" (367), and she is removed from the "elegancies and luxuries of Mansfield Park" (425). Sir Thomas's "anger" (370) fills our heroine with guilt: "I must be a brute indeed, if I can be really ungrateful" (372). The choice of words is telling, revealing Fanny's internalization of her animalization.

The novel consistently aligns Fanny and nature to explore the ideological connections between the position of nature and animals and that of women and other subordinated groups. Fanny's room, significantly, is her "nest of comforts" (179); formerly inhabited by the governess, then abandoned, it is a

room that “nobody else wanted” (177). It is a retreat for Fanny but at the same time a space of deprivation and a space of great vulnerability (some of the key scenes which threaten the heroine’s autonomy are set here). Among Fanny’s “comfort[s]” are mementos, books, plants, and “her works of charity and ingenuity” (178), giving the room both ethical and creative dimensions. William Deresiewicz perceptively points out that Fanny’s plants are “the only houseplants in all of Austen”, making the room a green space.²⁷ Further, the lack of a fire (one of the privations marking Fanny’s second-class status) situates the room between inside and outside, for Fanny’s residence there is dependent on the seasons and weather: “while there was a gleam of sunshine, she hoped not to be driven from it entirely, even when winter came” (177–78). Fanny’s room as a nest is an example of metaphoric associations that run throughout the novel, linking the heroine to animals. The pedagogical plan of raising Fanny is a form of “breed[ing]” (7), as Mrs. Norris puts it. There are repeated references to Fanny as “creeping” (16, 171, 193, 326) through the house which speak to her status in the hierarchy as always less-than, barely even human.

The references to Fanny as a “thing” further emphasize her objectified status at Mansfield. Hoping that it will make Fanny reconsider Henry Crawford’s proposal, Sir Thomas intends her to feel privation: “She had tasted of consequence in its most flattering form; and he did hope that the loss of it, the sinking again into *nothing*, would awaken very wholesome regrets in her mind” (422; emphasis mine). For Fanny to count as someone means giving up her agency. In this sense, the precarity of Fanny’s position again is similar to that of the pet whose special status is dependent on obedience.

The novel not only demonstrates the interconnectedness of the ideologies which objectify women, the poor, slaves, and animals, but also directly challenges these ideologies by clearly establishing Fanny as the most feeling being in the novel. The physiological and psychological effects of Fanny’s inferior status at Mansfield Park are vividly documented, as John Wiltshire’s *Jane Austen and the Body* illuminates. When arriving at Mansfield Park at ten years old, she is “afraid of every body, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left” (14) and “sob[s] herself to sleep” (16). Lady Bertram is oblivious to her niece’s dread at the prospect of living with her other aunt Mrs. Norris: “It can make little difference to you, whether you are in one house or the other” (28). Such justifications are patently untrue. We see that Fanny suffers emotionally and physically. “Standing and stooping in a hot sun” to carry out “errand[s]” (85) for her aunts makes her ill with headache. While Fanny has not won popularity contests among readers, it is virtually impossible to not see her as the most reflective character in the novel. These two factors—her sentience and her intellect—serve to indict those who treat her as “the lowest and last” (258), and call into question the social hierarchy, including the human–animal hierarchy. Perhaps it is Fanny’s experience of subordination which leads her to view nature and animals differently than the other characters.

Fanny’s appreciation of nature is consistently emphasized. At Sotherton, she laments the cutting of trees: “What a pity! Does not it make you think of

Cowper? ‘Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited’” (66). (While Fanny does not quote *The Task’s* denouncement of animal cruelty, a careful reader such as her no doubt can recall such passages, too.) The heroine delights in the beauties of the night sky at Mansfield, the ocean at Portsmouth, and the varieties of “evergreen” (244). Her response to nature is in pointed contrast to that of the other characters. For example, while Fanny reflects on “the sweets of ... autumn” and admires the “growth and beauty” of the shrubbery at the Parsonage, her companion, Mary Crawford, “untouched and inattentive, had nothing to say” (243): she “saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women” (94). Everyone, with the exception of Fanny, looks at nature as a commodity, resource, or territory to be improved. Fanny’s attentiveness to nature thus has an ethical dimension. Looking at “the brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shade of the woods”, Fanny “feel[s] as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried out of themselves by contemplating such a scene” (132). At this point in the novel, Fanny has had direct personal experience with “wickedness” and “sorrow”, such as the loss of her family and her ongoing humiliation at the hands of Mrs. Norris. She also has observed Henry Crawford’s unscrupulously selfish dalliance with the Bertram sisters, now divided by envy and jealousy. Immediately preceding Fanny’s comment is a conversation between Mary Crawford, Edmund and herself about Dr. Grant’s temper and the resultant domestic unhappiness, and the announcement of Sir Thomas’s return from Antigua. The point is that Fanny’s contemplation of nature is linked to social critique and leads her to think about others.²⁸

Just as Fanny’s responsiveness to nature stands out in the novel, so does her relationship to animals. In contrast to Lady Bertram’s ownership of her dog and the male characters’ hunting and shooting of animals, Fanny’s relationship with animals is described in affective terms. The “old grey pony” is “her valued friend” whose death affects Fanny: “for some time she was in danger of feeling the loss in her health as well as in her affections” (41). This emotional connection with the pony challenges the instrumental view of animals. That such moments matter is made clear when they are in pointed contrast to Mrs. Norris’s self-proclaimed compassion for animals. For example, trying to sidestep Sir Thomas’s questions about her failure to supervise the young Bertrams in his absence, she shifts the topic to her solicitude toward his horses during a recent day trip to Sotherton:

You know how I always feel for the horses. And when we got to the bottom of Sandcroft Hill, what do you think I did? You will laugh at me—but I got out and walked up ... It might not be saving them much, but it was something, and I could not bear to sit at my ease, and be dragged up at the expense of those noble animals. I caught a dreadful cold, but *that* I did not regard. (222)

The scene's context makes Mrs. Norris's self-interest transparent. In contrast, we can recognize Fanny's true empathy for animals in her reaction to Mary Crawford's long horseback ride. She borrows the mare that Edmund lends Fanny for her exercise, and begins "to think it rather hard upon the mare to have such double duty; if she were forgotten the poor mare should be remembered" (79). Fanny believes in the shared sentience of human and nonhuman animals, for she, like *Northanger Abbey's* Catherine Morland, who asks John Thorpe if his horse needs "rest" (42), can imagine the mare's physical exhaustion. Fanny is thus animalized in two ways: the Bertrams and Mrs. Norris treat the heroine as an animal to subjugate her, and the novel challenges the human-animal hierarchy (and associated social hierarchies) by attaching positive associations to Fanny's closeness to the animal world which grounds her ethics in a connectedness to others.

Fanny's marriage to Edmund at the end of the novel is often read as Austen's endorsement of the patriarchal and imperialist ideologies embedded in the great house. But this closure comes with significant anxiety. The conclusions of Austen's novels tend to be perfunctory and self-consciously draw attention to their artifice. The "parodic elements of [the] denouement" in *Mansfield Park* are a case in point.²⁹ The narrator tells us: "I purposely abstain from dates on this occasion ... I only intreat every body to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire" (544). Furthermore, while Fanny manages to escape Henry Crawford, the novel's likening of courtship to a sport which objectifies and harms women certainly implicates the central marriage plot. Edmund is not outside the world of hunters; his participation in the sport links him to Henry Crawford, and Edmund was himself willing to use Fanny, to pressure her into marrying Henry Crawford, in order to advance his own pursuit of Crawford's sister. Moreover, the novel spells out that Fanny's aunt and uncle persist in valuing her for her usefulness to them. "I am very glad we took Fanny as we did, for now the others are away, we feel the good of it" (331), says Lady Bertram. Sir Thomas's "charitable kindness had been rearing a prime comfort for himself. His liberality had a rich repayment" (546).

Marriage does bring Fanny, and Austen's other heroines, degrees of economic security and social integration, but it also compromises their liberty. To give another example, at the end of *Sense and Sensibility*, the happy Elinor and Edward have "nothing to wish for, but the marriage of Colonel Brandon and Marianne, and rather better pasturage for their cows" (425). This casual yoking together of marriage and milk production is strikingly suggestive. It parallels women's domestic role to the subordination of nature for human ends, and registers the anxiety that marriage and maternity animalize women. The novel hesitates to cast Marianne's marriage to Brandon in romantic light, instead emphasizing Marianne's utility: Edward, Elinor, and Mrs. Dashwood "each felt [Colonel Brandon's] sorrows, and their own obligations, and Marianne, by general consent, was to be the reward" (429) for Colonel Brandon. The

objectification of Marianne in the marriage plot is reiterated when we see her cast into a passive role through it: “she found herself at nineteen, submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village” (429–30). Screen adaptations tend to gloss over Austen’s critique of the marriage plot.³⁰ John Alexander’s 2008 television adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, for example, is intent on amplifying the Colonel Brandon and Marianne plot as romance, and this also entails the idealization of human dominion over animals. Its glamorization of Colonel Brandon in part relies on his mastery of animals. With Colonel Brandon on horseback in the background, Elinor compares his style of courtship to the breaking in of horses: “the great tamers of horses do it by being gentle and then walking away. Nine times out of ten the wild horse will follow”. Sure enough, this Marianne does. There is also an invented scene of Colonel Brandon as falconer—with a suitably impressed Marianne looking on: the falcon has been tamed and trained, and so has Marianne. While the film casts this in a romantic light, Austen is far less sanguine about the animalization of women and their subordination in marriage.

“THE LOWEST AND LAST”: CONCLUSION

While this essay is primarily concerned with making the case for why animals matter in Austen, it also suggests more broadly that animals matter even—or especially—when they seem not to be a text’s central focus. This may seem a somewhat perverse claim to make (I was once asked at a conference why I didn’t just work on texts that were more explicitly about animals). But to ignore references to menageries, prey, meat, and carriages reinforces the ideologies which objectify animals, then and now. While many of us feel a deep connection with the animals that share our homes, we remain largely disassociated from the historically unprecedented exploitation of animals in agribusiness and medical experimentation (and the ways in which the pet industry is implicated in both). Much of contemporary animal activism seeks to expose this hidden suffering and to challenge what Owain Jones has called the “un(ethical) geographies of human/non-human relations”. Reading references to animal commodities as being about animals—to restore, using Carol J. Adams’s now classic formulation in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, the “absent referent”—can be part of the advocacy dimension of scholarship.³¹ This chapter also suggests that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature offers important historical context for current thinking about the intersectionality of structures of oppression. Further, this literature moves toward an understanding of the species divide as socially constructed and put to the ideological work of naturalizing social hierarchy. Writing at a time when women, slaves, and the poor were not ascribed the same status and full humanity of white upper-class men, Austen explores how the human–animal divide subordinates nonhumans as well as humans, those who, like Fanny, are “the lowest and last” on the social hierarchy.

NOTES

1. Grey, "Pets", 324. See Seeber, *Austen and Animals*.
2. Weinsheimer, "Jane Austen's Anthropocentrism", 138, 134.
3. Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, 252; Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 4, 373; Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 216, 39.
4. Williams, *The Country and the City*, 112.
5. Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 7.
6. Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, 2; Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*, 1:78.
7. Primatt, *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy*, 7; Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, 40; Young, *An Essay on Humanity to Animals*, 2.
8. Kenyon-Jones, 80.
9. Cowper, *The Task*, lines 3.327, 3.306–07, 3.301, 6.321–26.
10. Kenyon-Jones, 90.
11. Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty*; Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature*, 21.
12. Macaulay, *Letters on Education*, 189, 49, 1.
13. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 73.
14. Macaulay, 336; Wollstonecraft, 243; Bowerbank, 5.
15. Austen, *Letters*, 140, 336.
16. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 267. Hereafter page references are cited in text.
17. Austen, *Letters*, 203; Litvak, *Strange Gourmets*, 22.
18. See, for example, Fraiman's "Jane Austen and Edward Said".
19. Shell, "The Family Pet", 121.
20. Fudge, *Pets*, 19.
21. Ellis, "Suffering Things", 101.
22. For a contrasting view, see Palmer's "Slipping the Leash".
23. Nash, "Animal Nomenclature".
24. Stearns, "Lady Bertram's Lapdog", 450; Wyatt, "The Lap of Luxury", 280. Also see Howard-Smith's argument about pug as an allusion to the slave trade in "Hearty Fow Children".
25. Shell, 137.
26. Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*.
27. Deresiewicz, *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets*, 58.
28. For contrasting readings, see Mee's "Austen's Treacherous Ivory" and Landry's "Learning to Ride at Mansfield Park".
29. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel*, 114.
30. See Kaplan on the "harlequin-ization of Austen's novels" ("Mass Marketing Jane Austen" 171).
31. Jones, "Un(ethical) Geographies of Human/Non-Human Relations", 268; Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 40.

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John Keats and the Sound of Autumn: Reading Poetry in a Time of Extinction

Michael Malay

In “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, T. S. Eliot writes that canonical works “form an ideal order among themselves”.¹ This order is based on two contradictory but united principles: continuity and coherence, on the one hand, and, on the other, disruption and innovation. “[N]o artist of any art”, Eliot writes, “has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists” (38). On this view, a new work of art is always in some kind of dialogue with the past—with the totality of the artworks that preceded it—even if it marks a radical departure from inherited forms. However, the relationship extends both ways. If the past exercises its power over the present, shaping how art is made, perceived and understood, the past is likewise influenced by the present, refashioned and remade by contemporary events. Or, as Eliot puts it, the order that “monumental works” form among themselves is not static but changeable: it can always be “modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art” (38). Whoever accepts this idea, he continues, “will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past” (39). Once written, literary works do not exist in a timeless realm; rather, they are open to and continually revised by the future. We do

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not simply read Alice Oswald's *Memorial* in light of Homer's *Iliad*, we read the *Iliad* in light of *Memorial*.

This chapter takes Eliot's proposition one step further by addressing it from an environmental perspective. In particular, it explores what it might mean to read poetry during a time of mass extinction. It thinks about what happens, or what might happen, when the reciprocal relations between poetry and the natural world begin to fray, when the lively forms that inspire art become increasingly rare or, in cases of extinction, disappear altogether. If the past, according to Eliot, is "altered by the present", then how might our sense of literary history be reshaped by the large-scale disappearance of animal life? What new meanings does poetry accumulate, and what meanings are lost from poetry, during a time of extinction?

The accelerated loss of animal life from the planet provokes such questions. This is because extinction is not only a biological event, but a cultural one too. When a particular creature disappears from the world, a special way of being, a certain kind of singularity, also disappears. And because literature, as the poems under discussion will reveal, partly derives its meanings from our interactions with animal life, the degradation of the natural world may involve the diminishment of what is artistically possible. When W. H. Auden writes that a "culture is no better than its woods", he seems to have such a relationship in mind: since nature and art are so deeply interwoven, the unstitching of nature's tapestry also impinges upon cultural life.² In this conception, art does not stand outside or above nature, but is co-constituted by it (not to mention preceded by it). The state of poetry, we might say, is linked in indefinable ways to the state of nature. It is in this special sense that extinction is also a "cultural" event, especially in those cases where there are close relationships between particular human and nonhuman communities. Animals are co-creators of the world we live in—contributors to its colours, sounds, smells, forms, and textures. Their loss from the world also involves, therefore, the loss of singularity, on which the artistic imagination is partly nourished.

Thinking about literature in these terms is both troubling and salutary—obviously troubling because, in light of the current environmental crisis, we begin to see how much literary history depends upon natural history; but also salutary because, in evaluating literary texts from this perspective, we realise how essential nature is to culture. The arrival of the common cuckoo in Europe, for instance, offered a way of marking the seasons: its pure, unmistakable song was synonymous with spring. But the cuckoo was also, within a particular literary tradition in Britain, a kind of shorthand for nature's continuity, as well as the vitality of animal life. Its presence was symbolically charged, its song overlaid with multiple meanings. Over time, these symbols and meanings have been borrowed, developed, revised and otherwise expanded upon by a whole range of poets, such that the cuckoo has become an essential strand in a tradition of poems about "spring" (understood both as a season in the year and a metaphorical season in the lives of men and women). The bird inspired one of the oldest songs in the English language, "Sumer is icumen in", and also attracted

the attentions of William Wordsworth, John Clare, Gerard Manley Hopkins and W. H. Auden, to name a handful of poets.³ And, since later poets writing about the bird were often familiar with the work of their predecessors, a whole intertextual tradition involving homage, allusion and sub-text built up around the common cuckoo.

The steady disappearance of the species from Britain—there has been a 65 per cent decline in numbers since the early 1980s—is therefore not only an ecological concern, although it is, of course, primarily that, but also a literary question.⁴ Literary texts, after all, derive part of their meaning from a set of experiences that are common to a culture; when those experiences are no longer widely shared, then the significance of certain motifs and the power of particular descriptions lose some of their immediacy, or, and this may amount to the same thing, can only be recovered through historical reconstruction. In this way, extirpation and extinction not only affect our sense of the present and the future; they can also affect our reading of and relationship to the past. To read poetry from the perspective of extinction is to see how biodiversity loss, which sends ripples through space, also sends ripples through time, altering our sense, to borrow a phrase from W. B. Yeats, of what is “past, or passing, or to come”.⁵

One can demonstrate the rippling effects of extinction by way of a thought-experiment. If it is possible to think of poems as “models for energy flow, community building, and ecosystems”, as William Rueckert does, then what would happen if we extended this thought?⁶ What if we also thought of poems as *vulnerable* ecosystems, living landscapes that continue to be affected by changes happening today? What if, every time an animal became endangered or extinct, the poetry of the past was retrospectively altered, terrible redactions made, certain lines struck from the record? Louis Rutledge, tabulating the number of times insects and arthropods appear in Emily Dickinson’s work, concludes that 10 per cent of her poetry concerns the world of bugs.⁷ If you were to pick up an “insect-less” collection of her work, the book in your hands would be shot through with holes.

In pursuing this thought-experiment, my aim is to literalise Eliot’s reading of the literary tradition: if the present has the power to alter the past, then how might extinction redefine our sense of the literary tradition? The point of developing this line of thought is to give a fuller sense of why extinctions are not only biological phenomena—the unravelling of evolutionary lines—but events which also have the power to reconfigure culture. For millennia, human communities have grown up alongside nonhuman ones, forming what Thom van Dooren calls “relationships of co-evolution and ecological dependency”. According to van Dooren, these are complex relationships which extend beyond “‘biology’ in any narrow sense”. Indeed, it is through such “entanglements that learning and development take place” and “that social practices and cultures are transformed”. Our relationships with animals, in other words, partly shape how we understand the world and how we make sense of ourselves: they “produce the possibility of both life and any given way of life”.⁸ If

this is so, then the extinction of those animals whose histories are folded into ours involves the impoverishment of what van Dooren calls “entangled significance”, an unravelling of a whole organisation of being-with-others, and so a way of existing and behaving in the world (7).

The second half of this chapter offers a close reading of John Keats’s “To Autumn”, a poem in which animals feature prominently. There the aim is to dwell on the affirmative dimensions of poetry. Aware of the power of declensionist narratives—the “elegiac and tragic modes” that Ursula Heise identifies as central to most extinction stories and that need to be replaced, she argues, with more nuanced responses—the chapter concludes by thinking about the ways that poets, attending closely to the natural world, provide models of seeing and relating to animal life that, in a time of mass extinction, we would do well to learn from.⁹ Of course, this emphasis on environmental poetry might be thought of as a paltry response to the phenomena of extinction, and, in many ways, it *is* just that. Nevertheless, it is motivated by the principle that close, slow and attentive readings of poetic texts might stimulate the kind of sensitive appreciation for animal life that conservationists are trying to cultivate in the public imagination (an argument elaborated below). The suggestion is that poetry might help us see, in Rilke’s phrase, “more seeingly”, thus nurturing more thoughtful ways of relating to animal life and so deepening our care for them.¹⁰ After all, it is difficult to fight for things one does not care for, and one cannot care for things one has no relation to. The power of poetry, in this context, may be its capacity to attune us to the world of others, to make visible the entangled relations between humans and the nonhuman world. It may be, then, that poems from the past can teach us about futures they could never have imagined.

II

Sometime in April 2017, I began compiling a notebook. The notebook collected poems in which insects played a prominent role, from Yeats’s “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”, with its “bee-loud glade”, to John Clare’s poems about beetles, grasshoppers and crickets.¹¹ The notebook was an anthology of sorts, except for this peculiar variation: every line that mentioned an insect was cut out with a pen-knife and removed from the poem, leaving behind a “redacted” text which was then mounted onto the notebook’s black pages. Thus, Emily Dickinson’s “Two Butterflies Went Out at Noon” came to look like this (Fig. 1), while Keats’s sonnet “On the Grasshopper and Cricket” came to look like this (Fig. 2).

The experience of compiling the scrapbook was strange: to remove lines from the poems felt like an act of desecration, a kind of vandalism. But the exercise was also heuristic: the scrapbook helped give visual expression to ecological degradation, dramatising what species loss from poetic ecosystems might “look like”. The creatures removed from the poems above—Dickinson’s butterflies, Keats’s cricket and grasshopper—are still part of our landscapes

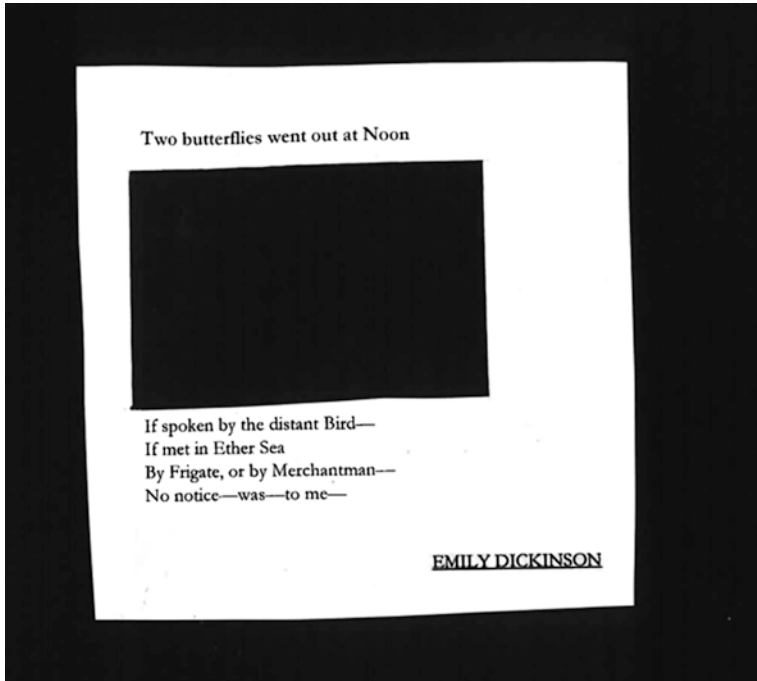


Fig. 1 “Two Butterflies went out at Noon”, Emily Dickinson

today. However, many species among these insect groups are threatened, and in some cases critically endangered, both in North America and the British Isles. If they were to completely disappear, part of the meaning of these poems would vanish too.

Conservationists talk about “trophic cascades”, a term which describes how, with the addition or the removal of a keystone species, ecosystems can experience dramatic changes in their organisation.¹² In relation to literature, we might use the term “poetic cascades” to describe how changes to an environment might lead to shifts in cultural meanings, to alterations in what makes sense for a community. In the scrapbook, these changes are visualised in a direct way: “gaps” in a poem are made to stand in for cultural absences, for aporias of experience that open up when a particular species disappears. As with “trophic cascades”, in which ecosystems are altered in often unpredictable ways, the outcomes of “poetic cascades” are also unforeseeable. In Keats’s poem, for example, the experience of summer is indissolubly bound up with the sound of the grasshopper, whose “voice”, running from “hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead”, exists as a continual thrumming in the landscape.¹³ Secreted in the pockets of the field, the grasshopper is “never done / With his delights”: even in the midday heat, when all the other creatures are silent, it continues to sing (lines 6–7). The grasshopper has a particular way of

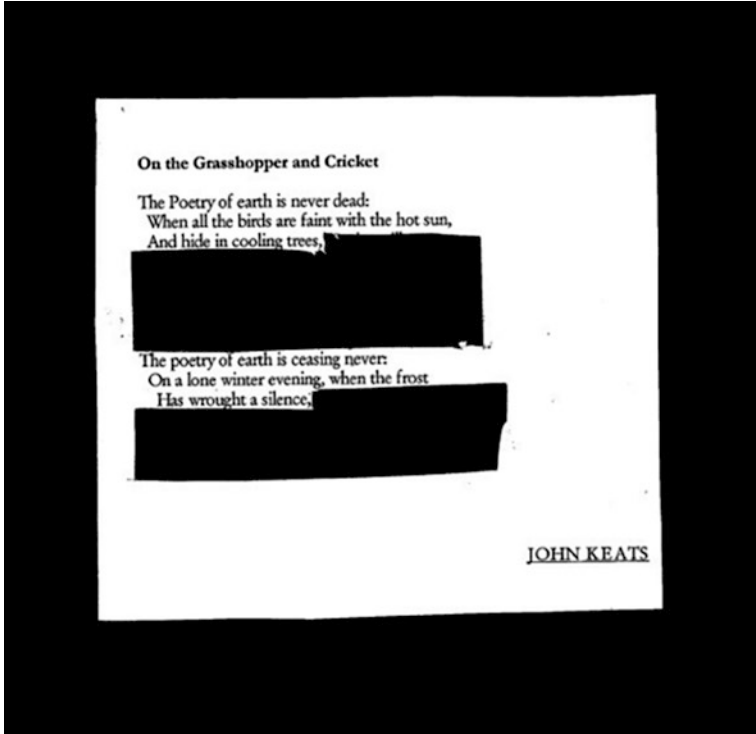


Fig. 2 “On the Grasshopper and Cricket”, John Keats

being in the landscape and a particular place within it: when “tired out with fun”, you will find him resting “at ease beneath some pleasant weed” (lines 7–8). However, even as the creature is individuated in this way, it is clear that Keats’s grasshopper also stands in for something much larger, is in fact seen (or heard) as an emanation of the summer itself. In the poem, the experience of “summer” is also the experience of the “grasshopper”: the two terms belong to each other.

In the scrapbook version of the sonnet, these associations are obscured: *contra* Keats, whose grasshopper sings when other creatures are silent, taking the choral “lead” from birds when they are “faint with the hot sun”, the grasshopper in the poem’s redacted version does not sing; an acoustic baton is dropped and the hedges no longer pulse with sound (lines 2–4). The aesthetic totality of the poem is likewise marred. Gone are the rhymes, for instance, between “mead”, “lead” and “weed”, an absence that has the effect of revealing how much the landscape was threaded through with the grasshopper’s presence. (Certain birds from which the creature takes its “lead” are partly there, after all, because they subsist on insects like the grasshopper.) In the poem’s redacted version, the collocation between “grasshopper” and

“summer” breaks down, and, as it disappears, it alters our sense of the whole, by weakening the poem’s range of meanings, experiences and associations.

The removal of another creature from Keats’s poem, the cricket, leads to a similar cascading effect. Singing in the winter, “when the frost / Has wrought a silence”, Keats’s cricket—like the grasshopper or the cuckoo—is another reminder of nature’s vitality and endurance (lines 10–11). (The poem is referring here to a house cricket, a species common in many UK homes before the mid-twentieth century, which lived next to, and was kept warm by, a stove or hearth.) Again, rhyme in the poem works by knitting together, by connecting elements of experience that we might otherwise take as discrete:

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket’s song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper’s among some grassy hills. (lines 10–14)

In the middle of winter, and in “drowsiness half lost”, the cricket’s song reminds the speaker of the grasshopper’s: the two sounds blend and merge, such that “shrills” recall “grassy hills”, and warm stoves the warmth of a summer’s day. Carefully balanced, Keats’s poem not only shows the rhythmic alterations between the seasons but also their apparent recursiveness, the sense in which winter contains a spark of summer, and summer a hint of winter. And what connects these different seasons is the pulsing of insect life: the “Cricket’s song” summons the memory of the grasshopper’s in summer, just as the grasshopper’s song anticipates the cricket’s in winter, in “warmth increasing ever”. Again, these associations are irreparably damaged when Keats’s poem is redacted. In the scrapbook version, the rhymes between “shrills” and “hills” are lost, rendering the link between summer and winter incoherent. An acoustic continuity is lost. In the “revised” version, indeed, the poem concludes with these uncanny lines: “On a lone winter evening, when the frost / Has wrought a silence”. Here, the cricket no longer has the last say; instead, the final words belong to the “frost”, which leaves behind an unpunctuated silence.

Redacted in this way, other lines from the poem also take on new, unintended meanings. The sonnet’s opening line, for instance, “The Poetry of earth is never dead”, now comes to signify its opposite: the poetry of earth *can* cease. For in the sonnet’s redacted version, the hedges no longer pulse with the grasshopper’s voice, just as the cricket no longer “shrills” from the stove, a sound which once made the “lone winter” evenings more companionable. Rather than celebrating the earth’s undying music, a perverse irony now attaches itself to the sonnet’s first line, which, in the poem’s redacted version, points precisely at what has been lost, at the level of both “Poetry” and sound.

The redaction of the cricket and the grasshopper are not discrete, isolated events. Instead, they affect the poem’s coherence in completely unpredictable

ways: gaps in the text precipitate much larger rifts in meaning.¹⁴ Might these ruptures in poetic meaning offer ways of thinking about the “cascade effect” in ecosystems? If we can think of poems as analogous to ecosystems, on the model that the integrity of basic elements in a literary text—words, rhymes, sounds and descriptions—are tightly interwoven, then the erasure of elements within a literary text—here, “grasshopper” and “cricket”—has a specifically environmental implication: it shows how quickly local losses scale up, pervading the system as a whole. In the case of actual landscapes, the effects of these losses can often be guessed at. The disappearance of grasshoppers and crickets, for instance, necessarily affects the birds that prey upon them—one of the causes, in fact, of the severe decline of the corn bunting in the UK. However, as with the unpredictability of poetic cascades, natural cascades also unfold in ways that are difficult to anticipate. Just as it is never clear how the loss of a particular word, rhyme or image in a poem might alter our sense of the poetic whole, it is equally uncertain how the disappearance of one species might alter the lives of others, even those animals with whom it was only peripherally connected. To be mindful of these connections, in ecosystems and literary texts alike, is to remember how much the “Poetry of earth” is one of ecological entanglements, cross-references and co-dependencies.

I continued adding to the scrapbook over the summer of 2017. At a certain point, however, the project no longer felt like a useful way of thinking about endangered life and extinction. There are limits, after all, to the method of thinking by negation. Imagining extinctions may clarify the shape of future absences, as a chalk drawing may outline the shape of a body, but the vitality of creaturely life is best rendered by extended engagement with the material presence of other animals. This capacity to evoke presence is arguably one of poetry’s strengths, as is its capacity to reveal—in particularly compressed and memorable form—patterns of connection and relationality between different objects and beings. The final section of this chapter therefore proceeds with a brief reading of another poem by Keats, by way of exploring how the writer’s careful attention to the world around him, as well as his generous recognition of the ecological entanglements at work in a particular landscape, models a form of generous attention that has become especially urgent today, and that might form an important strand of current efforts to overturn the disregard of animal life (cultural, perceptual and philosophical) that underlies the phenomena of mass extinction.

Why offer a close reading of a poem? And what bearing might this have on our thinking about extinction and endangered life? A number of reasons can be outlined here. First, if poetic writing can help us see “more seeingly”, then to notice how another poet notices can sharpen our own sensibilities: the connections they see, the entanglements they observe in nature, become, by virtue of our own intense engagement with a literary work, connections and entanglements we begin to feel and discern for ourselves. Slow reading is crucial to this process. For it is through slow reading that, as readers of poetry, we enact the attentiveness of other poets in our own minds and bodies, perceiving

relationships, recognising patterns, elaborating upon difficulties, and pondering over complexities that might otherwise go unregarded or unremarked. It is this kind of attentiveness that is arguably needed today, in our politics and in our relationships with nature, which, insofar as they can be generalised, are insufficiently environmental, in that they fail to recognise and properly accommodate the claims of ecological others (from plants to animals) and the various natural systems and entities that make up our planet (from oceans to the health of the soil). Of course, the scale of the environmental crisis raises difficult questions here: how can one justify slow reading at a time of swift ecological unravelling, when political action is what is most needed? Given the circumstances, might slow reading be a privileged exercise, a form of quietism in the midst of ecological breakdown? Again, answers to these questions based on aesthetic rather than political grounds are likely to sound feeble; nevertheless it is true that without aesthetics, and without other ways of imagining the world, our political visions are apt to be attenuated, shaped by the dominant contours and hegemonic realities of the present. To phrase this more positively: aesthetic visions can animate political ones, adding depth and vitality, as well as a phenomenological fullness, to ideas and arguments that might otherwise remain abstract. The aesthetic imagination can be central to our politics—at least in the sense of “imagination” defined by Jedidiah Purdy. “Imagination means how we see and how we learn to see, how we suppose the world works, how we suppose that it matters, and what we feel we have at stake in it.” Imagination “also enables us to do things together politically”, Purdy adds: “a new way of seeing the world can be a new way of valuing it—a map of things worth saving, or of a future worth creating”.¹⁵ The act of attentive reading can be seen and practiced in this context. Far from being a hermetic activity or a purely aesthetic exercise, close reading can be understood as a commitment to noticing detail and attending to complexity, a commitment which, in its cultivation of the arts of attention and care, has an ethical content as well. Understood in this way, close reading also has a practical dimension: it can contribute to the production of a “map of things worth saving”. The following section offers some provisional suggestions as to how poetry might do this, and how, by compelling us to attend more keenly to presence, poets can also help us appreciate, in a vivid and terrible way, the scope of the losses entailed by extinction.

III

On a fine autumn day, on September 21, 1819, John Keats wrote to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds to praise the landscapes and the weather in Winchester, Hampshire:

How beautiful the season is now—how fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather. Dian skies. I never lik'd stubble fields so much as now—Aye, better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a

stubble field looks warm—in the same way that some pictures look warm—this struck me so much in my Sunday’s walk that I composed upon it.¹⁶

Not long after this letter, Keats completed one of his most famous poems, his ode “To Autumn”. The poem begins with the following invocation:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun,
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
 To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o’er-brimm’d their clammy cells.¹⁷

The opening lines are characterised by a sensuous abundance, a tactile richness at the level of sound, rhyme and syntax. There are the full-rhymes between “core” and “more”, “shells” and “cells”, the half-rhymes between “mists” and “fruitfulness”, “fruitfulness” and “bless”, and the memorable doubling of words and phrases: “moss’d cottage-trees”, “thatch-eves run”, “load and bless”. This linguistic richness is matched by the fullness of the world being described: the mossy trees “bend” under the weight of apples, the gourds “swell” with matter, the hazel shells “fatten” with kernels; everywhere, “all fruit” is being filled with “ripeness to the core”. Indeed, the word “fruit” appears three times in this stanza, in line one with “fruitfulness”, in line four with the description of “fruit” on the vines, and in line six. Like the apple tree, it is as though Keats’s own lines were groaning under the weight of summer’s harvest. Or, to take another example from the poem, the poet’s language seems to find its organic counterpart in the abundance of the bees, whose clammy cells are over-brimming with honey. Both poem and organic matter appear to be animated by a steady, overflowing force, by a sheer sense of profusion, energy and zest.

This bounty spills over into the next stanza:

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep,
 Drows’d with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours. (lines 12–22)

The description of the wheat “twined” with “flowers” may seem a little puzzling. We are accustomed now to seeing fields of wheat and barley largely free of “weeds”. In the early 1800s, however, such fields would have been full of herbs and wildflowers, partly because today’s powerful herbicides did not then exist, and partly because the cleaning and sorting of crop seed was less efficient, meaning that flower seeds were inadvertently sown with cereals. Farmed land was therefore constantly pervaded by wild interlopers—dandelion, hogweed, thistle, poppy, dock, plantain—whose presence led to a flourishing community of insects who thrived on the abundance of nectar, pollen and seeds (as well as the birds who thrived on the abundance of insects).

Keats’s poem is in fact full of such moments of twining, of entanglements between the landscape’s different elements, and, more generally, entanglements between the human and the nonhuman. Recall, for instance, “the vines that round the thatch-eves run”, another example of nature criss-crossing with and growing over a human structure. Or consider another detail enfolded within this image of enfolding, the word “thatch-eves”, which recalls the natural materials used to build human constructions. In particular, the cottages Keats was referring to were likely thatched with a combination of bundled wheat straw, known as “yelms”, and hazel sticks that had been split and sharpened, known as “spars”. (When one considers that such hazel was collected from coppiced woodland, yet another strand of human–nonhuman entanglement is underscored: the long history between humans and forests.) In other words, everywhere we look in Keats’s poem, the natural world is woven into the human world, sometimes in ways that are planned, as in the thatched roofs, but also in ways that are uncontrolled, as in the wildflowers growing in the fields. In its various forms, human making, building and dwelling are shown to unfold in relation to and within the wider context of the natural world which makes those activities possible.

But Keats’s poem is not only concerned with spatial entanglements. As the references to time bear out, it is concerned with temporal cycles too. The poem is full of a sense of time passing, of process, of constant change. There is the furrow which lies “half-reap’d” (with its other half soon to follow); the “winnowing wind”, which separates the wheat from the chaff; and the “cider-press”, where the apples’ “last oozings” are gathering in barrels. Autumn’s touch—at once slightly warm and slightly chilly—transfigures the entire scene, producing a change here, a transformation there, slowly yet steadily changing the whole nature of the landscape. The apples, which had earlier bent down the “moss’d cottage-trees”, are now utterly changed, converted into liquid; while the fields, with their tall, swaying corn, are being cut back to the bareness of stubble. In other words, Keats’s poem dwells both in place and in time: the landscape it describes is always in flux, is constantly transfigured by the seasons.

This temporal dimension casts a special glow over the landscape, a glow that illuminates the health and ruddiness of things (the bulging gourds, the budding flowers) but which also underscores their fragility: in time, the “winnowing wind” will touch all things, even those things that, for the moment, seem vigorously far from death. The reaper may be still for the moment, “Drows’d with the fume of poppies”, but the entire furrow will soon be cut, taking, alongside it, the flowers growing in the corn. Noting the relations between human and nonhuman worlds, the speaker also emphasises their mutability, reminding us of the contingent nature of our dwelling-in-the-world and our relationships with others. The poem celebrates the fullness of things by attending to their fleeting, fragile nature; or, to reverse the terms, it is by appreciating the fleetingness of things that their presence is properly illuminated.

That celebration finds its highest expression in the poem’s final stanza:

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies. (lines 23–33)

Keats’s poem moves through three distinct stages. In the first stanza, we have descriptions of hefty abundance—swelling gourds, ripening fruit, thickening hazel shells; in the second stanza, Keats personifies the autumn: we are presented with the image of the reaper, the gleaner and the cider presser. In the final part, however, Keats ends with the sounds and pulses of the natural world, thus completing a movement from the tangible to the visual to the acoustic. As Helen Vendler observes, the “ear, rather than the eye,” becomes “the chief receptive agent” by the poem’s conclusion.¹⁸ There is the “wailful choir” of small gnats by the willow trees (the “river shallows”); the bleating of the sheep; the crickets stridulating from the hedge, the robin whistling from the croft, and the swallows twittering in the skies. Does autumn have any songs to match the “songs of spring”, the poem rhetorically asks, before finding ample evidence of that music in the pulsing, buzzing, bleating and singing of animal life. However, unlike the solidity of the cottages, or the rootedness of the apple trees, what characterises these sounds is their transient quality: their resonances will quickly fade, “as the light wind lives or dies”. And yet the poem finds a kind of durable joy in this very impermanence: it is precisely in the face of the transient that the preciousness of organic life is understood and salvaged; if

time transfigures matter, it also makes matter “matter”, calling attention to its fragility. In a static world, there would be nothing to celebrate.

According to Jonathan Bate, “To Autumn” is a “meditation on how human culture can only function through links and reciprocal relations with nature. For Keats, there is a direct correlation between the self’s bond with its environment and the bonds between people which make up society.”¹⁹ In the poem, those “bonds” are made up of strands that are at once infinitely small and unimaginably vast, from the obliquity of the planet in relation to the sun, which is responsible for the earth’s seasons, to the gnats singing by the willow trees (a source of food, not incidentally, for the swallows in the poem), to the human activities of building, reaping, gardening and cider-pressing, not to mention the creative activity of making art. It is interesting, however, that in a conclusion so concerned with “songs”—“Where are the songs of spring? [.../] Think not of them, thou hast thy music too”—it is the hedge-cricket that is given one of the poem’s most important verbs. Whereas the robin “whistles” and the swallows “twitter”, it is the cricket that “sing[s]”, and by singing gives the season its “music”. Taking up only half a line in the poem, the humble hedge-cricket is nevertheless an essential part of this landscape, not merely present in the field but part of the field’s presence. Without it, the poem seems to ask, could we recognise autumn as autumn?

The pulsing of an autumn landscape or the silences “wrought” by extinction: the two reading practices discussed in this chapter invite us to hear both sounds, to listen keenly to a cricket’s song, or to imagine the possibility of no song at all, to the unsounded absence of animal life. One method of reading, call it “close” or “slow” reading, involves a heightened sensitivity to the worlds disclosed by a poem. It also demands close attention to the aesthetic qualities of a text—its handling of form, image, and rhythm, for example—and to the material relations it describes, relations between, as in Keats’s poem, the world of humanly shaped things—cottages, orchards, gardens and fields—and non-human things, the world of bees, gnats, crickets, robins, swallows, weeds, flowers, clouds, rivers and mists. Also involved in this method of reading is a certain plasticity of the psyche, an imaginative willingness or capacity to enter bodily into the landscape of the poem such that its way of seeing amplifies one’s own. This is a form of attentive reading by which the world’s presence is, as it were, doubled: even as one continues to see through one’s own eyes, one also sees with the vision of another. The other reading practice discussed here—what might be termed “reading by redaction”—requires a similar capacity to enter into an imagined landscape, although with this crucial distinction: the landscape to be imagined is a silenced one, empty of the vitalising forces and sounds that distinguish a living landscape. It is a landscape in which the stitched relations between one being and another, or between one community and another, have come undone, leaving behind a frayed, incomplete tapestry. And while the contrast between these forms of reading—close reading and redacted

reading—is admittedly a dramatic and exaggerated one, so too is the contrast between a healthy ecosystem and an impoverished landscape. It is, in Keats’s terms, the difference between song and silence.

NOTES

1. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, 38.
2. Auden, “Woods”, line 54.
3. See the entry for “Cuckoo” in Armitage and Dee, *The Poetry of Birds*, 117–20.
4. “Cuckoo decline”, *British Trust for Ornithology*.
5. Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium”, line 32.
6. Rueckert, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”, 110.
7. Rutledge, “Emily Dickinson’s Arthropods”, 74.
8. Van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*, 4.
9. Heise, *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*, 12.
10. Rilke, *Selected Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke*, 155.
11. Yeats, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”, line 4.
12. For example, the industrial killing of sea otters for fur, which intensified in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to an increase in sea urchins (the otter’s staple food source), which, in turn, led to the rapid disappearance of kelp forests. (No longer kept in check by sea otters, urchins were free to graze on kelp and gradually deforest marine environments.) For a comprehensive discussion of the “cascade effect” and related terms, see John Terborgh and James A. Estes (eds.), *Trophic Cascades: Predators, Prey, and the Changing Dynamics of Nature* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2010).
13. Keats, “On the Grasshopper and Cricket”, lines 3–4.
14. Taking this thought-experiment one step further, one could cut out lines from actual books of poetry and then observe the effects this has on the preceding or succeeding page (which may very well be a different poem). If, for example, one removed the following line from the Penguin edition of Keats’s *The Complete Poems*—“a voice will run / From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead; / That is the Grasshopper’s”—one would also inadvertently disrupt the preceding poem, “Sleep and Poetry”. In particular, the following words would be “collaterally” redacted: “His eyes from her sweet face [...]/ For over them was seen a free display / Of out-spread wings” (lines 391–393). I’m indebted to John Miller for suggesting this particular thought-experiment.
15. Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*, 6–7.
16. Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, 384.
17. Keats, “To Autumn”, lines 1–11.
18. Vendler, *The Odes of John Keats*, 245. Douglas Bush makes a similar point in his analysis of the poem: “In the first stanza the sense of fullness and heaviness is given through mainly tactile images; in the second they are mainly visual [...] in the last [...] the images are chiefly auditory”. *John Keats: His Life and Writings*, 177.
19. Bate, “Living with the Weather”, 440.

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RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

- McHugh, Susan. 2017. Indigenous Knowledges of Extinction and Genocide in Honeybee Stories. In *Indigenous Creatures, Native Knowledges, and the Arts: Animal Studies in Modern Worlds*, ed. Susan McHugh and Wendy Woodward. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
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Cooper's Animal Offences: The Confusion of Species in *Last of the Mohicans*

Onno Oerlemans

Toward the end of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Uncas, Cooper's fantasy of the last Mohican, is surrounded by angry Hurons and Delawares who are about to put him to death. As he is dragged to a stake, one of his captors tears Uncas's shirt from his torso, revealing "the figure of a small tortoise, beautifully tattooed on the breast of the prisoner, in a bright blue tint."¹ The spectacle of this beautiful tattoo on a beautiful torso produces an immediate and stunning effect. "The eye-balls of the Delaware seemed to start from their sockets; his mouth opened, and his whole form became frozen in an attitude of amazement. Raising his hand with a slow and regulated motion, he pointed with a finger to the bosom of the captive. His companions crowded about him, in wonder, and every eye was, like his own, fastened intently on the figure" (348). Like much of Cooper's work, the writing is both awkward and lurid, but bears careful reading. Uncas is here saved from certain death by a tattoo of a tortoise, the tattoo itself having a seemingly magical effect on all who see it. What the tattoo reveals in the melee is Uncas's essence—that he is, as he announces for the reader's benefit, "the son of Chingachgook" and that "my race is the grandfather of nations" (349). From the considerable chaos of the scene, the tattoo provides immediate clarity and power.

There are multiple fantasies in play here: that of a single monarchical authority who can command and unify multitudes, and a contradictory one that the soon to be killed Uncas is the last of some self-evidently noble tribe that is

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doomed to disappear. What interests me is that a simple emblem of an animal can speak so powerfully of a specific and essential human identity. This is an identity that in the novel appears rooted in blood and lineage, and is thus imagined to be natural, stable, and undeniable. But, as the scene also reveals, this version of identity in the novel is set against a backdrop of overwhelming complexity and unreadability. Nearly every character has multiple names, as do their national/tribal identities; costumes and disguises abound. Characters are abducted, and are lost or wandering in the wilderness. Most interesting for my purposes, humans are mistaken for animals, and animals are mistaken for humans, and the narrator frets over the national identity of various species of animals. Uncas's tattoo suggests that the animal broadly understood is somehow at the center of the novel's racial fantasies, and yet its treatment of animals has received very little attention. My argument is that Cooper coopts what he thought of as Native American animal symbolism, and attempts to marry it with European notions of animals, especially species essentialism within a hierarchical chain of being, in an attempt to fashion new myths about European American identity. However, because the categories that Cooper uses are in fact rooted in real nature (real animals, real human peoples), and because humans are also in fact animals, Cooper's task is necessarily complicated, and the boundaries get only more confused and blurred even as he tries to redraw and reassert them, producing many of the novel's interesting contradictions.

The most obvious deployment of animal symbols in the novel is for the purpose of making its racial ideologies appear rooted in Nature, which is to say, something real and physical, of the world and thus seemingly beyond our ability to wish it away or alter it. This is suggested in the scene I describe above by Uncas and the Mohican-Delaware-Lanape peoples' symbol of the tortoise.² While Uncas gains power through the transparency of the sign, it matters that the sign is referencing an animal. Notably, it gains him power only over the other Native Americans; the sign is apparently meaningless to the Europeans in the scene. To the reader, however, this is only one more instance of how the aboriginal use of animals in their art and culture appears to mark these peoples as closer to animal, the all-too familiar strategy of dehumanization through animalization.³

One of the first scenes of the novel features Natty Bumpo (Hawkeye) and Chingachgook, discussing which weapons are best suited to each race, with Hawkeye insisting that whites are naturally better with guns, while Indians are better with bows and arrows. During the discussion, Hawkeye gives the first of his innumerable declarations that he is a man "without a cross" (i.e., that he is "pure" white), and surveys "with secret satisfaction" (38) the color of his skin.⁴ Immediately after this discussion, Uncas arrives to picturesquely kill a deer with an arrow: "In another moment the twang of a cord was heard, a white streak was seen glancing into the bushes, and the wounded buck plunged from the cover, to the very feet of his hidden enemy" (41). This incident is the first of many in which Native Americans are represented as somehow closer to animals, more animal-like and thus more primitive, than Europeans.

Another even more telling example occurs a few chapters later when Hawkeye instructs Uncas to aim lower than he has been in shooting at the attacking Hurons, explaining that “the life lies low in a Mingo, and humanity teaches us to make a quick end of the serpents” (84). Calling the Hurons serpents is obvious enough as an instance of dehumanization, but that Hawkeye thinks that the Huron’s heart lies in a different place suggests that he is thinking of his enemies as essentially a different species, which is to say, as animal. This indeed is the underlying “idea” behind much of the novel’s racism: that race is equivalent to species, and that there is a clear hierarchy of species and races. Similarly, Hawkeye insists on several occasions that Europeans and Indians will not share heaven, that race difference is rooted in habitat difference in both this life and the next.

A stranger example of the animalization of Native Americans occurs as the party of pursuers approaches what they take to be an Indian village:

A hundred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake.... Their rounded roofs, admirably moulded for defence against the weather, denoted more of industry and foresight, than the natives were wont to bestow on their regular habitations, much less on those they occupied for the temporary purposes of hunting and war. In short, the whole village or town, which ever it might be termed, possessed more of method and neatness of execution, than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged, ordinarily to the Indian habits. (248)

The narrator here focuses on Duncan Heyward, the young British army officer who is educated in the ways of wilderness as he is “Americanized” over the course of the novel—taught by Hawkeye, the wilderness, and his various battles how to adapt to the new environment he will eventually help to populate with a new “kind” of people. For two pages, readers get a description of what Duncan sees, including the sudden appearance of “a few dark looking heads [that] gleamed out of the dwellings..., which, however, glided from cover to cover so swiftly, as to allow no opportunity of examining their humours or pursuits” (249). The elaborate and over-long joke (played by both the narrator and Hawkeye), which Hawkeye eventually reveals, is that these are not Indians, but beavers, against which Duncan may “fire a whole platoon” (250). However, this turns out not to be a joke at all, since when Duncan approaches an actual Indian village, just ten pages later, the narrator notes that the “fifty or sixty lodges, rudely fabricated of logs, brush, and earth... were arranged without any order, and seemed to be constructed with very little attention to neatness or beauty. Indeed, so very inferior were they, in the two latter particulars, to the village Duncan had just seen, that he began to expect a second surprise, no less astonishing than the former” (261–62). This time the surprise is that there is no surprise; this is indeed an Indian village, and we are told, for good measure, that “there is much fruitful soil uncultivated here” (262). This elaborate confusing of beaver villages with Indian settlements, and of beavers and Indians, is

on the one hand an example of the kind of bad (because ludicrously unrealistic) writing that Mark Twain excoriated Cooper for in his well-known essay “Cooper’s Literary Offenses.” On the other hand, its purpose is transparent; while the first episode of mistaken identity seems to mock Duncan’s ignorance of wilderness, the second village encounter emphasizes a dehumanizing of Native peoples, their bodies, and culture, by insisting on their apparent inferiority to beavers.

It is worth exploring the complexity of the beaver as a symbol in the early nineteenth century. They were then already representative of a nearly platonic form of industriousness and ingenuity because of their astonishing ability to alter landscapes in dramatic ways. Their dams and “houses,” and the “engineering” required to design them, calls into question the Cartesian belief of animals as unthinking machines. An early twentieth-century historian called beavers “the most interesting animal today extant,” not only because of their conspicuous displays of intelligence, but also because the wealth produced by trade of their skins (mostly used to make felt hats for European fashion) drove much of the colonialist expansion into northeastern and central North America.⁵ Indeed, the control of the trade in beaver fur was one of the root causes of the French and Indian wars that are the historical backdrop for Cooper’s novel, set, as its subtitle announces, in 1757. It is tellingly ironic, however, that already by this period the intensive trade in fur had extirpated the beaver from even the Adirondack region in which the novel is set, while the Native Americans whose ultimate demise the novel wants to foretell were of course still very much alive and active, including when Cooper was writing it.⁶ Cooper’s trick here is again to switch or confuse Native American with animal identity, elevating the beaver as a cultivator of land, culture, and wealth, while devaluing Native Americans as doomed to a kind of extinction that was actually well underway for several species of animals, especially the beaver. And of course by this time too, as Cooper himself notes in several ways in his earlier novel *The Pioneers*, there were active and deliberate campaigns to eliminate wolves, cougars, and other predators from the already “settled” regions of the United States. We see here an extraordinary example of what Shukin calls the “zoo-ontological production of species difference as a strategically ambivalent rather than absolute line, allowing for the contradictory power to both dissolve and reinscribe borders between humans and animals” (13). Native Americans are in this passage and throughout the novel figured as less than human, and thus expendable, even as the beaver is blithely remembered as definitive of the real value of this new wilderness landscape. The novel traffics in the myth of Native American extinction (announced in its title, of course) to make it appear as inevitable, natural, and proper as the apparent extinction of many animal species at the time. Moreover, it redeploys the beaver as an important animal symbol for European American culture—an already existing sign of actual profit, as well as a symbol of the kind of industry and cultivation and work that would allow the colonists to declare the land their own by having altered it.⁷

Another obvious and disturbing aspect of the novel's racist ideology is its frequent invocation of the horrors of miscegenation. These are so ubiquitous in the novel (as in Hawkeye's repeated insistence on being a man without a cross) that fear of interracial relationships could appear to be the novel's primary theme. A main driver of the plot is Magua's desire to force Cora to marry him, and even he sees this cross-racial relationship as something ultimately vicious, since he understands it as an act of revenge on her father rather than a result of sexual desire. Other Indian threats on Alice and Cora occur regularly in the novel, the first of which provokes Duncan to insist that "there are evils worse than death" (92). And Hawkeye insists too at the novel's end that Uncas and Cora, between whom a kind of ethereal romance seems to be developing before both are killed in the final battle, cannot consummate this love even in heaven, as both Munro (Cora's father) and the Indian women hope, since even the heavens of Europeans and Indians are separate in his world view. As the novel's central figure and hero, Hawkeye's views could be taken to represent the novel's ideology on matters of race, with miscegenation figured as a kind of hybridizing that is at once unnatural and monstrous because races, like species, are understood as platonic entities whose very nature demands their continued purity.

Yet if this were all the novel had to say in its figuration of the human-animal relationship and race, then we should rightly consign it to a well-deserved oblivion. However, in contrast to the repeated condemnations of miscegenation, there are many other instances in the novel where the hybrid—the crossing of race, species, and even gender boundaries—is represented as something exciting, necessary, strengthening, and new. Cora is the most obvious example of this, since she is "hybrid" in terms of both the novel's essentializing of race and of its casting of the roles of gender and nationality. As Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse argue, Cora is at the center of the novel's seeming strategy of playing with what they call "family resemblances,"⁸ which they see as allowing for a kind of romance that encourages readers to discover overlapping similarity between distinct groups, rather than a more traditional vision of the romance plot as reifying a lineage with clear winners and losers. Cooper's "signature style," they argue, is in using "ethnographic description to establish formal resemblances across an otherwise proscriptive divide" (227). Cora, as a character of mixed race who also repeatedly expresses anti-racist points of view, presents a potent counterargument to Hawkeye's essentialism, and points more generally to the power of many other kinds of mixing that the novel also presents.

The novel's linking of Cora's racial identity and her anti-racist beliefs begins in the first scene in which she appears, as she carefully watches Magua:

Though this sudden and startling movement of the Indian, produced no sound from the other, in the surprise, her veil also was allowed to open its folds, and betrayed an indescribable look of pity, admiration and horror, as her dark eye followed the easy motions of the savage. The tresses of this lady were shining and

black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the colour of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds. (24)

Unlike Alice, who quickly announces that she does not like Magua (25), Cora is here and throughout the novel able to gaze at Indian bodies and culture with sympathy. This sympathy—which quickly becomes an explicit anti-racist ideology—is figured here too in her own body and blood, bursting the bounds of race and gender.⁹ Interestingly, she is linked immediately to an animal (the raven) that figures darkness and evil in European cultures, but is an important figure of intelligence and trickery in many Native American cultures. We of course learn later in the novel that Cora is partially African, that her mother, as Munro (her father) describes her, “descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class, who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people” (180). Rather than debasing or enfeebling her, however, we see in this first scene and throughout the novel that this hybridity is strengthening, a nearly literal reinvigoration of a line that, if marked by the impotency of Alice and Munro, has become nearly inert.¹⁰

Cora, then, has resemblances to multiple families—her colors echo those of Magua as well as her sister, humans as well as animals—and this bodily hybridity seems an echo or source of the fluidity and strength of her beliefs. If the conventional (or pure) romance centers on Duncan and Alice (who will marry and carry on some kind of British American lineage), the really interesting and seemingly strengthening one is that which quickly develops between Uncas and Cora. This imagined union involves the marrying of the three races that Cora already seems to contain. The narrator, like the Delaware villagers who imagine them united in heaven, revels in the idea of this romance, not so subtly advancing it over the course of the novel. The romance figures a present and future hybridity that offers an evolution of European and African people and cultures in a new American environment, even as the novel’s plot frustratingly ends this possibility by killing off both Cora and Uncas in the final battle. And this hybridity is signaled both by the crossing (or bursting) of bounds, and a linkage with animals and animality. The web of family resemblances that Armstrong and Tennenhouse find in the novel, then, is not just about genre (British and Colonial romance), but relates to actual flesh and blood.

The vitality and appeal of Cora’s hybridity allows us to see other versions of crossing in the novel, not least with Hawkeye himself. Although Hawkeye is continually protesting that he is not a cross, he protests too much because he is otherwise so easily mistaken for one. He has strong family resemblances to Chingachgook and Uncas, who have served as his actual family for long enough that he has adopted their ways and language. He dresses in Indian clothing; and his skin has presumably reddened from being exposed to the elements almost continually.¹¹ His only real distinguishing feature as he sees it (aside from his painful verbosity) is his long rifle, which he insists is the proper weapon of the white man (36–7), even though it is in fact used by all races and

nationalities in the novel. Also, like all the other Native Americans of the novel, he is strongly linked with animals, both in name and skills. He appears to know them intimately, and like Uncas is expert in killing them. Moreover, unlike the more clearly European characters, he has multiple names, both in English and in the several other languages that appear in the novel. In his introductions to both the 1826 and the 1831 editions of the novel, Cooper suggests that the Native practice of giving and having multiple names is correlated somehow with their decline, that the “obscurity” and “confusion” of tribal and individual names is symptom or cause of their loss of power. These multiple names are a palpable sign of mixedness, even as they also suggest a facility of crossing, of making oneself known to and being recognized by other groups. Hawkeye obviously has this facility; he is known by all Native Americans in the novel, regardless of tribe. Moreover, he speaks their languages, and knows their customs and ways of war.

Most strikingly, Hawkeye seems actually to become an animal in another one of the novel's strange instances of human–animal crossing, in which he is able to move about a Huron encampment disguised as a bear—a disguise that seems utterly to fool David Gamut, Duncan Howard, and even Uncas. There is much confusion in the rendering of these moments in the novel. We read first that David's attempt at making music is interrupted and echoed “in a voice half human and half sepulchral [by a] shaggy monster seated on end, in a shadow of the cavern, where, while his restless body swung in the uneasy manner of the animal, it repeated, in a sort of low growl, sounds, if not words, which bore some slight resemblance to the melody of the singer” (288). We don't find out what kind of animal this is until a few pages later, when the “fierce and dangerous brute” is identified by the narrator as a bear, and a few sentences later, after more description of its actual physical attributes, that this is Hawkeye in a bear skin.

A number of critics have noted the strangeness of this extended scene, and argued both that it signals Cooper's familiarity with native understandings of the bear as the most human-like of the animals, and that it allows for temporary cultural crossing.¹² Uncas successfully takes on this disguise himself a few pages later, and later in the novel, Chingachgook appears to fool the entire village by wearing a beaver head. Hawkeye himself seems to find no real significance in the successful disguise, explaining later that “I should be but a poor scholar, for one who has studied so long in the wilderness, did I not know how to set forth the movements and natur (sic) of such a beast... but it is no such marvelous feat to exhibit the feats of so dull a beast; though, for that matter too, a bear may be over acted!” (292). These are fascinating if perhaps also comically implausible versions of becoming animal, but they are interesting in part because the reader is not in on the disguise (and/or joke), and because of their frequency. We too are unable to tell if the brutes are animal or human, and are confused because, even in rereading the passages, we are surprised that the novel's characters can't make out the difference either.

Like Duncan's earlier confusion of the beaver and Indian villages, these scenes may all be read as examples of the "otherness" of the Native American place and culture—a kind of animalizing magic associated with Native American identity and culture, occurring only in spaces clearly identified as Native American. And yet despite Hawkeye's insistence to Gamut that he is "a man like yourself; and one whose blood is as little tainted by the cross of a bear, or an Indian, as your own" (304), these strange animal-human blurrings are also evidence of the kind of multiple family resemblances seen in hybrids, where an individual can simultaneously reveal and embody different identities. Natty as human can act and become bear, and speak in a language that is somehow both at once. Rather than revealing essential difference, then, these passages demonstrate the depth of resemblances between kinds of animals, and that humans are a kind of animal whose species identity is changeable rather than fixed.

The novel features other hybrid characters in addition to Cora and Hawkeye, and David Gamut is also interesting. Although a relatively minor character, he is the novel's most unusual, and is both the first character introduced by the narrator, and the one given the longest description, of which the following quotation is only the opening:

The person of this individual was to the last degree ungainly, without being in any particular manner deformed. He had all the bones and joints of other men, without any of their proportions. Erect, his stature surpassed that of his fellows; though, seated, he appeared reduced with the ordinary limits of the race. The same contrariety in his members, seemed to exist throughout the whole man. His head was large; his shoulders narrow; his arms long and dangling. (21)

The detailed account of the body, and the fact that Gamut immediately walks among "the common herd" in order that he might "freely express... his censures or commendations of the merits of the horses" (22), reveals that this is in fact the first instance of the narrator's deliberate confusing of animal and human; while the narrator has been describing Gamut as though he were an animal (a mule, perhaps?), Gamut has himself been describing animals.¹³ Gamut's evolution in the novel, however—from physical and cultural oddity, singing from the Bay Psalm Book (the first book produced in America) to a warrior who adapts Native American weapons and strategies—shows the strength of this new hybrid, much as Natty himself does.

Magua is also a kind of hybrid, a Huron who has lived among the English and the Iroquois, who speaks all of the many European and Native languages that the novel figures. And to Magua is given what to many modern readers will sound like the most prescient and truth-speaking language in the novel, in which he describes the European colonialists not as the apotheosis of human types, but as themselves constituting a dangerous and new hybrid, made by

the Spirit... with faces paler than the ermine of the forests: and these he ordered to be traders; dogs to their women, and wolves to their slaves. He gave this

people the nature of the pigeon; wings that never tire; young, more plentiful than the leaves on the trees, and appetites to devour the earth. He gave them tongues like the false call of the wild-cat; hearts like rabbits; the cunning of the hog, (but none of the fox), and arms longer than the legs of the moose. (339–40)

Magua's hybridizing account suggests a return of the repressed that, as Cooper wants retroactively to narrate a story of European superiority and the arising of a new nation (and thus a new people), he is confronted in multiple ways with resemblances that point to the essential mixedness of all people—that is, humanity's essentially biological and animal nature. Hybridity involves the tendency of biological types to evolve or devolve from the singular to the multiple. These contradictions cannot really be reconciled because they are so overdetermined, not least by Cooper's sense, made much more explicit in his novel *The Pioneers*, that the United States is itself a hybrid nation, a new culture rising or evolving out of a *mélange* of peoples and cultures. In this contradiction the animal serves both as a sign of something essentially fixed and stable, and a reflection of the herd, of the multiple and collective. Another way to put this is that the confusions of the novel are the inevitable confusions of any notion of an absolute human–animal “divide,” since humans are also animals.

The novel's contradictions, as I hope I've shown, make it both deeply problematic and worth studying. In a sense, Cooper's problem is that he was ambitious enough as a writer to set for himself several explicitly ideological goals. Like Walter Scott, whose new historical romances he was explicitly imitating, he produced popular nationalist fiction that only seems to depict historical and natural realities. The novel could help in the cultural work of constructing an ideology of national identity, and ideology generally insists on clarity where there isn't any, on categories that seem immutable and clear, but which in fact are not. On the other hand, he also depicted (white) Americanness as necessarily a hybrid mix of European cultures and peoples adapting to a new environment. The animals, and the human as animal, serve as useful symbols for these conflicting ideas. There are other contexts worth thinking about the novel within as well, especially in terms of the American reception and translation of European Romanticism. Although this is the ground that has been covered by many other scholars of Cooper, thinking about the representation of animals in the novel adds some new complexity to these contexts. Romantic period writers did much to question and take apart received categories, such as that of the fixity of species, which in itself turns the hybrid from a kind of freak or flaw into a new species or an origin of future species.¹⁴ Cooper also reflects the new Romantic interest in science, or, more broadly, the physical world as a ground of knowledge and culture, a project taken up with much more eloquence and force by Thoreau. But Cooper so fixates on race, and race as essential, that his novel is more clearly a precursor of modernist interests in eugenics than it is of Thoreau's particularizing interest in the physical world.

NOTES

1. Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, 348. All subsequent references to this text will be included parenthetically.
2. Interestingly, the turtle is an important symbol within many North American First Nations' cultures, generally a crucial figure in creation stories. See, for instance, Hausman, *Turtle Island Alphabet*, 171–74.
3. See Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 7–10; and Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 7–11.
4. Here too there is ambiguity. On the one hand, readers should assume that Natty is satisfied that he can see the whiteness of his skin. On the other hand, we know that he is weathered and tanned and so it may look “Indian.”
5. Dugmore, *The Romance of the Beaver*, 1. Dugmore argues later in the book that Canada’s “development was inextricably interwoven with the life, or I should say, the death of the beaver. It was opened up by the beaver, wars were waged through the competition for the skins of the little animals, the skins were the currency of the country” (178).
6. See Schneider, *The Adirondacks*, 69–74.
7. See William Cronon’s account of this process in *Changes in the Land*.
8. Armstrong & Tennenhouse, “Recalling Cora,” 223–245.
9. As she says in response to Alice and Duncan’s immediate suspicion and revulsion of Magua, “Should we distrust the man, because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark” (26).
10. In sharp contrast to Cora, Alice spends most of the novel afraid, weeping, or fainting. After the fall of Fort William Henry, Munro is also mostly quiet and impotent. Even Duncan, the other figure in the novel of some kind of purity or unambiguous English origin, is remarkably ineffective and impotent in the wilderness, and he is repeatedly saved by Hawkeye.
11. Barbara Mann speculates interestingly although somewhat unconvincingly that Natty is actually of mixed native and European race. See “Man With a Cross.”
12. Sivils, “Bears, Culture-Crossing and the Leatherstocking Tales,” 5–9, and Michaelsen, “The Color Line, Beavers, and the Deconstructing of White Identity,” 11–17. Michaelsen too argues that the confusing representation of animals in the novel shows that “no sharp line exists” between humans and kinds of animals (14).
13. Deirdre Dallas Hall reads Gamut as “a hybridized construction around which signs not only of the Puritan but also of the Indian and the Jew gather. This body increasingly emerges as a site of racial ambiguity, a screen upon which a drama of cultural flux unfolds” (“Remarkable Particulars,” 38).
14. See Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*.

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PART VI

Victorian Literature



Jane Eyre and Tess Durbeyfield at the Human/Animal Border

Ivan Kreilkamp

In the opening pages of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, when John Reed bursts into the family breakfast room looking for Jane, he calls out to his sisters, and labels Jane in a surprising manner: "tell mama she is run out into the rain—bad [X]!"¹ If asked to guess what that noun "X" is in John Reed's phrase, what comes to mind? Jane is viewed by the Reeds as an orphan, a quasi-servant, akin to a rebellious slave, as a deceitful liar, as a "caviller" (9), as an ungrateful "dependent" (12), an "interloper not of [their] race" (17), an "uncongenial alien" (17), among other designations. But it is none of those specific concepts that John Reed references here; rather, he labels her a "bad *animal*" (as well as a "sneaking...rat" (12)).²

What is at stake in such a designation? What are the implications when a character in a realist Victorian novel labels another as an "animal"? Genre matters here: such a question would take us in a very different direction in reference to non-realist fiction of the era. In works of children's and fantasy literature, a shift from the everyday realist world to an imaginary realm of playful fantasy is often signaled by a shift in the status of animals, who emerge as person-like characters who speak and act very much like human beings.

For an emblematic example of the representation of a person-like animal in a work of fantasy or children's literature, consider the opening of *Alice in Wonderland*.

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321

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do.... when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.³

The Alice of the first sentence is, at least potentially, a character within a realist novel, "very tired of" its mundane laws of plausibility. But the rabbit's "sudden" appearance, running "close by her", implants in Alice a "burning ... curiosity" that drives her completely out of the world of plausible realism. To fall or go down the rabbit hole has, in the years since Carroll first published his novella in 1865, come to mean something like "to stumble into a bizarre and disorienting alternate reality"⁴: one in which animals speak in English, have watches, and emerge as full-fledged characters.

That animals talk and behave like human beings only in non-realist genres may seem an obvious insight, but Alice's dive down the rabbit hole offers a useful negative contrast to literary realism's opposing commitment to a law of anthropocentrism. These genre rules seem to operate in Carroll's narrative as a constraining limit, such that the bored and sleepy Alice is overcome by a desire to flout or refuse them, to dive into an alternative reality of personified nonhuman beings.

In realist Victorian novels, animals operate and exist very differently. They can never be full characters. They do not speak, and they are usually marginal rather than central, fleeting or ephemeral rather than essential to the story. They may either be nameless creatures perceived as part of "nature", or, as with sheep, cows, or pigs, as positioned close to the boundary between the natural and the cultural human. Or, like many cats and dogs and some other animals, they may be "pets", special animals allowed into households and even given names, granted a highly provisional person-like status. And animals also serve as a major source of metaphor, figuration, analogy, and simile. Jacques Derrida asserts that "power over the animal is the essence of the 'I' or the 'person', the essence of the human", and we see one manifestation of that power in literary texts, in which animals are typically subordinated, marginalized, and used as symbolic reservoirs, often for insult or invective when applied to human beings.⁵

Such meanings are evident in John Reed's scornful label for Jane. To be an "animal" (or a "rat") is to be denied access to the space and affections of the family and the home. The designation underlines Jane's precarious status in the

Reed family as a barely tolerated, “uncongenial” “interloper”. “You ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do” (12), John tells Jane, virtually commanding her that she should behave like a dog. Over the past few decades, scholars have intensively considered the ways Brontë deploys a discourse of race and of racialization in *Jane Eyre*, but have devoted far less attention to the parallel and overlapping discourse of species and animalization in the novel. Racialization and animalization would often go hand in hand as two twinned forms of dehumanization in the Victorian era, operating on an assumption that the human norm is implicitly defined as a white English person. But we can isolate and separate those two distinct discursive strands: one of “race”, when Jane is made to feel by Mrs. Reed an “interloper not of her race” and an “uncongenial alien” (17); another of something more like *species*, when John Reed defines her as an “animal”.

Even as Jane leaves the Reeds, she continues to feel—or to be made to feel—like “an interloper and an alien” (rather than “one of God’s own lambs”) (62). And in Rochester’s discourse, she is often further defined as inhuman, as a kind of fairy spirit: “She comes from the other world—from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming!” (220). Jane must define herself as a living and breathing human woman, worthy of love and of being included as a fully enfranchised member of a middle-class family, in part by differentiating herself from another woman who is not only insistently racialized but also animalized. (And as I have already noted, we have tended to focus more on the former than on the latter.)

In a scene with overtones of the opening of Bluebeard’s hidden chamber, after Jane is awakened by “a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall”, Rochester finally leads her to the room of the mysterious Grace Poole:

I saw a room I remembered to have seen before, the day Mrs. Fairfax showed me over the house: it was hung with tapestry; but the tapestry was now looped up in one part, and there was a door apparent, which had then been concealed. This door was open; a light shone out of the room within: I heard thence a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling. Mr. Rochester, putting down his candle, said to me, “Wait a minute”, and he went forward to the inner apartment. A shout of laughter greeted his entrance; noisy at first, and terminating in Grace Poole’s own goblin ha! ha! *She* then was there. (186, 188)

In one of several images that associate Bertha Mason with animality, this description defines Bertha (not yet known to us by that name) as a kind of nightmare version of Jane, or what Jane would most dread to be: not a potentially desirable or loveable female human being, but instead in- or nonhuman, associated with animals, on the one hand, and with supernatural monsters, on the other; not possessing freedom of movement, but instead isolated, and locked away; incapable of expressive human speech, but instead reduced to a “savage”, “snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarreling” (186).

Bertha's dog-quarreling sound recalls the protagonist-narrator Pip's description, in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, of the convict Magwitch eating the meal Pip has stolen for him:

I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating, and the man's. The man took strong sharp sudden bites, just like the dog. He swallowed, or rather snapped up, every mouthful, too soon and too fast; and he looked sideways here and there while he ate, as if he thought there was danger in every direction, of somebody's coming to take the pie away. He was altogether too unsettled in his mind over it, to appreciate it comfortably, I thought, or to have anybody to dine with him, without making a chop with his jaws at the visitor. In all of which particulars he was very like the dog.⁶

Neither Bertha Mason nor Magwitch have yet been named in these two scenes; at these moments, they occupy some threshold slightly or well below that of fully human characterization. One of them "very like the dog", the other "almost like a dog", Magwitch and Bertha are animalized in ways that stigmatize them and that emphasize their exclusion from human community.

Comparisons of Bertha Mason to an animal are one key component of a rhetorically annihilating strategy by which Brontë directs Rochester and Jane to define her as utterly beyond the bounds of human affection or sympathy, unworthy of love or care:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (262)

Jane levels a categorizing (even imperial) eye, trying to determine the status and the ontology of this shadowed "figure" running backwards and forwards like a creature in a zoo, whose behavior positions her somewhere between the poles of "beast" and "human being". Like a puzzled anthropologist or zoologist encountering an indeterminate specimen exhibiting confusing behaviors, Jane considers seemingly contradictory signifiers: Bertha "growled like some strange wild animal", but wears clothing like a human being. She "grovel[s]... on all fours", but then upon seeing Rochester, as if acting out an ambiguous allegory of beast-to-human progress, Bertha, the "clothed hyena", utters a "fierce cry ...and stood tall on its hind-feet"; "she was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides" (263).

Rochester continually figures Bertha in supernatural terms, as a "demon" (263), a "fiend" (269), a "monster", and a "goblin" (277). But just as Jane found herself alternately defined as a kind of fairy and as an "animal", Bertha is at once supernatural demon/goblin and nonhuman creature, Rochester's imagery hesitating between the two alternatives, or choosing both: "Glad was

I when I at last got her to Thornfield, and saw her safely lodged in that third-storey room, of whose secret inner chamber she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den—a goblin's cell" (277). Recall Derrida's assertion that "power over the animal is the essence of the 'I' or the 'person'". Within the logic of this novel, as Gayatri Spivak influentially argued, Jane can rise up as a fully empowered human being—"It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play and in force"⁷—only, it seems, at the expense of the thorough dehumanization and animalization of the degraded Bertha. As Spivak argues, "Bertha's function in *Jane Eyre* is to render indeterminate the boundary between human and animal".⁸

Later, after she flees Rochester and before she is taken in by the Rivers, Jane wanders about "like a lost and starving dog" (293)—her resemblance to a dog now serving less as a stigmatizing marker of degradation than as a mark of pathos. Human beings may be safely compared to animals in realist fiction, it might be hypothesized, as long as the division between vehicle and tenor, between human subject and animal comparison, remains distinct and clear within a familiar allegorizing framework. "I should have been a careless shepherd if I had left a lamb—my pet lamb—so near a wolf's den, unguarded" (195), Rochester reassures Jane, with an affectionate but condescending Biblical analogy that casts Bertha out of the human community as a dangerous enemy (also recall the language used by Orlick to terrorize Pip in *Great Expectations*: "Now, wolf", said he, "afore I kill you like any other beast,—which is wot I mean to do and wot I have tied you up for,—I'll have a good look at you.... O you enemy!" (420)). If Bertha's function "is to render indeterminate the boundary between human and animal", then Jane, as the protagonist and heroine of a realist novel, must reaffirm that boundary. She ultimately shakes off the previous animal comparisons in order to emerge as an empowered domesticator or tamer of beasts, in her return to the blinded Rochester at the novel's close: "in his countenance I saw a change: that looked desperate and brooding—that reminded me of some wronged and fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach in his sullen woe" (384). If Rochester has been "wronged" in his fettering, Jane eventually offers a more humane and loving form of domestication; and in domesticating Rochester, she emphatically positions herself as human.

For my second test case of the implications of human–animal comparison in realist fiction, I now turn to the work of Thomas Hardy. Hardy was deeply interested in human–animal relations. It has long been a truism to observe that his work is suffused by Darwinian ideas; somewhat less well known, at least until recently, is that he had an abiding concern for animal welfare that expressed itself in numerous tangible ways. He offered the pig-killing scene from *Jude the Obscure* to the animal-rights organization The Animals' Friend to be republished as a pamphlet⁹; he wrote in his self-written biography that the "sight of animals being taken to market or driven to slaughter always aroused in Hardy feelings of intense pity, as he well knew ... how much needless suffering is inflicted" (468), and his will left sums of money to two different

animal-protection societies “to be applied as far as practicable to the investigation of the means by which animals are conveyed from their home to the slaughter-houses with a view to the lessening of their sufferings in such transit” (468).

In 1911 Hardy became a life-member of the Council of Justice to Animals, and that cause was fundamental for him.¹⁰ Although he did not always connect his writing as directly and tangibly to animal advocacy as he did with the pig-killing scene from *Jude the Obscure*, these novels are suffused with representations of animals and animality, and seem determined to push beyond previously dominant conventions for such representations. I have suggested that in order to achieve the status of a successful protagonist, Jane Eyre had to make very clear that she was not, in fact, the “animal” that John Reed had accused her of being—that she had to reassert the division between human and animal. Hardy, very differently, often allows his protagonists to run the risk of allowing that boundary to weaken and blur, at least insofar as to invite strong empathetic connection across the species boundary.

I will briefly consider Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, published over 40 years after *Jane Eyre*—and almost 70 years after the 1822 founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in a social-political context in which animal welfare and anti-cruelty politics had moved closer to the mainstream of English life.¹¹ Following our consideration of Bertha Mason’s “snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling”, it is instructive to turn to Hardy’s depiction of the death of Tess’s father’s horse Prince.

A sudden jerk shook her in her seat, and Tess awoke from the sleep into which she, too, had fallen.

They were a long way further on than when she had lost consciousness, and the waggon had stopped. A hollow groan, unlike anything she had ever heard in her life, came from the front, followed by a shout of “Hoi, there!”

The lantern hanging at her waggon had gone out, but another was shining in her face—much brighter than her own had been. Something terrible had happened. The harness was entangled with an object which blocked the way.

In consternation Tess jumped down, and discovered the dreadful truth. The groan had proceeded from her father’s poor horse Prince. The morning mail-cart, with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow, as it always did, had driven into her slow and unlighted equipage. The pointed shaft of the cart had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword.¹²

Prince’s “hollow groan” is a very different vocalization from Bertha’s dog-like snarling. The first thing to note about it, perhaps, is that it is not *like* an animal’s vocalization—but is in fact one. Tobias Menely has demonstrated how thoroughly eighteenth-century British poetry considered analogies between human voice and animal cries, and how seriously this poetry takes animal vocalization. Menely argues that the shepherds in James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, for example, guide the sheep via attention to their cries: the good shepherd must be attentive to “a semiosphere that extends beyond the human”.¹³ But Victorian

realist fiction prior to Hardy had not, for the most part, concerned itself with nonhuman vocalizations in this manner.

What follows in the novel is extraordinary, as Tess tries in vain to halt the flow of “all that had animated” the horse out of his wound:

[F]rom the wound his life’s blood was spouting in a stream, and falling with a hiss into the road.

In her despair Tess sprang forward and put her hand upon the hole, with the only result that she became splashed from face to skirt with the crimson drops. Then she stood helplessly looking on. Prince also stood firm and motionless as long as he could; till he suddenly sank down in a heap. . . . The huge pool of blood in front of her was already assuming the iridescence of coagulation; and when the sun rose a million prismatic hues were reflected from it. Prince lay alongside still and stark; his eyes half open, the hole in his chest looking scarcely large enough to have let out all that had animated him. (33)

Prince is “her father’s poor horse”, and her poor father’s horse, and so some of Tess’s agony here relates to her knowledge of the material loss this death represents for her family. But Hardy conveys a sense that an animal’s death can *matter*, can bear consequence—not only as an economic loss but also as an emotional and sympathetic one. Is Prince a full “character” in the novel? Surely not, and Hardy even specifies, just before the accident, that since “Prince required but slight attention” Tess “no longer [had] a companion to distract her, [and] fell more deeply into reverie than ever” (32). Prince is not and cannot be a true “companion” to Tess. But even if Tess slights Prince—her inattention in fact leading to his death—*Hardy* honors the creature with a lyrical, even tragic death scene. Human marginalization and disregard of the animal is noted by the novel, we might say, rather than simply enacted by it.

Later, Hardy comments of “field-women” working in the fields that they become “part and parcel of outdoor nature”: “a field-woman is a portion of the field; she had somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it” (88). And as Tess walks through an overgrown garden in summer, she seems to become a thoroughly natural being, making her way “stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin” (122). In the scene with Prince, Tess seems, too, almost herself to become animal¹⁴; showered in Prince’s blood, Tess perhaps achieves some partial atonement for her role in his death by allowing herself (in Spivak’s words) to “render indeterminate the boundary between human and animal” (249).¹⁵

In the second half of the novel, it is as if the baptism in Prince’s blood had marked Tess in some fundamental way, inaugurating her into a tragic intimacy with, and feeling for, animal life. A moment when she winces “like a wounded

animal” (218) is emblematic of this new sense that Tess not only understands and sympathizes with animal and animal experience but also experiences some more primal empathy—feeling with as well as feeling for nonhuman animals (if we consider “sympathy” a more cognitive emotion, empathy a more embodied and subconscious one). Like Gabriel Oak in Hardy’s *Far From the Madding Crowd*, who tenderly cares for the lambs in his charge, Tess learns how to “pity” the nonhuman animal in a manner that requires an embodied, somatic, empathic connection.

Phase the Fifth of *Tess*, “The Woman Pays”, echoes the situation of Jane Eyre’s flight, “wander[ing] about like a lost and starving dog” (293), away from Rochester, as Tess separates from her husband Angel Clare, who refuses to forgive her for her rape: “You were one person; now you are another” (228).

With the shortening of the days all hope of obtaining her husband’s forgiveness began to leave her; and there was something of the habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she rambled on—disconnecting herself by little from her eventful past at every step, obliterating her identity. (275)

Tess resembles the young Jane Eyre in some respects here: banished from the human community, from family affection, dehumanized and associated with animals in her marginalization. Yet if Jane needed to escape this state, to more definitively secure her human status—in a process of humanizing or de-animalizing that the novel itself seems to endorse—Tess seems almost to long for nonhuman, animal status as a kind of solace. Her coldly moralizing husband has declared that “the woman I have been loving is not you”, but is “another woman in your shape” (229). In response to his refusal to accept her for who she really is—an “impure” woman, not a virgin—Tess in effect embraces a form of dehumanization, on her own terms, “obliterating” her human identity and “rambl[ing]” like a “wild animal” as Jane had “wandered about” like a dog.

After encountering a rudely insinuating man who recognizes her,

There seemed only one escape for her hunted soul. She suddenly took to her heels with the speed of the wind, and, without looking behind her, ran along the road till she came to a gate which opened directly into a plantation. Into this she plunged, and did not pause till she was deep enough in its shade to be safe against any possibility of discovery.

Under foot the leaves were dry, and the foliage of some holly bushes which grew among the deciduous trees was dense enough to keep off draughts. She scraped together the dead leaves till she had formed them into a large heap, making a sort of nest in the middle. Into this Tess crept. (277)

Tess finds refuge “outside humanity” (278). Where she had earlier moved “stealthily as a cat” (122) through an overgrown garden, she now “plunge[s]” into the foliage and creates “a sort of nest” for herself. We recall Brontë’s and Dickens’s language defining Bertha Mason and Magwitch as “almost like a

dog”, “very like the dog”; now Tess is in effect *almost like* a bird. Having nearly obliterated her human female identity, she creates a refuge for herself that is not precisely a “nest”, but very close to one.

Hiding in her refuge, she now hears another nonhuman vocalization:

[S]he heard a new strange sound among the leaves. It might be the wind; yet there was scarcely any wind. Sometimes it was a palpitation, sometimes a flutter; sometimes it was a sort of gasp or gurgle. Soon she was certain that the noises came from wild creatures of some kind, the more so when, originating in the boughs overhead, they were followed by the fall of a heavy body upon the ground. ... Then she perceived what had been going on to disturb her. ... Under the trees several pheasants lay about, their rich plumage dabbled with blood; some were dead, some feebly twitching a wing, some staring up at the sky, some pulsating quickly, some contorted, some stretched out—all of them writhing in agony, except the fortunate ones whose tortures had ended during the night by the inability of nature to bear more. (278)

Tess now experiences “the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself”, and her “first thought was to put the still living birds out of their torture, and to this end with her own hands she broke the necks of as many as she could find, leaving them to lie where she had found them”. “Poor darlings—to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o’ such misery as yours!” she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly” (279).

There is something paradoxical, but fitting in this outcome. I have suggested that Tess’s baptism in Prince’s blood inaugurated her into a tragic intimacy with animal life. Now, this intimacy and this empathy lead her to perform a series of mercy killings in order to prevent further suffering on the part of these nonhuman creatures. Tess needs to become almost like a bird, “very like” a nonhuman animal, in order fully to empathize with their suffering (and therefore to try to mitigate it).¹⁶ In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë places her heroine ambiguously on the human/animal border for much of the novel, only definitively to shift her to the fully human side as Jane claims her place at the novel’s conclusion. Tess Durbeyfield is a different kind of protagonist, one whose empathetic closeness to animal identity and animal suffering is also presented as a sign of her fullest humanity. In this regard, she can stand for an increasing willingness, on the part of realist novelists of the later-Victorian period, to allow the human/animal border to become more permeable and flexible than ever before.

NOTES

1. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 9.
2. This essay extends some of the central claims of my book *Minor Creatures: Persons, Animals, and the Victorian Novel* (University of Chicago, 2018). A few paragraphs’ worth of material is taken directly from the book, although the

- essay's central readings of *Jane Eyre* and of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are (respectively) almost entirely and entirely new.
3. Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 7–8.
 4. Schulz, “The Rabbit-Hole Rabbit Hole”.
 5. Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 93.
 6. Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 19.
 7. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 374.
 8. Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts”, 249.
 9. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 289.
 10. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, 383.
 11. See Kreilkamp, “The Ass Got a Verdict”, and Mario Ortiz-Robles, “Animal Acts”.
 12. Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 32–33.
 13. Menely, *The Animal Claim*, 122.
 14. Elisha Cohn also analyzes the scene of Prince’s death and reaches a similar conclusion: “the episode of Prince’s death... makes use of the aesthetic of becoming-animal” (“No Insignificant Creature”, 511). Cohn’s essay argues that in Hardy’s earlier novels, “the lyrical instability of narrative evokes a world without human autonomy, agency, or individuality in which humans and animals appear to interpenetrate”, but that Hardy “shifts from lyricism to a more stable perspective”; “In order to suggest that human intervention can and should prevent the suffering of animals, Hardy comes to favor a more traditional aesthetics of sympathy over the narrative style associated earlier in his career with effacing human agency and individuality” (499).
 15. It’s worth noting a highly gendered aspect of “becoming animal-like” or “becoming natural” for Hardy. In the passage cited about the field-woman who “assimilate[s] herself” into her natural surroundings, Hardy in fact specifies that while a field-woman becomes “a portion of the field”, a “field-man is a personality afield” (88) and does not “los[e his] own margin”, or become absorbed into nature, as the woman does.
 16. Cohn reads this as a pivot point in the novel, which shifts definitively here from a “lyrical” mode that effaces species distinctions (typical of Hardy’s earlier work), to what she characterizes as an “ethical” mode that “require[s] boundaries between species” (501), characteristic of Hardy’s later work. That is, Cohn implies that in mercifully killing the birds, Tess realizes her error in thinking that she could evade humanness (with its moral obligations) and escape into an animal state. Although I find her distinction between these two modes to be helpful, I do not see the distinction between the “lyrical” and the “ethical” mode to be quite so clearly demarcated: it is precisely the experience of strong empathetic connection across the species boundary, Hardy often suggests, that can inspire or motivate attempts to mitigate cruelty or to reduce an animal’s pain.

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Animals and Nonsense: Edward Lear's Menagerie

Ann C. Colley

There was an old person of Crowle,
Who lived in the nest of an owl;
When they screamed in the nest, he screamed out with the rest,
That depressing old person of Crowle.

Animals play a considerable role in Edward Lear's nonsense. On opening a volume of his poems, limericks, and stories, inevitably one finds a mammal, a fish, or a bird conveying Lear's impression of an absurd, upside-down world. Like the old person of Crowle, much of his nonsense resides in the nest of an owl and screams out with the rest, for the human figure in the verses resembles and converses with the animals surrounding him. And no wonder, for Lear spent a good portion of his life around zoos, natural history museums, and private menageries, where he was surrounded by a culture devoted to collecting and classifying species from within the reach of empire (Fig. 1).

Becoming more aware of Lear's connections to scientific circles, especially with individuals whose obsession it was to assemble, identify, and arrange animals into some sort of taxonomic order, makes it possible to read his nonsense verses and stories with a fuller understanding and to see through their playful frivolity to some of the harsher and more telling realities informing these pieces. Lear knew the scientific particulars of what he was summoning in his nonsense writing. And he was acquainted with the violences involved in collecting these beings for study. This knowledge makes it easier to recognize how deeply Lear

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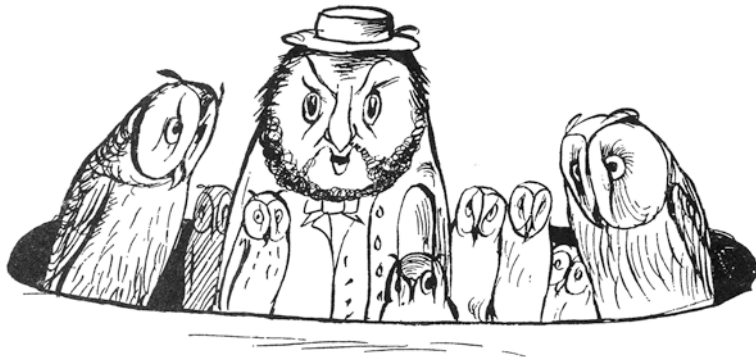


Fig. 1 Edward Lear. "There was an old person of Crowle"

empathized with animals and found consolation among them. For him the ideal world would be one in which animals and people live in harmony. Like the Old Man of Whitehaven, a part of him wished to dance a quadrille with a Raven or, like the Old Man of Crowle, to live in a nest with an owl.

Throughout his life Lear found a pleasant and relatively safe companionship with animals; his celebrated long attachment to Foss, his cat, is an example. The numerous drawings of him and Foss walking together in an ironic union are, perhaps, testimony enough. He identified with animals so frequently that in his correspondence he periodically dashed off comic self-portraits in which he depicted himself as a stout bird with stubby wings. On other occasions he used animals to portray his state of mind. For example, in the late 1830s when he arrived in Italy to study landscape painting, he exclaimed, "I am extremely happy—as the hedgehog said when he rolled himself through a thistlebush" (Noakes 55).

NONSENSE AND THE CRITICAL TRADITION

Before exploring the engagement of Lear's nonsense writing with the natural history world, it is useful to be reminded of traditional approaches to his limericks, a form he popularized, and to his comic stories. Commentary on Edward Lear's oeuvre has concentrated, almost exclusively, upon his "nonsenses", as Lear liked to call them.¹ From the very beginning critics have researched the origins of the limerick form, luxuriated in Lear's verbal and visual playfulness, investigated the indebtedness of his nonsense to Romantic and Victorian poetry, or considered the influence of the "nonsenses" on later writers. Often comparing Lear's work with Lewis Carroll's, many have also reflected upon the very nature of nonsense.

In addition, critics have remarked upon the affinity between Lear's life and his "nonsenses", many of which they regard as vehicles written to express his anxieties, especially his discomfort with himself. From their perspective, Lear's

seemingly carefree verses barely mask something more troubling, such as Lear's acute self-consciousness concerning his physical appearance (Lear, for instance, was not pleased with his large nose), his epileptic attacks (records of which he kept in his diaries), his social standing (Lear never went to university), his sense of isolation (even though he had many friends), and his sexuality (especially his ambivalence towards marriage).² Aware of Lear's intermittent feelings of alienation (he sometimes referred to himself as an "exile") and his sensitivity to an oppressive social code, others have remarked upon the occasional appearance of an unnamed but violently present "they" found in such limericks as the following:

There was an Old Man of Whitehaven,
Who danced a quadrille with a Raven;
But they said—"It's absurd, to encourage this bird!"
So they smashed that Old Man of Whitehaven. (Jackson 39)

Prompted by the fact that Lear suffered from the absence of his mother as a young child, yet others have indulged in psychoanalytical interpretations of his nonsense verses.

A recent book widens the critical perspective by bringing together newer studies that discuss Lear's obligation to the figure of the fool, Romanticism, dissent, ideas of love and marriage, and his contributions to the play of letters, later writers (such as his influence on Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and John Ashberry), as well as to British psychoanalysis.³ These studies demonstrate an increasingly serious interest in Lear's work, a point reinforced by the fact that Lear's reputation as a nonsense writer has travelled even farther than even Lear himself did. Now that Lear has his place among the eminent Victorians, the criticism flourishes. His nonsense verses and songs are no longer a subject only for British and North American critics; they are a focus for scholars from, for instance, Ukraine, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Greece.⁴ This body of criticism continues to suggest that the limericks, songs, recipes, alphabets, and stories are more than just elusive jingling expressions of simple frivolity, written "to see little folks merry", but are reflections of a poignant personal and cultural context.⁵

NATURAL HISTORY

Not all aspects of Lear's cultural context, however, have been sufficiently recognized by these commentators. In particular, what is missing is an acknowledgement of Lear's attachment to nineteenth-century scientific circles, more specifically the familiarity with mid-century thought concerning zoology and botany that informs his significant drafting skills as a natural history illustrator. This is a noteworthy omission, for, as I have suggested, Lear's engagement with the world of natural history influenced the subject and images of much of his nonsense. A major 1985 exhibition of Lear's work at the Royal Academy in

London displayed, perhaps for the first time, Lear's natural history illustrations to a substantial and diverse public audience.⁶ Predisposed to think of Lear exclusively as a nonsense writer, many attending the exhibit would have been able to recite at least one of his limericks and poems by heart. Generally speaking, to most, he was solely the composer of nonsense and no more.

Lear's interest in zoology and botany had, however, never been entirely forgotten. For instance, in 1947, the Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum wrote a short article on "The Birds of Edward Lear", which introduced a dedicated readership to these prints. And in 1978 the first major study of his bird illustrations, by Brian Reade, offered the public a better sense of Lear's career as a natural history artist. Reade points out that even as a child or adolescent, Lear displayed "an ardent love for birds and animals" and that later in his life, seeking to escape the "humiliation" of his epilepsy, Lear found reassurance and comfort in this love. Reade emphasizes Lear's uniqueness in working from living models in menageries—an exception to those who predominantly worked from taxidermy and unmounted skins in studios—and his art of painting from "casual points of view". He notices how Lear arrests the animals and birds "in the arcs of complex movements as their shapes are revealed as never before, except perhaps in certain Dutch paintings of the late seventeenth century" (7). Reade also describes Lear's lithographic process that distinguishes him as "one of the soundest of craftsmen among early lithographers" (10).

Susan Hyman's *Edward Lear's Birds* (1980) concentrates on Lear's ornithological prints and goes further than Reade by presenting more particulars about Lear's methods. She also reproduces full-page illustrations from the many volumes to which he contributed. The book's folio size does justice to Lear's vibrant pictures and gives the reader a good sense of them in the original. The full-size reproductions of the "Spectacled Owl", the "Marsh Harrier", and "The Great Auk" are especially striking. It is clear that had Lear continued to concentrate on this work and not, in the late 1830s, abandoned it to become a landscape painter, he might have exceeded the reputation of both John Gould and John James Audubon.

It is only within the last few decades, however, that a handful of literary critics have more fully recognized the fact that Lear's early experiences as a natural history illustrator lurked beneath the humorous whimsy of his "nonsenses" to significantly shape their affect and matter. To amplify an understanding of Lear's engagement with science it is helpful, I believe, to take a closer look at his own attachment to animals, which so thoroughly populate his nonsense. To view this subject more closely, a more detailed look at the man himself is appropriate.

Born in 1812, Lear was the youngest of 21 children. At the age of 4, after his father fell into serious debt, he was handed over to his eldest sister Ann, who was 25 years his senior and living apart from the family. Lear was raised by Ann, and in part by his sister, Sarah. Both were painters and gave Lear practice in drawing and painting. Copying from magazines and books about natural

history, Lear practiced doing detailed paintings of birds, insects, and plants. He learned to make outline sketches and add notes for later watercolours. He also, as was the custom in popular magazines, recorded scientific particulars of his subjects.

In his teenage years, this training led to his employment as a medical illustrator, work that would have required him to attend to accurate details. Attracted to natural history and particularly fascinated by birds, both domestic and exotic, eventually in the summer of 1830 (when he was 18 years old) Lear received permission from the London Zoological Society to sketch at the London Zoo, where he studied the various parrots and examined the skins and specimens of these exotic creatures in the Society's museum. The result of this effort was *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*, published by private subscription between 1830 and 1832.

Lear's incredibly meticulous and engaging renditions of these birds caught the attention of leading ornithologists, among whom were Audubon and Gould. One result was that Gould, who had been the taxidermist to the Zoological Society, hired him to draw images for his major *Birds of Europe* (1832–37) and engaged Lear to accompany him on his tour of zoos in Europe.⁷ Lear was to make sketches of the animals and birds. His abilities as a natural history illustrator were also noticed by, among others, Prideaux John Selby and Sir William Jardine who hired Lear to illustrate sections of the famous *Naturalist's Library*. Eventually the London Zoological Society asked Lear to supply the images of wildlife for Captain Beechey's account of his three-year voyage across the Pacific to the Bering Straits and Alaska, and for *Sketches of Animals at the Zoological Gardens* as well as for *The Zoology of the Voyage of the HMS Beagle*. Notably, as a result of his skill and knowledge, he was elected to become an associate member of the prestigious Linnean Society, the premier society for discussing natural history classification.⁸

One significant contact Lear made through this zoological and ornithological work was with Edward Stanley, later the 13th Earl of Derby (to be referred to as Lord Derby), whose estate, Knowsley Hall, just outside of Liverpool, housed a museum, in which Lord Derby arranged over 25,000 specimens according to their taxonomic groups, and contained the largest private menagerie in England. At the death of Lord Derby in 1851, the Knowsley menagerie totalled 318 species of birds (1272 individuals) and 94 species of mammals (345 individuals). The zoological garden that covered 100 acres of land and water not only included birds and mammals but also reptiles and exotic fish. "The collections as a whole far outstripped that of the Zoological Society of London" (Fisher 86–87).

Lord Derby was a scientist and an eminent collector who was a leading figure in the natural history world. He conducted research in the British Museum, and was elected vice-president and then president of the Linnean Society. He was also a founding member of the Zoological Society of London and eventually became its president. He was in touch with scientists, agents, zookeepers, and museum workers throughout Britain and all over the globe. His

friendships were extensive across the world of natural history, including with Darwin, Audubon, Gould, Gray, and many other notable naturalists. His cousins, the Hornbys, and their children, who often came to stay at Knowsley, were also drawn to his interest. For instance, Lord Derby's niece, Elizabeth Hornby, whose diary of her voyage to South America with her vice-admiral father is in the Maritime Museum, Greenwich, shot, stuffed, and bargained for specimens for her own collection as well as for her uncle Derby's. She is probably responsible for bringing back from South America the first black-necked swans to England.

When Lord Derby invited Lear to come and paint the birds and animals at Knowsley and spend as much time as he liked on the estate, Lear's education in naming, identifying, describing, cataloguing, and learning about the business of collecting the live and the skinned was privileged and became far more extensive.⁹ For about six years in the early 1830s, Lear created a stunning record of the exotic mammals and birds on the estate, in the aviary, or displayed in the museum. Eventually *Gleanings of the Menagerie and Aviary at Knowsley Hall* (1846) appeared with 17 illustrations by Lear and with a foreword by Gray, keeper of the zoological collections at the Natural History section of the British Museum. Gray praised Lear for his meticulous accuracy.¹⁰ In the midst of this enthusiasm for displaying and organizing the natural world during the 1830s as well as meeting many of the most notable naturalists of the time, Lear was steeped in a culture dedicated to learning as much as possible about species from the reach of empire. And even though he left Knowsley around 1837 in order to change direction and become a landscape painter, he never forgot what he had learned. Furthermore, for years he stayed in touch with Lord Derby (sometimes visiting him), the Hornbys, and others he had met at Knowsley, many of whom continued to patronize him generously.

ANIMAL STUDIES AND NONSENSE

Inevitably, Lear's work as a naturalist informed his nonsense. Initially he wrote his famous limericks while residing at Knowsley Hall, apparently creating them to entertain the children visiting the estate, but soon the verses' whimsical charm bewitched the adults, so, throughout his life, Lear continued intermittently to compose limericks. The first edition of the nonsense, *A Book of Nonsense by Derry Down Derry* (1846), went through many editions and was enlarged to include nonsense songs, stories, nonsense botany, alphabets, rhymes, laughable lyrics, and songs. The last collection to appear in his lifetime was *Laughable Lyrics, A Fourth Book of Nonsense Poems, Songs, Botany, Music, etc.*, published in 1877.

In these books, it is not unusual to see the storks, parrots, and owls of his naturalist portraits transformed into caricatures, and to find many limericks about a person's relationship to an animal or a bird. For instance, the "Black Stork" which Lear rendered for Gould's *The Birds of Europe* (V. 4) finds its way

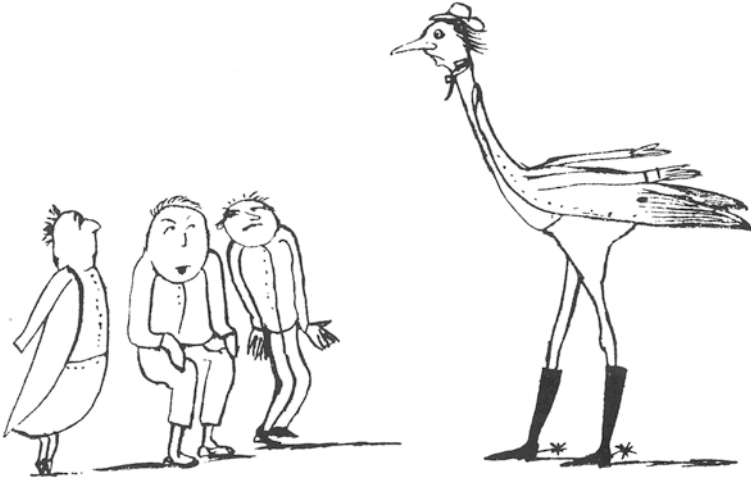


Fig. 2 Edward Lear. “There was an old man of Dumblane”

into the illustration accompanying “There was an Old Man of Dumblane” (Fig. 2).¹¹

There was an old man of Dumblane,
 Who greatly resembled a crane;
 But they said,—‘Is it wrong, since your legs are so long,
 To request you won’t stay in Dumblane?’ (Jackson 189)

In the nonsense drawing, though altered, the stork’s posture remains distinctly true to its natural self. But Lear did more than just use his adept knowledge of an animal’s or bird’s appearance as a foundation for his nonsense drawings. More significantly, in his “nonsenses”, Lear frequently made fun of the scientific practice of classifying and naming species of plants and animals—an exercise, even a passion, that, as I have mentioned, would have been all too familiar to him. Such books describing and illustrating these specimens were in Lord Derby’s library. The subject would also have been part of the daily conversation.¹²

In the 1860s and 1870s, for instance, Lear created a nonsense botany which satirized the practice of classification when new plants were brought back from faraway places. What better way to poke fun at the methods of identification and the rage to find something previously unknown to the scientific world than by drawing a flower named “Manypeoplia Upsidownia” or “Piggiwiggia pyramidalis”. The latter depicts four little pigs (as petals) on each side of a plant’s stem. Parodying the parlance of scientific organizations, the accompanying explanation amusingly proclaims that this plant is Professor Bosh’s latest discovery.¹³

In his nonsense drawings, Lear also mocked methods used to name species of birds. Because species identification depended so heavily, though not exclusively, on the outward appearance of a bird or mammal, Lear would have been under a mandate to execute his portraits with as much accuracy and detail as possible—quite the opposite of the comic sketches found in his nonsense. When working for Lord Derby, for instance, Lear spent endless hours not only sketching birds from life but also meticulously recording, in the margins of that sketch, the correct lay and colours of the feathers. The exoticism of these alien species was carried by these particulars in a manner similar to the way ethnographic portraits carefully attended to details of costume, personal appearance, and perceived racial differences. The focus on the details of a specimen's outer covering in natural history illustration is no different.

Letters Lear sent to Lord Derby often express his awareness of this requirement and his desire to fulfil that expectation. In 1833, he sent Lord Derby a drawing possibly of an "Emys Ornata" (Lear's script is difficult to read here). Because the creature had recently died, Lear had not been able to render a sketch from life, but had been required to borrow an earlier illustration. The letter's apology for this fact significantly reveals not only Lear's anxiety that the illustration might be flawed but also his acute awareness of the requirements that this portrait be true to life (Colley, *Wild Animal Skins* 110).

In his "nonsenses", Lear's cartoon-like drawings of rather befuddled birds, wryly glancing at an observer, satirize and turn this requirement on its head. His nonsense sketches gleefully discard the myriad of accurate details belonging to the natural history portraits. In a set of 14 coloured birds Lear drew for a child he knew in Corfu in 1865, he blithely contradicted this procedure and made fun of the zoologist's practice of noting the intricate feather colouring so that one species could be distinguished from another and, thereby, placed in some sort of taxonomic order that was probably fated to be changed by some later discovery. Instead, these birds, rather than meticulously exposing every detail of their plumage, display a single colour and are simply identified as "The Dark Blue Bird" or "The Orange-colour Bird", a droll nomenclature so very different from the elaborately serious Latinate (yet, to the uninitiated reader rather nonsensical) titles carefully given to species so as to conform to the Linnaean system.

As someone who had extraordinary empathy with animals, Lear seems to have enjoyed poking fun with this reversal. Indeed, his nonsense drawings reveal his occasional impatience with the scientists' and collectors' desire to assume power and control nature by naming, categorizing, and caging animals in zoos, or displaying them in museum cases. The illustrations accompanying the limericks express Lear's desire to give animals their due and displace people's sense of their own superiority. Indeed, as if acknowledging debates about hybridity and arguments concerning the loosening of rankings of animals and people, he reverses the notion that various animals and humans are different species by drawing birds whose faces reveal a human expression and by sketching people so that they resemble animals. Both partake of each other: a man

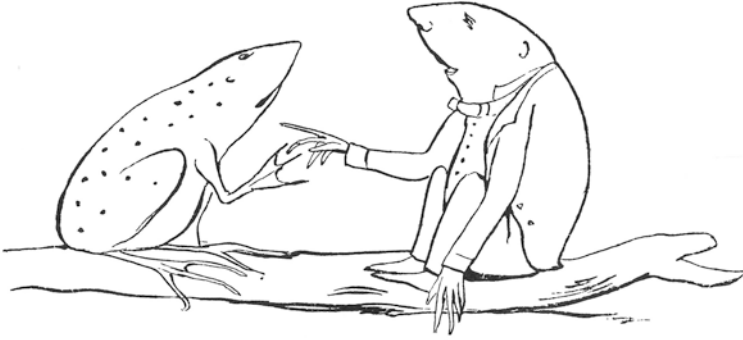


Fig. 3 Edward Lear. “There was an old man in a Marsh”

resembles an owl; an owl resembles a man. A man with a frog-like face and body posture stares at a humanized and empathetic frog of equal size (Jackson 165). Sitting level on a branch, they look at each other and converse as if there were no difference and as if they have dismissed all sense of hierarchy that places one being over another (Fig. 3).

In a sense, Lear’s drawings partake of the cartoons that were to appear showing man as ape shortly after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. The nonsense illustrations, moreover, achieve a kind of revenge on the animal’s behalf. Lear often debunks the imperialistic notions of observation that gave scientists permission to grasp, enclose, and study what they culled from lands opened up to them as a result of an expanding British empire. In the illustrations for the limericks, instead of there being the person of colonial authority who observes or analyses, it is often quite the opposite: the animal itself commands attention and gazes back at the human in the drawing. Lear’s nonsense drawings emphasize the observing mammal or bird in such a manner as to disqualify a person’s inflated sense of himself. Often it is the animal regarding the person rather than the other way around. The ass, in spite of its lowly position, disdainfully looks back at the old Man of Madras who attempts to ride him, and the cur with its self-possessed and self-satisfied eye destroys the old Man of Kamschatka’s apparently misplaced belief in his own prominence. Lear’s illustrations accompanying many of his limericks ridicule imperialistic practices in other ways. People, not animals, are caged. They are stuck in nests, held by the nose by parrots (Jackson 202), or trapped in trees (Fig. 4).

AN ANTI-COLONIAL BESTIARY

In even more direct ways, Lear’s nonsense reveals his discomfort with certain colonial realities, especially with the practice of hiring agents or travelling out to remote places in order to collect animals from the reach of empire—journeys that his experiences with zoos, scientists, and collections at the Knowsley estate

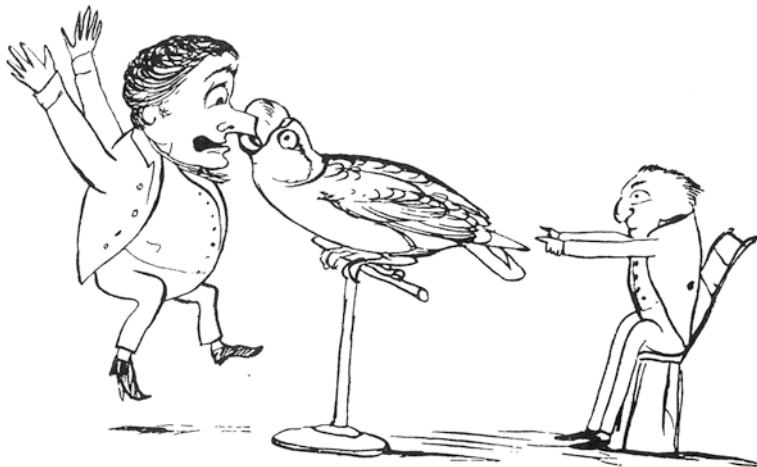


Fig. 4 Edward Lear. “There was an old man of Dunrose”

made all too vivid and present.¹⁴ Even though Lear depended upon the privileges of imperialism, he was not entirely uncritical of the colonial system.

“The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World” is one example. In this narrative, Lear is particularly critical of some of those devoted to studying, collecting, exchanging, identifying, breeding, and preserving animals and birds from various parts of the globe. This nonsense story draws upon Lear’s experiences while working for Gould, sketching at the London Zoo, and living at Knowsley Hall. In particular, Lear seems to be summoning the experiences of the innumerable agents who worked for Lord Derby.

Representing this way of life, the story’s children—Violet, Slingsby, Guy, and Lionel—sail across the sea from land to land, island to island; they admire new species, such as the “Cooperative Cauliflower”, explore foreign landscapes, and survive adventures in the wild.¹⁵ Lear delightfully stretches the truth he is representing so that towards the end of the narrative when the children lose their sailing vessel to the jaws of a ferocious creature, they improbably, for 18 months, travel home across land on the back of an elderly rhinoceros, which is also transporting “a crowd of kangaroos and Gigantic Cranes”. (Knowsley was famous for its kangaroos and cranes, and captive smaller animals were often transported on the backs of large animals.) (Fig. 5)

Once they all arrive in England, however, this obliging rhinoceros is summarily slaughtered, flayed, and stuffed. The narrative brusquely concludes: “As for the Rhinoceros, in token of their grateful adherence, they have him killed and stuffed directly, and then set him up outside the door of their father’s house as a Diaphanous Doorscraper” (Jackson 106). Such a harsh and abrupt conclusion to the tale exposes the fate of numerous grand, exotic mammals, whose bodies were mounted and exhibited by hunters and scientific institutions. Lear’s rhinoceros is yet another victim of curiosity as well as the

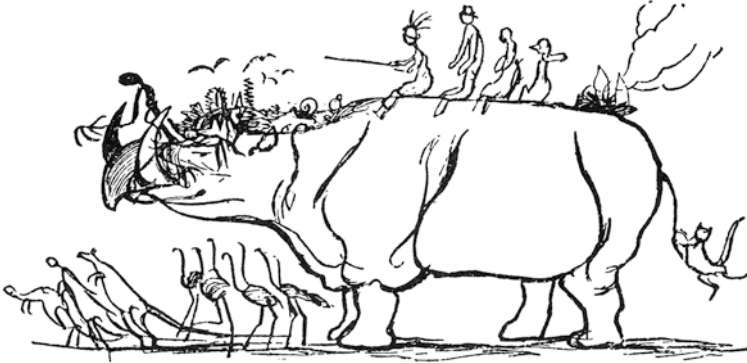


Fig. 5 Edward Lear. "The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World"

self-appointed license to show off colonial authority. It shares a place with those trophies featured at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, and joins the company of the 16 tigers shot in India by the Prince of Wales, later exhibited to the public in the lecture room of the London Zoological Society. As a doorscraper, the rhinoceros, in addition to becoming a subservient object for scraping one's dirty feet, also keeps company with what became known as Wardian furniture—furnishings named after the London taxidermist, Rowland Ward, who turned animal parts into ornamental household articles.

Other nonsense stories go on to draw upon Lear's familiarity not only with natural history museums but also with discussions in popular publications about the phenomenon of extinction, as well as with survival narratives. For instance, the conclusion of "The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple" describes how after reading in the newspaper about the "calamitous extinction" of these seven animal families (parrots, storks, geese, owls, guinea pigs, cats, and fishes), their parents refused all further sustenance and purchased "great quantities of Cayenne Pepper, and Brandy, and Vinegar, and blue Sealing-wax" as well as "Seven immense glass Bottles with air-tight stoppers". After this, "they filled the bottles with the ingredients for pickling, and each couple jumped into a separate bottle, by which effort of course they all died immediately" (Jackson 120). They commit suicide to create specimens of themselves. In their will, they ask that these Bottles should be presented to the principal museum of the city of Tosh, "to be labelled with Parchment or any other anti-congenial succedaneum, and to be placed on a marble table with silver-gilt legs, for the daily inspection and contemplation, and for the perpetual benefit of the pusillanimous public" (121).

The whimsical, spritely rhythms of Lear's nonsense barely disguise the tragedy of this narrative's concluding paragraph. Somewhat embarrassed, at the conclusion of the story, one is caught chortling when one shouldn't, for, in the end, these animals relegated to jars are turned into dead objects that more than likely will be invisible among the crowds of specimens populating

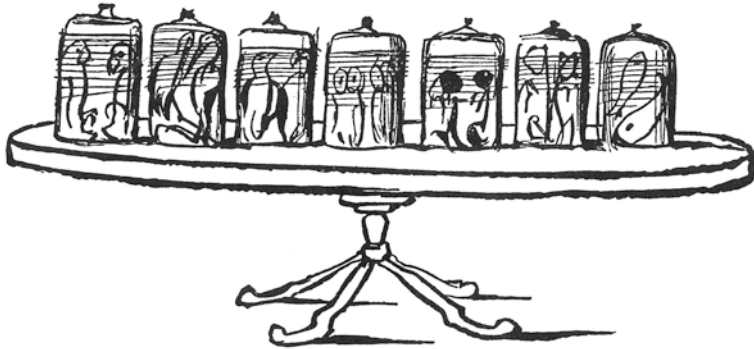


Fig. 6 Edward Lear. “The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple”

museums—and how true (just visit a museum’s back rooms or storage areas). What had been thriving is lost and forgotten (Fig. 6):

And if ever you happen to go to Gramble-Blamble, and visit that museum in the city of Tosh, look for them on the Ninety-eighth table in the Four hundred and twenty-seventh room of the right-hand corridor of the left wing of the Central Quadrangle of that magnificent building; for if you do not, you certainly will not see them. (121)

This image of extinction and neglect is far removed from those limericks that delight in a vibrant world in which animals and humans interact and occasionally live or dance in harmony. The conclusion of the narrative also lacks the lightness of being found in those limericks in which animals occasionally usurp the power people mistakenly think they have over the natural world. Lear’s “nonsenses” reverse the order of things to remind readers of these possibilities and truths. Until his death in 1888, Lear valued the presence of animals. He treasured their companionship and remained interested in his early natural history work. As a result, animals played a prominent role in his nonsense writing. Animals gave him a means of addressing not only his own fears and disappointments but also his sensitivity to a colonial culture that frequently imposed its imperialistic ways over the birds and mammals whom he had studied and admired. Animals and nonsense are vital colleagues in Lear’s world.

NOTES

1. For a detailed account of historical responses to Lear’s nonsense, see Ann C. Colley’s *Edward Lear and the Critics* (1993).
2. Jenny Uglow’s 2017 biography of Lear, for instance, explicitly explores connections between Lear’s nonsense and his anxieties.

3. See *Edward Lear and the Play of Poetry* (2017), a collection of exploratory essays edited by Matthew Bevis and James Williams.
4. For examples of this criticism, see Colley's *Edward Lear and the Critics*.
5. The phrase "to see little folks merry" comes from the title page of Lear's first *Book of Nonsense* (1846).
6. This 1985 exhibition of Lear's work was curated by Vivien Noakes. It was presented at the Royal Academy in London, and later at the National Academy of Design in New York. In addition to the Royal Academy show, other occasional exhibits displaying Lear's visual knowledge of natural history also have contributed to keeping his interest in the subject from extinction. These include a March 1975 exhibit of 40 of his zoological works at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, Edward Lear's "Birds" at the Ruskin Gallery (1988), and more recently a fine exhibit of Lear's natural history drawings and manuscripts at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, curated by Robert McCracken Peck. The commentary on these exhibitions allows one better to understand the circumstances, techniques, and context of his zoological and ornithological illustrations.
7. Lear's name was silently removed from the second edition of Gould's *Birds of Europe*. For an account of Lear's prickly relationship with John Gould, see Vivien Noakes' and Jenny Uglow's biographies of Lear. Gould often appropriated and took control of Lear's work.
8. For more recent commentators on this early engagement with natural history and scientific societies, see Jenny Uglow's new biography of Lear, Peck's essays in the *Harvard Review*, V. 22, Numbers 2–3, and Peck's finely illustrated *The Natural History of Edward Lear*.
9. Both Lord Derby and Lear had species of birds named after them. A list of birds named after Lear is in Vivien Noakes's *Edward Lear 1812–1888*, p. 209; a list of birds named after Lord Derby are in Clemency Fishers's *A Passion for Natural History*, pp. 121–35.
10. For a most informed series of essays on Lord Derby and Lear as well as on the menagerie at Knowsley Hall, see Fisher's *A Passion for Natural History*. And for another elucidating discussion of Lear's work while at Knowsley, see Peck's *The Natural History of Edward Lear*.
11. The spelling of "Dumblane" comes from the first edition of this limerick in 1872. Many subsequent printings of this limerick, however, alter the spelling to "Dunblane", a town in central Scotland.
12. For a study of classification practices in Victorian times, see Harriet Ritvo's *The Platypus and the Mermaid and other Figments of the Classifying Imagination*.
13. Lear, of course, was not alone in making nonsense out of these practices. Gillian Beer's recent book, *Alice in Space* (2016), talks about Charles Dodgson's (whose pen name was Lewis Carroll) applying scientific arguments concerning naming, nomenclature, classification, and taxonomy to help shape the Alice books. As she points out, "Dodgson was thoroughly aware of the tussles going on" (142). For instance, because Alice is a "taxonomic anomaly" (143), she is often examined to find out if she is animal, vegetable, or mineral. Furthermore, Alice is repeatedly asked "Who are you" and, at one point, because she has a long neck, mistakenly classified as a serpent.

14. Colley's work "Edward Lear's Anti-Colonial Bestiary" (1992) and her recent book *Wild Animal Skins in Victorian Britain* (2014) address this connection, one which was recently reinforced in Jenny Uglow's biography of Lear.
15. For a recent article on the culture of collecting, see Colley's "Collecting the Live and the Skinned".

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Intimacy, Objectification, and Inter/Intra-Species Relations in Victorian Animal Autobiographies

Monica Flegel

In Victorian animal autobiographies—that is, stories told from the point of view of talking animals, who relate the passage of their life¹—animal speakers often intimately describe the close relationships they have with their human companions, attesting to a central feature of companion species relationships, namely, “the affective, immediate ties between [humans] and the four-footed”.² In this chapter, I examine the relationships between two different species (inter-species) alongside the less-discussed relations between animals of the same species (intra-species) as they appear in E. Burrows’s *Tuppy: Autobiography of a Donkey* (1860), Edis Searle’s *Mrs. Mouser* (1875), Frances Power Cobbes’s *Confessions of a Lost Dog* (1867), Gordon Stables’s *Sable and White* (1893), Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877), and others. In *Dog Love* (1997), Marjorie Garber notes that in animal texts, animals are not often depicted as having close relationships within their own species; instead “falling in love is something that happens only between human and animal ... unruly affections are out of bounds”.³ I argue, however, that “unruly affections” between animals *do* appear in many animal autobiographies, often illuminating the possibility that culture is not the sole purview of humanity. Stories of animal friendships and kinship in Victorian animal autobiographies, though told through the lens of human eyes and human culture, nevertheless seek to recognize intra-species

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relationships and, in so doing, model affection as something that can be learned *from* animals, challenging and undermining the narrative of human dominance so central to the animal autobiography as a genre.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN DEPICTIONS OF INTER-AND INTRA-SPECIES RELATIONS

The vast majority of human relationships with animals are self-serving: animals, after all, are primarily used by humans for service and as food, clothing, and art objects. Companion animals are given a perfunctory personhood, but, as Alyce Miller notes, while we may call them family, our pets are, under most current laws, “property, pure and simple, just like a sofa or car”.⁴ As a result, the status of pets is one that is inherently contingent upon the value humans place upon them, attitude we have inherited from the “cult of the pet” in the Victorian period. Ivan Kreilkamp notes that in Victorian culture and the Victorian novel, pet dogs, in particular, “typically possess a tantalizingly incomplete identity: they are granted a name and a place by the hearth in the family circle, but only temporarily, only as long as their master permits it”.⁵

Numerous animal narrators from Victorian texts are represented as acquiescing to this human “right” of dominance and their own dependent status. Harrison Weir’s Bob, from *Memoirs of a Spotted Terrier* (1848), claims that he “was formed to be the creature of another’s will”⁶ and carefully shows no disrespect to his master despite Bob’s mistreatment at his hands (47). This forgiving, loyal nature, assumed to be an inherent quality in dogs,⁷ overrides all others, especially, Bob points out, when the master is worthy: “the GREAT PARENT OF ALL has given more honourable sensations to dogs ... in the sufferings of a kind master they forget almost that they have wants of their own, which nature imperiously commands them to satisfy” (55). Bob’s assertion that dogs were “formed” to be servants, and that such service has been ordained for them by God, authorizes his own inferiority and the rightfulness of unequal power relations.

This willingness in dogs to endure suffering in servitude, and to ignore their own wants in favour of satisfying the needs of their masters, is seen also in Cobbe’s *Confessions of a Lost Dog* (1867), in which Hajjin, the narrator, relates the tale of Snap, a dog whose mourning for a dead mistress was so severe that he had to be shot. Hajjin opines, “Perhaps Snap managed to follow his mistress somehow. After all, she would, I think, have missed him a little in the very happiest place she could go I should think it would be dull (I am sure my mistress would find it so) in a garden of Eden without birds or beasts”.⁸ Here, Hajjin presents Snap’s death as almost necessary because without his companionship his dead mistress would be bereft. Apparently, heaven for dogs is continual self-sacrifice in the name of loyalty and love. These narrators demonstrate that the animal autobiography is most definitely a space in which humans can narcissistically project themselves into a narrative as the primary and ultimate

relationship for an animal, one which is based entirely on speciesism and dominance.

While humans are constructed as the worthiest object of animal affection in these texts, relations between animals are often presented as fleeting and insubstantial. In the home of a flighty female mistress, Bob observes that “a great deal of company visited in the family, and sometimes very pretty creatures of my own species were introduced, with which I formed an agreeable acquaintance, and as speedily dissolved it” (68). The text uses Bob’s shallowness here to satirize human society: he says, “Indeed, I partook too much of the manners of my mistress, and began to lose some portion of that honest sincerity which is the distinguishing characteristic of my kind” (68–69). The novel’s intense focus on his relationships with his many masters and mistresses, ending with his valorization of “the reciprocal interchanges of duty and love” (123) he finally finds with Mr. Allworthy, stands in stark contrast to the lack of relations portrayed with others of his own species. This same subordination of intra-species relations to inter-species ones is seen in Cobbe’s text, in which Hajjin describes her love affair with Carlo, a “very handsome Retriever who ... was a fine, well-bred animal, and always devoted to me” (37). While she is “persuaded to make a match of it” with him, her priorities remain very clear: “Of course, now [the mistress] had come home, I had no time for Carlo or my landlady or anybody, but kept my eye on my mistress night and day, lest she might slip off again to Italy at any moment. It is a terribly anxious thing for a dog to have a mistress who travels” (40). Hajjin’s assertion that it is difficult “for a dog”, rather than herself specifically, to be separated from the primary human in her life, again highlights the loyalty of dogs to humans as their reason for being, central to their identity and far above any connection to their own species.

A key way in which companionship with humans is privileged in these texts is through negative depictions of familial relations between pet animals. In particular, relations between mothers and their offspring are often represented as bordering on indifference. Hajjin’s motherhood is almost a side-note, for example:

Our union was blessed with two puppies. They were not pretty; and though I tried to lick them into shape, and performed all motherly duties towards them in an exemplary manner, they continued to be poor little creatures, no credit to Carlo or me. One day, returning, after a brief grubbing in the garden, to the box which contained my nursery, I found I was bereft of both my offspring. They had been carried away, and I saw them no more. I suffered for some days the pangs of outraged maternity, and then turned my attention to other things. (38)

The description of Hajjin “suffering the pangs of outraged maternity” focuses primarily on motherhood as an instinct, rather than an emotional attachment—indeed, Hajjin’s dismissal of her pups as “not pretty” and “poor little creatures” who are “no credit” to their parents, clearly suggests that her attachment was minimal at best.

In other animal autobiographies, relations between mothers and their children are similarly portrayed as lacking in the depth and meaning that the animals find with their human companions. In Burrows's *Tuppy*, for example, the titular character observes, "my life in the field was very dull. My mother left it some time ago, and I never heard anything of her now. Not that I regretted that very much. She had long since ceased to think about me, and had centred all her affection upon a younger child. Still, as long as she was in the field, she was some sort of companion for me".⁹ Tuppy's depiction of his mother's affection for a "younger child" certainly gestures at the possibility of intra-species intimacy, but there can be no doubt that Tuppy's construction of her as "some sort of companion for me" bears no comparison to his love for the human Miss Annie, of whom he avows, "we became the best of friends. I never was so happy as when I was with her" (14). Similarly, Luath in Stables's *Sable and White*, encounters his mother at a dog show:

We stopped at one bench, and master smoothed a dog and looked at her number, then patted me, and said, "That is your mother, Luath".

I gazed at her, and memories of my first paddock, my first master, and my first old boot came rushing green again into my memory.

"Mother", I said, "don't you know me?"

"Yes", she answered coolly, "where have you been all this time?"

I took my paws off the bench now.

"Take me away, master", I cried sadly; "people's own folk soon forget them. Good-bye, mother!"¹⁰

Again, Luath's sadness here does open the door for an understanding of intra-species connection and intimacy, but his mother's coolness, and the idea that "people's own folk soon forget them", privileges the second family of human and animal over the first family. The critique here could indeed be aimed at human relationships as well, with "people's own folk" having wider implications beyond the doggy-world, yet the privileging of connection with humans, set beside the lack of relation between a dog mother and her son, works to portray intra-species familial relationships as shallow.

Another problem with depictions of intra-species relationships in animal autobiographies of the period is that, by mimicking the structure and style of the human autobiography and the *Bildungsroman*, these texts rely heavily on anthropomorphism; as Tess Cosslett has pointed out, "the differences between animal and human consciousness are not much explored" (70). Instead, the animal protagonists are often made legible to audiences through analogies to humans, usually in terms of hierarchies which make the lower status of animals clear; as Cosslett notes, parallels with "children, women, slaves [and] servants" are common (73). When we encounter depictions of animal friendships and familial bonds in Victorian animal autobiographies, therefore, it is often very clear that such relationships tell us primarily about *human* relations.

Searle's *Mrs. Mouser*, in its depiction of Mrs Mouser's love for her kittens, universalizes feminine love and maternal feelings towards offspring in its depiction of her joy at giving birth: "I could scarcely believe it, but the different mamma cats who came to see my five babies assured me, that much as I love my children, they felt certain that theirs were just as dear, and just as beautiful".¹¹ If Mrs Mouser's love for her kittens speaks to proper feminine domesticity, then the protagonist of "The Adventures of a Cat through Her Nine Lives", published anonymously in the *Boys' Own Magazine* in 1860, models the dangers of domestic life. The cat protagonist's description of her troubled relationship with Tom, one that transforms from initial infatuation into a downward spiral of abuse, infanticide, and murder, relies on clear tropes linking the cat to labouring humans so as to provide a voyeuristic cautionary tale of working-class domestic relations. And Sewell's *Black Beauty* describes Beauty's separation from his family in a way that, as Moira Ferguson observes, "underscores how slavery callously fractures the family unit".¹² Because animal autobiographies were usually written for children and used depictions of animal behaviour as a means of imparting didactic lessons, the relations between animals in these texts can be seen as models for the child reader in negotiating their own familial and social relationships. *Mrs. Mouser*, for example, highlights the nature of sibling rivalry, and even violence, in its depiction of Mrs Mouser's two kittens, Smut and Snowball. Snowball is often praised for her good behaviour, in comparison to her brother: "*She* never scratches ... she's a darling kitten" (44). Texts such as this provide a safe place for sibling, parent/child, class and race conflicts to be explored, projected as they are onto the animal characters, but still clearly focused on human relationships.

In all of these instances, we can see how depictions of intimacy between animals rely on an understanding of the animal protagonists as, largely, humans in animal form, displacing an attempt to comprehend different ways of relating and interaction by projecting human concerns onto the animal narrators. In so doing, these texts participate in speciesism by valuing animals for their meaning to humans and, arguably, "obliterat[ing] the non-human experience and [replacing] it entirely by the human".¹³ Trying to learn anything from depictions of intra-species relations that seem primarily about human relations, "our own projections"¹⁴ of how we would like to see ourselves ventriloquized through adoring animal narrators, would therefore seem to be a futile exercise.

CRITICAL ANTHROPOMORPHISM: "OH! IF PEOPLE KNEW WHAT A COMFORT TO HORSES A LIGHT HAND IS"

Having acknowledged the problems of anthropomorphism in these texts, I nevertheless believe that nineteenth-century animal autobiographies can also challenge anthropocentrism in ways that do not denigrate or diminish intra-species relations, and that the very anthropomorphism I have been identifying is crucial for them to do so. Specifically, by imagining animal relationships and

intimacy, particularly in ways that privilege or at least grapple with animality, texts such as these also open up a space in which to acknowledge the possibility of non-human culture. It is important to recognize that anthropomorphism, as a charge and a critique, is often used far too broadly, attacking any construction of the animal other as possessing emotions, communication, personality, consciousness, culture, and complex affective and social relations: as Matthew Chrulew notes, “the accusation of anthropomorphism is more likely ... to be used as a weapon to refuse to animals their bona fide attributes”.¹⁵ The Cartesian philosophical narrative of animals, one that focuses on animals as creatures of instinct and automation as opposed to feeling and consciousness (which is reserved for humans within this philosophical tradition), has long played too large a role in the Western construction of animals. Chrulew argues it has specifically infected the scientific study of animals, leading to “a toxic mechanomorphism that projects automaticity onto animal behaviour and thus obstructs understanding of their complex worlds” (22). In such scholarship, anthropomorphism, alongside anecdotal evidence drawn from lived experience with animals, is carefully avoided “as sentimental and unrigorous” (23).

There might seem to be a great distance between sentimental, nineteenth-century imaginative constructions of talking animals and contemporary biology and ethology, but I argue that the current turn towards acknowledging the complex bonds that animals have with each other and the increased recognition that “while they might demonstrate a particular proficiency, humans do not have a monopoly on culture” (28) allow for a reading of these animal texts as providing something more than simply humans in animal form. Instead of seeing the human tendency to anthropomorphize as solely a speciesist colonization, Chrulew describes how contemporary philosophers such as Dominique Lestel urge us to see anthropomorphism as “a legitimate means for understanding animals’ capabilities” (31) in which “we ... tell stories in order to legitimately make meaning of animals’ own meaning-making activities ... [and] as rich and significant revelations of essential elements of animal life” (32). I therefore want to take the representations of intimate relationships between animals in Victorian animal autobiographies, as, at least in part, sincere attempts to narrativize the possibility of affection, attachment, and complex interpersonal interactions between animals, ones that do not necessarily privilege the human.

Stables’s *Sable and White*, for example, certainly has what Cosslett identifies as the “circular plot that returns animals to their first owners and original names”, a key feature in reminding the reader that “there is no life for these animals outside human ownership” (91–92). However, the close relationship between Luath and Jim, the pug with whom he travels the countryside looking for his former owner, is arguably far more the heart of this text than the interspecies relationships. Luath’s owner is, after all, the one who enters Luath in numerous dog shows, which the text describes repeatedly as an exhausting, degrading, and even life-threatening pursuit. And while the friendship between Luath and Jim can be seen as a model for human friendship, the text’s

presentation of “dog feeling” focuses particularly on how dogs comfort and nurture each other, and specifically on the physicality of dog intimacy. For example, Luath describes comforting a fellow show dog, Professor Huxley, who is being “done to death” by his owners:

As soon as Tom left, I lay down beside my kind and noble companion and licked his face and ears. I said nothing to him, however. Never a word. But he seemed so pleased ... and grateful for my attention, which he well knew how to interpret, that gradually his eyes began to close, then, with a contented sigh he placed his great head on his paws, and fell into a sound and gentle sleep. (108–109)

It is significant that this comforting between fellow dogs happens after Tom, Luath’s handler, leaves. Though he is identified as part of the “brotherhood” of “doggy people” (36), and therefore the human who best represents a closeness and understanding of dogs, Tom is not included in this moment of comfort and care; instead, this is something shared between dogs in which humans cannot partake. The exclusiveness of this intra-species interaction is underlined by the fact that the talking dogs of the text do not speak in this moment—instead, this is an instance of physical communication, in which comfort is given that the receiver can interpret without words. Stables captures here what current philosophers of animal culture have argued: “We conclude too swiftly that, because the animal is without language, it remains deaf to speech”.¹⁶ Luath, who is given authority to speak to us by virtue of being the protagonist, nevertheless relates moments in which animal communication is more effective than speech.

This focus on physicality is also a key feature of animal intimacy in other autobiographies. In *Black Beauty*, physical proximity between horses is what allows for intimacy, as Beauty describes: “The cob was a strong, well-made, good-tempered horse, and we sometimes had a little chat in the paddock, but of course I could not be so intimate with him as with Ginger, who stood in the same stable”.¹⁷ Here, physical proximity is privileged over “a little chat”. Furthermore, Beauty and Ginger find pleasure in each other’s company, even when their use value for humans has been diminished by the ill-treatment that has, as Ginger observes, “ruined [them] in the prime of [their] youth and strength”. Beauty asserts, “we both felt in ourselves that we were not what we had been”, but “that did not spoil the pleasure we had in each other’s company; we did not gallop about as we once did, but we used to feed, and lie down together, and stand for hours under one of the shady lime trees with our heads close to each other; and so we passed our time” (136). The companionship Beauty and Ginger have for each other has value in and of itself; they have bodily pleasures, and intra-species intimacy, that cannot be reduced to the value their bodies have in service to humans.

In some texts, such as R. M. Ballantyne’s *Chit-Chat by a Penitent Cat*, animal intimacy is in fact a pleasure that is entirely inaccessible to humans: “I am quite sure that human creatures do not understand the extreme pleasure, the

wild joy, that fills a kitten's heart when it sees its mother's four legs, and its little sister's four legs, and their two tails, twirling together in a heap of confusion".¹⁸ The wild intimacy between mother and sister, one in which Dingey joins with "a frightful shriek and a fuff", is again beyond expression: "words cannot quite describe my feelings" (28). Here, Dingey's pity for humans is based on a human inadequacy of communication: language is what is constructed here as lack, while animal physicality is privileged as both a source of joy and a form of communication that allows for intense intimacy and familial bonding outside of human parent-child relations. Mrs Mouser similarly finds human mothers a bit lacking when she observes, "though they may have white children or black children, I believe they never have tabby ones, so they cannot be as happy as I was" (9). Mrs Mouser could certainly be accused of a speciesism of her own here, pitying humans as she does for a lack that we do not perceive ourselves to have; but by embracing an outsider view of humans, the text does consider the possibility of animal pleasures and privileges that are not anthropocentric in nature.

Cosslett notes that "the narration of animals to each other can give a conspiratorial sense of solidarity against humans" (68), which makes a conceit of these texts clear: although these are talking animals, the sense is that they are not necessarily always talking *to* humans. Instead, they also talk to other animals and often complain about ill-treatment from humans. In Ballantyne's story, Dingey describes the master of the house as "Our man", who is "a very kind one, but silly, —at least I thought so" (27). Searle's Mrs Mouser has a much more pointed complaint:

"But will Snowball like to go away from her mamma?"

"She won't mind a bit. Cats don't care for their mothers, and their mothers don't care for them, when they're grown up," ... and I said to myself, "You little simpleton, what do you know about the matter?"

For I did care very much indeed. Snowball was my Snowball, and they had no business to call her theirs, and give her away, as if she were nothing at all but a toy, which they had bought at a shop. (127–128)

Here, Mrs Mouser strongly enunciates her grievances against humans, whose failure to recognize the depth of her attachment to her kittens is a source of grief; their dismissal of her feelings is not taken as true, but instead as a sign of ignorance. The depiction of animal family relations as shallow is here critiqued by Mrs Mouser: "'They do feel sorry when their children die, I know', Fred persisted. ... 'Yes, for two or three days', nurse answered; 'and so she will be when Snowball goes away, my dear, and then she'll forget all about it, and be quite happy again'" (128). Again, Mrs Mouser resents her subordinate position, in which she is forced to endure human stupidity: "I, sitting under the table, heard them talking about me in this ignorant way, and couldn't make them any wiser, because they were so silly that they never understood me when I tried to talk to them" (128). It is not Mrs Mouser who lacks feeling and

depth and the ability to communicate, but instead the humans, who fail to understand perhaps because they are “silly”, and also, the text implies, because it is in their interests to pretend that animals have no feelings or connections so that pets can be used and disposed of to serve human needs.

Many Victorian animal autobiographies also highlight that, regardless of an animal’s attachment to humans, inter-species relationships cannot entirely compensate for the lack of intra-species ones. For example, the protagonist of Lucy D. Thornton’s *Story of a Poodle* (1890) laments his separation from his family: “I found myself most ruthlessly torn away from my dearest mother. I cried my little heart out, but all to no purpose. I know now what happened. I was being taken abroad with my mistress for her amusement”.¹⁹ The focus on “her amusement” makes clear that, unlike Cobbe’s Hajjin, this dog does not find his mistress and her desires paramount. Rather, there is a lack of animal companionship for which a human friend cannot compensate: “I had, take it all in all, a very happy life, only sometimes I longed for my dear mother, and brothers and sisters; to have a good game with them would have been so nice” (9). And unlike the story of the dog who died as a result of mourning her dead mistress in Cobbe’s *Confessions of a Lost Dog*, Thornton relates the sad tale of Sally and Nibs:

Poor “Sally!” ... She took cold and had a sharp attack of bronchitis; and though my mother nursed her night and day, she grew worse, and one morning poor “Sally” was found dead in her basket. “Nibs” was so miserable he would not eat, and starved himself until he too fell sick and died in a few days, my mother said, of a broken heart. So the two lie buried in one grave, under the old horse-chestnut-tree at the end of the orchard. (38)

In this text, the celebrated canine devotion is still very much in place. However, displacing that devotion from humans to other dogs at the very least attempts to value canine fidelity beyond the anthropocentric model of dogs as “emotional prostheses”,²⁰ in which “loyalty ... tacitly served to produce the human as the deserving recipient of such intimate attachment” (14). Instead, Sally and Nibs, and Gaston (the narrator), in grieving lost companionships with canine friends and family, long for intimacy that cannot be compensated with human companionship.

Furthermore, these texts, through their depiction of animal intra-species intimacy, offer some possibilities for reimagining inter-species relations, or at least for complicating the narrative of dominance with which I began this chapter. Lestel asserts that “we are only humans by letting be expressed within us all those who were previously silent, not because they had nothing to say but because they did not have the means to say it. Language is not that which separates human from animal but on the contrary that which establishes the fundamental connection”.²¹ By using story to imagine how animals might best relate to each other, these texts also “remind us that to a companion animal we are not the beings we might think we are, because companions animals—of

whatever species—make sense of us from their own perspective, read us through their own senses, and thus potentially experience something of us that we do not”.²² The focus on human hands that occurs in some of these texts demonstrates such a means of communication, one that privileges the animal experience of humans. For example, Tuppy observes of his meeting with his first human friend, “the hand was held steady till I had been able to sniff all round it, and satisfy myself that no harm was intended me; then the hand was gently raised to my head, and the pleasantest sensation I had ever felt in my life was transferred to my whole body. Oh, how soothing, how delightful was that rubbing and scratching” (6). Here it is the human who is reduced to a body part, but not in an objectifying way, as Tuppy responds to the touch with a desire to communicate: “I broused against my new friend, and looked up in his face, as much to say, ‘Oh! do it again, please, do it again’” (6). *Black Beauty* relates similar moments with those humans who are used to model proper caring for the reader; he says of his groom, “he was so gentle and kind, he seemed to know just how a horse feels, and when he cleaned me, he knew the tender places, and the ticklish places” (24), and relates of his master, “Then he led me into my box, took off the saddle and bridle with his own hands and tied me up; then he called for a pail of warm water and a sponge, took off his coat, and while the stable man held the pail, he sponged my sides a good while so tenderly that I was sure he knew how sore and bruised they were” (34). These scenes demonstrate the power of imaginative sympathy as central to true inter-species relations; they also, arguably, show that culture goes both ways: as Yeniurt rightly notes of the good characters in Sewell’s novel, “The best of them develop good instincts about horses, presumably by playing with them and observing what they make available ...” (246). By demonstrating what constitutes care and intimacy in intra-species relations between animals, these texts assert inter-species relations as something that should not originate from and serve human culture solely.

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING INTER-SPECIES RELATIONSHIPS

I do not want to privilege relations with “one’s own kind”, whether human or animal, as somehow superior to cross-species relationships, nor to suggest that relations between animals and humans are always and necessarily solely about dominance. “Domestication” might “mean domination” in Yi-Fu Tuan’s classic equation,²³ but, as theorists such as Lestel have pointed out, relations between animals and humans are far more complicated than that. Recognizing again that these autobiographies are written by humans and for humans, I believe that they nevertheless, in compassionately and passionately imagining animal experience, attempt to represent forms of intimacy between animals that are not human-centred—that they, however marginally, attempt to speak for animals, on behalf of animals. As Kathryn Yeniurt observes, “the strategy employed by Sewell in the writing of *Black Beauty* was not that of simple role reversal, but the deployment of imaginative descriptions of horses’ experiences

for the purposes of fostering sympathy for horses as individuals who are in the possession of bodies, like humans”.²⁴ Her novel calls for us as readers “to perform a great deal of emotional work in order to follow the stories of imaginary horses”.²⁵ These animal autobiographies, therefore, though they rely heavily on anthropomorphism, nevertheless have moments in which they ask us to imagine animal culture as something that our own relations with animals disrupt and destroy.

These texts, that is, despite their attention to the human right to dominance, nevertheless also express a debt towards animals—a recognition, even if it stands in contrast to the overarching morals of these texts, that humans use and abuse animals, and that we deprive them of companionship and attachment with those of their own species. But perhaps they also tell us that we need animals, not just for use value, but for the intimacy they can teach us. Lestel argues fervently for the possibility of animal–human friendship, asserting that the “impossibility of dialogue does not at all exclude the transfer of affects”.²⁶ These texts, at least in part, model how we might learn to speak and listen in ways that animals model for us.

NOTES

1. Cosslett defines the genre as possessing “self-consciousness about allowing the animal protagonists to talk”. The talking animal at the heart of Victorian animal autobiographies speaks to the reader, but this ability is “juxtaposed with a story in which human characters cannot understand the animal”.
Talking Animals, 1.
2. Kuzniar, *Melancholia’s Dog*, 3.
3. Garber, *Dog Love*, 77.
4. Miller, “Just Don’t Call Me ‘Mom’”, 90.
5. Kreilkamp, “Dying Like a Dog” 81.
6. Weir, *Memoirs of Bob*, 30.
7. Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 22–38.
8. Power Cobbe, *Confessions*, 36.
9. Burrows, *Tuppy*, 17.
10. Stables, *Sable and White*, 34.
11. Searle, *Mrs. Mouser*, 4–5.
12. Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy*, 81.
13. Simons, *Animals and the Politics of Literary Presentation*, 116.
14. Daston and Mitman, “The How and Why of Thinking with Animals”, 5.
15. Chrulew, “The Philosophical Ethology of Dominique Lestel”, 31.
16. Lestel, “The Friends of My Friends”, 143.
17. Sewell, *Black Beauty*, 25.
18. Ballantyne, *Chit-Chat by a Penitent Cat*, 27.
19. Thornton, *The Story of a Poodle*, 6.
20. Chez, *Victorian Dogs, Victorian Men*, 17.
21. Lestel, “The Infinite Debt of the Human Toward the Animal”, 177–178.
22. Fudge, *Pets*, 102.
23. Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*, 99.

24. Yenyurt, "Black Beauty: The Emotional Work of Pretend Play", 239.
25. Yenyurt, 240.
26. Lestel, "The Friends of My Friend", 135.

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How Not to Eat: Vegetarian Polemics in Victorian India

Parama Roy

VEGETARIAN ABSURDITY, VEGETARIAN CRUELTY

For a long time—a time that continues, one might argue, into the present—vegetarianism and animal advocacy have enjoyed a mixed reputation in the global North. Tristram Stuart has detailed a widespread European fascination from the seventeenth century onwards with the religious practices of the Indian subcontinent’s non-Islamic populations, including their religiously mandated dietary restrictions, and their ethical or cultic stance with respect to nonhuman life and nonhuman death.¹ Several British traveller-writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including the clergyman John Ovington, the novelist Phebe Gibbes, and the social critic John Oswald, explicitly associated the vegetarianism and practices of animal protection of these populations with a laudable ethics of gentleness and nonviolence. For the protagonist of Gibbes’s *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789), these customs are in pleasing accord with the tenets of sensibility, as she explains to her correspondent: “They live, Arabella, (except from the austerities, in some instances, in their religion) the most inoffensively and happily of all created beings—their Pythagorean tenets teaching them, from their earliest infancy, the lesson of kindness and benevolence; nor do they intentionally hurt any living thing:—from their temperance they derive

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health, and from the regulation of the passions, contentment".² Such a concurrence of diet and temperament became something of a commonplace among European thinkers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau noted in *Emile* (1762) that English carnivory had produced a people notorious for cruelty, and the antithesis of the admirably gentle vegetarian "Gaures" (or Zoroastrians) and Banias of India.³ Other thinkers, from the philosopher Jeremy Bentham to the enormously popular nineteenth-century Irish historian William Lecky, noted that consideration of animal welfare by "Mohammedans and . . . Brahmins" antedated and surpassed that of the Protestants of Europe.⁴

But vegetarianism was not always met with unmixed admiration, especially in contexts of normative carnivory.⁵ The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a range of debates about the theory and practice of meatlessness, within both the metropolitan context of Britain and the United States and the imperial and peri-imperial contexts of India and China. Contentious and often ideologically fraught, these debates about vegetarianism helped establish dietetics as a major idiom for the elaboration of ethics within a trans-imperial continuum. And, importantly, as the following pages will show, they also involved the vigorous participation in vegetarian polemics of a sizeable constituency of the colonised.

For every instance of the kind of admiration of vegetarianism instantiated by Gibbes and Bentham, there were less laudatory responses. Vegetarianism was diagnosed, even by some who praised it, as effeminising, the cause of physical and moral debility among its practitioners. In his vastly popular *History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (1774), a digest of the work of Pliny, Buffon, and other naturalists, Oliver Goldsmith was to equate the military incapacity and sensualism of the Bengali and, by extension, the subcontinental male, with an unwillingness to shed nonhuman blood: "The Indians have long been remarkable for their cowardice and effeminacy. . . Many tribes among them eat nothing that has life; they are fearful of killing the meanest insect; and have even erected hospitals for the maintenance of the meanest vermin. . . The vigour of the Asiatics is, in general, conformable to their dress and nourishment; fed upon rice, and clothed in silk vestments, their soldiers are unable to oppose the onset of an European army".⁶

Vegetarians closer to home did not escape derisive notice, perhaps on account of vegetarianism's increasing visibility in Britain. Some political and religious dissenters took to vegetarianism in seventeenth-century England. It also drew wide interest in the Romantic period, bringing together reform-minded members of the middle and upper classes and the artisanal working classes; unlike vegetarians in earlier periods, they were neither mystically inclined nor wealthy patients of celebrity physicians like George Cheyne, who had endorsed a meatless diet as a prophylactic against obesity and nervous disease.⁷ Several of this considerable vegetarian fraternity tended to political radicalism; their numbers included John Oswald, Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, and Joseph Ritson.⁸ The fact of their political radicalism, including the Jacobinism of Oswald, had the effect, for political reactionaries, of casting their

consideration for animal suffering as a species of violent misanthropy; Timothy Morton notes that the caricaturist James Gillray depicted Jacobins “both as vegetarians and as cannibals”.⁹

Not all vegetarians and animal rights advocates were upbraided in the same terms. Sensibility to animal suffering was often described as overwrought, implicitly feminising, and dangerously promiscuous in its sympathies, resulting in what Tobias Menely calls “a pathological sentimentality, with its unguarded and expansive affinities, its lack of respect for anthropocentric hierarchies of value”.¹⁰ The editor Richard Griffith attacked Uncle Toby’s tenderness for a fly in *Tristram Shandy* by likening him to votaries of Hindu “superstition”, given to the “strange extravagance” of founding an infirmary “for sick fleas”.¹¹ And, around 1800, when the earliest animal welfare bills were brought before the British Parliament, conservative factions in that body painted animal welfare advocates as ethical relativists and sentimental hysterics unsuited for political deliberation. Such a pathologisation of a sentimental attachment to animals has animated even some of the more visible forms of animal rights advocacy in our own time, as the overt anti-sentimentalism of the neo-Kantian Tom Regan and the utilitarian Peter Singer manifests.¹²

Across the Atlantic, too, in mid-nineteenth-century America, vegetarians were met by widespread mockery and vitriol in the popular press and in mainstream medical publications, perhaps not least because of their association with politically radical causes such as the abolition of slavery and women’s suffrage. Like their British associates, they were seen as physically and mentally weak, obsessive in their habits, and unnatural in their avoidance of carnivory.¹³ Some of their detractors accepted the vegetarian argument that a meatless diet tended to reduce aggression. But, like Griffith, they understood such an effect in terms of racial or religious forfeiture, making white American bodies excessively akin to those of civilisationally ignominious others: “we do not want to make them peaceable by making them weak and cowardly, like the Hindoos”.¹⁴ Some missionary publications also addressed the biomoral inadequacy of Hindu diet and its concomitant zoolatry. Hence the *Heathen Woman’s Friend* addressed its child readers in the following terms: “If a Hindu boy should see you eating the flesh of a cow, he would be almost as much shocked as if you were making your dinner off the flesh of a man. ... Shall we not all do our best to give the people of India the knowledge of the true God and of his Son Jesus Christ, so that they will no longer consider cows holy, and bow in homage before them?”¹⁵

Mockery and religio-racial philippics, then, were the favoured modes of anti-vegetarian polemicists through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But the Victorian period saw the development of a distinctly new strain of counter-vegetarian polemics in the Indian colony, one predicated upon the idea, not of vegetarian sentimentality or weakness, but of vegetarian *cruelty*. This was the strange effect of a humanitarian sensibility that commenced its emergence in the eighteenth century in the public and literary cultures of Britain and Europe. With its appeals to common humanity and its investment in the possibilities of sympathetic communion, it sought to forge a code of

ethics based on benevolence that drew hitherto excluded constituencies—slaves, children, and animals among them—within the ambit of its moral concern. Charles Taylor identifies the moral culture emblematised by this humanitarian turn as one of the significant achievements of the Enlightenment: “One thing the Enlightenment has bequeathed to us is a moral imperative to reduce suffering. This is not just a sensitivity to suffering, a greater squeamishness about inflicting it or witnessing it. ...[B]eyond this, we feel called upon to relieve suffering, to put an end to it. ...It is these [standards of universal concern] that are deeply anchored in our moral culture”.¹⁶ The imperative simultaneously to minimise one’s own acts of violence and to offer redress to the unfortunate victims of suffering would constitute the scaffolding of an emergent ethics grounded in sensibility and dedicated to the amelioration of pain.

The result of this humanitarian turn was a significant transformation, by the middle of the nineteenth century, in European and North American notions of necessary or unavoidable pain and unnecessary suffering, and of the relationship between benevolence and cruelty. This is a familiar story, one that I can sketch only in the broadest of strokes. In the emergent dispensation, pain became something to be avoided or minimised as much as possible. Cruelty, understood as pleasure in the infliction of pain or in the spectacle of pain of another, came to be defined in terms of a certain gratuitousness or wantonness. Hence, anti-cruelty was inescapably tied to a certain calculus about the balance of suffering and pleasure, one that involved minimising pain as well as regulating or reining in the pleasure in inflicting pain. As James Steintrager, Margaret Abruzzo, Eric Hayot, Talal Asad, and James Turner have shown, cruelty to those considered helpless came to be seen as inhuman in this new order, while those who practised it—or worse, took pleasure in it—were seen as “moral monsters”, strangers to humanity.¹⁷ Conversely, it was only as a member of a humanitarian community that one could lay full claim to humanness.

If an incapacity to bear animal suffering came to be a hallmark of civilisational refinement, cruelty, whether defined as a lack of sensibility for the sufferings of others, or a wanton relish for such suffering, was outsourced to lumpen elements at home and to non-Europeans.¹⁸ In an earlier era, the Earl of Shaftesbury had spoken with disapprobation of “unnatural affection”—“that unnatural and inhuman delight in beholding torments, and in viewing distress, calamity, blood, massacre and destruction, with a peculiar joy and pleasure”. This he identifies as “a plain characteristic of uncivilised manners and barbarity”, the “reigning passion” of tyrants, “barbarous countries”, and “the more savage nations”.¹⁹ The Victorian period made the logic of such an ethnographic mapping of humanitarianism and cruelty palpable. In a partial reversal of earlier European commonplaces about the kindness to animal life of Baniyas, Brahmins, Zoroastrians, Turks, and other non-Europeans and non-Christians, it was the inhabitants of the colonies who were deemed to display an indifference to suffering in their customs and outlook when they did not manifest a positive genius for cruelty. It might be surmised that the racial and religious outsourcing of cruelty had some relationship to the deeply evangelical character of the

dominant forms of animal advocacy in nineteenth-century Britain and the United States, and its insistence that Christianity, rather than other religious traditions, provided a blueprint for “benevolence and mercy to animals”.²⁰

In their insensibility to animal suffering (the substantially vegetarian) Indians were like unfeeling members of the lower orders at home. But unlike brutish members of the British working classes, the cruelty of subcontinental vegetarians was the result of a host of practices ostensibly designed to *safeguard* animal life: vegetarianism, the sacralisation of nonhuman animals, and the establishment of animal hospitals/shelters for ill, aged, and economically unviable animals. There is a large bibliography of nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian and British writing on India that testifies to the paradoxical cruelty of vegetarian populations that combine the conservation of animal life with a callousness about animal suffering, and about how in fact they produce or prolong animal suffering as a *consequence* of their ostensibly benevolent practices towards animals. John Lockwood Kipling’s *Beast and Man in India* (1891), written in the immediate aftermath of the passage of Act XI, the first all-India legislative act designed to prevent cruelty to animals, is emblematic of such writing, in addition to being the best-known title in this bibliography. As Lockwood and other critics of diet and indigenous practices of animal protection in the subcontinent saw it, human-nonhuman relations in the colony constituted an urgent ethical crisis, precisely because of what passed, erroneously, for vegetarian compassion and animal welfare among the British empire’s subjects, but actually was cruelty. The task of imperial authorities and activists committed to humanitarianism was to protect susceptible, abused animals from the effects of the cruelty of natives.²¹

SACRED COWS AND BOVINE ADVOCACY

How did the targets of such criticism respond to these evaluations of their diet and their moral/religious and workaday relationship to nonhuman creatures? For members of a colonised (and, generally speaking, high-caste Hindu) middle class smarting under accusations of effeminacy, physical degeneracy, and historical backwardness, and living in conditions of political servitude, some of these accusations had considerable persuasiveness; there is significant evidence that some aspects of the critique were internalised by them, in a kind of circular traffic of religio-racial stereotypes. This was especially true where diagnoses of the enfeebling and effeminising effects of a vegetarian diet were concerned. A certain faith in patriarchal carnivory as a cornerstone of the political order held wide sway across the imperial divide in the nineteenth century; this is made manifest in M.K. Gandhi’s recollection of a jingle in fashion among schoolboys in his youth that extolled the preternatural prowess of the Englishman, a prowess conferred by meat-eating: “Behold the mighty Englishman / He rules the Indian small, / Because being a meat-eater / He is five cubits tall”.²² For the adolescent Gandhi, as for so many of his South Asian contemporaries, meat-eating was a favoured conduit to a successful assimilation into the new world

order opened up by imperialism, though in his manhood he would depart conspicuously from such an understanding of alimentary lack, and its resolution. More strenuously than the conflicted adolescent Gandhi, the cosmopolitan Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda insisted that vegetarianism was one of the root causes of the loss of national freedom. Such being the case, carnivory became a matter of racial-civilisational urgency for colonised Indians, and especially colonised males. He suggested that vegetarianism, along with its concomitant spirituality, was in fact the apt diet of virile *western* powers that needed to build up their reserves of moral rectitude, given that they already had proved their mettle in their vigorous pursuit of worldly success. But it was the mistaken and unnatural moral choice of Hindus/Indians, an enfeebled people over-invested in spiritual purity.²³

Vivekananda and the teenaged Gandhi notwithstanding, large numbers of the colonised dissented powerfully from the imperial assessment of their non-carnivorous dietary practices. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a distinct category of Indian (and often largely Hindu) production of texts of animal advocacy—in the form of polemical essays, petitions, plays, poetry, songs, posters, handbills, travel narratives, and cookbooks—in several languages. These criticised what many described as the unremitting voracity of carnivores of various stripes, including Britons, North Americans, and Christians. Some of the multifarious and indeed disparate strains of this writing are worth examining in some detail.

One of these strains emerged from what came to be called the cow protection movement. Historians have noted how the cow emerged as an enormously charismatic political symbol of the Hindu nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in northern India.²⁴ Aggressively sectarian mobilisation around the cow as an emblem of sacred, beleaguered Hinduness came from high-caste Hindu revivalist-reformist outfits, as well as from Jains and Kuka or Namdhari Sikhs; in the 1880s and 1890s, it would lead to dozens of riots between Hindus and Muslims in northern India. Prominent among these outfits was the Gaurakshini Sabha (or Cow Protection) movement, formed in the 1880s by the Arya Samaj, whose members were engaged in an endeavour to redefine Hindu religious traditions to accommodate as well as to resist western criticism of indigenous practices.²⁵ The writings and other cultural productions of the movement were dedicated to arguing for the distinctive sanctity and economic value of cattle, and to petitioning the imperial government, the British Parliament, and Queen Victoria to institute a ban on cow slaughter.

Perhaps the most prominent apostle of this bovinophilia was the Hindu reformer Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj and the author of *Gokarunanidhi* (*Ocean of Mercy for the Cow*, 1881). This book quickly established itself as one of the founding texts—if not *the* founding text—of the cow protection movement. Dayanand's writing established the terms in which the cow's significance would be evaluated, not simply as religious but also economic and ethical. *Gokarunanidhi* asserts the sanctity of all forms of life,

nonhuman and human, as a law of both God and nature, which the state cannot but uphold as a principle of its own ethical soundness as well as its worldly endurance. A departure from this sovereign principle of law and the state has led incontrovertibly to the decline of great empires in the past, he argues. But while all birds and beasts, and in particular the domesticated ones, are deserving of protection, it is cattle above all who should inspire our deepest regard and compassion. Cow's milk rather than meat is the perfect food, uniquely beneficial for the development of physical and moral muscle; carnivory as an emblematically cruel practice on the other hand ravages moral as well as intellectual capacity.²⁶ But, beyond even these ethical, affective, historical, and health-related reasons, Dayanand adduces an unexpectedly utilitarian, or overtly economic argument, drawn from the logic of agrarian economy, to describe the cow's unparalleled role in preventing malnutrition, poverty, and famine. If the cow is sacred, its sanctity is grounded above all in its utility. In pursuit of this argument, Dayanand provides a series of detailed if somewhat fanciful calculations seeking to demonstrate through mathematical proof how one cow and her female calves in a normal life span can nourish as many as 154,440 persons; the flesh of a slaughtered cow on the other hand can feed only 80. An indulgence in a "savage taste" for the flesh of cattle and goats is a detraction from the common good, resulting in an annual loss of revenue to the tune of 832,321,316 pounds sterling.²⁷ Hence the preservation of bovine life must be comprehended as eminently propitious for economic stability, health, and general welfare rather than as a sectarian affair. This insistence on the cow as an economic resource above all was an important consideration in appealing to an imperial government professing religious neutrality in its modes of governance.

Dayanand and other cow protectionists' Hindu scientism and utilitarianism on behalf of the cow was not aimed against Britons, who were famous for their beef-eating—or at least not directly. This is notwithstanding the fact that Arya Samaj mobilisation in the late nineteenth century was driven in significant part by fears of Christian proselytisation in Gujarat and the Punjab. Bovine advocacy was aimed against more intimate enemies: Muslims, who sacrificed cattle and consumed beef on festivals and religious holidays, and so-called Untouchables, who handled bovine carcasses and skins and sometimes consumed bovine flesh. Riots, social boycotts, economic intimidation, and cow protection propaganda targeted these demographics, and Muslims above all. Nonetheless, notes Peter Robb, Anglo-Indian authorities were disquieted by the tacit censure of their rule by the movement. Pictures issued by cow-protection societies "depicted the [historical or mythic] age which had protected the cow ('dharmraj' [era or rule of righteousness]) in contrast to the present era, the age of evil. ... Unspoken, it seems, was the implication that it was the British, eaters of beef, who ruled in these evil times".²⁸ After all, some nineteenth-century texts of Hindu eschatology associated the arrival of English-speaking *gurundas* (mutilators of cows) with the onset of *kaliyuga*, the age of decline and degeneration.²⁹

It is perhaps no surprise that the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, in his 1893 memorandum reviewing this new movement, considered it the gravest menace to the Government since the Mutiny of 1857, especially in light of the roughly contemporaneous formation of the Indian National Congress, a body of educated urban elites pursuing greater political autonomy, though within the compass of the empire.³⁰

THE VEGETARIAN WITNESS

It is important to note that criticisms of animal slaughter and carnivory in late nineteenth-century India were not confined to those engaging in political and cultural activism in the name of a revivalist Hinduism, endeavouring to harness its sacred cows to the service of modern efficiency and humanitarianism. Perhaps unexpectedly, Anglo-Indian and British criticisms of vegetarian dietary inefficiency and vegetarian cruelty encountered significant resistance from those who affiliated themselves sympathetically on many issues with the civilising claims of the imperial state and of the missionary enterprise. The work of some of these critics is worth scrutinising for its particularities.

In an exchange of letters at the turn of the century with the Reverend James Welldon, Archbishop of Calcutta, the Junagadh-based animal rights advocate Labhshankar Laxmidas, active in the cause of diminishing animal cruelty in India and a regular contributor to international publications on animal advocacy and vegetarianism, hit back sharply at Christian castigation of subcontinental vegetarianism and animal veneration. In this exchange he presents himself as a friend to Christianity, and as an admirer of the Christian character of much organised animal advocacy. He is in other venues a fierce critic of animal sacrifice in Hindu goddess worship, a *bête noire* of missionary and secular critics of Hindu conduct towards animals. Nor is he opposed to imperialism; he approves the Christian rulers who have abolished cruel Hindu customs like *sati*.

But on the issue of vegetarianism, he insists, it is Christians and not Hindus who are cruel in seeing animals merely as resources for human exploitation. He responds energetically to the Rev. Welldon's sneering reference to Hindu sacralisation of the cow. Using the logic of civilisational progress dear to imperialist thought, he says tartly to his religious and dietary antagonist: "This humane position [that carnivory is morally unjustifiable] was reached by the Brahmins and Buddhists twenty-five centuries ago, and it is time Christendom adopted it also".³¹ The worship of the cow, he says, follows from seeing divinity in all beings. He is not, in other words, of the camp of Dayanand; he makes no special plea for the cow, nor does he rationalise any economics of bovine advocacy. He turns the presumptive docility of zoolatrous Hindus into positive moral capital; it has had the salutary effect of keeping them from "the cowardly sins of vivisection, bloody sport, and slaughter, of which Christians are so very fond", and has kept overall rates of crime low in India in comparison with Britain and the United States (8).

Even as he jibes at the Christian record of violence against animals, he approves the publicly proclaimed desire of the bishops of India and Ceylon to turn the subcontinent Christian. But he identifies the Bishop of Calcutta's terse defence of and adherence to carnivory—the prelate avows that “the church holds that man is entitled by God to use the life of animals for his own support” (8)—as an insuperable barrier to such a goal in a land where Brahminical law and Buddhism condemn the “torture and murder [of] poor harmless animals” (9). “How can he [the potential convert] accept Christianity as a superior religion, when his hereditary instincts and religious belief lead him to consider that the flesh-eating missionary is on a lower plane of spirituality than himself? Should we listen to the teachings of cannibals if they came to instruct us?” (9) Better objects of abolition or conversion present themselves in Spanish bull-fights and the “murderous millinery” of “tender-hearted Christian ladies” (8), the latter being a reference to the decimation of bird populations as a result of Victorian fashions for decorating women's hats with feathers and other avian body parts. “If the pious people of Europe and America can let alone the heathens for a few years, and direct all their energies to convert the so-called Christians to Christianity, which is really a very noble religion, an incalculable amount of evil will disappear from the face of this earth,” he concludes rebarbatively (8).

If Laxmidas's letters engage with the antipathetic logics of vegetarianism and carnivory, the Bombay-based Parsi journalist, writer, and social reformer Behramji Malabari relies instead on what I will venture to call the modes of vegetarian ethnography and vegetarian witnessing. (This is also an apt description of the work of Pandita Ramabai, described later in this chapter.) Like most Parsi intellectuals of the nineteenth century, Malabari was deeply appreciative of what he saw as the benefits to India of imperialism. His first book-length publication in English was *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876), an entirely unmemorable volume of occasional verses in English; it is most noteworthy perhaps for its several poems addressed to the Prince of Wales and its repeated avowals of gratitude for imperial rule, and for the cautiously polite attention it received from luminaries such as Alfred Tennyson, Max Mueller, and Florence Nightingale, to whom it was sent. But he was a fairly well-regarded Gujarati poet, and his part-ethnographic and part-fictional work, *Gujarat and the Gujaratis* (1882), produced at the request of Martin Woods, his editor at the *Times of India*, established his reputation as a witty and engaging observer of social life.³²

Malabari was also, importantly, an ardent advocate of the reform of Hindu social practices. As Antoinette Burton notes, “[Parsi] Westernization in Bombay entailed a social distancing from the Hindu way of life. It also required a rejection of what were perceived as regressive Hindu attitudes toward women—most notably in terms of child marriage, the seclusion of women, and the prohibition of widow remarriage.”³³ In 1884, he published his influential *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood*, distributing it to prominent Indians and Britons, and demanding, through his public speeches and editorials, that legislation be enacted to prohibit both practices. It was largely

to seek parliamentary support on these issues and to address a reform-minded public at the heart of the empire (rather than the more unresponsive imperial government in India) that he travelled to Britain in the 1890s. The result of this travel was *The Indian Eye on English Life* (1893).

Curiously, though, *The Indian Eye* is remarkably reticent about social reform in India—the object for which Malabari ostensibly made three trips to Britain. Rather, it is a recognisable specimen of the English-language travelogues and guidebooks that, starting in the 1880s, came to be produced by Indian male travellers to London in significant numbers. Many commented on the poverty, overcrowding, filth, and contrasts between the lives of the rich and the poor that they encountered in the metropolis. Such commentary, Burton notes, can be read as a “provincialization of Britain”, one that functions as a critique of the claims to civilisational superiority that functioned as justifications for imperial rule.³⁴ Burton also reminds us that *The Indian Eye* was almost exactly contemporaneous with the “East End” travelogues—including William Booth’s *In Darkest England, and the Way Out* (1890) and Margaret Harkness’s *In Darkest London* (1889)—that had “mapped London itself as a colonial space”.³⁵

Malabari turns an often sharply critical eye on what he encounters in London. He finds the city noisy, smoky, and crowded, its “fine days” laughably limited, its inhabitants restless and brusque, and its poverty more shocking than in India. Women’s behaviour is marked by sexual freedoms that he finds unnerving. The English are fickle in their friendship, excessively devoted to militarism, and given to fighting and rough sports. They are fiercely consumerist and restless for novelty, which desire is marked by the pervasiveness of advertisements for various commodities.

But above all, and to a surprising degree, given that he was an advocate neither for vegetarianism nor for animal welfare, Malabari takes issue with the English diet, especially its carnivory, and with what this entails for the treatment of animals. Like many Indians over the decades, he thinks of the English as being possessed of colossal appetites.³⁶ He finds the spectacle of the English at table somewhat revolting, with respect to the quantity they eat, their venue and manner of consumption, and their choice of alimentation.³⁷ “Bismillah! How these Firanghis do eat!” he notes with wonderment and disgust, reversing the familiar Orientalist trope in which the western visitor encounters nauseating foods in exotic locales.³⁸ He slips, unusually, into the Urdu vernacular to mark his distance from those devouring prodigious quantities of oysters, pork, bacon, beef, and ham. He finds English cuisine lacking in imagination, taste, and variety, largely as a result of its carnivorous limitations. “I wish the people could be induced to go in more for vegetables and fruit, for grain, pulse, and other cereals. There would be less alcoholic drink necessary in that case, and a marked improvement both in their habits and appearance”, he remarks, connecting what he sees as the very English vice of hard drinking with the consumption of flesh (46). Vegetarian restaurants have made a beginning in the right direction, but they lack the culinary skills to make a gastronomic success of their venture. In matters of gastronomy, they need to imitate their

Indian colony: “Not until they learn how to draw the people by a variety of well-seasoned dishes will they compete successfully with ‘the roast beef of Old England’. Why don’t they employ Indian cooks for a time? Anglo-Indian ladies ought to set the example to their sisters” (46). Despite being neither a vegetarian nor a caste Hindu observant of restrictions on commensality, Malabari finds himself unable to dine with the English; he can play only the part of a horror-struck observer. “I sit there, wiping my forehead (they do the eating, I the perspiring) as I see slices of beef disappearing, with vegetables, mustard, etc. ...The host then asks me slyly what I think of the food and their mode of eating? I reply instinctively, ‘It is horrible’” (46).

If Laxmidas had accentuated the (deplorable) ethics of carnivory, Malabari draws attention to its aesthetic. What makes carnivory distasteful for him is not simply the fact of its cruelty coupled with the gluttony it appears to induce. At least in its English variety, it is yoked with other kinds of sensory engagements that aggrandise its cruelty. The English carnivore is cruel not just because he eats flesh but because he also derives a certain delectation from the spectacle of slaughtered animal bodies; his cruelty encompasses the eye and the nose as well as the palate. Malabari returns repeatedly to the exposure of the dead bodies of slaughtered animals to the public gaze in butcher shops: “the materials...may be seen any day hung up at the shops; carcasses [*sic*] of large animals and small, beef, veal, pork, mutton, ducks, geese, rabbits, chickens, all dressed and ready for use. The sight is invariably unpleasant, and the smell is at times overpowering if one happens to be near the shops. It is an exhibition of barbarism, not unlikely to develop the brute instincts in man” (45–6). There is cruel eating, but there is also cruel looking and cruel olfaction, and often it is hard to keep these apart. Besides, in a metropolis devoted to restless accumulation and stark contrasts of wealth and poverty, the butcher shop displays also serve as a particularly brutal form of conspicuous consumption.

For Malabari, these sights are at powerful odds with his status as a man of sensibility, keenly attuned to the sufferings of the unprotected, whether they be Hindu child brides, widows or animals. Consequently, the inhumane elation of the crowds witnessing such displays constitutes for him a significant element of the horror of the spectacle: “what can excuse the sights and smells of a butcher’s shop in London, gloated over by the people?” (107).³⁹ A relish at the sight of animal suffering is also vividly presented at the zoo, where human spectators applaud the devouring of live prey by caged predators (182). Likewise, sadistic shipboard games involving the driving of turkeys, geese, and ducks draw “shrieks of delight” from English ladies and “shouts of applause” from their male companions (228–9). No wonder, then, that a favourite British expletive is “bloody”, which, he notes a bit roguishly, seems to accord with the habitual ferocity of John Bull’s temperament.

Bitingly, Malabari notes the hypocrisy of those who seek to reduce animal suffering without sacrificing their own carnivory: “At present, those of us who advocate laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals are perhaps amongst the first to kill and eat them wholesale” (106). Women, often at the forefront of

movements for reducing cruelty to animals, “indulge in fashions involving barbarous cruelty, the plucking of birds and skinning of animals, after they have been destroyed for the purpose” (110). And what is worst of all is vivisection, “the cruelty inflicted on animals in the name of science and humanity”, which in the East can only seem like “science run mad” (111).

It is instructive to compare Malabari’s travelogue, with its dietary ethnography and vegetarian witnessing, with *United Stateschi Lokasthiti ani Pravasavritta* (*The Peoples of the United States*, 1889), the feminist and social reformer Pandita Ramabai Saraswati’s account in Marathi of her extended visit to the United States. A Sanskrit scholar of note, Ramabai is best known as an unsparing critic of Hindu male orthodoxy in addition to being a highly visible advocate of child widows and an educator; she was to publish *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*, a scathing assessment of caste and gender hierarchies in Hindu society, to great acclaim during this visit. She would spend over two and a half years lecturing across the United States and Canada, primarily on the need for women’s education in India, and raising funds for a residential school for high-caste widows at Pune. She received a warm welcome from a wide range of auditors and interlocutors, including educational authorities and women’s and Christian missionary circles. As importantly for our purposes here, she established close ties with George Angell of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and with Frances Willard, president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU); there was a connection between the nineteenth-century temperance and animal welfare movements in the United States, and the WCTU “defined animal cruelty as a form of intemperance—both involved a loss of free moral agency”.⁴⁰

United Stateschi Lokasthiti ani Pravasavritta, notes Meera Kosambi astutely, weaves together a narrative that encompasses three locales: the United States, Britain, and India, each of which summons up a distinct ideological investment. Overall, the United States serves as a cudgel which castigates the shortcomings of both Britain and India. In contrast to the religious intolerance and rigid class hierarchies of Britain, and the caste-bound benightedness of India, the United States is “a land of progress, equality, and opportunity, of collective action and citizens’ rights.... indirectly...a precedent for India to follow in its pursuit of political freedom and social reform”.⁴¹ As a result, Ramabai writes with fervid admiration about the positive traits of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant community of the northeastern United States: its republicanism, its egalitarianism, its public spiritedness, its promotion of education, the warmth of its nuclear family life, and the opportunities it provides for women to pursue education and be active in the public sphere.

Ramabai is not uniformly uncritical of the Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States. She is scathing about the absurdity and unhealthiness of women’s fashions, mocking them for their criticism of Chinese foot-binding while being oblivious to their own need for sartorial liberation. She denounces the pervasive racism against African Americans, Native Americans, and Chinese

immigrants to the United States, while noting that these do not match the intensity of caste bigotry in India.

But her strongest criticisms of North American and European cultures emerge from her ethnography of a carnivorous society; they are inspired by its diet and fashion. Like most of her animal rights contemporaries, she is shocked at the staggering numbers of birds slaughtered or skinned alive to ornament women's hats and bonnets. Such destruction beggars both description and calculation: "Who can adequately describe such cruelty, and the agony of the poor birds? Two years ago, a shop in London sold, in three months, the skins of 404,464 birds from the West Indies and Brazil, and the dead bodies of 356,389 lovely birds from our own India. There are thousands of such shops in Europe and America. Who can estimate how many untold millions of dead birds are bought and sold there?" (112). She describes the pathos of fledglings perishing for lack of food, in the hope that the knowledge might make unthinking female consumers abandon such cruel fashions. It is one of the strikingly few instances in the travelogue where she feels that American depravity outdoes its Indian counterpart: "As I travel around this country I see thousands of young ladies and old women, as well as little children, wearing whole and half bodies of birds on their bonnets. It shocks and grieves me. There is cruelty enough in my own country, but our gentlewomen do not at present think of beautifying themselves with dead birds".⁴²

Despite being a high-profile Chitpavan Brahmin (and therefore vegetarian) convert to Christianity, Ramabai had not undergone the "baptism of meat" that many Asian converts to Christianity underwent; she remained resolutely non-carnivorous to the end of her days.⁴³ The callous treatment of animals destined to furnish meat for the table in the United States is, unsurprisingly, a source of distress for her. Eschewing a diet of flesh, she finds it difficult to keep herself fed: "A person who is averse to fish, meat, or dishes prepared with eggs and animal fat has a very hard time getting enough to eat, and is compelled to manage largely with milk, bread, and fruit".⁴⁴ But, what is worse, "a great deal of killing of animals" attends American holidays, as she notes in her account of domestic conditions in the country. Perversely, animals are considered no more than vegetables or insentient commodities, and this category confusion suffuses the very language of animal husbandry: "Some up-and-coming traders there cultivate large 'farms' and 'orchards' of cattle and pigs, and supply these living and moving 'vegetables' to cities thousands of miles away. ... These pastures are the vegetable gardens of the Americans. Cattle, sheep, and pigs are bred here, and at the specified time these living and moving vegetables are loaded into railroad wagons and sent across thousands of miles" (132). She, on the other hand, understands their condition to be that of "incarcerated creatures"; this rhetorical restoration of their tortured creatureliness is part of her ethical charge as the vegetarian witness. As in Malabari's case, she is appalled by the discursive and material conversion of sentient beings to raw material, depth-less and inanimate matter awaiting use by humans. To counter their transformation into commodities whose exchange value alone matters, she underlines their corporeal vulnerability to suffering and

death. Her cognisance of the manifold physical agonies of cattle though the course of the seasons—they are scorched by the sun and drenched by the rain, and shiver to death in the winter—raises a sympathetic bodily reverberation in her: “I still shudder at the very memory of the distress suffered by the cattle which I saw while touring through the States of Iowa and Nebraska” (132). “On the whole”, she observes, “the people of this country are very kind and compassionate; but they seem not to care for the well-being of creatures other than humans, either because of their habit of eating meat, or for some other reason” (132).

Ramabai generally mitigates any criticism of her host country by describing its endeavours at melioration. So, characteristically, she follows her description of the heartless treatment of animals raised for food by an exposition of institutional endeavours to legislate against the ill-treatment of animals, paying tribute to the work of Henry Bergh, founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and of George Angell of the organisation’s Massachusetts chapter. “Nowadays public opinion is favorably disposed toward animals”, she avers. Praising the “Bands of Mercy” formed in the United States to instruct children in duties of kindness to animals, she remarks: “Our country has a great need for such societies” (134).

Yet she finds herself returning repeatedly to the new and varied forms of animal cruelty she witnesses in North America. Unlike Malabari, she does not witness the display in a butcher’s shop, but reports of slaughterhouses convey to her an impression of “Hell itself”, with the butchers and traders in meat playing the part of something worse than “human demons” (132). Like her Parsi compatriot, she takes note of the fact that the cruelty of carnivory is also a cruelty of the eye. She is particularly aghast at the aesthetic of the *nature morte* still life painting and taxidermy that constitutes the beautification of domestic space: “Sometimes dining room walls are hung not with pictures but with dead and stuffed peacocks or pigeons, upside down. It is also customary to hang on the walls paintings of freshly caught, bloodied fish dangling from a peg, or hares killed in a hunt. Needless to say, it is not a good custom. Such cruel pictures harden the hearts of children” (134). The horror this evokes is of a different order from that induced by the slaughter of animals for the carnivorous table. The dead creatures in the paintings serve as trophies, killed and displayed not for eating—peacocks had not been part of aristocratic tables for centuries, and taxidermied birds in any case were not part of a gustatory aesthetic—but as signs of privilege and the prerogative to kill for pleasure and ostentation. Frank Palmeri names such game pieces trophy paintings, in that “trophy game is killed in order that a record or memento of the dead animal can be made, in such forms as a taxidermied head or antlers mounted on a wall. In these paintings of trophy animals, the painting itself becomes the trophy, the sign of the owner’s authority to kill”.⁴⁵ The fact that the animal corpses are in aberrant poses in this dramatic tableau—hung upside down, dangling from pegs—may indicate the effect of the unnatural violence that has rendered them no more than props in a sadistic aesthetic.

Ramabai deprecates the pedagogical effects of these game pieces on their viewers, especially the young. And, indeed, the description of the game piece is bracketed by two paragraphs that bear out her point. In one she encounters a young boy holding a hen upside down by its legs, indifferent to its suffering. In the other she points to the example of cruel sports such as fishing, which causes its practitioners—“lovely young ladies, tender children, young men, and even middle-aged scholars”—to “feel delighted at the sight of the fish in the throes of death” (134–5). With uncharacteristic vehemence, and a particularly pointed irony given her own status as Christian convert, she asserts: “These customs cannot but make one feel that it would be a good thing if missionaries of some compassionate Buddha came to this country and converted the people here” (135).

At the same time, Ramabai is keen to disavow any romanticisation of an animal-loving Hindu India that is morally more advanced than a carnivorous west. She is at significant pains to counter or balance some of her assertions about American carnivory with some equivalent evidence of atrocity from India. Her description of turkey slaughter on holidays like Thanksgiving is matched with a footnote about the history of Brahmin meat-eating (including beef-eating) in India. “The killing of animals decreased considerably in our country because of the teachings of the Buddha; even so, there are still many who do not hesitate to eat meat if they get an opportunity”, she concludes. And appended to her desire for advent of Buddhist missionaries to convert Protestant America is a long footnote about the perverse forms of Indian (for her, definitionally Hindu) kindness to animals—building asylums for animals, supplying human blood to vermin, offering milk to snakes—that is accompanied by singular indifference to human suffering. She concludes this long, somewhat exclamatory note by asserting, “Truly, the Americans do possess a higher degree of kindness to living creatures!!” (136–7), although it is not necessarily straightforward to gauge the tone of this.

CONCLUSION

No matter the degree of their mutual differences, there is a way in which the quite disparate writings of Dayanand, Laxmidas, Malabari, and Ramabai are in a certain conversation with one another. Taken together, they point to the emergence of a distinctly new genre of colonial writing on diet and ethics, produced this time by those who had long been the object of ethnographic investigation, sometimes hyperbolic admiration, and more often forms of censure and mockery for their unusual forms of alimentation and animal protection. If vegetarian polemics itself has a long history in the global North that precedes the Victorian period, we might say that the imperial experience in the Victorian period expands its languages, sometimes literally, and gives it distinctive new turns. We see in the work of Laxmidas, Malabari, and Ramabai in particular a deployment of vegetarian polemics as a form of critique of an imperial or proto-imperial order that maintained the right to kill and eat animals while

simultaneously avowing concern for their welfare. Their self-constitution as vegetarian witnesses from colonised worlds to the ravages of carnivory might even be said to function as harbingers of the conspicuously vegetarian character of Gandhi's anti-imperial politics.⁴⁶ Moreover, the striking ethnographies undertaken by Malabari and Ramabai of the carnivorous cultures of Britain and the United States have the singular effect of displacing carnivory from any position of normativeness. This may be among their most unexpected and consequential effects.

In these capacities, the works of the Indian vegetarian polemicists add crucial dimensions to that subset of humanities scholarship, located at the intersection of animal studies, food studies, and ecocriticism, that we might designate as vegetarian and, more recently, vegan studies. While scholars in literary or historical or philosophical fields traditionally have viewed matters of diet in general and those of vegetarianism or veganism in particular as marginal practices, scholars of bloodless diets, vegetarian and vegan, have established beyond a doubt that such practices put significant pressure upon core aspects of daily life, thought, and faith in the global North, and thus have had an impact beyond the numbers of their adherents. Certainly, the work of Laxmidas et al. gives evidence besides that the theory and practice of alimentation provided an important framework for thinking the cultures of trans-imperial politics and not just metropolitan ones. As such it lends substance to recent iterations in vegetarian and vegan studies that seek to be attentive to matters of race and empire in parsing questions of alimentary ethics and animal advocacy.⁴⁷ Examining the career and writings of late Victorian vegetarian advocates from the subcontinent makes us attend to all the ways in which a vegetarian study is irreducibly trans-imperial, religiously and racially various and contested, and multilingual.

At the same time, it is important to avoid an automatic affiliation between vegetarian polemics and radical or anti-imperialist critique. The violent anti-Muslim animus of Dayanand and the Hindu cow protectionists should remind us that vegetarianism (and veganism) can be prompted by a variety of reasons, only some of which have to do with considerations for animal welfare. The idioms of vegetarian ethics and animal advocacy easily can be, and historically have been, harnessed to deeply regressive ends. (The contemporary phenomenon of ecofascism, inspired as it is by the racial and animal politics of the Third Reich, is a case in point. So is the recent rash of lynchings by Hindu mobs of Muslim and Dalit subjects suspected of killing cows or consuming beef.) A careful parsing of the vegetarian polemics of late Victorian India underlines the fact that the abjuration of meat, or of some kinds of meat, is by no means straightforward or even invariably nonviolent.

NOTES

1. Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, 39–40.
2. Gibbes, *Hartly House, Calcutta*, 50.

3. Rousseau, *Emile, or Education*, 118+n. 2.
4. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, vol. II, 188.
5. See Kellman's "Fish, Flesh, and Foul" for an account of the animosity directed at vegetarians, mostly in the global North.
6. Goldsmith, *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, vol. 1, 212. The historian Richard Eaton has cautioned against seeing these disparaging diagnoses of non-carnivorous diet as rooted only in European Orientalism. He notes that these strictures on diet, masculinity, and moral fibre in Bengal were not so much the *invention* of orientalising Europeans as they were an appropriation and assimilation of "values and attitudes that were already present in India, and that were associated in particular with [the wheat- and meat-eating Mughals], Bengal's former ruling class" (*The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760*, 169, n. 29).
7. Morton, ed. *Radical Food: The Culture and Politics of Eating and Drinking, 1790–1820*, vol. 1, 10.
8. Morton lists as many as forty nine persons; see "Joseph Ritson, Percy Shelley and the Making of Romantic Vegetarianism", 58. Also see Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*.
9. Morton, "Joseph Ritson", 58.
10. Menely, *The Animal Claim*, 199.
11. Cited in Menely, 198 (emphases in original).
12. Menely notes that a morbidly sentimental attachment to animals was even diagnosed in the early twentieth century as the nervous disorder "zoophilpsycho-sis" (199).
13. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade*, 93–114.
14. Shprintzen, 97.
15. Cited in Davis, *The Gospel of Kindness*, 155.
16. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 394.
17. Turner, *Reckoning With the Beast*; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Steintrager, *Cruel Delight*; Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*; and Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain*.
18. See Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, for an analysis of the distinctly classed dimension of animal protection laws in the Victorian period.
19. Cooper, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*, ed. Julius Ruska, 108–110. It is worth bearing in mind Festa's argument that the emergence of sentimental narrative—in which sympathy plays a shaping role—was articulated with the experience of empire-building; see *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*.
20. Li, "A Union of Christianity, Humanity, and Philanthropy," 273.
21. For an elaboration of "vegetarian cruelty," see my essay, "On Verminous Life".
22. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 17. A consideration of Gandhi's turn to vegetarianism (and to nonviolence more broadly) as anti-imperial and anti-modern critique is outside the scope of this paper, given its focus on the Victorian period.
23. See especially, Swami Vivekananda, *Prachya o Paschatya (The East and the West)*, and Chakravarti, "From the Diary of a Disciple".
24. See, for instance, Parel, "The political symbolism of the cow in India"; Freitag, "Sacred Symbol as Mobilizing Ideology"; Yang, "Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space in Rural India"; Pandey, "Rallying Round the Cow"; Robb, "The Challenge of *Gau Mata*"; and Adcock, "Sacred Cows and Secular History".

25. The Arya Samaj had a prominent role in the Cow Protection movement, but the movement itself drew support from a wide cross-section of Hindus in northern India, reformist and orthodox, urban and rural, high-caste and upwardly mobile lower castes, not to mention Jains and Sikhs.
26. Dayanand Saraswati/Durga Prasad, *Ocean of Mercy*, 29.
27. Dayanand/Durga Prasad, 17. One can see Dayanand as an inaugural figure in what Subramaniam has dubbed Hinduism's "archaic modernity," predicated on a vision of a mythic past where science and technology thrived as part of a religious utopia; see her "Archaic Modernities".
28. Robb, 295.
29. Halbfass, *India and Europe*.
30. Robb, 303.
31. Laxmidas, "To the Rt. Rev., the Metropolitan, Calcutta", 7. All further references will be incorporated parenthetically into the text.
32. Siganporia, "From Folk to People".
33. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire*, 158.
34. Burton, 186.
35. Burton, 166.
36. When, in *A Passage to India*, Aziz arranges an expedition to the Marabar Caves for Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested, he is under the impression that they must be fed every two hours.
37. "We learn from the Anglophile Mirza Lutfullah that around 1810 the people of central India believed that the 'abominably white' Europeans had no skin and ate everything, including human flesh, when driven to extremity", observes Raychaudhuri ("Europe in India's Xenology", 157).
38. Malabari, *The Indian Eye on English Life*, 47. All future references from this source will be incorporated parenthetically into the text.
39. Even the Reverend Nundo Lal Doss, the Christian convert and missionary for the London Missionary Society, was nauseated by these spectacles, and the responses they elicited from English viewers: "Many of the bystanders gaped with wonder at this fat beast, and no doubt many a tongue watered at the sight of this dainty dish, but I can assure you mine did not, with all my old Hindu tastes still deeply ingrained in me" (*Reminiscences, English and Australian*, 67).
40. Davis, 22.
41. Kosambi, "Introduction", *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 6.
42. Kosambi, "Introduction", 26.
43. The associations of carnivory with Christianity and of vegetarianism with eastern religio-cultural traditions extended beyond India. Eric Reinders suggests that western Christian missionaries in nineteenth-century (Manchu) China came to connect religious identity, whether Buddhist or Christian, with a decided stance on carnivory. Abstention from meat was seen as religiously meritorious for Buddhists; hence conversions of Chinese Buddhists to Christianity had to involve a "baptism of meat". See his "Blessed are the Meat-Eaters".
44. *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 108. All future references from this source will be incorporated parenthetically into the text.
45. Frank Palmeri, "A Profusion of Dead Animals", 56. Palmeri is describing a seventeenth-century Flemish and Dutch genre, but his conclusions hold for the nineteenth century too.
46. Much has been written about Gandhian dietetics and the critique of imperialism; for some of the major statements, see Lloyd and Susan Rudolph, *The*

Modernity of Tradition; Alter, *Gandhi's Body*; Gandhi, *Affective States*; Roy, *Alimentary Tracts*; and Singh, "Future Hospitalities".

47. See, for instance, Wright's *Through a Vegan Studies Lens*, and Harper, *Sistah Vegan*.

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PART VII

Modernist Literature



Modernist Animals and Bioaesthetics

Carrie Rohman

Though writers and other artists are now engaging more and more with ideas about animals, and even with actual living animals, their aesthetic practices continue to be interpreted within a primarily human frame of reference—with art itself being understood as an exclusively human endeavor. The future of a humanities that expands the concept of what is valuable for “human” experience to include our entanglement and shared capacities with other sentient, agential beings requires a shift in understandings of the aesthetic impulse itself: we must recognize artistic impulses and activities as profoundly trans-species. Once we understand that artistic impulses are part of our evolutionary inheritance—borrowed, in some sense, from animals and the natural world—the ways we experience, theorize, and value literary art fundamentally shift. I call this shift an acknowledgment of *bioaesthetics*.¹

In my view, human creativity is only the most recent iteration of an artistic impulse that belongs to the living in general. Rather than looking primarily “beyond” ourselves to understand animals and aesthetics, I suggest we must also look “within” to identify a long, durational coincidence of the human and animal elaboration of life forces in aesthetic practices. Moreover, we ought to turn *toward* animals to revise and revivify our understanding of aesthetic capacities. Such a viewpoint radically suggests that all human artistic propensities have some fundamental connection to animality that is based on strategies of excess, display, and intensification that are not primarily cognitive. Reconceiving our artistic drives as more than human—re-envisioning the aesthetic domain

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itself as trans-species in scope—is also ethically charged because we must acknowledge the shared status of art-making, one of our most revered and formerly “exceptional” activities.² A bioaesthetic framework therefore also signals a heightened ethical responsibility to acknowledge the richness and vitality of the nonhuman world. To be clear, I am not simply suggesting that certain modes of aesthetic expression are closely linked to animals, but that the aesthetic itself *is* animal.

My earlier work³ has detailed how modernism represents a privileged site for the eruption of animality in artistic and cultural texts in the post-Enlightenment era. Modernism should be understood as a charged site of animality’s “homecoming” in cultural, artistic, and psychic discourses after Darwin. The decades after Darwin’s work became widely circulated mark one of the most extreme upheavals in humanism vis-à-vis animals that human history has witnessed. What is more, modernism’s insistence on “making it new” resulted in a particularly resonant moment for bioaesthetics in literature and culture. That is, the coincidence of scientific and cultural acknowledgments of humans’ animality with the explicit desire to innovate and refigure forms of artistic practice, helps explain the recurrence of bioaesthetic themes in this period. Modernism is itself a kind of aesthetic “becoming-other”, and thus the bioaesthetic is especially prominent in this period.

Before I turn to a discussion of D. H. Lawrence, who is arguably the most bioaesthetic modernist writer, I will outline some basic frameworks for a bioaesthetic approach. Theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Elizabeth Grosz have provided mechanisms for understanding the origins of the artistic within the strivings of life itself. Their work suggests that artistic practice has its roots in the excesses of evolution and in the showy extravagance of sexual selection, where qualities and forces are elaborated in the name of attraction, innovation, and a becoming-other. For these thinkers, art is not a primarily conceptual or representational activity, but is rather to be understood in terms of affects, embodied elaborations, and, as I have emphasized, creatural engagements with inhuman forces. For instance, building on many of Deleuze’s concepts, Grosz claims that the intersection of life itself with earthly or cosmic forces serves as the occasion for what is fundamentally an aesthetic emergence. In her 2008 book, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, Grosz describes the “productive explosion of the arts from the provocations posed by the forces of the earth... with the forces of living bodies, by no means exclusively human, which...slow down chaos enough to extract from it something not so much useful as intensifying, a performance, a refrain, an organization of color or movement that eventually, transformed, enables and induces art”.⁴

Just as compelling is Grosz’s further claim that sexual difference lies at the heart of aesthetics. This idea is especially fascinating given Grosz’s well-known work in the areas of feminist and queer theory, disciplines that have tended to resist most biological framings of sexuality and gender. Pivotal to her position is understanding nature as *dynamic* rather than static, as something that is always opening toward the new and the future in a process of becoming. She

emphasizes that because animals attract sex partners through various “vibratory” forces, through color and through dance, and through song and cadences, the aesthetic is linked to the workings of sexual difference in evolution. In her 2008 discussion of music and sex, for instance, Grosz makes much of Darwin’s claims that mammals use their voices to attract sexual attention. For Darwin, music is “seductive” and “dangerous”; it “intensifies and excites”, in Grosz’s words (*Chaos* 32). Thus, there is “something about vibration”, or resonance, or rhythm, “even in the most primitive of creatures, that generates pleasurable or intensifying passions, excites organs, and invests movements with greater force or energy” (33). Birdsong, for instance, exists at a crossroads between sexuality and creativity.

Grosz goes on to note that “sexuality itself needs to function artistically to be adequately sexual, adequately creative, [and] that sexuality...needs to harness excessiveness and invention to function at all” (64–5). Referencing the work of Alphonso Lingis, Grosz discusses the forces of sexual selection and the bodily manifestations of those forces as creatures invest in enhancing “the body’s sexual appeal”: “This calling to attention, this making of one’s own body into a spectacle, this highly elaborate display of attractors, involves intensification. Not only are organs on display engorged, intensified, puffed up, but the organs that perceive them—ears, eyes, nose—are also filled with intensity, resonating with colors, sounds, smells, shapes, rhythms” (66). Thus taste, pleasure, performance, and staging all enter into the aestheticization of the body in sexual selection and evolution: “Art is of the animal precisely to the degree that sexuality is artistic” (70).

It is important to clarify how Grosz suggests that reproduction does not have to be viewed as the primary telos of these processes. Rather, Grosz speculates that “[perhaps] sexuality is not so much to be explained in terms of its ends or goals (which in sociobiological terms are assumed to be the [competitive] reproduction of maximum numbers of [surviving] offspring, where sexual selection is ultimately reduced to natural selection) as in terms of its forces, its effects...which are forms of bodily intensification. Vibrations, waves, oscillations, resonances affect living bodies, not for any higher purpose but for pleasure alone” (33). We need not see sexuality as biologically “determined” or rigidly heteronormative, but rather as a fluid process of becoming that emphasizes pleasure. At the same time, Grosz aligns herself with Luce Irigaray who cautions that we must take seriously the existence of sexual dimorphism, even if we understand sexuality as highly fluid and historically contingent.

There are a number of questions that inevitably arise in discussions of Darwin’s renderings of sexual selection, of the concept of sexual dimorphism itself, and the harnessing of “gendered” bodies and behaviors, in any theoretical framework. I cannot address all the nuances of these questions, but we should note for instance that the idea of sexual dimorphism is at the very least heavily tied to social, heteronormative expectations. Biologists such as Bruce Bagemihl and Joan Roughgarden have done extensive work to queer our received understanding of how evolution works, studying the ways that animals

transgress and improvise with “standard” dimorphic forms of courtship.⁵ In fact, Roughgarden explains that some species do this more than others, further emphasizing that we must stay attuned to diversity in all our theorizing. If we take Grosz’s point that pleasure could be the motivating drive toward bodily extravagance, and follow her insistence that even typical reproduction is a vital engine of biological *difference*, we might advocate a capacious, queer bioaesthetics, one in which bodily becoming-other, even in “standard” courtship or coupling, should not be interpreted as teleological or as reinforcing a cisgender bias.

Lawrence’s literary grappling with other animals—and with humans’ own creatural natures—is a hallmark of his writing. In earlier studies, I have suggested that Lawrence is the British modernist most engaged with the species question, and have elaborated upon the tensions in Lawrence’s writings between the desire to acknowledge and revere the radical alterity or otherness of animals and the desire to dominate and destroy nonhuman creatures.⁶ Lawrence’s work also tends to engage with living beings at extremity and in connection with what we might call evolutionary excesses and intensities. Moreover, Lawrence’s well-known emphases on “liberated” sexualities need to be linked to the idea that sexuality *requires creativity* to be itself. My discussion here of creatural dances, painterly animal bodies, territorial creativity, and “dandy” animals in Lawrence demonstrates how his work is particularly focused on the creative, embodied self-overcoming that resides at the heart of a bioaesthetic understanding of artistic impulses.

Lawrence’s late novella, *The Escaped Cock* (1929), for instance, shows how his writing is occupied by complex species questions and associations, particularly along the lines of embodiment and aesthetics. This highly provocative story, in which a Jesus figure—after his resurrection—is imagined to renounce his original vocation and instead choose a life of creatural and earthbound joys, begins with an explicitly bioaesthetic portrait of the titular game-cock. Lawrence’s initial description of the bird evokes a cross-species notion of art as rooted in the excesses of sexual difference and display. The story’s first sentence emphasizes the bird’s putting on “brave feathers as spring advanced, and [being] resplendent with an arched and orange neck, by the time the fig-trees were letting out leaves from their end-tips”.⁷ The creature grows “to a certain splendour. By some freak of destiny he was a *dandy rooster*, in that dirty little yard with three patchy hens” (VG 123; my emphasis). The bird also “learned to crane his neck and give shrill answers to the crowing of other cocks, beyond the walls, in a world he knew nothing of. But there was a special fiery colour to his crow, and the distant calling of other cocks roused him to unexpected outbursts” (123). The craning action in particular emphasizes excessive effort and the bird’s bodily extravagance as he calls out, framing his creative territory. It is worth noting that Lawrence’s story suggests a recanting of the moral, accusatory use of the biblical cock’s crow in Luke 22:60 (to signal betrayal) and reverses that economy toward a model of bioaesthetic pleasure and transgression throughout.

As is usually the case in nonhuman sexual dimorphism, the male is “tasked” with the goals of corporeal refinement and excess, which are all meant to engage and attract discerning females through aesthetic feats. To repeat, we need not see sexuality as biologically “determined” or rigidly heteronormative here, but rather as a fluid process of becoming that emphasizes pleasure. Moreover, such extreme coloration as the game-cock displays would be understood as a particularly incisive example of the way that sexuality itself requires creativity: “sexuality needs to harness excessiveness and invention to function at all” (*Chaos* 64). A bioaesthetic understanding of creatural, embodied intensities during sexual spectacle therefore applies precisely to Lawrence’s “saucy flamboyant bird” who seems “good for twenty hens” (*VG* 123).

The descriptive phrase “dandy rooster” has a particular salience for a bioaesthetic reading of Lawrence’s work. The dandy has a long and complex history. Proto-dandies have been traced back even to Julius Ceasar’s time, but the paradigmatic British dandy, George Brummell, made his mark in the early 1800s in London. While there is a good deal of critical work on the cultural significance of dandyism, here I want to emphasize the charm, splendor, queerness, independence, and anti-utilitarianism that typified ideas of the dandy in Victorian and modernist milieus. As Elisa Glick notes, the dandy exemplifies art’s “uselessness” in the era of “art for art’s sake”.⁸ Nigel Rodgers also confirms the dandy’s anti-utilitarianism, as the dandy is renowned for “doing nothing”.⁹ This aspect of dandyism overlaps in provocative ways with Grosz’s insistence on the non-utilitarian pleasures of sexual becomings. The vanity, charm, and visual splendor of the dandy are analogous to the insouciance and “flamboyance” that Lawrence attributes to his bird. And finally, what is often understood as “aristocratic superiority” (even in those with modest financial means) and translated by Rodgers into “uncompromising independence” (*Dandy* 11) is clearly at the center of Lawrence’s ideas about this feisty, corporeal creature who breaks free from expectations and insists upon his resplendent “birth-right” to be a vivid, forceful embodiment of creative living. Lawrence trades on all these qualities in his metaphor of the dandy rooster, the animal who models a brazen becoming-vivid for the humanized Jesus figure in the story.

The game-cock is also noted for his “shrill answers” to the crowing he hears from distant cocks in Lawrence’s tale. “How he sings!” the peasant notes (*VG* 123). Here, it is useful to recall the relationship between birds, birdsong, music, and art in Grosz’s readings of Darwin, where both thinkers insist that music functions in evolutionary terms by creating pleasure and attracting creatures to one another. In this sense, for Darwin, “it is perhaps birdsong that most clearly reveals the sexual nature of song, the productive role of sexual selection in the elaboration of the arts, and the mutual entwining of the arts of decoration, performance, staging, and so on, with each other” (*Chaos* 36). Birdsong marks territory, highlights skills in the singer, attracts and mesmerizes other birds and creatures of other species, and communicates distinctly intelligible messages among members of the same species. It also emphasizes emotion and marks the cultural acquisition of skills that are not reducible to instinct

(*Chaos* 37–38). Grosz makes an important clarification when she explains, “my claim is not that the bird influences the human, but that the songbird (and the songs of whales) accomplishes something new in its oratory, a new art, a new coupling of (sonorous) qualities and milieus that isn’t just the production of new musical elements...but the opening up of the world itself to the force of taste, appeal, the bodily, pleasure, desire—the very impulses behind all art” (39). Lawrence’s vocalizing game-cock thus sets out his “notice” to other creatures that his territory is marked off for the resplendent and performative songs and dances of seduction, activities that we can understand as participating in the bio-impulse at the root of all artistic endeavors. And he asserts this territory throughout the story.

The bird’s vibrational enmeshment with earthly and cosmic life forces is at the center of Lawrence’s depictions in the story, and make for a pointed contrast with the blunted, drained lifelessness of the human figures. The “dead-white” face (*VG* 127) of the man who died, his “thin, waxy hands” (128) and the gray tunics of the peasants are all contrasted with the brilliant intensities of creatural and vegetal life: “he [the man] was roused by the shrill, wild crowing of a cock just near him, a sound which made him shiver as if electricity had touched him. He saw a black and orange cock on a bough above the road, then running through the olives of the upper level, a peasant in a grey woolen shirt-tunic. Leaping out of greenness came the black and orange cock with the red comb, his tail-feathers streaming lustrous” (126). Such contrasts saturate the story, especially in the sections where the man is learning how to come back to an experience of living. The emphasis on movement (“leaping out of greenness”) is also frequent in this story, and I will briefly discuss Lawrence’s use of dance as a bioaesthetic framework below.

Lawrence returns to the significance of the game-cock’s singing again, early in the story, where the narrator emphasizes the bird’s assertiveness, despite his having been repeatedly shackled and constrained:

It was a diminished, pinched cry, but there was that in the voice of the bird stronger than chagrin. It was the necessity to live, and even to cry out the triumph of life. The man who had died stood and watched the cock who had escaped and been caught ruffling himself up, rising forward on his toes, throwing up his head and parting his beak in another challenge from life to death. The brave sounds rang out and...[the man] saw a vast resoluteness everywhere flinging itself up in stormy or subtle wave-crests, foam-tips emerging out of the blue invisible, a black and orange cock, or the green flame tongues of the extremes of the fig-tree. (129)

Here a specific creatural bioaesthetic force (a black and orange cock) is situated in the broader environmental dynamism of earth’s atmospherics. It is the man who died’s embeddedness in the drifting forces of earth’s liveliness that propels his journey to a “new” form of existence in the novella. This is, writ large, the creative movement of all creatural, organic, and cosmic life forces that Lawrence

suggests humans must reconnect with to correct an over-reliance on a “nerve-conscious” or hypercognitive disposition.

Lawrence insists upon the seductive and territorial qualities of creatural and earthly intensities repeatedly in the story. He also continues to connect such qualities with animals’ vocalizing cries. He writes, for instance, that “They came forth, these things and creatures of spring, glowing with desire and with assertion. They came like crests of foam, out of the blue flood of the invisible desire, out of the vast invisible sea of strength, and they came coloured and tangible, evanescent, yet deathless in their coming...he heard...their ringing, ringing, defiant challenge to all other things existing” (129–130). The man who died frames these “individual” intensities as ultimately entangled with larger vibrational and cosmic forces, so that “always, the man who died saw not the bird alone, but the short, sharp wave of life of which the bird was the crest” (130). Again, the movement of a wave highlights the living, durational artistic powers shared across organic and geological forces. Especially notable is one of Lawrence’s passages in which the cock notices a favorite hen come near him “emitting the lure” (130). While Lawrence’s descriptions of male “pouncing” here and elsewhere may suggest a troubling, essentialized sexual force directed at females, the passage nonetheless connects sexual selection to creative earth rhythms in a way that is undeniably bioaesthetic in nature: “he pounced on her with all his feathers vibrating. And the man who had died watched the unsteady, rocking vibration of the bent bird, and it was not the bird he saw, but one wave-tip of life overlapping for a minute another, in the tide of the swaying ocean of life.... The doom of death was a shadow, compared to the raging destiny of life, the determined surge of life” (130). Even if Lawrence could be called to account for his own naturalizing of gender norms, contemporary readers can appreciate how bioaesthetics can apply to all creatural forms—human and nonhuman—in their varied and non-normative self-fashioning and flourishing. If we think about human animality and sexuality, for instance, the “lures” and the “pouncings” would proliferate well beyond any set of clichés. And again, as contemporary biologists remind us, many animals also defy Darwin’s standard picture of the ardent male and coy female (Roughgarden).

The “surging” of one’s creatural and earth-bound body is also one of Lawrence’s literary refrains as his characters often dance rapturously in moments of creative becoming. Dancing remains one of the more interesting yet critically underexamined elements of his writing, despite the prominence of dancing as a motif in modernist becomings-animal.¹⁰ A bioaesthetic understanding of art as having its roots in inhuman forces allows us to make sense of the “strange” moment in *Women in Love* when Gudrun dances with a herd of cattle. This pivotal scene links creativity to inhuman sexuality, as Gudrun accesses a vibratory energy connecting living beings with cosmic capacities. Gudrun’s rhapsodic dancing performs a bioaesthetic transfer of forces:

Gudrun, looking as if some invisible chain weighed on her hands and feet, began slowly to dance in the eurythmic manner, pulsing and fluttering rhythmically with

her feet, making slower, regular gestures with her hands and arms, now spreading her arms wide, now raising them above her head, now flinging them softly apart, and lifting her face, her feet all the time beating and running to the measure of the song, as if it were some strange incantation, her white, rapt form drifting here and there in a strange impulsive rhapsody, seeming to be lifted on a breeze of incantation, shuddering with strange little runs.¹¹

Lawrence emphasizes a terrestrial, rhythmic method here, as Gudrun's feet pulse, flutter, beat, run, and make her body shudder. The rhythmic stampeding highlights the colocation of earthly forces and human shuddering, as Gudrun seems to become-animal and become-artistic.

Lawrence also represents the Highland cattle in bioaesthetic frameworks. The cattle are "vividly coloured and fleecy in the evening light, their horns branching into the sky, pushing forward their muzzles inquisitively, to know what it was all about. Their eyes glittered through their tangle of hair, their naked nostrils were full of shadow" (*WL* 167). As mentioned above, vivid coloring is an essential element of animals' bodily excess within the lexicon of sexual selection. Moreover, the image of horns "branching into the sky" emphasizes the aesthetic nature of secondary sexual characteristics in their precise sexual role within the dynamics of enticement. In other words, the horns demonstrate the idea that sexuality must be creative to be itself. This, coupled with the image of inquisitive muzzles and glittering eyes, sets us up to read the cattle as an audience who attempt to discern or distinguish the aesthetic power of Gudrun's performance.

When Gudrun suggests that the cattle are "charming", therefore, the charm is not *merely* sexual. Or rather, it is sexual in a much more elaborated register than is typically asserted in critical discussions of Lawrence and sexuality. The cattle are not primarily metaphorical stand-ins for men or male sexuality. Rather, they are charming because they invite Gudrun into an embodiment of a "mating" dance that is not only about sexuality, to be sure, but also is as much about the becoming-artistic of the human through vibrational excess and the harnessing of *inhuman* forces. Gudrun's desire to perform a dance with and for cattle is clearly linked to all the characters' experiments in living and in being, to their attempts to experience themselves as self-overcoming. This scene is one of the novel's most important examples of the human "lapsing out" into an extra-human or "blood" consciousness. Because Gerald puts a halt to Gudrun's "communion" with the cattle, which results in her first act of violence in their sexual relationship, the scene also suggests that the experience of becoming can dislocate our normative sense of self, and further, that creative sexuality also involves "dangerous" excesses of the body and of identity, that can unsettle and disrupt.

Finally, a bioaesthetic perspective may even help explain Lawrence's attitude in his essay "Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine", where he insists upon a universal and necessary framework of conquest in which "the life-species is the highest which can devour, or destroy, or subjugate every other life-species

against which it is pitted".¹² Lawrence's hierarchy in this essay is anchored by the clichéd, narrow re-interpretation of Darwinian evolution as primarily a "survival of the fittest" drama (a term coined by Herbert Spencer to describe his view of Darwin's principles). A bioaesthetic reading of this essay invites us to consider Lawrence's "loathing" of the porcupine alongside his simultaneous fear of and desire for the vividness of creatural excess. While the porcupine is not viewed during sexual selection activities in the essay, nor is the creature's sexual activity overtly discussed, Lawrence nonetheless dwells upon the porcupine's dangerous bodily nimbus (the "halo" of its quills when extended) in ways that indicate a bioaesthetic longing.

Lawrence's description of the porcupine modulates between disgust and admiration: the creature "raised all its hairs and bristles, so that by the light of the moon it seemed to have a tall, swaying, moonlit aureole arching its back as it went. That seemed curiously fearsome, as if the animal were emitting itself demon-like on the air" (*RDP* 349). Note that this creature's artistic self-becoming is also "swaying", in another Lawrentian, creatural dance. While Lawrence savages the animal by calling him (or her, as he later wonders) "repugnant" and "squalid" (349) and by comparing him to an insect, he nonetheless uses the term "halo" (352) when referring to the animal's great dilation of quills. Therefore, the notion of a "sacred" creature is—at the very least—lurking amidst Lawrence's protestations that the animal is foul and offensive. The idea that the animal is "emitting itself" on the air suggests the embodied self-expansion that I have been discussing. In Lawrence's essay, this is clearly a defensive behavior, but female porcupines are understood to choose mates based on the performance of males during intense courtship battles (male to male fighting), and male vigor is likely calculated in part through the female's discernment of quill density or size. It's hard not to think that—in defiance of supposed species boundaries—Lawrence is asserting his own sexual territory when he murders his prickly other: "This time I fired full into the mound of his round back, below the glistening grey halo" (353). In other words, Lawrence seems to envy the "creative" self-expansion of the porcupine.

In this essay, Lawrence repeatedly describes the creatural vividness, which all beings fight to attain, in terms of blooming, blossoming, and circularity. Timsy the cat, for instance, has an intense "bloom of aliveness" (*RDP* 356) that Lawrence admires: "And so it is. Life moves in *circles* of power and vividness, and each *circle of life* only maintains its *orbit* upon the subjection of some lower circle" (356; my emphases). Thus, his admiration is repeatedly linked to a need to master and absorb. The dandelion becomes an exemplary trope in this essay of the blossoming that must inevitably be overtaken. Not surprisingly, the peacock also makes an appearance in Lawrence's catalog of hierarchized liveliness: "The cycle of procreation exists purely for the keeping alight of the torch of perfection, in any species: the torch being the dandelion in blossom, the tree in full leaf, the peacock in all his plumage, the cobra in all his colour, the frog at full leap, woman in all the mystery of her fathomless desirableness, man in the fullness of his power: every creature become its pure self" (362).

The porcupine, moreover, may be framed as another dandy animal, another “peacock”, whose gender is unclear, and who displays an uncompromising independence. Here, the creature’s bioaesthetic nimbus is experienced as so fierce and dangerous, so threatening sexually, that Lawrence forces a reading of the porcupine as sordid, rather than as “divine” inspiration for a grounded god figure, as in *The Escaped Cock*. Lawrence’s work thus contains another vacillating tension around the species question: the bioaesthetic forces of nonhuman creatures at times inspire creative forms of living in their human counterparts without a concomitant need for destruction, but at other times Lawrence’s framework coils into an insistence on subjugation and absorption, perhaps when a creature’s powers seem to challenge human preeminence a bit too strongly.

Lawrence’s hierarchies and gendered taxonomies are inevitably grating to our sensibilities, as they should in part be. But Lawrence’s work is instructive in this too, in its very “disturbing” effects, because the toggling between admiration, envy, desire, and disgust in relation to animal erotic-creative forces is ethically significant for our views of species relations and human representations of all species. We need to recognize such tensions, and how a conflicted desire/envy allows the bioaesthetic to appear in Lawrence’s work, but to also be controlled, often through the destruction of the nonhuman creature. That a bioaesthetic envy partially drives Lawrence’s intense insistence on destroying and absorbing the bioaesthetic power of other creatures should get our attention. For instance, it is possible to think in broad historical terms about whether humans’ bioaesthetic desire/envy has contributed to the destruction and extinction of entire species.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the complex ambivalences and tensions in Lawrence’s writing between acknowledging, destroying, and incorporating animal forms of being into “human” relations and modes of existence (*Stalking*). A bioaesthetic approach to animals and animality in Lawrence’s work raises further questions about the creatural, bodily forces that reside at the core of all artistic impulses. In Lawrence’s writing, animals display vibrational shuddering of the creative, which open them and us to the emergence of difference or the new. These shudders tend to privilege movement or change, and they are sometimes framed in ways that suggest human envy of nonhuman creative powers. The modernist fixation with figuring “new” creative or aesthetic forms helps explain why artistic animals are frequently on display in modernist texts. And Lawrence, who is among the most attentive to the nonhuman world among modernist writers, repeatedly fills his texts to the brim with creative creatures.

NOTES

1. See Rohman, *Choreographies of the Living*. I first used the term *bioaesthetic* in a 2014 publication to signal a cross-species concept of the aesthetic impulse (see Rohman, “No Higher Life”, 562–78). My usage of this term counters trends in “neuroaesthetics” that regard all artistic capacities as exclusively human.
2. Here it is important to note a companionate ethics with Susan McHugh’s incisive work in her book, *Animal Stories*. As McHugh explains, “stories might be seen as key points of ethical negotiation across artistic and scientific models of species and social life” (14). The implications of a bioaesthetic framework resonate with McHugh’s claims: aesthetic impulses themselves are a point of contact or exchange between human and animal life-worlds. See McHugh, *Animal Stories*.
3. See Rohman, *Stalking the Subject*. Henceforth cited in the text as *Stalking*. See also scholarly work on modernism and animality by Chris Danta, Michael Lundblad, Michael Malay, Derek Ryan, and Kari Weil.
4. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 2. Henceforth cited in the text as *Chaos*.
5. See Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance* and Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow*.
6. See Rohman, *Stalking*.
7. Lawrence, “The Escaped Cock”, 123. Henceforth cited in the text as *VG*.
8. Glick, “Turn-of-the-Century Decadence and Aestheticism”, 332.
9. Rodgers, *The Dandy*, 9. Henceforth cited in the text as *Dandy*.
10. Andrew Harrison reminds us in his recent biography that Lawrence’s father, Arthur, “loved dancing” and was remembered as a lively, expressive fellow who also enjoyed singing. See Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*, 5.
11. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 166. Henceforth cited in the text as *WL*.
12. Lawrence, “Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine”, 358. Henceforth cited in the text as *RDP*.

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Vivisection in Modernist Culture and Popular Fiction, 1890–1945

Katherine Ebury

This chapter re-evaluates critical work on the importance of biology in the modernist period in the light of early-twentieth-century vivisection debates. We might think of this period as a moment of defeat or quiescence for anti-vivisectionist movements, especially after the First World War.¹ However, I will argue that in fact intense debates about animal bodies and the ethics of scientific experiment are taking place in fiction of the day, both through metaphor and through literal representation. Across the period examined by this chapter, a re-energized debate raged in Britain about the rightness of animal vivisection, exemplified particularly in the Brown Dog affair (1903–1910) and the science emerging from it. This scandal originated when two Swedish feminists and anti-vivisection campaigners, Lizzy Lind-af-Hageby and Leisa Schartau, published *The Shambles of Science*, an exposé of the treatment of a nameless mongrel brown dog whose vivisection violated the principles of humane scientific experimentation. *The Shambles of Science* alleged that—in contravention of the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act—the brown dog had been experimented on twice, had been not fully anaesthetized, and had been eventually killed in an unseemly way, by stabbing him through the heart with a knife, rather than using chemical methods. Their testimony was challenged in court on the grounds of the defamation of the scientists concerned (Ernest Starling and William Bayliss—though only Bayliss brought the complaint) and, despite conceding that the law had indeed been broken, the judge found in favour of

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Bayliss and awarded him damages. The case instigated a new but ineffective Royal Commission on Vivisection. The commemoration of the brown dog, and other vivisected animals, in the form of a statue in Battersea Park with an emotive inscription also led to demonstrations and riots by medical students, and counter-demonstrations by animal activists and the local community, until the statue was removed in 1910.² The other significant historical association with the Brown Dog affair followed from the fact that the scientists accused of cruelty by Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau were working on early endocrinology: in 1905, Starling would coin the word “hormone”.³ The science of endocrinology would become extremely celebrated in the interwar period and would be, as we will see, a key use to which vivisected animals were put during this time.

Critics have occasionally argued for the influence of the Brown Dog affair upon individual modernist authors’ practice: in this chapter I will take a wider survey across early-twentieth-century literature, including popular genres such as detective fiction.⁴ In the texts under consideration, the vivisectioning scientist’s treatment of animals is found to be an index of their attitude towards violence more generally. Animal rights and human rights (particularly in relation to gender, class and race) are deliberately entangled by the texts and authors I examine as case studies, including Dorothy Richardson’s *Interim* (1919), Dorothy L. Sayers’s *Whose Body?* (1923), Aldous Huxley’s *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), John Cowper Powys’s *Weymouth Sands* (1934) and Agatha Christie’s *Curtain: Poirot’s Last Case* (1975).⁵ While there is a great deal of useful criticism on connections between modern literature and biology, particularly eugenics, I am concerned with why the dependence of this science on vivisection and animal experimentation is rarely highlighted: the critical focus has been directed towards humans and the ethical and political implications of improvements in medical science.

To give a few examples of this problematic critical trend, the otherwise comprehensive summaries of modernist attitudes to the life science and eugenics offered by Angelique Richardson and David Bradshaw make no mention of vivisection and do not consider the role of animals either in the laboratory or in modernist eugenic science narratives.⁶ While Mark S. Morrison’s recent survey of the life sciences in *Modernism, Science and Technology* is alert to the response of modern writers to medicine and “the new biology”, especially cell and tissue culture, he performs this discussion without any reflection on the role of animal experiment in these discoveries.⁷ Tim Armstrong has explored a less abstract version of modern biology, which includes a fuller awareness of the role of experiments on animal and human subjects in popular and canonical novels including Christopher Blayre’s *The Cheetah-Girl* (1923) and Aldous Huxley’s *After Many a Summer* (1939)—but the ethics of these literary responses to science or their continuity with Victorian vivisection debates are never directly discussed.⁸ Intriguingly, the word “vivisection” is not used at any point in the new *Cambridge Companion to Literature and Science* where Armstrong’s essay was published, suggesting a conscious forgetting of scientific

cruelty to animals within the field. By contrast, the narratives I have chosen to examine deliberately use vivisection to highlight ambivalence about, and even offer a certain amount of resistance to, eugenic thinking, indicating how crucial it is to address the representation of human-animal relations when doing historicist work on scientific thought in modern literature and culture.

Through this approach, it becomes possible to understand how the literary memory of the Brown Dog lasted beyond the War. Although Rod Preece argues correctly that there was a loss of momentum in animal rights movements during and immediately after the First World War, due to a feeling that “animal experimentation had produced results that were proving of immense benefit in saving the lives of wounded soldiers at the front”,⁹ we do in fact see vivisection repeatedly brought into early twentieth-century narratives—both within canonical modernism and in more popular fiction. Animal rights activists often directly appealed to writers to allow this continuation of a literary anti-vivisection movement. For example, as Chien-hui Li has highlighted, Lind-af-Hageby reflected in her 1911 libel trial that she had deliberately sought to mobilize the support of prominent writers as part of a humanist argument in favour of human rights:

When I organized in 1909 an International Congress of the supporters of animal protection and Anti-Vivisection I wrote personally to Leo Tolstoy, Maeterlinck, Pierre Loti, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and a great many other people prominent in the world of literature, and asked them for their support, and they gave their support most wholeheartedly in letters strongly condemnatory of cruelty to animals...I contend that the Anti-Vivisection movement has had in all times the support of the pioneers of human thought and feeling—the poets, the artists, the writers, those who know humanity better than others.¹⁰

In highlighting the importance of literature’s humanitarian values both in terms of human and animal rights, the influence of the Humanitarian League (1891–1919) was crucial, which opposed the capital and corporal punishment of humans as well as, without an apparent sense of contradiction, fighting animal campaigns around blood sports and vivisection. Similarly, in arguing against vivisection in the wake of the Brown Dog affair, in *Vivisection: A Heartless Science* (1916), Stephen Coleridge cited progress in human rights in the nineteenth century as an argument for the development of animal rights in the twentieth century:

When my grandfather was called to the Bar, over a hundred years ago, men were hanged for offences which now entail no more than three or four months’ imprisonment, and the slave-trade was a reputable avenue of commerce. When men exhibited the most atrocious barbarity to each other, they were not likely to trouble themselves much about cruelty to animals.¹¹

Additionally, in a particularly modern development, Coleridge considers the psychology of the vivisecting scientist: he argues that if a vivisector is “a cruel

man”, there are no safeguards for his behaviour built into the law, as the license provided authorizes his scientific ability but not the humaneness of his motives.

During the period of literary modernism, psychoanalysis thus sits alongside and augments Victorian anxieties about the personal morality of the vivisectioning scientist: as Caroline Hovanec summarizes it, “One tactic of the Victorian anti-vivisection movement was to claim that, in the words of historian, Craig Buettinger, vivisection ‘morally brutalized the vivisectioners themselves’”.¹² After the dissemination of psychoanalysis there was a similar anxiety that one might seek out an opportunity to perform a legal act of violence (vivisection, execution, killing in war time) for abnormal, pathological motives which the subject might be conscious of or which might be buried in their unconscious. In the texts I will examine, it is implied that vivisectioning scientists really wish to experiment on female, sick, and/or disabled humans; further, psychoanalytic science is frequently depicted metaphorically as vivisection by writers who imply that patients with mental illness are treated in a similar manner to animals under experiment. While the widespread analogy made between experimental biology and psychoanalysis might seem surprising—as Armstrong has noted “the most enthusiastic interwar popularizer of Freud’s ideas in the UK was Sir Arthur Tansley, the eminent ecologist”—additionally, a scientific focus on biochemical transmitters in the interwar period focused on the influence of hormones on the mental state of the individual subject.¹³ The complexities of public attitudes to animal experimentation during the period are reflected in the authors considered in this chapter, who are securely anti-vivisection in their attitudes, although they cannot be said to be anti-scientific, especially in their attitudes to psychoanalysis.

The earliest text I consider, Dorothy Richardson’s *Interim* (1919) from her series of interlinked experimental *Pilgrimage* novels, features a pivotal debate about scientific ethics and vivisection, which simultaneously sums up and short-circuits her protagonist Miriam Henderson’s fascination with science across her previous novel *The Tunnel* and *Interim* combined. At this time in her life Miriam, a version of Richardson herself, has been working as a dental receptionist and is being educated in “the very best science there was” through attending open lectures at the Royal Institution.¹⁴ The atmosphere and arguments represented by Richardson in *Interim* recall the Brown Dog affair and throw into relief the interpenetration of animal rights and feminist movements in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era (when the novel is set). Miriam argues about vivisection with four Canadian gynaecologists in training who share her boarding house: elsewhere in the novel she is generally disposed to think of gynaecology as reflecting “all the horrors of medical science”, but she believes that for these doctors, two of whom are courting her, “women are people”.¹⁵ The vivisection debate opens up a different perspective in which Miriam engages in similar practice to 1890s anti-vivisectionist women who “attempted to draw parallels between the treatment of animals by science and the dehumanizing experience of gynecology”.¹⁶

Miriam begins the discussion by stating simply that she will not wear fur because she is an “anti-vivisectionist”.¹⁷ She is duly challenged by the Canadian scientists, who lose their individuality and blur into one voice, making the classic arguments in favour of vivisection: “I gather that you reckon the beasts oughtn’t to help advance science”; “An animal’s constituted differently to a man. You can’t compare them in the matter of sensitiveness to pain”; “Science has got to go ahead anyway”; “So long as you carry out their results you can’t honestly cry down their methods” (414–417). Miriam responds both seriously and playfully: “since nearly everyone is *ill*” and “if one disease goes down another goes up”, then medicine will naturally “lose more morally than we shall gain scientifically” if scientists force “sensitive creatures...with sensitive nervous systems, to bear fear and pain” (415–416). Further, she provocatively asserts that scientists are merely “curious” and “gossiping”, ascribing them traditionally female qualities, rather than a heroic wish to “improve the world” (417). While Miriam might sincerely wish to influence these male scientists’ thinking about animals and gender by making these arguments, she also hopes to maintain their esteem and to entertain them: the argument is prefigured by a reference to “Men, demanding jests and amusement; women succeeding only by jesting satirically about everything” (398). While the vivisection argument ends by mutual consent and a further flirtation between Miriam and one of her interlocutors, it also foreshadows the way her relationship with the doctors will end through their traditional patriarchal jealousy and misogyny at her friendship with another man, which is supposed to be especially scandalous because the other man is Jewish. Richardson implies that Miriam is wrong in thinking that for these young doctors “women are people”, as accepting the divisions between human and animal that allow vivisection also lead them to impulsively create hierarchies of race and gender (386–387).

In contrast with Richardson’s narrative, where an argument about animal suffering and vivisection is perhaps more important for characterization than plot, in Dorothy L. Sayers’s *Whose Body?* (1923), vivisection is part of the motive for murderous violence and is an integral part of Sayers’s construction of her first detective novel. Sayers’s culprit, Dr. Julian Freke, a psychoanalyst, medical researcher and vivisectionist, has chosen his victim, Sir Reuben Levy, because of personal animosity and for eugenic reasons: Levy is Jewish and is treated by Freke as having lesser claims to humanity because of his race. Levy is not only murdered: Freke’s plot depends upon his body being dissected degradingly by medical students at the hospital. There is thus a continuity with Richardson’s text in placing vivisection into contact with racial science and anti-Semitism. Although Sayers’s own anti-Semitism tempers claims that the novel is anti-racist, the sympathetic Levy’s death is seen as a horrifying fate, while other elements underscore its anti-vivisectionist message. For example, Freke further chooses to frame the hapless Mr. Thipps, on whose behalf Sayers’s detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, is investigating the case, because Thipps has in the past given him anti-vivisection literature. Freke reflects in his confession about how he deliberately targeted Thipps when looking for somewhere to

dispose of a body because of his sentimentality about animal cruelty: “I remembered his silly face, and his silly chatter about vivisection”.¹⁸ Freke’s specialism in the effect of hormones on body and mind constitutes Sayers’s allusion to the Brown Dog affair, which she further cements by basing the action of much of her narrative in Battersea, a key battleground for pro- and anti-vivisection campaigners. The hospital where Freke works and which facilitates his crime is “St. Luke’s Hospital, Battersea” (9). Freke’s confession asserts that he conceives his crime as an experiment—on the hapless victim, on the London Police force and, finally, on himself (as he wishes his brain to be donated to science and studied as an example of criminal psychology).

In other texts, Sayers similarly connects the practice of vivisection with other forms of violence and cruelty. The culprit of her *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928), Dr. Penberthy, commits the crime in order to inherit money which he will use to found a fashionable clinic specializing in glands and hormones: Sayers alludes several times in this work to the vogue for Serge Voronoff’s controversial experiments with monkey glands, which of course required experiments with many live animals (not only on monkeys, but also on sheep, goats and a bull). Rejuvenation science was denounced by Lindaf-Hageby and the Animal Defence and Anti-Vivisection Society in the very year Sayers’s novel appeared.¹⁹ Similarly, in Sayers’s short story “The Incredible Elopement of Lord Peter Wimsey”, a research scientist called Wetherall, again a hormone specialist, deprives his wife (who has a thyroid condition) of her necessary medication, both as an experiment and to avenge himself on her for her attraction to another man. Wetherall reflects on his exile in Spain with his tortured wife that he has “plenty of room for a laboratory, and no Vivisection Acts to bother one”.²⁰ Wetherall’s move to Spain thus allows him to perform forbidden experiments on both animal and human subjects and, as in Richardson’s text but to a greater degree, vivisection is associated with patriarchal power and misogyny. More broadly, Angus McLaren has shown how the 1920s vogue for Voronoff and Steinach’s work on male fertility and sexual potency allowed vivisection a patina of fashion, sex and modernity which took it a long way from traditional arguments: as he points out, despite the resistance to endocrinology shown by Sayers in her texts, other intellectuals including Sigmund Freud and W. B. Yeats underwent a Steinach procedure emerging originally from experiments on guinea pigs.²¹ In a continuity with Richardson, Sayers is influenced by H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), where vivisection represents a type of overweening masculinity. In Sayers this satirical aspect is even clearer given the importance of endocrinology in maintaining an embattled manhood. Sayers critiques this science by showing how doctors like Freke, Penberthy and Wetherall find themselves drawn to violence via endocrinology, implying that the dependence of medical science on cruelty to animals eventually reduces the value of human life more broadly.

Similarly, suggesting this tendency is quite widespread in the 1920s, in discussing the portrayal of animal rights in Huxley’s novels, Hovanec highlights a moment from the novel *Those Barren Leaves* (1925). This passage moves from

a justification of vivisection, through a denial of human rights, to a “hierarchy of existences” which would allow the elimination of the mentally ill.²² In *Those Barren Leaves*, Huxley characterizes what Hovanec calls “the slippery slope of pro-vivisection arguments” (92), as his character Philip Elver attempts to convince one of the protagonists, Mr. Cardan, of the rightness of Elver’s plan to murder his intellectually disabled sister Grace because of his superiority towards her and his need for her inheritance:

interpret in personal terms what he had said about vivisection, animal rights and the human hierarchy, and there appeared, as the plain transliteration of the cipher—what? Something that looked exceedingly villainous, thought Mr. Cardan.²³

Cardan does not truly believe that the death of Grace is justified, but he is determined to attempt to marry her for the inheritance instead, manipulating her through her childlike love of animals. Indeed, Huxley’s depictions of vivisection and eugenics across his oeuvre are ambivalent: while the narrator appears conscious of the wrongness of the way Grace Elver is treated, it remains a source of comedy and her death is indeed made to seem justified by the novel’s ending. This fits with Huxley’s stated view of science, as influenced in part by his brother Julian, an evolutionary biologist and eugenicist. As Armstrong points out, in a BBC radio broadcast on “Science and Civilization”, Huxley particularly praised two areas of science: “eugenics and endocrinology, that is, the external management of populations by direct bodily control and by management of reproduction”.²⁴

By the 1930s, the vogue for endocrinology had died down as the work of Voronoff and Steinach was discredited, and as a result vivisection is presented as less modern and more of a throwback. In John Cowper Powys’s critically neglected modernist novel *Weymouth Sands* (1934), Dr. Daniel Brush conducts illicit, secretive vivisection on dogs as part of his mental institution, the Brush Home: the threat of what happens to all those who enter it overshadows the town and the cast of eccentric characters depicted by Powys. As with Sayers’s creation of Dr. Freke, Powys, as Wiseman puts it, “makes the link between psychiatry and vivisection explicit in the figure of Dr Brush”.²⁵ Several characters in the novel dub the Brush Home “Hell’s Museum” and fear entering it:

Merely to imagine that those red-brick buildings contained animals in the process of being vivisected, and contained also hopelessly insane people whose death would be a comfort and relief to everyone concerned, was something that gave the spot an atmosphere of such horror.²⁶

Even strong, respectable characters, such as the tutor Magnus Muir, who briefly considers giving up his normal life to campaign against Brush’s animal experiments, feels radically disempowered by the challenge of vivisection,

seeing it as the “secret horror behind all modern civilisation”, with Brush’s work just the most obvious example of the tendency (372).

Yet Muir believes that Brush’s psychiatric work is an even worse sort of science than vivisection and fears his potential power over him too much to act: for Muir, psychoanalysis “feeds a diabolical curiosity. Its passion for pathology is not a passion for healing, but a passion for experiment” (121). Late in the narrative, when we gain access to Brush’s perspective, Powys asserts the connection directly:

Experiments on dogs have *not* been of anything like the practical value my colleagues claim. I know *that*. And it’s silly and tricky of them to pretend that the dogs don’t suffer. They suffer horribly. Murphy would see to that in any case, for that is why he is here. And of course, since human beings are what they are, there are Murphys in every university, in every hospital, in every laboratory. [...] If I were allowed – as no doubt we *shall* be in half-a-century to vivisect *men*, I’d gladly let the dogs alone [...] I wonder if our sentimental devotees comprehend what we real scientists are like. Mad! [...] I’m a madman with a vice for which I’d vivisect Jesus Christ (438–439).

Brush’s psychoanalytic training allows him to recognize the pathological, sadistic motives which underpin his own laboratory, his own lab assistant (Murphy) and, more broadly, the science of vivisection as practised even by the more conventional science of the hospital or university.

Brush’s self-diagnosis fits with Powys’s more direct denunciation of vivisection in his *Autobiography* (1934) as an “abominable wickedness...for the obtaining of what is often entirely irrelevant knowledge, and simply because vivisection is an interesting thing in itself”.²⁷ In this influential memoir, Powys makes a similar connection to Richardson’s between women’s bodies, sexuality and vivisection. He explains that his discovery of the realities of vivisection is one of “two frightful shocks” that he experiences when he goes to university in the 1890s. The other shock is when a friend informs him “with lurid realism of the hemorrhages that women have to suffer from in the revolutions of the moon” (191–192). He also argues that the work of “these unscrupulous, pitiless, unphilosophical scientists” will go on “until people feel as strongly about it as women did about women’s suffrage” (640). Here in his memoir and in *Weymouth Sands* Powys is using insights gained from reading psychoanalytic science and turning this knowledge against vivisection, as well as critiquing psychoanalysis itself. Indeed, in *Weymouth Sands*, Brush only agrees to give up working with dogs partly through a bargain with an intriguing patient, the mystic Sylvanus Cobbold, who explicitly agrees to become a human experimental subject by the end of the narrative, offering his own freedom as a sacrifice on behalf of the dogs. Though Cobbold’s self-sacrifice is undermined by the irony that Brush would have had to wind up his animal experiments soon due to pecuniary loss, this aspect of the narrative highlights the seriousness of Brush’s ambition to model his psychoanalysis as closely as possible upon the

practice of vivisection. Powys's concerns about vivisection are nonetheless made to fit into a eugenic framework, in which the primary focus is the long-term effect on human psychology from an evolutionary standpoint: "what science is really doing, is nothing less than *suggesting to the conscience of our race*, this conscience that evolution itself has produced, that it is a sign of superior intellect to be completely devoid of natural goodness, of natural pity, and of all natural sensitiveness" (640).²⁸

Finally, in Christie's detective novel *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*, Captain Hastings's own daughter Judith, working for a scientist who practices vivisection, is in love with her employer, Dr. Franklin, and is tempted to murder his invalid wife to facilitate his work on tropical diseases (and, she hopes, to one day marry him). Dr. Franklin is introduced as having fitted up part of the boarding house where the story is set as a lab: Mrs. Lutrell, the owner of the boarding house, reflects to Hastings that "Hutches of guinea pigs he's got there, the poor creatures, and mice and rabbits. I'm not sure I like all this science, Captain Hastings".²⁹ She believes Hastings's daughter's career is a waste of her youth, thinking it "a shame and a sin" that a "lovely girl [...] should spend her time cutting up rabbits and bending over a microscope all day" (12). As Poirot asserts in his last letter to Hastings, a key anxiety that he had in investigating the case was that Judith would stoop to murder Franklin's wife under the influence and psychological persuasion of Norton, the novel's real criminal and metaphorical vivisectionist, who manipulates people using psychoanalytic techniques to act upon their desire to kill. In examining Norton's psychology and his motives to incite murder, Poirot considers a story about Norton's childhood squeamishness and unwillingness to participate in science experiments on animals at school as revealing deeper motivations for the murders he has engineered:

One of the most significant things you told me was a remark about him having been laughed at at school for nearly being sick when seeing a dead rabbit. There, I think, was an incident that may have left a deep impression on him. He disliked blood and violence and his prestige suffered in consequence. Subconsciously, I should say, he has waited to redeem himself by being bold and ruthless [...] And little by little developing a morbid taste for violence at second-hand (262–263, italics Christie's).

Poirot suggests that because Norton was teased by his classmates for being unable to participate in animal experiments at school, he has developed a sadistic wish to experiment on human subjects, by torturing and manipulating them. In this sense he replaces one form of vivisection with another, more directly than Freke or Brush in other narratives. Poirot suggests that Judith has been brutalized by her animal experiments with Franklin, which is part of what made her vulnerable to Norton's manipulation. Franklin himself asserts explicitly that "about eighty per cent of the human race ought to be eliminated. We'd get on much better without them" and Judith echoes him, "Only people who can make a decent contribution to the community ought to be allowed to

live. The others ought to be put painlessly away” (76). Indeed, a whole chapter of the novel is devoted to a debate between Christie’s characters on the merits of euthanasia, which appears to be sparked by Second World War anxiety about eugenics as it is practised in Nazism (145–151). As in other narratives we have been examining, then, vivisection thus supports a strain of eugenic thinking which is as much death-dealing as it is life-giving and which remains unproblematic within the novel: it is also noteworthy that vivisection in the novel is directed towards curing tropical diseases and that, as Franklin and Judith eventually move to Africa as part of their “happy ending” to continue their experiments, we should be alert to eugenic attitudes as they apply more implicitly to race and imperialism in Christie’s novel.

Across the period from 1890 to 1945, we therefore see a science depending upon vivisection—endocrinology—grant increased legitimacy to both animal experiment and eugenics, even while outcomes of this science (e.g. the vogue for glandular-xenotransplantation treatments) become discredited. The Brown Dog affair is also frequently alluded to as a way of signalling the importance of feminist attitudes to animal rights, as well as the continuity of the analogy between women’s experience under medical care and the suffering of animal test subjects. Furthermore, the efforts to link human and animal rights, undertaken by the Humanitarian League and reflected upon in the works of these authors, share some continuities with contemporary scholarship about human-animal relations. For example, David Nibert has argued for the entanglements of animal rights and human rights in a model of “interrelation” that is attentive to the application of political violence and oppression across species.³⁰ Indeed, while psychoanalysis is metaphorically associated by the authors I have discussed with vivisection as a form of experiment on live subjects, these authors productively and without apparent self-consciousness also use psychoanalytic techniques and concepts to explore the cruelty and injustice associated with animal experiment through a study of the mind and character of the vivisector. The more pessimistic framework of psychoanalysis, also fashionable and associated with modernity in the period, thus allows authors like Richardson, Sayers, Huxley, Powys and Christie to evade accusations of sentimentality or conservatism when expressing ambivalence or anxiety about the utopian claims associated with the life sciences. These authors all, to a greater or lesser extent, highlight the more dangerous, sadistic aspect of animal experimentation in the period as well as the threat posed by these apparently idealistic impulses towards human perfection to the lives of marginalized human subjects.

NOTES

1. For example, Philip Armstrong writes that “the decades that closed the nineteenth century and began the twentieth saw the conclusive defeat of the anti-vivisection movement and the triumph of scientific authority” (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean*, 93).

2. My description of the Brown Dog affair is indebted to Hilda Kean's *Animal Rights*. The inscription on the statue of the brown dog read "In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog Done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903 after having endured Vivisection extending over more than Two Months and having been handed over from one Vivisector to Another Till Death came to his Release. Also in Memory of the 232 dogs Vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and Women of England, how long shall these Things be?" Tired of the unrest, the local council destroyed the memorial: a replacement statue was erected in 1984.
3. The *OED* attributes both the first and second usages of the word "hormone" to Starling: one in a 1905 issue of *The Lancet*, "These chemical messengers, however, of 'hormones' ... as we might call them", and one in a 1906 issue of *Recent Advances in Physiology Digest*, "This substance may be called the gastric secretin or gastric hormone" ("hormone, n." *OED Online*, July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/88473?redirectedFrom=hormone> (accessed September 17, 2018).
4. For example, Jane Goldman argues for the direct influence of the Brown Dog affair on Virginia Woolf and especially, the literary value of Lind-af-Hageby's *On Immortality: A Letter to a Dog* (1916) for Woolf's *Flush* (1933), her literary biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel in "*Flush: A Biography: Speaking, Reading and Writing with the Companion Species*", 163–177 (167–169). Similarly, Crispian Neill includes reference to the influence of the Brown Dog affair on D. H. Lawrence's portrayal of dogs: "D. H. Lawrence and Dogs: Canines and the Critique of Civilisation", 95–118.
5. Christie wrote *Curtain* during the Second World War and kept it for 30 years in a bank vault with a note that it should only be published posthumously. She eventually authorized its publication in the year before her death, 1975, but period details were not updated and the novel remains frozen in its mid-century setting in its attitudes to vivisection and other topics.
6. Richardson "The Life Sciences", 6–33.
7. Morrison, "The Life Sciences", 83–116.
8. Armstrong, "Modernism, Technology, and the Life Sciences", 223–241.
9. Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice*, 125.
10. Li, "Mobilizing Literature in the Animal Defense Movement", 27–55 (43).
11. Coleridge, *Vivisection: A Heartless Science*, 6–7.
12. Hovanec, *Animal Subjects*, 89.
13. Armstrong, "Modernism, Technology, and the Life Sciences", 223–241 (225–226).
14. Dorothy Richardson, "The Tunnel", 100.
15. Richardson, "Interim", 386–387.
16. Winning, "Masculine Women", 39–68 (64).
17. Richardson, "Interim", 414.
18. Sayers, *Whose Body?*, 202.
19. McLaren, *Reproduction by Design*, 88.
20. Sayers, "The Incredible Elopement of Lord Peter Wimsey", 48.
21. McLaren, "A Sort of Animal or Mechanic Immortality", 86–87.
22. Hovanec, *Animal Subjects*, 92.
23. Huxley, *Those Barren Leaves*, 195.
24. Armstrong, "Modernism, Technology, and the Life Sciences", 223.

25. Wiseman, *The Reimagining of Place in English Modernism*, 69.
26. Powys, *Weymouth Sands*, 119–120.
27. Powys, quoted in Wiseman, *The Reimagining of Place in English Modernism*, 69.
28. For a later, more philosophical development of this argument see Adorno and Horkheimer's "Man and Beast" appendix to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 203–212.
29. Christie, *Curtain*, 12.
30. See David Nibert's *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* and his *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*, as well as the two volumes of *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*.

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Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein: Two Modernist Women Writing as Dogs

Marianne DeKoven

This chapter will analyze two white, Anglo-American modernist women writers' relation to the status *great writer* by reading together Virginia Woolf's *Flush* and Gertrude Stein's *The Geographical History of America*, in which two of the most important modernist women write as dogs. Even though Woolf and Stein were both highly privileged, not just by race and class, and by their shared position at the center of two of the most important modernist circles or movements—Bloomsbury in England and the Parisian avant-garde—it was nonetheless a struggle for both of them to claim the status of *great writer*.

Woolf, at the height of her fame, turned to her autobiography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel Flush in order to recover from the arduous task of writing *The Waves*.¹ She considered *The Waves* her masterpiece, with which she established her status not just as writer but as *great writer*.² However, in *Flush*, she responded to the insecurity and ambivalence she felt about having achieved *great writer* status as a woman writer.

The model for Flush was the Woolfs' cocker spaniel Pinka (or Pinker), born in 1926 and given to Virginia and Leonard by Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's lover. Woolf got the idea for *Flush* in part by reading the Browning love letters. Pinka, whom Leonard and Virginia both adored, allows Virginia to write as a dog.³ *Flush* was published in 1933. In that year, Gertrude Stein published *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, written in six weeks the previous year. She wrote *The Autobiography* in her partner Alice Toklas' voice. This relatively light-hearted work at last brought Stein the fame she had craved for three

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decades. In 1934, Stein returned to America for the first time in those thirty years, to deliver a highly successful series of lectures, published in 1934 as *Lectures in America*, another popularly successful work. Shortly following her return to Paris in 1935, Stein wrote *The Geographical History of America, or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind*. While not accessible in the way *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Lectures in America* are, *The Geographical History* is decidedly more accessible than Stein's experimental work of the first two decades of the twentieth century, which were also the first two decades of her career.

A large part of the motivation for writing *The Geographical History* is Stein's ambivalence about the fact that it was such a light-hearted work that finally brought her fame and also ambivalence about fame itself. In *The Geographical History*, Stein says, repudiating *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* which brought her fame, "autobiographies have nothing to do with the human mind", and it is the human mind that writes.⁴ Stein uses her dog Basket as a touchstone for her meditations on identity, which she associates with autobiography and human nature. Identity and human nature are, for her, inimical to the human mind; the human mind, associated with "entity", the opposite of "identity", is the source of important writing. For Stein, "important writing" means both the great literature of the past (Homer, Shakespeare, Milton) and also the kind of groundbreaking, innovative work being done in modernism and the avant-gardes.

The phrase Stein repeats to jump-start her shifting train of thought about identity in relation to the human mind and writing is "I am I because my little dog knows me". This phrase is characteristically Steinian in its combination of nursery rhyme diction, rhythm, and tone with sophisticated philosophical questioning: how does one know oneself, the question answered perhaps most famously by Descartes. Basket and his successor Basket II were not little dogs—they were large, majestic standard poodles—but Stein says, in *Geographical History*, that it doesn't matter if the little dog is big: "I am I because my little dog knows me, even if the little dog is a big one".⁵ The writer only knows herself—knows that she is she—through recognition by her dog. What she calls her identity, her self-recognition, is formed through recognition, or "knowledge", of her by a nonhuman other. Her human interior is defined and maintained by means of a nonhuman exterior, particularly by its look or gaze.⁶

The work of both Stein and Woolf is full of animals.⁷ But it is only in the early thirties that animals, specifically dogs—one of the two species of companion animal with which humans feel the closest bond—become useful to Stein's and Woolf's self-constructions as great women writers.

As Woolf recognized, *Flush* came to be, in its own way, not a light-hearted relief from serious writing, but itself a serious and difficult book to write. For example, in her January 5, 1933, diary entry, Woolf says, "I'm so glad to be quit of page 100 of *Flush*—this is the third time writing that Whitechapel scene, and I doubt if it's worth it" and on January 21 of that year, "Well, *Flush* lingers on and I cannot dispatch him".⁸ And, despite Stein's playfulness in much of

The Geographical History, her intentions and preoccupations in this book could not be more earnest. In both of these works, older, famous modernist women writers respond to ambivalence about fame by writing, through the figure of a dog who cannot write, about what it means for them to produce important writing.

Stein's primary concepts in *The Geographical History*, as her subtitle makes clear, are "human nature" and "the human mind". The human mind is the source of significant writing, as opposed to what Stein elsewhere calls journalism. Human nature is linked to memory and identity—identity is created through memory of previous incarnations of the self, much as in postmodern theories of gendered and sexualized identity as achieved through iteration.⁹ This meditation moves through the idea of America as well: throughout her later work, Stein argues that modernity began in America and that the abstract essence of America is the same as that of modern art and writing.

Despite the seriousness of this project, the tone of *The Geographical History* is, for the most part, like that of *Flush*, light and humorous. The associative but ruptured meditative stream of thought is punctuated by plays, rhyming jingles, and extensive repetition. For example, a sequence in the middle of the text reads as follows:

And yet romance has nothing to do with human nature.
No nothing.
Nothing at all.
Nothing at all at all
Nothing at all.¹⁰

This sequence, with each reiteration of "nothing at all" occupying its own line as in a poem, is useful to consider, also, in its attempt to link an array of concepts to Stein's central terms, "human nature" and "the human mind". "Romance", which "has nothing to do with human nature", is one of the terms in this array. "My little dog" begins as another. But in the development of this narrative, that little dog escapes from "human nature" and becomes increasingly important to the central point of *Geographical History*, which is that Stein herself is the one who has done the important writing of the human mind in the twentieth century.

Flush, evidently, is a more easily readable work, written in Woolf's characteristic free indirect discourse, with the narrative closely focalized through the dog Flush. It has a clearly defined, conventional plot, mimicking (for the most part comically) the life trajectory of the standard, great-man biography, following Flush from birth to death and focusing on his claim to fame—his life with Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as we will see. Reading *Flush* is an entirely different experience from reading *The Geographical History*. Nonetheless, again, the relationship between dogs, ambivalence toward fame, and modernist women in later middle age breaking new ground in writing is central to both works.

Flush, at least in part, is the diametric opposite of the woman writing. He is barred from comprehension of what Elizabeth is doing when, from his point of view, she bends for hours over paper with a “stick” in her hand, moving it across page after blackened page. Similarly, Stein’s “little dog” is connected to human nature and identity, therefore, seems diametrically opposite to the human mind that writes. But, in fact, the woman writing as a dog incorporates this paradox: the woman writer *is* the dog at the same time that the dog is the opposite of the writing woman.

Despite her self-professed struggles with writing it, Woolf’s description of the Victorian Wimpole Street where Flush goes as a young dog is hilariously over the top, and yet at the same time, of course, most revealing. “Even now”, the narrator claims, “nobody rings the bell of a house in Wimpole Street without trepidation”.¹¹ The source of the trepidation is precisely what makes for Wimpole Street’s timeless greatness: the “consistency” and “regularity”, in the narrator’s terms, of the houses and all their features, and “their consequent submission to the laws of God and man”.¹²

Flush adapts to his new, confined environment with great difficulty, but at last he embraces the substitution of love of Elizabeth Barrett for the freedom of his country home with Miss Mitford, who has given Flush to Elizabeth, just as Sackville-West gave Pinka to Virginia. The passage in which each embraces the other for life completes Woolf’s deft delineation of the complex set of circumstances within which this dog autobiography will proceed. All critics of *Flush* discuss this passage. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

Heavy curls hung down on either side of Miss Barrett’s face; large bright eyes shone out; a large mouth smiled. Heavy ears hung down either side of Flush’s face; his eyes, too, were large and bright; his mouth was wide. There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I—and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been—all that; and he—But no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other. Then with one bound Flush sprang on to the sofa and laid himself where he was to lie for ever after—on the rug at Miss Barrett’s feet.¹³

This passage has been used to discuss the absolute, abyssal otherness of the nonhuman animal around the issue or question of language.¹⁴ I prefer to read it in terms of a mutual gaze establishing at once recognition and non-recognition, identification, and disidentification. Elizabeth and Flush immediately see and describe their physical likeness, then their physical difference. The combination of the two leads to the thought that they might each “complete what lay dormant in the other”: a sickly, confined woman and a healthy, so-far free dog co-creating an ideal, posthuman, or at least nonhuman, being,

consummated in the act of Flush giving up his freedom in exchange for his love affair with Elizabeth.¹⁵

I would like to call attention to the moment just before they both think of their maximal difference from one another around the issue of language: “Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been—all that; and he—But no”. The first sentence, posed as a question, evokes an image of a being formed in one mold and then broken into two and separated, presented now with the possibility of re-forming as a whole, as in the classic notion of heterosexual love. The next, negating sentence, rejecting that conventional paradigm, is notable for its ellipses. The narrator cannot say what the “all that” “she might have been” might be, though it certainly includes the possibility of Elizabeth becoming healthy and robust like Flush. For Flush, we have even less idea what might result from Elizabeth completing what was dormant in him, but whatever it might be, it would have to make him more like a human. “But no” is an absolute negation of any possibilities their mutual likeness might have opened, a negation activated by the thought or idea of language, that hitherto unbreachable barrier between humans and other animals, and guarantor of absolute human superiority over them.

The issue of speaking, which creates between Elizabeth and Flush “the widest gulf that can separate one being from another”, morphs into the central issue of writing. Again, Flush has no clue what Elizabeth is doing as he “watched [her] fingers for ever crossing a white page with a straight stick”—“he longed for the time when he too should blacken paper as she did”.¹⁶ Again, they are co-creators of themselves, as *woman* (not human) and dog, and yet they are permanently sundered by the fact of writing. At the same time, however, the narrator shows us not just Elizabeth feeling sundered from Flush, but also Flush’s view of writing, which undercuts its elevation above materiality (parallel to Miss Mitford’s “scribbling” to pay the bills) just as much as it signals the limitations of Flush’s understanding and ability: is writing just a process of “blackening paper”, as Flush appropriately imagines it, “with a straight stick?”

There are various kinds of writing for women, some free, some not. The former happens in mutual interiority/exteriority co-created by a woman writer and a dog, despite the narrator’s assertion of the “sundering” of the two by language. Woolf passionately ascribes to Elizabeth thoughts and feelings that were Woolf’s own: “‘Writing,’—Miss Barrett once exclaimed after a morning’s toil, ‘writing, writing ... After all, she may have thought, do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words?’”¹⁷ This outcry, which echoes others in Woolf’s fiction, is followed by a fleeting fantasy of Elizabeth’s that Flush is really Pan, and “she no longer an invalid in Wimpole Street, but a Greek nymph in some dim grove in Arcady ... The sun burnt and love blazed”.¹⁸ The realities of Wimpole Street then close in, but Woolf has foreshadowed here Elizabeth’s later life in Italy with Robert and Flush. The rejection of “writing writing”, because it separates the woman writer from love, figures the complexity of the

status of writing for women in this book, as in *The Geographical History of America*.

In her years in Florence Elizabeth became a major writer. She wrote the great feminist long poem *Aurora Leigh*. Her energies were freed to write powerfully against slavery and child labor, and in favor of Italian unification. Her bond to Flush, and his to her, are loosened, as both find freedom, power, and agency, but they remain loyal to one another. In this mutual freedom, Elizabeth and Flush find their fullest expressions of self. While she writes her great mature works, Flush lives a full dog's life in the separate world of smell, incomprehensible to humans: "The greatest poets in the world have smelt nothing but roses on the one hand, and dung on the other. The infinite gradations that lie between are unrecorded. Yet it was in the world of smell that Flush mostly lived. ... To describe his simplest experience with the daily chop or biscuit is beyond our power".¹⁹ Furthermore, "Not a single one of his myriad sensations ever submitted itself to the deformity of words".²⁰ Note, in both cases, the limitations of human language, especially to describe the sensory world of other animals.

Overall, Flush's life as depicted by his biographer Virginia Woolf follows, in mock-heroic form, the trajectory of the traditional biography. This structure allows Woolf the freedom to play with ideas about self-construction in relation to a nonhuman other. Elizabeth looks at Flush and sees herself. She knows herself by looking at and loving him, and being looked at and loved by him. But to write, she must separate herself from him and enter a world into which he cannot follow. At the same time, he has experiences that go beyond what can be put into a human language that Woolf considers incapable of avoiding distortion and diminution. Through mutual, co-created identity, the dog both supports the woman writing and also guarantees the fact of writing as other to the sensually bound, fully and exclusively embodied life of the dog. This complex nexus of the doubleness of reflexive, simultaneously identifying and dis-identifying, human/nonhuman exterior interiority/interior exteriority, in the relations of woman and dog, linked to a woman writing in late middle age, also underlies *The Geographical History of America*.

As in many of Stein's other meditations, her thought in this text begins and begins again, following a shifting but closely interrelated set of key words and ideas through various formal, linguistic, and intellectual permutations; it thereby works toward a set of partial, often disavowed, discoveries. Although the structure of this work appears, and to a large extent is, random, it actually does progress through these permutations toward provisional conclusions.

The Geographical History of America is in large part a response to Stein's American tour of 1934–35. Air travel over the mid-section of the country—a first for Stein and Toklas—informs Stein's insistence on the abstract flatness of the United States (she didn't get farther West than Chicago), which she equates with the intellectual and formal abstraction of modernism, or, of what she calls the twentieth century. As it appears from the air, divided into varyingly shaped, four-sided geometric forms, the Midwest looks to Stein like a cubist painting.

Stein also associates this American flatness and abstraction with what she calls the human mind, which is what produces important writing. It knows no identity and has no memory, including memory of itself. It exists in a pure abstract state. It has nothing to do with fame or audience, and is therefore linked to the human mind.

Human nature is the home of all those things twentieth-century writing, done by the human mind, excludes, particularly identity, which depends on memory and iteration of itself. Writing, as Stein calls it, meaning nontrivial writing, cannot be written from within identity, and therefore human nature cannot write. The key linguistic and intellectual marker for identity, over against the human mind that produces writing, is the recurring sentence “I am I because my little dog knows me”. As we will see, this dog, just as in *Flush*, seems antithetical to writing, and, toward the end of *The Geographical History*, antithetical to the important writing and thought of the twentieth century, which Stein first ascribes to “a woman,” and then to herself as *the* woman who has produced this most important thought and writing of the modernist period. But it is through writing as this dog that Stein is able to make that claim.

In the final movement of *The Geographical History*, Stein’s relation to writing emerges as her central concern. She begins with firmly certain declarative sentences: “The human mind is the mind that writes”; “And the writing that is the human mind does not consist in messages or in events [‘journalism’] it consists only in writing down what is written and therefore it has no relation to human nature”; “Human nature is animal nature but the human mind the human mind is not. ... Think of the Bible and Homer think of Shakespeare and think of me”.²¹ Here “the dog” or “my little dog” is generalized or abstracted into, and dismissed as, “animal nature”, the belittling, anthropocentric ideology that animalizes abject qualities of the human, a dismissal that both Woolf and Stein otherwise avoid. This simplistic formulation stands in contrast to the earlier complex, shifting, ambivalent, and self-contradictory meditations of the first part of the book.

This certainty frees Stein’s writing of any connection to identity, allowing her to pursue the assertion implied by “Think of the Bible and Homer think of Shakespeare and think of me”. This assertion is first stated somewhat indirectly and tentatively: “certainly mostly only one in a generation can write what goes on existing as writing”, then “only once oh only once in every few generations the human mind writes”.²² Dogs make only brief appearances over the next long section of the book, calmly and unambivalently associated with identity and sundered from “entity”, the opposite of “identity” and a category that includes the human mind writing. The dog, and now loving the dog—when the speaker as a young woman had no dog, “I was not I because my little dog did not love me”—guarantees identity over against the human mind and writing.²³ The dog of identity is also linked to middle age: it was when she was a young woman that she had no dog.

As she approaches the clear assertion of her own genius and preeminence in modernist writing, Stein relaxes what I would call her frightened, rigid, and

counterphobic insistence on separation of the writing mind from the dog of identity. She describes the writing produced by the human mind in a way that makes it clear that she is thinking of her own writing: “All words are not words to which you can get accustomed or used. Therefore a great many of them cannot go into master-pieces. . . . Any word which can go into a master-piece is one to which you cannot get used”.²⁴ Of course, using words “to which you cannot get used” refers to Steinian experimental writing and the modernist literary theory that underlies it.

This assertion allows her to say, “Not even the dogs can worry any further about identity. They would like to get lost and if they are lost what is there of identity”.²⁵ Note however that dogs “worry about identity” at the same time that they embody it. Also, “would like to get lost” is a wonderful formulation, implying both a sort of passive escape from human need of them, letting go of the love bond with humans that guarantees human identity in order to disappear from the exigent requirements of the human world by dropping out of the text. Something similar happens in *Flush*, when, in Italy, Elizabeth becomes free to write, and Flush becomes free to “get lost”. Stein, asserting her preeminence despite fame and money coming to her through autobiography, can now afford to wonder where dogs might be once they “get lost”—perhaps they migrate into pinquity with the human mind:

Basket a story.

Interlude I

I am I because my little dog knows me.

Is he is when he does not know me.

This sometimes happens.

That is his not knowing me.

When it does not happen he sometimes tries to make it happen.

So is he he when he does not know me.

And when he does not know me am I I.

But certainly this is not so although it really very truly is so.²⁶

The question of the dog, identity, and writing that was so pressing earlier in the text has become not all that important—the questions of identity, the dog’s as well as the narrator’s, seem raised with less pressure, less at stake, than they were before. The tone is not urgent. Rather it is self-qualifying and speculative: perhaps it is not so although it certainly is so. In other words, it is not the crucial question it had been earlier. The crucial question has become: who has produced the only great writing of the twentieth century, and the answer, delivered from her empowered late middle age, is that Stein has produced it: “Also there is why is it that in this epoch the only real literary thinking has been done by a woman”; then, “Once more I can climb about [like a dog?] and remind you that a woman in this epoch does the important literary thinking”; then, at last, “So then the important literary thinking is being done. Who does it. I do it. Oh yes I do it”.²⁷ The fact that she identifies herself emphatically as

a woman here is crucial to my argument: the key figures of simultaneous identification and disidentification always in motion (freely ‘climb[ing] about’), in relation to important writing, just as in *Flush*, are woman and dog.

And what of the little dog? “I am [still] I because my little dog knows me”. But, “this figure wanders on alone [I imagine the dog figure ambling off-stage]. The little dog does not appear because if it did then there would be nothing to fear”.²⁸ However, as it turns out, there is very much something to fear, despite the fact that the great writing of the twentieth century has been done by a woman, this woman, Gertrude Stein. In the closing lines of the text, the little dog reveals its centrality to writing:

And so a little dog cannot make a master-piece not even now and why.

And yet by recognising that the little dog would not be there if it were alone it can be that I am I because my little dog knows me comes into a master-piece but is not the reason of its being he.

A dog has more identity when he is young than when he gets older.

When he is young a dog has more identity than when he is older.

I am not sure that is not the end.²⁹

As she writes this book, Stein is “older”. The relegation of the dog to mere identity, a subordination of the dog Stein had to insist on to make the claim for herself as the great writer of the twentieth century, weakens with age. Furthermore, the masterpiece should have the little dog in it, even if the little dog is inimical to the human mind that produces the masterpiece. If the little dog is in the masterpiece, then in that way *the dog is essential to the human mind*, and I am not sure that is not the end.

Well, it is not quite the end. Because this chapter is not a “masterpiece”, I feel obligated to tie together all these themes; to catch all the balls as they fall down from the air. To sum up, in late middle age, Stein and Woolf both wrote as dogs in order to grapple with the relationships among writing, a co-created interior/exterior understanding of self not as an interiority/exteriority of human/other–human but as woman/dog. Writing as a dog allowed them to claim both greatness and freedom. For Woolf, writing as a dog allowed her to make clear the parallels between herself and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in resisting patriarchal tyranny, both private and public, and, implicitly, in greatness of literary achievement. For Stein, writing about her loving relationship with her dog, a relationship that defined and guaranteed her identity, allowed her to claim the status of the only great writer and literary thinker of the twentieth century.

Overwhelmingly, the comparison to animals of women, and of all subordinated, maligned, othered groups, serves to demean those groups. Despite advances in scientific understanding of animal behavior, efforts to preserve endangered species and their habitats, to prevent cruelty to animals, and despite cultures of companion animal love, “animal” is still primarily a term of opprobrium. Animals are generally seen as “lower” than humans; they are also

associated with lawless violence and aggression, hypersexuality, intellectual inferiority, “disgusting” habits, absence of any coherent form of political, social, or cultural organization, and utter ignorance. To call anyone an “animal” or to associate anyone with animals is almost always an extreme form of barbed insult. However, for these two modernist women writers, in late middle age and the latter portion of their careers, the domesticity marked by the beloved dog, when linked in complex, contradictory ways to writing, becomes a site of the woman writer’s public power.

Another issue makes its appearance at last, to imitate badly the way Stein writes. Both Flush and Basket are male dogs. The configurations I have been discussing seemed to me too complex to keep this fact active in the argument from the beginning. However, it is clearly an important fact. Woolf emphasizes Flush’s male sexuality, expressed at Three Mile Cross in his fathering offspring at an early age. He becomes celibate in London, in his bond with the celibate Elizabeth, but in Italy they both live freely the life of the sexual body. Nothing in the novel indicates that Flush’s maleness gives him higher status than he would have as a female (Pinka was a female). What is important about him is that he is a dog. Nonetheless, his loving bond with Elizabeth, and his rivalry with Robert for her love, a battle that he definitively loses, might be seen as adding the element of conventional, heterosexual romantic love to the already-complex mix.

However, how conventional can this love be when the male lover is a dog? Stein lived openly as a lesbian, and Woolf had a lesbian life. The fact that both women were queer, and that Pinka was a gift from Woolf’s lover Vita while Stein co-owned and co-loved Basket with Alice, makes the maleness of Flush and Basket, especially as the dog other/self to the woman, queer as well. These love bonds therefore undermine, rather than establishing, heteronormative coupling’s conventional monopoly of love. In doing so—both referring to socially acceptable heterosexual love and also negating it—these texts debunk the great man (for Woolf, Mr. Barrett, her own father; for Stein, the male “geniuses” of the Parisian avant-garde) and with them the patriarchy itself. Replacing the patriarch, a dog who is the co-creator of the powerful woman writer becomes a queer co-conspirator in the modernist woman writer’s claim to literary authority.

NOTES

1. Woolf considered *Flush* a light and light-hearted project: in a well-known diary entry from August 7, 1931, she says “writing Flush of a morning, half seriously to ease my brain, knotted by all that last screw of *The Waves*.” *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4, 1931–35, ed. Anne Oliver Bell, asst. Andrew McNellie (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), 36.
2. Woolf, *Diary*, 36. “‘It is a masterpiece,’ said L. with tears in his eyes.” Woolf agreed with the sentiments espoused here by her husband, Leonard.

3. Trekkie Ritchie, introduction to *Flush: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1935; repr., New York: Harvest Books, 1983), vii–x.
4. Gertrude Stein, “The Geographical History of America, or, the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind,” in *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1932–1946*, eds. Catherine Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), 389.
5. Stein, “Geographical History”, 404.
6. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1–23.
7. See Jane Goldman, “*Flush: A Biography*: Speaking, Reading and Writing with the Companion Species,” in *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jessica Berman (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.: 2016): 163–176; Jutta Ittner, “Part Spaniel, Part Canine Puzzle: Anthropomorphism in Woolf’s *Flush* and Auster’s *Timbuktu*”, *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 39, no. 4 (2006): 181–96; Craig Smith, “Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 348–61; Dan Wylie, “The Anthropomorphic Ethic: Fiction and the Animal Mind in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* and Barbara Gowdy’s *The White Bone*”, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 9, no. 2 (2002): 115–31.
8. Woolf, *Diary*, 141, 145.
9. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
10. Stein, “Geographic History”, 438.
11. Virginia Woolf, *Flush: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1935; repr., New York: Harvest Books, 1983), 15.
12. For a detailed discussion of this particular phrase, see Anna Snaith, “Of Fanciers, Footnotes and Fascism: Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*”, *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 614–36.
13. Woolf, *Flush*, 23.
14. See Pamela Caughie, “*Flush* and the Literary Canon: Oh Where Oh Where Has That Little Dog Gone?” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 47–66;
15. For more on animal-human co-creation, see Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
16. Woolf, *Flush*, 38–9.
17. Woolf, *Flush*, 37–8.
18. Woolf, *Flush*, 38.
19. Woolf, *Flush*, 130.
20. Woolf, *Flush*, 132.
21. Stein, “Geographic History”, 406–7. This last statement, in particular, represents Stein’s notorious claim to the highest level of greatness.
22. Stein, “Geographic History”, 427, 434.
23. Stein, “Geographic History”, 458.
24. Stein, “Geographic History”, 462–63.
25. Stein, “Geographic History”, 464.
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Kingship, Kinship and the King of Beasts in Early Southern African Novels

Jade Munslow Ong

Both Thomas Mokopu Mofolo's *Chaka* and Solomon Plaatje's *Mhudi* are fictionalised histories.¹ Mofolo reimagines the early life and reign of the Zulu king Shaka (c. 1787–1828),² and Plaatje recounts the overlapping *mfecane/difiqane* (“the crushing”), in which expansionist military campaigns led by the Matabele king Mzilikazi (c. 1790–1868) caused widespread devastation and forced migrations of indigenous people in Southern Africa in the 1820s and 1830s.³ Whilst this means that human concerns, conflicts and negotiations remain the focus of much of the action, there are also a number of interspecies encounters involving predators such as hyenas, leopards and lions; and human issues are often represented through animal metaphors and symbols that are significant for religious, political and interpersonal reasons. Wendy Woodward and Susan McHugh explain that this is common in various global traditions, as “animals have been imagined in relation to spiritual realms and the occult, whether as animist gods, familiars, conduits to ancestors, totems, talismans or co-creators of multispecies cosmologies”. Despite this, they go on to state that there has been a “conventionally dismissive stance toward such associations as primitive symbols for more vital human relations” that “[reveals] an ongoing struggle to engage with animals in indigenous epistemologies at face value, on their own terms, and as vital players in the lives of cultures”.⁴ This chapter responds to their prompt by investigating the agentive roles of lions in Mofolo and Plaatje's novels in the context of Tswana, Sotho and Zulu experiences and worldviews,

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which are not burdened by a logic that requires clear divides between the human and animal, living and dead, or dream and reality. Material modalities thus interact with other spiritual and abstract modes of experience and expression to reveal how individual human lives, kin relations, social structures and local, national and colonial politics might be altered through the interventions of animals. This includes their associations with deceased ancestors, their presence in dreams and prophecy, and through the IsiZulu, Sesotho and Setswana animal fables, proverbs and praise poetry featured in the novels. By presenting the role of lions in African societies as transformative, with the potential to change, rather than fortify, established structures, Mofolo and Plaatje are able to engage with, and critique, European leonine aesthetics that support colonial hierarchies of race, nation and gender. It is possible then too to perceive how the novels' presentations of Sotho, Tswana and Zulu engagements with lions facilitate explorations of more equitable and sustainable human and interspecies relationships in the context of twentieth-century anticolonial struggles in Southern Africa.

The most famous of the lion's epithets, "the king of beasts", refers to its apex predator status and pre-eminent role amongst the African big cats. The animal is therefore closely associated with royalty in African cultures, as Daniel F. McCall explains: "[t]he lion or the leopard was equated with the king. In some societies a king was a lion and a lion was a king".⁵ Given that lions inhabited almost the whole of Africa (excluding the Sahara desert, some coastal areas of West Africa and the Congo basin), as well as parts of Syria, Turkey and India, until the late-nineteenth century, it is no surprise that they figure so prominently in royal appellations, art, sculpture, religious iconography and oral and written cultures emerging from these parts of the world. Importantly, however, the lion's symbolic life extends well beyond the boundaries of the species' actual or historic geographical range, operating in varied global contexts to invoke ideas of nation, sovereignty, nobility and leadership; qualities such as bravery, piety, power and justness; and mythical and astrological associations with the zodiac and the sun. An international range of leonine representations was available to both Mofolo and Plaatje due to their missionary educations, and indeed they rework lion imagery from the Bible, John Bunyan, and nineteenth-century adventure fiction to respond in subtly critical ways to imperial forms of representation.

The first example of leonine imagery in *Chaka* provides an example of what David Atwell and Neil Lazarus each describe as the novel's characteristic "equivocation", enacting the struggle—also felt by Mofolo personally—to reconcile colonial Christian and Sotho worldviews and experiences.⁶ The passage describes Chaka in childhood:

any person whose eyes met his, even without having known him before, could tell at once that he was of royal blood, and not the child of a commoner; they said that all who saw him described him with the words: "He is the cub of a lion; he is the nurseling of a wild beast; he is a new-born little lion".⁷

The quotation contained within the passage above is an *isibongo* (praise poem) that offers a cross-cultural address to capture both the internationally recognisable motifs of king-as-lion and lion-as-king, as well as a specific transitional phase in Zulu history and culture. Various critics have noted, as Dan Wylie does, the “tendency to lionise Shaka” across the various literary and historical versions of his life, and Duncan Brown states that there are repeated “references to Shaka as the lion or the elephant (animals commonly associated with the strength and power of kings or chiefs)”.⁸ The connection between the lion and royalty extends from the symbolic to the synonymous in IsiZulu, however, which is important for *Chaka*, because in creating a biofictional history of the famous Zulu king, Mofolo necessarily had to translate words and concepts into Sesotho, occasionally leaving passages in Shaka’s native IsiZulu. Although in Sesotho, the words for lion, *tau*, and king, *morena*, have no etymological connection, N. G. Biyela notes that “the Zulu names of the lion, which are *ibhubesi*, *ingonyama* and *imbube* [...] are same as those of the Zulu king”.⁹

There are yet more meanings generated by the lion symbolism of the *isibongo*, which not only identifies Chaka as the royal son of chief Senzangakhona, but also comments on a changing historical context. The Zulu people were traditionally partly nomadic pastoralists who lived in close proximity to African wildlife, but the pre-Shakan period of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries involved shifts in Zulu social and political structures, as smaller pastoral clans were replaced by military *kraals* (villages) ranging in size. More complex forms of government emerged that involved systems of taxation and martial allegiance imposed by chieftains who conquered others’ chiefdoms.¹⁰ The *isibongo* then, refers to Chaka as a “nurseling” as a way of illustrating the closeness of humans and animals as experienced in pastoral life, indicating a long-established co-existence, even co-dependence, of humans and other species; whilst the description of the nursing lion as a “wild beast” invokes the ferocity and strength of the animal to represent the qualities of Zulu leaders in this period of violence and change.

Although Chaka is the firstborn son of King Senzangakhona and wife Nandi, his conception outside of marriage leads Senzangakhona’s more senior wives to force the banishment of both Nandi and Chaka as a way of securing the succession of their own sons, Mfokazana and Dingana. As a result, Chaka has a miserable childhood in exile, where he is repeatedly attacked by other boys. In an attempt to protect her son, Nandi visits a doctor who gives her “two kinds of medicine” for Chaka:

one for vaccinating and the other for drinking, whose purpose was to turn him into a fierce person, and make him long to fight; he would also have bravery in his liver and be fearless. Among the ingredients in those medicines were the liver of a lion, the liver of a leopard, and the liver of a man who had been a renowned warrior in his lifetime (14).

The association between African big cats, violence and leadership is here apparent: as Chaka applies or imbibes the medicine, so too does he take on the qualities associated with the deceased lion, leopard and warrior. Although not explicitly stated, the links to kingship are again made through these animals because in Zulu culture it is typically only the king who may wear leopard-skin clothing, whilst *indunas* (headmen) are permitted to wear leopard-skin headbands.

Connections between *pantherinae*, violence and leadership, are also apparent in the range of biblical narratives that provide key sources for *Chaka*. As Grant Lilford observes in his analysis of Mofolo's engagement with the Bible: "Chaka echoes David in the early stages of his career [...] grows to resemble Saul, whose reign is marred by the fear of losing power", and who in the end "resembles Manasseh, the most depraved of the kings of Israel and Judah".¹¹ The early parallels between Chaka and David are of particular interest here, because they are partly expressed through the characters' respective relationships to animals. David is a shepherd when he is anointed by Samuel as God's chosen future king, and Chaka is a cattle herder when Nandi is told to "smear his head" (14) with medicines to protect him from harm and make him a great warrior. After receiving their respective anointments, David "slew both the lion and the bear" to protect his flock of sheep, then kills the giant Goliath to secure a victory for the Israelite army;¹² and Chaka kills a lion, hyena and a madman who all threaten the lives of humans and livestock in local communities. Where David uses his defeat of the animals to justify his ability to fight Goliath, and it is only after he proves himself in battle with this human (albeit a giant), that he becomes a leader of the Israelite army, Chaka's defeat of the lion itself instigates the first change in his social status.

In the episode, Chaka joins a hunting party. When a lion attacks, killing a man, the rest of the party flee, leaving only Chaka, who fatally wounds the animal with his spear. Local women witnessing Chaka's triumph sing *isibongos* that shame the other hunters for their cowardice, praise Chaka's bravery, and laud Nandi, "For she has borne a male child in all respects" (19). Chaka thus transforms into the most desirable and respected man in his village. The implications of this are also linked to notions of kingship, because by overcoming the "Tawny One, fawn-coloured king of the wilds" (16), Chaka justifies his claim to Senzangakhona's throne. In this way, the lion killing, which is motivated by real concerns over safety and the protection of valuable cattle that were central to precolonial Southern African ways of life, thus also mobilises Christian and African symbolic significances to establish Chaka's masculinity, adulthood, courage, skills in combat, and future role as the Zulu king.

Whilst Christian narratives likewise provide key sources for Plaatzje's novel, he cites one further influence in a 1920 letter to Silas Molema, in which he writes that *Mhudi* is "like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus".¹³ Though the adventures of Haggard's heroes are presented as ostensibly real experiences, lions operate within these texts as stock motifs to sustain notions of colonial supremacy. As John Miller argues, texts by Haggard, as well

as R. M. Ballantyne, W. H. G. Kingston and G. A. Henty, “[insisted] on the naturalness of hunting” that “in a wider schema serves to naturalise colonial domination”.¹⁴ This was also true of nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel writing and hunting narratives by figures such as David Livingstone, William Cornwallis Harris and Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, because as John MacKenzie points out, “[t]he lion was everywhere in pioneering and hunting images”, and colonial hunters in Africa “were proudest of their careful tally of lion kills. They had contributed to the successful annexation of the ‘king of beasts’ as a national and imperial symbol”.¹⁵ This annexation was not only confined to hunting records, hunter nicknames and trophy body parts to represent imperial strength, masculine prowess and familial legend, but also involved the capture of live lions for European and American zoos, menageries and lion taming shows popular in the period.¹⁶

Though Plaatje cites Haggard as a key influence, his depiction of the hunting of lions does not follow Haggard in bulwarking established imperial hierarchies, but rather functions as a way to inaugurate new roles, relationships and power dynamics between human characters. The first lion encounter in *Mbudi* happens shortly after the slaughter of the Barolong people by Mzilikazi’s Matabele troops. The Barolong protagonist of the novel, Ra-Thaga, believes that he is the lone survivor of the massacre, as his people, “[t]he famous race of warriors and descendants of Tau—the Lion of the North—who in their wars never tarnished their spears with children’s blood are no more”.¹⁷ The idea of king-as-lion is again in play, because as Tim Couzens explains in his account of Barolong history, “the fourteenth chief in descent was the great warrior Tau (his name means lion), who became king around the year 1740 [...] and the Barolong were at the peak of their power during his reign”.¹⁸ In *Mbudi*, the Barolong chief at the time of the massacre is depicted as an incompetent leader, whose directive to kill two Matabele tax-collectors brings about Mzilikazi’s devastating revenge attack. This chief’s name is Tauana, which Plaatje translates as “Lion’s whelp” (24), an archaic term for cub, and which is used to suggest that it is Tauana’s immature kingship that whelps, or brings about, the Matabele destruction of the Barolong and the ensuing events in the novel.

Following Ra-Thaga’s flight from the battlegrounds, he is forced to spend nights high in trees as “a wise precaution, for occasionally his sleep and the stillness of the night were disturbed by the awful roar of the king of the beasts” (34). The haunting calls of the lion seem to mourn the deceased descendants of the Lion of the North, even as their presence poses a continued threat to Ra-Thaga’s life. After a number of days in the wilderness spent longing for human company, Ra-Thaga

suddenly saw a slender figure running softly towards him. It was clear the maiden was frightened by something terrible, for she ran unseeingly towards him, and as he arrested her progress the girl stood panting like a hunted fox. It was only after some moments that with a supreme effort she could utter the short dissyllable, tau (that is, a lion). (34)

The female protagonist, Mhudi, arrives at the same time as a lion, so that Ra-Thaga's physical, conceptual and genealogical survival is linked both to the arrival of a human companion who will become his wife and mother of his children, and to escaping the "two things he was against meeting [...] a Matabele and a lion" (35). It is telling too that in the passage Mhudi is described as a "hunted fox", as the only vulpine species in Southern Africa, the Cape fox, is an animal not usually hunted. Plaatje thus addresses an English reading audience, as colonial game hunting in Africa is closely linked to the long-established English fox-hunting tradition.¹⁹ In allying the African woman to the hunted fox rather than the hunting lion, Plaatje extends the lion's significance to subtly allude to the future threat posed by British colonists—a connection that becomes obvious in a later encounter.

Ra-Thaga and Mhudi are successful in turning their defensive hunting of the lion into opportunistic hunting by driving the animal away from its kill, a large eland (indeed this was a common hunting method used in societies across East and Southern Africa at the time). In this way, Plaatje's representation of lion hunting deviates from Haggard's as a sense of shared identification is established not only between the man and woman, but also between the humans and lion in their roles as hunters, what David Wood identifies in a different context as this "common-being-in-the-world (hunting), and the fact that each is prey for the other". Wood explains that this creates a "sense of broad equality and reciprocity of being-in-common between humans and animals" that "reflect[s] the shared assumptions of pre-industrial, pre-urban cultures everywhere".²⁰ This being-in-common is conceived in regal terms by Plaatje because in claiming the lion's kingdom and kill as their own, the couple are designated "[a] royal pair [who] never sat down to a meal with greater relish than the rescued Mhudi and her chivalrous comrade" (38).

Over food, Mhudi reveals to Ra-Thaga that she prophesised their meeting in a dream about bees:

In their familiar buzzing language they muttered an invitation to me to come into the shade of their tree for shelter to eat honey and fruit and be happy. Oppressed as I was by the absence of any sign of human life in my dream, I was startled by the vision of a lion coming towards me. At the sight of the beast every limb in my body shook with fright, and I wept as the monster approached. In the midst of my helplessness, a man descended from the tree, held me by the waist and raised me up in a hammock, which he fastened to two big branches high up beyond the lion's reach. This man, after killing the animal, treated me to the joy of hearing our language uttered once more in the beautiful voice of a wellspoken man, and I felt that so long as I remained in his company, no harm could possibly come to me (48).

Mhudi's close connection with nature allows her to communicate with insects, who help her to foresee a meal and the arrival of a male companion, who in turn helps her to escape the lion and becomes her partner. Later, the narrator

of the novel, Half-a-Crown, reveals that he is the child of this union in the line: “[t]hat is exactly how my father and mother met and became man and wife” (59), and “[t]he forest was their home, the rustling trees their relations, the sky their guardian, and the birds, who sealed the marriage contract with their songs, the only guests. Here they established their home and named it Re-Nosi (We-are-alone)” (60). The interspecies relationships described by Half-a-Crown can be interpreted in light of Donna Haraway’s recent push to “increas[e] well-being for diverse human beings and other critters as means and not just ends” through an interpretation of kin that “mean[s] something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy” because “[a]ll critters share a common ‘flesh,’ laterally, semiotically, and genealogically”.²¹ Indeed Ra-Thaga and Mhudi’s utopia is made possible by deep bonds formed across clan—Ra-Thaga is a member of the Ra-Tshidi clan and Mhudi is a Kgoro—as well as species, suggesting an alternative form of kin-making grounded in cross-community affinities, local knowledge and ecological awareness. Of course in *Mhudi*, this newly formed equitable and sustainable utopia cannot be sustained, as the arrival of Qoranna hunters to the area, and encroaching threats posed by Mzilikazi’s troops and the Boer Voortrekkers (Dutch-speaking settlers) mean the end of Ra-Thaga and Mhudi’s new nation. This is also alluded to in Half-a-Crown’s name, which, as Couzens suggests, operates as “a pun on the ‘loss of a kingdom’” that will be instigated by the Voortrekkers, who would go on to colonise large areas of Southern Africa that they name the Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal.²²

Mhudi’s close affinity with the natural world and associated prophetic insight means that she possesses the leadership skills required to negotiate and survive life-threatening situations. Laura Chrisman rightly observes that Ra-Thaga does not immediately recognise Mhudi’s superior abilities because his attitude towards her is “both [as] fellow proprietor *and* as property”.²³ He “regard[s] himself as a king reigning in his own kingdom, [...] the animals of the valley as his wealth”, and Mhudi as “his queen” (60–1). Mhudi, however, has the experience and perception that Ra-Thaga lacks, which is signalled by the recounting of her earlier “narrow escape from a roaring lion” (68) whilst gathering berries with her female friends. Ra-Thaga admits that he had heard this story previously, in which Mhudi, “the heroine of Motlhokaditse!”, alongside other “good girls manage[d] to scare that lion away” (69). Mhudi’s knowledge and experience are used to her benefit in her third encounter with lions, which occurs in Re-Nosi, after Ra-Thaga thinks he spies “six faggoters with loads of wood on their heads” (61) approaching their home. Mhudi’s reasoning makes him realise to his horror that “You are right, Mhudi [...] Great Tau’s Barolong! Those are not faggots, they are lions’ manes. Lions, six lions, I see!” (61). Their arrival forces Ra-Thaga to acknowledge that “he could not claim the sole proprietorship of Re-Nosi” (62) and his kingdom shrinks as he limits his hunting territory for fear of meeting the lions.

Only later, when Mhudi becomes ill with malaria, does Ra-Thaga venture further afield in the hope of finding a cure, though when he returns, spies a lion outside the hut where Mhudi is convalescing:

Ra-Thaga, with his senses keyed up, was breathlessly and without noise making an effort to reach the lion. [...] He never could describe how he managed to reach that lion unobserved and to grip it by the tail. The frightened animal leapt into the air, lifting him up so high that he was nearly thrown onto its back; but he held on tenaciously by the tail till the lion abandoning its prey was only struggling to get away; but Ra-Thaga would not let it go (64).

Mhudi responds to her husband's "frantic calls", and, "highly amused, she gripped the situation, stepped forward in obedience to Ra-Thaga, and summoning all her strength, she aimed a stab at the lion's heart" (64). In D. S. Matjila and Karen Haire's words, this signals Mhudi's "praiseworthy leadership qualities of physical, moral, emotional and spiritual strength", because in Tswana culture, the *kgosi* [tribal leader] "must hunt, kill and skin [a] lion himself before he earns the right to wear its skin—a task that symbolically demonstrates his readiness for the responsibilities of the chieftaincy".²⁴ As a result, it is Mhudi not Ra-Thaga who is symbolically marked as the *kgosi* in this scene, because it is she, not he, who kills the lion.

The intertextual significance of Mhudi's slaying of the lion is highlighted by Stephen Gray, who suggests that "the Bunyan connection is [...] deeply meaningful. Ra-Thaga and Mhudi are lost in a land fairly overrun with lions, lions vicious, lions rampant, lions multiplying, lions that don't mean to lie down with the lamb".²⁵ Just as Christian must ensure he maintains the righteous path between the fierce lions that guard the Palace Beautiful in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, so too must Mhudi maintain her course to avoid harm. Plaatje's novel is not only directed at a white Christian readership, however, as Phaswane Mpe emphasises: "[t]here are small, but significant, hints that suggest that the novel is addressed to various racial and ethnic groups".²⁶ Indeed, Ra-Thaga and Mhudi's battle with the lion also draws on a Setswana folk tale that Plaatje published as "Hunters and Beasts of Prey" in his 1916 collection, *A Sechuana Reader*. In this tale, two hunters find a sleeping lion. The first grabs the lion by the tail and tells the other to "Stab it to the heart with your spear while I hold it". The second hunter flees, telling others in the village "that his companion had been eaten by the lion". When the villagers set out to find the remains, they see "that the man was not dead, but was still holding the lion by the tail". They instruct the cowardly second hunter to stab the lion, though "[a]s soon as he got in front of it, his fellow-countryman let go of the lion's tail; the animal roared and rushed at the timid man and tore him to pieces".²⁷ In rewriting this folk tale for *Mhudi* so that the protagonists work together to slay the animal, Plaatje is able to emphasise the importance of kin-making and collaboration as life-sustaining forces.

In all three of Mhudi's encounters with lions, she is able to overcome the deadly threats they pose to individuals and communities by drawing on her ability to foster lasting and supportive relationships. These skills are associated with her leonine character, as Matjila and Haire point out: "Mhudi possesses strength, bravery, power and intelligence - qualities associated with the lion".²⁸ Importantly too, after Mhudi kills the third lion, Ra-Thaga no longer views himself as the superior partner, and refers to himself by his relational status in recognition of his wife's achievements: he is a "proud husband" (66). Indeed Mhudi remains the moral guide, leader and prophet throughout the novel, later warning Ra-Thaga against Ton-Qon, a Qoranna leader. Thus when Ra-Thaga "put[s] it down to some idiosyncrasy, peculiar to women, which would no doubt wear off in time" (73-4), he suffers the consequences, as Ton-Qon tricks Ra-Thaga into being attacked by a leopard, and then leaves him to die. Similarly, when Ra-Thaga becomes enamoured of his new Boer friends who ally with the Barolong to defeat the Matabele, Mhudi remains sceptical about their decency and integrity. In both cases, when Ra-Thaga is missing and wounded, Mhudi tracks him down to reunite him with family and friends.

The final lines of the novel are delivered by Ra-Thaga as testament to Mhudi's courage and intelligence, as he promises that "from henceforth, I shall have no ears for the call of war or the chase; my ears shall be open to one call only—the call of your voice" (188). Interestingly, however, the original publication of the novel by the Lovedale Press has the following as Ra-Thaga's closing lines: "my ears shall be open to one call only besides the call of the Chief, namely the call of your voice—Mhudi".²⁹ This reveals the provocative nature of Plaatje's representation of Mhudi as authority and leader, as in forcing this change, the Lovedale editors undermine the significance of her three interactions with lions, which clearly mark her as the monarch or "chief" of the novel. As such, it seems that the colonial missionary press sought to diminish the presentation of indigenous epistemologies based in environmental awareness and understanding, as well as Plaatje's female-centred politics, because these ideas could not be reconciled with colonial masculine, Christian and European notions of power.

The editing of *Mhudi* by the Lovedale press in combination with the delayed publication of both *Mhudi* and *Chaka* provides yet more evidence that the first black African novelists had to find ways of combining assimilatory and anticolonial possibilities through literary equivocation in order to publish their work. Mhudi killing the third lion thus represents both the real struggles faced by the Tswana people who often had to protect humans and animals from attacks by large predators, and can also, through Bunyan, be aligned to Christian messages about the difficulties faced by believers on the road to salvation. There is one further interpretation available too, because as Gray acknowledges:

the lion that Ra-Thaga almost rode the back of is also a British lion, and Mhudi has stabbed it to the heart. In the nicest possible way, cheeky Mr. Plaatje is laughing at the Georgian lions that have set up their flag over Southern Africa.³⁰

Gray's interpretation of the lion's death as a light-hearted joke at the expense of the coloniser perhaps underplays its significance, though rightly insinuates that Plaatje was not in a position to offer a more overt critique of British colonialism if he was to secure publication. Thus, though Plaatje compared his writing to Haggard's, his presentation of human encounters with lions detaches notions of bravery from ideas of British, masculine, elite, religious, technological and evolutionary superiority.

The use of the lion as a symbol for European colonial powers appears once more in *Mbudi* in the Zungu fable, which is told by Mzilikazi near the close of the novel:

[Zungu] caught a lion's whelp and thought that, if he fed it with the milk of his cows, he would in due course possess a useful mastiff to help him in hunting valuable specimens of wild beasts. The cub grew up, apparently tame and meek, just like an ordinary domestic puppy; but one day Zungu came home and found, what? It had eaten his children, chewed up two of his wives, and in destroying it, he himself narrowly escaped being mauled (175).

This allegory has a counterpart in a Setswana proverb, "*Tau e jang ra-motho le ngoana e a tle mo je*", which appears in Plaatje's 1916 collection and is translated as "The lion that kills the father will also kill the son".³¹ In the context of *Mbudi*, Mzilikazi's lion story is offered as a warning to the Barolong that allying with the Voortrekkers to defeat Mzilikazi's Matabele nation will not secure their long-term safety, and in fact, the Voortrekkers will also turn against the Barolong in due course. He argues that this precedent has already been set, asking "Where is Chaka's dynasty now? Extinguished, by the very Boers who poisoned my wives and are pursuing us today" (175). It is no coincidence then that Chaka's closing message in Mofolo's novel mirrors Mzilikazi's in *Mbudi*. Here, "the lion of Zulu descent, fearless beast of the wilds" (164) becomes ill and sufficiently weakened that he cannot defend himself from his murderous brothers, Dingana and Mhlangana, and their assistant, Mbopha. As he is stabbed, Chaka delivers his final words:

You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong, that is not the way it will be because the *umlungu*, the white man, is coming, and it is he who will rule you, and you will be his servants. (167)

The warnings offered by Mzilikazi and Chaka at the end of Plaatje and Mofolo's novels are hugely significant because both are deposed leaders of the two largest Southern African kingdoms of the early nineteenth century. Throughout both novels, their empire-building is depicted as devastating, and their expanded Zulu and Matabele nations are ultimately destroyed. In this way, Plaatje and Mofolo are able to use African examples to offer subtly refracted censures of European imperialism from the vantage point of the early-twentieth century.

In both *Chaka* and *Mhudi*, lions are used to address a range of environmental, social and colonial issues facing Southern Africans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lions thus combine real and representational concerns, so that defensive hunting of the big cats is depicted as essential for human survival, and their deaths have cultural meanings and societal impacts that are expressed through invocation of local orature. Zulu, Tswana and Sotho fables, proverbs, and praise poetry relating to lions combine with intertextual influences drawn from colonial religious texts, adventure fiction, and hunting narratives, to allow Mofolo and Plaatje to navigate African and European perspectives, the missionary press, and diverse audiences. This in turn provides a way to cautiously explore the violent consequences of imperialism and its underpinning racism and anthropocentrism. By using the king of beasts as a way to comment on the positive potentials and failings of kingship, and the vital importance of kinship across boundaries of race, nation, gender, and species, Mofolo and Plaatje push for more equitable and sustainable human, animal, and environmental relationships as alternatives to European colonialism and its cultures.

NOTES

1. *Chaka* was written in 1909, published in 1925 and translated from Sesotho into English in 1931. *Mhudi* was written in 1920 and published in 1930.
2. To avoid confusion, I use “Shaka” to refer to the historical figure, and “Chaka” to refer to Mofolo’s protagonist.
3. Mzilikazi was formerly one of Shaka’s most formidable lieutenants, who broke away in 1823 to establish the Matabele kingdom (later part of Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe).
4. Woodward and McHugh, “Introduction”, 2.
5. McCall, “Prevalence of Lions”, 134.
6. Atwell, “Reprisals of Modernity”, 279; Lazarus, “Logic of Equivocation”, 4243.
7. Mofolo, *Chaka*, 8. Subsequent citations will appear in the body of the chapter.
8. Wylie, “Language and Assassination”, 71; Brown, “Poetry, History, Nation”, 22.
9. Biyela, “Animal Metaphors”, 641.
10. See Taylor, *Shaka’s Children*, 23–5, 45; Wylie, *Myth of Iron*, 44–52.
11. Lilford, “Kingship and Prophecy”, 377–8.
12. 1 Sam. 17:36.
13. Quoted in Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 254.
14. Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, 20.
15. MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 47.
16. See Colley, *Wild Animal Skins*; Amato, *Beastly Possessions*, 182–223; Cowie, *Exhibiting Animals*, 12–51, 179–204.
17. Plaatje, *Mhudi*, 38. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to the Heinemann edition of *Mhudi*. Subsequent citations will appear in the body of the chapter.
18. Couzens, “Introduction”, 9.
19. See Thompsell, *Hunting Africa*, 7; MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 18–22.
20. Wood, “Thinking with Cats”, 138.
21. Haraway, *Staying*, 102–3.
22. Couzens, “Introduction”, 16.

23. Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance*, 175.
24. Matjila and Haire, "Echoes", 69, 68.
25. Gray, "Sources", 23.
26. Mpe, "Zungu", 50.
27. Jones and Plaatje, *Sechuana Reader*, 20, 22.
28. Matjila and Haire, "Echoes", 69.
29. Plaatje, *Mhudi* (Ad Donker), 200.
30. Gray, "Sources", 23.
31. Jones and Plaatje, *Sechuana Reader*, 55.

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Animals Inside: Creatureliness in Dezső Kosztolányi's *Skylark* and Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*

Anat Pick

He wants to break free, attempts to stretch open the walls, but he has been tautened there by them, and there he remains in this tautening, in this constraint, and there is nothing else to do but howl, and now and forever he shall be nothing but his own tautening and his own howling.— László Krasznahorkai¹

Existential claustrophobia permeates László Krasznahorkai's surrealist text, *Animalinside* (2010), in which the experience of constraint, the unbearable tightness of being, is coupled by an aggressive desire to exceed what limits and confines. The anonymous creature in Krasznahorkai's 13 vignettes takes shape between entrapment and flight, inhibition, and wild uninhibitedness.² Having stated that "there is unfortunately no point in speaking of escape",³ in the next section the speaker declares, "I am the one who shall break out".⁴ Central to *Animalinside* is the notion of the limit as the measure of creaturely life. The limit, rendered verbally by Krasznahorkai's "high voltage" prose and graphically in Max Neumann's accompanying drawings, is ever-present.⁵ But the limit is precisely what, for the creature, cannot be reconciled and against which it rebels. The paradox of the limit is at the core of human animality, the "animal inside" of Krasznahorkai's title. The howling that ensues expresses the enfolding of animal and human, also the straining of language to the point of collapsing the highly-differentiated order of words and the order of pure sound.

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“[A]t this very moment”, Krasznahorkai’s creature explains,

I’m in the middle of a leap, I am as a matter of fact enclosed within this arc, the arc I happen to be leaping into right now, and maybe that that is why I am so incredibly alone, because I don’t know anything about anything.⁶

The image of the leaping arc of the creature, whose valiant attempt at escape is itself framed and forestalled, represents the impossibility of division between the human and the animal. Every extension is framed by a limit. Autonomy and agency are “enclosed within this arc” in which dynamism and stasis coalesce. To the confined creature, transcending the limit is never simply an act of freedom but carries with it the anguish of the unfree.

Elsewhere, I have written about creatureliness through the prism of vulnerability.⁷ Ethical parity between humans and animals is grounded in the finitude, material fragility, and susceptibility to force that are shared among the living. As an ethical foundation, creaturely vulnerability replaces both rights and capabilities approaches that assign value to animals on the basis of particular capacities or attributes. Conceived in this way, creaturely vulnerability offers a counter to human exceptionalism. Here, I am interested in a different inflection of the creaturely as the state of being-limited.

In two novels, Dezső Kosztolányi’s *Skylark* (*Pacsirta*, 1924) and Hanya Yanagihara’s *A Little Life* (2015), human characters are defined by their limitations, which expose them to the realm of the creaturely. The novels explore the “leaping arcs” within which characters encounter an impasse whose rigidity throws into question accepted wisdoms about human flourishing. Through their accounts of movement curtailed, *Skylark* and *A Little Life* realize a creaturely perspective. As they unfold within the leaping arc described by Krasznahorkai, the novels reflect on the ramifications for the human of the state of extreme limitedness.⁸ What initially seem like recognizably human stories become creaturely narratives dwelling in zones of species “indistinction”.⁹ Different kinds of limits underlie each novel: in *Skylark* it is ugliness, while in *A Little Life* it is trauma. In both books, however, the naming of the limit is arbitrary insofar as it is the presence of a boundary that blocks and unsettles the characters’ humanity. The world of the novels is not, then, one of animal symbolism but rather a creaturely universe, where humans are “limited” by ugliness and by trauma, jettisoned into a nonexceptionalist space of animality.

THE ARC AND THE LIMIT

Skylark is unique among modern works of fiction. Its eponymous heroine is 35, unmarried, and—as her father finally confesses—ugly. Taking place over one week in 1899, during which Skylark is largely absent, the novel follows her ageing parents, Ákos and Mother (her name, Antonia, is mentioned only once), as they savour independence for the first time in years. The setting is the

fictional town of Sárszeg, on the outskirts of the Austro-Hungarian empire, whose demise, though unimaginable to the characters, is just around the corner.

Skylark goes away and comes back, but the novel's contention, quietly shared by the characters, that nothing will change, remains the same. The novel's *dénouement*, then, is no more than the awful confirmation of this changelessness. *Skylark's* tripartite structure—before her departure (the opening two chapters), during her absence (chapters III–XI), and her return home (closing two chapters)—is a closed migratory circle. The novel's very last words, exchanged between Ákos and Mother, “‘She’s flown back home’ ... ‘Our little bird ... has finally flown home’”, deliver the final blow. They express tenderness and a deathlike finality. The drama of *Skylark* lurks beneath its rudimentary plot in the intimacy of unspoken mortifications, the pretences that sustain family life, and the sadness and loneliness that underlie it. At the same time, the novel's miniature dimensions betray a grandiosity of ambition. *Skylark* is at once a little book, and “essential, a distillation of the heart's properties”.¹⁰

I want to reflect on the peculiar function of ugliness in the novel, not as a didactic reminder of the gap (or accord) between outside and inside, appearance and essence, or as representing social or cultural failure to value women as more than their physical attributes, but as the indicator of a limit that shapes life in ways that curtail hopes and desires. An unmovable barrier, ugliness delineates what is and is not possible for a living creature. It is also the shaper of subjectivity, of the ugly woman and those around her. Ugliness names Skylark's vulnerability and reveals her life as determined by forces beyond her control. Reading the novel as a creaturely text means thinking through Kosztolányi's use of ugliness, not as a question of perception but as a token of necessity—the mechanism that subjects Skylark to the random ruthlessness of circumstance. Everything in the novel, its plot as well as its engulfing, crushing sadness, flows from the fact that Skylark is ugly. If Skylark's life, and the lives of the people of Sárszeg, could be deemed creaturely, this is not in Eric Santner's sense of the characters' biopolitical exposure.¹¹ The novel's historical placing and political references (most notably to the European Revolutions of 1848 and the Dreyfus Affair) are a backdrop to the personal dramas of the characters.¹² History looms large, but the lives of Skylark and the Sárszeg residents move in more private orbits, dominated by character psychology and physical appetites (for sex, for food, for alcohol).

Ugliness in the novel is thus neither in the eye of the beholder, the symptom of a shallow society, nor is it compensated for by Skylark's talents or wits. As Deborah Eisenberg poignantly argues, “Skylark is ugly—not appealingly plain, not *jolie-laide*, not ‘unconventionally beautiful’, just ugly. Hers is not the sort of ugliness, familiar to us from so much wishful literature, that is eventually to disclose a disguised beauty to the sophisticated, original, or morally gifted”.¹³ Ugliness is axiomatic. It is the novel's engine of cause and effect. Not even Ákos' drunken outburst in Chapter X, the novel's “day of reckoning”, during which for the first time he confronts his wife about their daughter's

misfortunes, can alter the novel's conclusion: at the end of the week Skylark returns, and the family, concealing its brokenness, will resume its old routines.

Ugliness is a literary motif that applies to both humans and animals. Charlotte M. Wright argues that the ugly woman trope in modern literature allows authors to liberate "the heroine from the emotional and physical burdens of family, lovers, and society, *because of*, and not *in spite of*, the fact that it makes her less desirable to all three".¹⁴ But while ugliness renders Skylark unmarriageable, it also cements her stifling bond with her parents. In her "ducklike waddle",¹⁵ Skylark recalls Hans Christian Andersen's ugly duckling, but Kosztolányi refutes the tale's central premise of beauty as the fruit of patient transformation. Skylark walks and looks like a duck, but does not transform into a swan. In another ugly animal story, Margaret Marshall Saunders' *Beautiful Joe* (1893), the dog's ugliness helps to reconsider Victorian conceptualizations of humaneness. In the nineteenth-century moral imagination, beauty was associated with feminine virtue, while ugliness was aligned with sin. Keridiana W. Chez claims that by telling the story of an ugly mutt, "Saunders scrambled the associations between ugliness and sin to cut across the thick web of gendered discourse that made humaneness towards animals a difficult value for males to adopt".¹⁶ Saunders' novel introduced the idea of "'ugly beauty' ... where outward ugliness concealed, and therefore signaled, real beauty of character",¹⁷ recasting compassion for animals as acceptably masculine.

By contrast, Kosztolányi's interest in ugliness is amoral and indifferent to the gendered conceptions of beauty as social capital. Not only does Skylark fail to accrue power as a result of her ugliness, she is "irreversibly reduced" by it.¹⁸ There are simply no advantages for Skylark in being ugly. Her abjection reveals the mixed emotions that vulnerability triggers. Observed by the townfolks "with a look of grey, benevolent sympathy, lined in red with a certain malevolent pleasure", Skylark is the object of pity and scorn. Any kindness she arouses is offset by a crueller recoiling.¹⁹ Part of what makes *Skylark* so remarkable is that its titular character belongs neither to the tradition of the ugly animal, nor to that of the unattractive spinster.

Skylark's literary affinities are works that do not imbue suffering with the power to heal, whose realism lies in a refusal to grant meaning to ugliness as morally or socially significant. Ugliness is an arbitrary obstacle to personal growth, which makes *Skylark* a kind of *anti-Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman* is typically a novel about an individual's formation, education, or coming-of-age. It is made up of the German word *Bildung* (education, self-cultivation) and *roman* (novel). Walter Bauer explains that in the modern age, "*Bildung* became the quintessential term for human self-development and self-fulfilment. It found its literary expression in the genre of the German *Bildungsroman* It is no coincidence that, here, the personal development of the protagonist does not occur through institutionalised processes of learning but through the life experience, especially that gained through travel and encounters with other people and other cultures".²⁰ *Skylark's* week in the plains

is a parody of such character-building expeditions. Ugliness is indeed formative, but it works to de-form.

Skylark's creatureliness is not simply the function of her supposedly monstrous appearance. It is contained in the fact that her situation cannot and will not improve: she shall remain unloved and friendless, save for her parents, whose old age means they, too, will soon be gone. For Eisenberg, this is the novel's *modus operandi*: "it is imperative that within the confines of the book nothing will ever be able to change for Skylark".²¹ In conception and structure, then, *Skylark* explores the literary possibilities of a life that will not outgrow its limitations.

A similar imperative underpins Yanagihara's *A Little Life*, a longitudinal story about four male friends in New York that shifts partway through into a novel about one of the group, the symbolically-named Jude St. Francis.²² Jude is a brilliant litigator and gifted mathematician with a secret history as a victim of violent abuse. His trauma results in a lifetime of extreme self-harm and, ultimately, suicide. Through the course of the novel Jude is subject to what Merritt Moseley described as a "parade of horrors" that debilitate him physically and mentally.²³ Over time, Jude's wounds refuse to heal. Those around him struggle in vain to support him, before succumbing themselves to the ravages of chance—accidents, illness, and death.

At over 700 pages, *A Little Life* is capacious, a loose baggy monster to *Skylark*'s compact "novelette".²⁴ Whereas *Skylark* is slender and sly, *A Little Life* is hefty and ornate. *Skylark*'s portrait of Sárszeg and its under-achieving populace exceeds satire, while Yanagihara's depiction of New York's ascendant metropolitan milieu mashes gothic fairy tale with realism.²⁵ Yanagihara's prose can be languorous. There is the proliferation of "sorries" or the habit characters have of repeating each other's name in conversation.²⁶ Such flourishes render the dialogue unnaturally heavy.²⁷ Kosztolányi's language, by contrast, crackles and sparks.²⁸ *Skylark* is decorous, *A Little Life* brimming with sensationalist detail.²⁹ But in other ways the books are close. They explore small social and domestic circles weighed down by the burdens of the unsaid. Their most striking similarity, however, is conceptual: both depict life as determined and predictable. Irrespective of scale, the fictional universe in each novel compels its characters to an equal degree. If *Skylark* is a Sárszeg novel and *A Little Life* a New York one, it is still the case that "the good Lord hovers above the town, invisible and terrible, ever present and everywhere the same, be it in Sárszeg or in Budapest, in Paris or New York".³⁰ Necessity (or God) reigns, whether one is in Sárszeg or New York.

The characters of *Skylark* and *A Little Life* suffer irredeemably. Narrative "development" in these works is predicated on the principle that things will not get better. The novels draw their power from the premise, rare in conventional storytelling, that certain conditions are unhealable, that suffering may not be alleviated, and that fate, or something like fate, frames the arc of human life, giving rise to a necessary chain of events. In both books, moreover, vulnerability is written in the flesh: ugliness and violence undercut the characters'

thriving. The creaturely novel is therefore the shadow of the *Bildungsroman*. As experimental texts, testing the possibilities of fiction as a medium of stasis, *Skylark* and *A Little life* are powerful acts of literary foreclosure.

UGLY

Like *Skylark*'s ugliness, which is never fully disclosed, *A Little Life* makes repeated references to Jude's exceptional beauty without providing any clear description. Beauty and ugliness in these novels remain vague, and we are meant to accept them as realities whose facticity leads to loneliness (in the first novel) and fails to alleviate it (in the second).

Skylark's first appearance is a masterstroke of the slow reveal:

A girl sat on a bench by the flowerbeds, beneath the horse-chestnut tree. She was crocheting a tablecloth from a ball of yellow cotton.

Only her black hair could be seen, casting—like the leaves of the horse-chestnut tree upon the ground below—a heavy shadow on about two-thirds of her face.³¹

Skylark's head is bowed, presumably in concentration. But the narrator remarks without explanation that “[t]he experience of many long years had taught her that this posture suited her best”.³² Even once she steps into view in the company of her parents, we never fully see her: “when her face finally revealed itself between the leaves, the smiles paled slightly on their lips. ‘It’s time to go, my dear’, said Father, looking at the ground”.³³ Father’s gloom may have to do with *Skylark*'s impending departure, but the same, small avoidant gesture will recur throughout. Nearly everyone who looks at her lowers their eyes, and to avoid being seen, *Skylark*, too, looks down. These gestures corroborate the key fact of *Skylark*'s existence: that she is ugly.

Seeing *Skylark* off at the train station, Ákos and Mother fuss over her. But their prissiness reveals a deeper trepidation. For it is on the occasion of her departure, when their carefully arranged life is suddenly disrupted, that Ákos' thoughts turn to his daughter's predicament:

[He] knew she was not pretty, poor thing, and for a long time this had cut him to the quick. Later, he began to see her less clearly, her image gradually blurring in a dull and numbing fog. Without really thinking any more, he had loved her as she was, loved her boundlessly. Five, ten years must have passed since he had abandoned all hope of one day giving *Skylark* away in marriage. The idea no longer even crossed his mind.³⁴

The next passage contains the novel's only description of *Skylark*'s appearance, which pains Ákos, but shames him too:

He pitied his daughter, and took his pity out on himself. He watched her intently, almost offensively, still unable to get used to her face, at once both plump and

drawn, the pudgy nose, the flared, horsy nostrils, the severe, masculine eyebrows and the tiny watery eyes which somehow reminded him of his own.

He had never really understood women, but knew only too well that his daughter was ugly. And not just ugly any more, but withered and old. A veritable old maid.

It was only in the flood of almost theatrically rosy sunlight cast by the parasol that this became irrevocably clear to him. A caterpillar under a rosebush, he thought to himself.³⁵

It is significant that Skylark's poor appearance is communicated through animal imagery. She is bird-like, horse-like, and larval, neither properly feminine nor properly human. Her irregularities are perceived by Ákos as aberrations of gender and species. Paradoxically, Skylark's unnatural state brings her closer to nature.³⁶

Nevertheless, Skylark's physical description does not fully account for Ákos' assertion that his daughter is ugly (it is possible to imagine a woman of such description as impressive or "handsome"). As Péter Esterházy writes, "Skylark's ugliness is not a symbol"; its function hinges on our willingness to accept it as an unmitigated fact.³⁷ Later in the novel, we again almost see her, but not quite. Because she is always hiding, we can never be sure what it is about her that is so off-putting.³⁸

For Esterházy, "Skylark's hideousness, her soft puffiness, dullness, aggressive goodness is: us. It is our lives that are so stiff, so predictable, so impersonal, so Hungarian. Skylark is eternal. There's no deliverance".³⁹ The universal (if somehow still peculiarly Hungarian) quality of Skylark's ugly fate has the dual makings of a singular character who represents something absolutely general. Skylark's life is designated from without, while being hers alone to endure. This is how Skylark experiences her own irreplaceability, which, while being uniquely hers, is impersonal and anonymous:

"I", she began in her thoughts, as we all do when thinking of ourselves.

But this was her, something, someone whose life she really lived. She was this I, in body and in soul, one with its very flesh, its memories, its past, present and future, all of which we seal into a single destiny each time we face ourselves and utter that tiny, unalterable word: "I".⁴⁰

Human creatureliness is revealed, not resolved, by the capacity for self-reflection, which intensifies the opacity, the mystery of being one-self. Subjectification fails to deliver self-transparency, while at the same time landing Skylark, irreplaceably, in the world.⁴¹

Throughout, Skylark is associated with a number of common birds. Her nickname, Skylark (a pleasant, unremarkable bird whose conservation status is currently listed as "Least concern; Population decreasing") was given to her as a child, yet she no longer sings.⁴² She walks with a "wavering, almost ducklike waddle",⁴³ and returns from her trip with a caged pigeon. But the novel's ornithological symbolism signals a more profound creatureliness, rooted in the

characters' failed attempts to escape their vulnerabilities through self-delusion, repression, or distraction. At once unsparing and deeply sympathetic, Kosztolányi's "sincerity was aesthetic and humanistic, not humanitarian".⁴⁴ Kosztolányi views Sárszeg like the contents of a Petri dish through the lens of a microscope, with forensic precision. The town is the ideal setting for such close observation. Like Skylark's double, the ugly pigeon Tubi who willingly returns to his cage, the townsfolk—despite their weekly bacchanals—are tame: everyone dreams of Budapest, and nobody goes.

Skylark is knowingly rooted in the past: "the meld of satire and elegy all suggest retrospect and even an irony-inflected nostalgia for something that, however unsatisfactory, is over and done with".⁴⁵ There are, in fact, different kinds of world-endings in the novel, including that of family. Ákos, a retired archivist, is fixated on his family's origins, which he traces back to a noble Hungarian caste. Ironically, Skylark, his only child, marks an end to the lineage. Could Skylark be read, queerly, as a tacit critique of what Lee Edelman has called "reproductive futurism"?⁴⁶ Although ugliness excludes Skylark from participating in the heteronormative rituals of marriage and childbearing, there is little to suggest that ugliness is resistant or redemptive. In the world of the book, marriage and children represent a 'successful' narrative trajectory. For most of the characters this success is mere façade (unhappy unions, adultery, and divorce are rife in Sárszeg). But in depriving Skylark of husband and offspring, Kosztolányi also refuses the consolations of resistance as a response to affliction. Indeed, the closing pages of the book depict a kind of living death. In her "cold and barren girlhood bed, [where] nothing, save sleep and illness had ever happened", Skylark "pressed the full weight of her body downwards, like a corpse into its bier".⁴⁷ Ugliness precludes reproduction, not in the conservative, social Darwinist sense, but as one impossible renewal among others.⁴⁸ "It was the end, she felt, the end of everything".⁴⁹ This ending is more than just a feeling, more than a historical omen. It is also a biological fact, and a metaphysical dead-end.

$X = X$

You know, I could write a book. And this book would
be thick enough to stun an ox. Cause I can see the
future ... Let $X=X$. — Laurie Anderson.⁵⁰

In interviews, Yanagihara has stated that *A Little Life* began with the desire to write about a character who never gets better.⁵¹ In *Skylark*, too, the impossibility of change propels the novel along its circular route. A central place in *A Little Life* is afforded to the "axiom of equality", according to which a thing, or a person, is and could only ever be what they are. As a novelistic foundation, the axiom of equality is in tension with the *Bildungsroman*. It is at odds, culturally, with the liberal idea of personal agency, and, philosophically, with the anti-identitarian idea of becoming. Part IV of *A Little Life* is titled "The Axiom of

Equality”, which is Jude’s favourite mathematical axiom. But *A Little Life* as a whole may be seen as an elaborate illustration of this very principle.

At the end of a scene in which he is nearly killed by his abusive partner Caleb, Jude considers the axiom’s central contention:

The axiom of equality states that x always equals x : it assumes that if you have a conceptual thing named x it must always be equivalent to itself, that it has a uniqueness about it, that it is in possession of something so irreducible that we must assume it is absolutely, unchangeably equivalent to itself for all time, that its very elementalness can never be altered. But it is impossible to prove. Not everyone liked the axiom of equality ... but he had always appreciated how elusive it was, how the beauty of the equation itself would always be frustrated by the attempts to prove it. It was the kind of axiom that could drive you mad, that could consume you, that could easily become an entire life.⁵²

Jude discovers in the axiom of equality the organizing logic of his life: “now he knows for certain how true the axiom is, because he himself—his very life—has proven it. The person I was will always be the person I am”.⁵³ As an adult, despite his years of abuse, Jude is surrounded by friends, is successful and wealthy. But none of these seemingly miraculous improvements have made a difference. While being hurled by Caleb down a flight of stairs (a version, or perversion, of Krasznahorkai’s leaping arc), Jude realizes that change is impossible:

He may be respected ... but fundamentally, he is the same person, a person who inspired disgust, a person meant to be hated. And in the microsecond that he finds himself suspended in the air, between the ecstasy of being aloft and the anticipation of his landing, which he knows will be terrible, he knows that x will always equal x , no matter what he does ... no matter how much he earns or how hard he tries to forget. It is the last thing he thinks as his shoulder cracks down upon the concrete, and the world, for an instant, jerks blessedly away from beneath him: $x = x$, he thinks. $x = x$, $x = x$.⁵⁴

In a strongly-worded critique, Daniel Mendelsohn accuses Yanagihara of a sentimental (if cynical) penchant for victimized characters to elicit a response from readers: “her novel is little more than a machine designed to produce negative emotions for the reader to wallow in”.⁵⁵ Mendelsohn’s observation that *A Little Life* operates like a machine is canny, but this is not a machine that produces emotions. For Mendelsohn, *A Little Life* capitalizes on the alleged “snow-flakery” (my word, not his) of the moment, with its exacerbation of vulnerability.⁵⁶ It is possible to interpret Jude’s contemplation of his abject sameness as the expression of survivor psychology. Mendelsohn does this, and it leads him to see the book as an exploitation narrative. But what if we were to reject the assumption that these thoughts are Jude’s internalizing of shame and self-loathing? Yanagihara’s true audacity, I think, is in treating the axiom of equality as essentially valid. Jude’s assessment, in other words, that “he is the same person, a

person who inspired disgust, a person meant to be hated” is correct insofar as the x that defines him remains unchanging. But what is x ? Its meaning in the novel could be one of two things: the trauma that has damaged Jude beyond repair, or—and this is the more scandalous option—an immutable quality, like Skylark’s ugliness, that has set Jude on the path of recurring, endless abuse.

Mendelsohn’s complains that “Yanagihara’s novel has duped many into confusing anguish and ecstasy, pleasure and pain”.⁵⁷ Here, again, the intuition is right, but not the substance. Yanagihara’s trickery, such that it is, is to present a narrative which could but should not be read psychologically. Doing so leads to a multitude of problems, as Mendelsohn’s essay itself illustrates. *A Little Life* operates in an altogether different register with few bearings on, or interest in, character psychology. To identify or empathize with Jude is a little like identifying with the biblical Job—a feasible but nonsensical attitude. Just as the Book of Job is not really about the personal experience of grief over the devastating loss of one’s family and fortune, *A Little Life* is not really about sexual abuse.⁵⁸ Were we to begrudge Yanagihara, it would be for the steeliness with which she utilizes paedophilia, for the second time in her literary career, as exemplary of the abuse of power.⁵⁹ *A Little Life*’s frame of reference is not ‘abjection’ as Mendelsohn argues,⁶⁰ but necessity: the mechanism by which x must equal x .⁶¹

Treating the novel as realist fiction, Mendelsohn also takes issue with Yanagihara’s divergence from “aesthetic necessity”:

For the novel in the realistic tradition to be effective, it must obey some kind of aesthetic necessity—not least, that of even a faint verisimilitude. The abuse that Yanagihara heaps on her protagonist is neither just from a human point of view nor necessary from an artistic one.⁶²

But the necessity at work in the novel is not aesthetic. There is little adherence here to Aristotelian proportionality or to verisimilitude. Necessity comes into view through the novel’s unlikely setup. Contrivance may seem like a betrayal of the internal relations that hold (good) novels together, but the artificial nature of Yanagihara’s experiment is precisely what makes the other necessity stand out. *A Little Life*’s realism is not achieved through fidelity (the impression that these characters could really exist, that their meteoric rise to success is convincing, or that their patient, consistently loving response to Jude’s cycles of self-harm is humanly possible). Yanagihara’s extremes of implausibility show necessity in the colours of a deeply-saturated mise-en-scène. *A Little Life* works as a fairy tale, as a biblical narrative, and as melodrama, even camp.⁶³ The fictional world is arranged such that its effects on the characters are recognized as predictable, a highly-contrived universe.

The gap between Mendelsohn’s censorious reading and my sense of the book’s genuine radicalism pertains also to the undoing of the human. The title of *A Little Life* toys with literary anthropocentrism: the novel is partly about the vital signs of its characters (Jude is instructed to “show a little life” when forced to work as a prostitute),⁶⁴ and about the sensation that one’s life is

everything and nothing in the vastness of space and time. Caught up in the mechanism of his life, Jude is and is not human. His being treated “like an animal” is not a call to rescue Jude’s humanity, but opens up questions of suffering beyond the human. The novel’s inhumanity derives from seeing Jude in this way, as the “animalinside” the novel’s unforgiving arc.

Whether from birth or from trauma, Skylark and Jude suffer intense, incurable loneliness. Jude muses on the nature of a life without intimacy:

What does it mean to be a human, if he can never have this? And yet, he reminds himself, loneliness is not hunger, or deprivation, or illness: it is not fatal. Its eradication is not owed him. He has a better life than so many people, a better life than he had ever thought he would have. To wish for companionship along with everything else he has seems a kind of greed, a gross entitlement.⁶⁵

Jude wrestles with the notion that loneliness *is* hunger, that for humans (and humans alone), the need for closeness is as vital as any physical need. The end of the passage, where Jude opts to reject the uniqueness of emotional needs, feels less than sincere. There is no stoic detachment here, but despair, which suggests that Jude still wants to believe in his own humanity. Emotional need “*seems* a kind of greed”, but is in fact real. Read as metafiction, the passage conveys Jude’s exasperation at his own unreality. Here, Yanagihara plays with humanist storytelling conventions like a cat plays with its prey. By mobilizing the idea that humans alone require companionship and affection, Yanagihara taunts the reader and critic (Mendelsohn), in whose eyes Jude’s humanity falls short of convincing. If Jude’s pain in the passage rings somewhat hollow, this is because his problem is not exclusively human. His suffering is not meaningful because he is human; it is amplified by the realization that, regardless of species, suffering happens, and is devastating to the victim.

In her pain, Skylark, too, admonishes herself for desiring more than she has. Staring at the image of the Virgin Mary above her bed she “flung out her arms... in a gesture of passion which, however, she immediately suppressed. Patience. Patience. There are those who suffer so much more”.⁶⁶ Skylark and Jude are both afflicted. Yet unlike Jude, Skylark has not suffered a debilitating childhood trauma, has not been shaped by her past. Skylark’s trauma is her own body; *she* is that trauma itself.

A NOTE ON GESTURE

Every space is too tight for me. I move around, I jump, I fling myself and yet I’m still inside that one space which is too tight for me, unbearably small, although at times it is only exactly just a bit too tight, and it is exactly then, when it is exactly just a bit too tight, that it is the most unbearable.— László Krasznahorkai.⁶⁷

It is only once she is on the move that Skylark can no longer suppress the knowledge that nothing will change: “now, as the receding landscape, the

alternating meadows made her think of what could never change, would always stay the same, her heart sank”.⁶⁸ As the train chugs along and the views rush across the window, there is no real prospect of forward motion for Skylark. When, next, she glimpses her own reflection, she can see the reason for her misery: “in the glass she could see her own face. She didn’t believe in looking at herself; it was a sign of vanity, they said, and, besides, what was the point? She set off back down the swaying corridor of the train, hurrying anxiously as if in flight, as if in search of a more secure and secluded space in which to hide her pain”.⁶⁹ On seeing herself, Skylark’s thought first turns to the edicts of female modesty. But how could these clichés apply to her? Finding solace in what “they say” cannot work, and Skylark is promptly thrown back against herself: “what was the point?” This is one of a number of instances in which seeing and being seen, in a mirror or a photograph, affirms the reality of the image. Contrary to what “they say”, the image does not lie; Skylark really is a sore sight for eyes.

It is clear, moreover, that neither Skylark nor her parents look forward to the trip. Over the years, the visit to Tarkó had been repeatedly postponed, but now that it is no longer avoidable, pretences are bound to be shattered. The visit could not possibly go well, but to entertain failure openly would expose the lies that have so far kept life intact. As we soon discover, any new social interaction, any divergence from their insular routine, threatens to expose the truth and cause pain. Staying still may not reduce Skylark’s suffering, but movement, the pretext of change, cannot but increase it.

Self-delusion protects characters against the wounding knowledge of their own creatureliness. But by deluding themselves, characters reconfirm their creaturely limits (the plot of *Skylark* unspools as the inverse of the ancient dictum “know thyself”). Kosztolányi tracks the permutations of consciousness as it contorts to safeguard self-sustaining untruths. Everyone lies to themselves and to others, and the novel excels in depicting the fragility of these manoeuvres.⁷⁰ In a half-hearted attempt to justify the trip, Mother says to Ákos,

“at least it’ll be a rest. And perhaps...” She did not continue.

“Perhaps what?”

“Perhaps someone might... turn up”.

“What kind of someone?”

“Someone”, Mother repeated timidly, “some... good fortune”, she added with an affecting, womanly boldness.

Father looked away in irritation, ashamed to hear what he has so often heard in vain, had so often thought himself, yet knew would only ever lead to more humiliating fiascos and bitter disappointments. There was something vulgar about his wife’s remark. He shrugged. Then almost inaudibly, he muttered:

“Absurd”.⁷¹

The parents' plight is that even they cannot bring themselves to hold out hope for their daughter. They agree, and agree never to say, that Skylark's fate is sealed. Nothing will change, *x* equals *x*.⁷²

Finally, there is the family picture taken at Tarkó. "Ákos asked to see the photograph. He only looked at his daughter".

She stood by the door of the barn, which was propped open by a wooden rake. With one arm clinging to Aunt Etelka and the other planted against the wall of the barn, she appeared to be reaching out for protection from something that frightened her. She seemed so alone among the others, even among her relatives, her own flesh and blood. Only this gesture of hers was visible, this gesture of desperate escape, which was, in its own way, quite beautiful. Otherwise, her face could hardly be seen, for, as always, she hung her head and showed the camera only her hair.⁷³

We have come full circle to Skylark's first appearance in the garden of her home, hunched over her crochet, her face hidden from view. Ákos knows what is later confirmed, that "Uncle Béla and Aunt Etelka had ... received [Skylark] warmly, but she soon discovered that her presence was superfluous, a burden, and had tried to make herself scarce, to shrink to half her size".⁷⁴

Framed in the photograph Skylark is a perfect illustration of Krasznahorkai's creature pressed against the boundaries of its animal existence. Like the creature, Skylark is held "inside that one space which is too tight", leaping without fleeing. The gesture, not the face, is the crucible of creaturely expression and it traces Skylark's leaping arc. The photo shows everything at once: the limit set by Skylark's ugliness, her attempt at escape, and the impossibility of fleeing. In a moment of gestural clarity, Ákos glimpses the beauty of his daughter's animality.

If Skylark is animalized by being framed, and framed in the setting of the family farm (where "livestock" is kept and controlled), her image reflects the general paradox of animal representation. In her discussion of animal cinema, Laura McMahon describes how cows seen on film express their own subjectivity while being subjected to the power of the apparatus (of farming and of the film). The cow's image is powerful but reveals "the force of the look captured on film ... enabled by the captivity of the animal".⁷⁵ A creaturely approach to animal representation seeks out the tensions inherent in these double-edged moments of capture. Pictorial, or gestural, capture exceeds its framing and frames its own exceeding, what McMahon describes as "the cinematic frame [that] opens to a deframing".⁷⁶ As he looks at the photograph, Ákos perceives the reality of creaturely life as the simultaneity of capture and flight, and for a moment, the realization disarms him. In the next moment, however, he reverts back to platitudes: "Splendid", he says.⁷⁷

White lies are no salve, but the alternative would be too much to bear. *Skylark* itself is this alternative, stripped of comforting fantasies and clear on why people desperately cling to them. The novel's vision of reality contrasts

with Ákos' fondness for "factual" books peddling accepted wisdoms: "he insisted on historical veracity. He didn't consider novels and plays as things to be taken "seriously"". ⁷⁸ Yet, as Kosztolányi is at pains to show, it is fiction, not what passes for fact, that communicates truth. Ákos' "edifying books which elucidated some moral truth" ⁷⁹ do nothing more than "rock one in the lap of the comforting illusion that no one suffers undeservedly in this world, nor dies of stomach cancer without due cause". ⁸⁰ Firmly on the side of fiction, Kosztolányi uses ugliness to explore the contingencies and inequalities of suffering. The beauty of Skylark's photographed gesture, impersonal yet exclusively hers, is too small to redeem Skylark in her father's eyes. But it is perhaps not entirely trivial that Skylark's sole association with beauty is prompted by her image in a photograph. The photo, in its own way a representation-within-a-representation, is the novel's one merciful mirror. The beauty of Skylark's stricken gesture is like the "beauty of the equation [of equality] itself". ⁸¹ Amidst the suffering inflicted on those who least deserve it, beauty resides in the attempts to formalize—through art or mathematics—the senseless necessity of suffering.

NOTES

1. László Krasznahorkai, *Animalinside* (Ottillie Muzlet, trans. New York: New Directions, 2011), 8.
2. Takes shape literally as the essay was written in conjunction with Max Neumann's drawings. *Animalinside* is a co-authored piece of image and text.
3. Krasznahorkai, *Animalinside*, 15.
4. Krasznahorkai, *Animalinside*, 16.
5. Colm Tóibín's introduction to *Animalinside* describes Krasznahorkai's prose as "a force struggling against the domination of cliché and easy consumption, offering small, well-organised revolts ... preparing high-voltage assaults on the reader's nervous system" (5).
6. Krasznahorkai, *Animalinside*, 24.
7. See in particular *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability* in Literature and Film. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, and "Vulnerability", in *Critical Terms for Animal Studies*. Lori Gruen, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 410–423.
8. The notion of limits offers a bridge between the adjacent, occasionally antagonistic, fields of environmentalism and Animal Studies. As Naomi Klein's new book *On Fire: The Burning Case of a Green New Deal* (New York: Penguin, 2019) makes clear, the current climate crisis is (literally) fuelled by an inability to properly contend with the idea of the earth's limits. Anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism are similarly buoyed by a lack of appreciation of the limits of the human's world-forming capacities. And yet, the often maligned liberal-humanist subject is arguably a creature of (political, juridical) limits. Its individual freedoms are curtailed in the recognition that they are potentially unbridled. Political liberalism is based on a careful qualification of (human) power. Krasznahorkai's text is situated at the point of vacillation between onto-

- logical entrapment and transcendence of the human creature. The limit's formative role as the hallmark of human animality is significant for my two readings here.
9. The term "indistinction" is discussed in Matthew Calarco's *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.
 10. Deborah Eisenberg, "Quiet, Shattering, Perfect", *The New York Review of Books* April 8 (2010), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/04/08/quiet-shattering-perfect/>, accessed on 28 August 2019.
 11. On the biopolitical dimensions of creaturely life as human exposure to political power and historical trauma see Eric Santner's *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. It is worth noting that Kosztolányi is part of the same pivotal period Santner is concerned with. Rilke's *Duino Elegies* is published in 1923, a year before the publication of *Skylark*. Born in 1875, Rilke is a decade older than Kosztolányi. The Hungarian author dies exactly ten years after Rilke, in 1936.
 12. 1848 saw a wave of popular uprisings against the European monarchies. Across the Austro-Hungarian empire, nationalists, liberals, and socialists agitated in favour of forming nation-states. Sometimes known as the People's Spring, 1848 saw the most significant revolutionary wave in European history. Unlike the rest of Europe, Britain was generally resistant to the Republican upheavals. In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish French army officer, was falsely accused of spying for Germany and convicted of treason. The novelist Émile Zola published his famous 'J'accuse' piece in Dreyfus' defence. The latter was finally exonerated in 1906. The Affair deeply divided France, and its repercussions were felt well into the late twentieth-century.
 13. Eisenberg, "Quiet, Shattering, Perfect".
 14. Charlotte M. Wright, *Plain and Ugly Janes: The Rise of the Ugly Woman in Contemporary American Fiction* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 11.
 15. Kosztolányi, Dezső *Skylark* [*Pacsirta*, 1924]. Richard Aczel, trans. New York: New York Review of Books, 2010, 201.
 16. Keridiana W. Chez, *Victorian Dogs, Victorian Men: Affect and Animals in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), 2017, 77.
 17. Chez, *Victorian Dogs*, 78.
 18. Eisenberg, "Quiet, Shattering, Perfect".
 19. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 9.
 20. Walter Bauer, "Introduction", *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 35.2 (2003), 133–137, 134. Etymologically, *Bildung* contains the German word *Bild*, "image" or "picture", a point to which I shall return at the end of the chapter.
 21. Eisenberg, "Quiet, Shattering, Perfect".
 22. The name, Jude St. Francis, is richly allusive. It refers to St. Francis, the patron saint of animals as well as to Jude the Apostle, the patron saint of lost causes. It also calls up Thomas Hardy's doomed protagonist of *Jude the Obscure* (1895). All three allusions are creaturely: they reference those who are, or who advocate for, the vulnerable.
 23. Merritt Moseley, "The Booker Prize 2016", *Sewanee Review*, 124.4 (2016), 674–684, 674, 682.

24. Joseph Remenyi, “Dezso Kosztolanyi, Hungarian Homo Aestheticus (1885–1936)”, *The American Slavic and East European Review* 5.1/2 (May, 1946), 188–203, 201.
25. On the novel’s “mishmash of genres” see Yanagihara’s conversation with Madhulika Sikka at the Politics and Prose bookstore, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZQqdGrazAs>, accessed 28 August 2019.
26. “The phrase ‘I’m sorry’ or, the even more prevalent, ‘I’m so sorry’, shows up more than 100 times over the course of the novel, and that is not even to consider the many other ways the characters convey their apologies (an additional 36 mentions) and regrets (another dozen). It is impossible to read the novel for more than few [sic] minutes without coming across an expression of sorrow and contrition”. Sean McCann, “‘I’m So Sorry’: *A Little Life* and the Socialism of the Rich” *Post45*, 6 March 2016, <http://post45.research.yale.edu/2016/06/im-so-sorry-a-little-life-and-the-socialism-of-the-rich/>, accessed on 10 August 2019.
27. In his fascinating takedown of the novel in *The New York Review of Books*, Daniel Mendelsohn rails against Yanagihara’s “atrocious”, grammatically skewed writing and wonders “why the striking weakness of the prose has gone unremarked by critics and prize juries” (19). “A Striptease Among Pals”, *The New York Review of Books* 16.19 December 3 (2015), 18–20. See also the subsequent exchange in the same publication between Mendelsohn and *A Little Life*’s editor Gerald Howard of Doubleday, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/12/17/too-hard-take/>
28. Richard Aczel’s superb English translation reportedly retains much, though not all, of Kosztolányi’s linguistic brilliance. On what is lost (and found) in the transition from Hungarian language play to English, see Katalin Bucsecs, “About the Aspects and Roles of Phrasemes in Kosztolányi’s *Skylark* (1924)”, *Hungarian Studies* 29.1/2 (2015), 179–191. See also, Thomas Cooper’s “Dezső Kosztolányi and Intertextuality: Anticipations of Post-modern Literary Criticism”, *Hungarian Studies* 14.1 (2000), 45–54.
29. Péter Esterházy’s comment in the introduction to *Skylark*’s 2010 edition that “Kosztolányi’s prose is quiet and sharp. Today our books are noisier and perhaps more blurred” (xv) comes to mind.
30. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 59.
31. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 5.
32. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 5.
33. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 6.
34. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 8.
35. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 8.
36. Here, the intersecting of the categories of gender and species is most acute. Women’s cultural association with the state of nature is often related to their physical beauty. In *Skylark*’s case, it is her physical ugliness that makes her animal-like, something that makes her less human, more animal, and yet is also considered by Ákos to be “unnatural”.
37. Péter Esterházy, “Introduction”, Dezső Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, vii–xv, xv.
38. The cover of the 2010 edition features a woman’s face in close-up, from *Self-Portrait* (1898) by the post-impressionist German painter Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907). While not conventionally beautiful, the painted woman is not ugly, and the image may have been chosen instead for its furtive, anxious expression. Modersohn-Becker herself was neither ugly nor unmarried, and her

- career, though brief, was richly productive. Like Rilke, whom she knew well, Modersohn-Becker was ten years older than Kosztolányi. She died almost two decades before him, aged thirty-one.
39. Esterházy, "Introduction", xv.
 40. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 218.
 41. Kosztolányi knew his Freud, and *Skylark* contains various psychoanalytical traces, most notably in the parents' deep ambivalence about their daughter: they love and resent her at the same time. See, for example, Ákos' dream that Skylark is kidnapped and brutally murdered, "her body horribly mutilated, stab wounds in her naked breast. She was dead" (35).
 42. Ironies abound in Skylark's nickname, which implies humour (lark), creativity (song), and—in the English plural, an "exaltation of larks"—refers to the birds' joyous flight. Skylark is none of those things. Rather, she is compared to a caterpillar, which skylarks eat. I am grateful to Robert McKay for reminding me that a group of skylarks are an exaltation.
 43. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 201.
 44. Remenyi, "Homo Aestheticus", 202.
 45. Eisenberg, "Quiet, Shattering, Perfect". On nostalgia, Péter Esterházy remarks that: "Kosztolányi looks back at a world he knew well, where he knew his way around as if at home, but without nostalgia. He knows how the story ends; he sits there in his own nothingness" (xv).
 46. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
 47. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 220.
 48. Darwinism appears briefly, in the drunken exchange between two members of the Panthers gentlemen's club, which Ákos revisits during his daughter's absence (142). There are other hints that Skylark is a creature unfit for survival. Walking alongside his daughter, Ákos "tugged nervously at his left shoulder, pulling it close, as if to cloak his embarrassment at the offence his own flesh and blood caused to the order of nature" (10).
 49. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 218.
 50. Laurie Anderson, "Let X=X", track 8 on *Big Science*, Warner Brothers, 1982.
 51. Yanagihara told Adalena Kavanagh: "One of the things I wanted to do with this book is create a character who never gets better". "A Stubborn Lack of Redemption, an interview with Hanya Yanagihara, author of *A Little Life*", *Electric Literature*, 21 May 2015, <https://electricliterature.com/a-stubborn-lack-of-redemption-an-interview-with-hanya-yanagihara-author-of-a-little-life/>, accessed on 15 September 2019.
 52. Hanya Yanagihara, *A Little Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 2016), 385–6.
 53. Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, 386.
 54. Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, 386.
 55. Mendelsohn, "Striptease", 20.
 56. *A Little Life* begins like a "friends from College" novel, and it is unsurprising that Mendelsohn, who is a College professor (at Bard, assumed to be the model for the unnamed College in the novel) veers away from the book to citing "declining student resilience" (20) as a cultural malaise. He continues: "many readers today have reached adulthood in educational institutions where a generalized sense of helplessness and acute anxiety have become the norm" (20). The novel affirms a view of the world as "a site of victimization and little else" (20).

- Mendelsohn is right to suggest that the theme of victimhood and the prevalence of the child abuse subplot played a part in *A Little Life*'s success. But if there is something to my claim that readers' enthusiasm on these grounds is misguided, then the novel's passionate endorsement is all the more intriguing.
57. Mendelsohn, "Striptease", 20.
 58. In her conversation with Madhulika Sikka at Politics and Prose, a member of the audience thanked Yanagihara for her insightful portrayal of Jude. The speaker described being an abuse survivor and added that despite its brutality, *A Little Life* resonated deeply with her own experience. But however genuine, this is not a response that is encouraged by the book itself. Yanagihara has been explicit about not conducting research on the subject of child sexual abuse before writing. More strikingly, in a book that rejects the very rationale of therapy, Yanagihara has stated that she has had no personal experience of it. What might be called the "therapeutic response" to the novel is at odds with the spirit, if not the letter, of the text.
 59. Yanagihara's first novel, *The People in the Trees* (2013) is also concerned with paedophilic abuse, this time from the perpetrator's perspective. Interestingly, the novel also includes extensive sections on vivisection, reminiscent of the violent passages in *A Little Life*. Vivisection and child abuse are two examples of radically asymmetrical power relations.
 60. Mendelsohn, "Striptease", 18.
 61. I am borrowing the term necessity from the philosopher and mystic Simone Weil. Necessity, the "mechanism of the world", is for Weil the proper object of art, sought through the practice of what she calls "attention". I have explored the relevance of necessity in literature and film in a number of earlier pieces. This chapter is part of a larger project on Weil's approach to art as the expression of necessity, of "what is". See for example, "'Nothing now but kestrel': Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch and the Cinema of Letting Be", *The Iris Murdoch Review* (2017), 41–49, and "Vegan Cinema", *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory*. Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood, eds. London: Palgrave, 2018, 125–146.
 62. Mendelsohn, "Striptease", 20.
 63. *A Little Life* has been read as a gay novel. The claim is problematic because the book contains few if any particulars of gay life. Moreover, there are no political references that situate the novel historically or chronologically. But in its antirealist sensibility and tendency towards kitsch and camp, the novel may indeed be considered queer. On *A Little Life* as a gay text, see Garth Greenwell's "A Little Life: The Great Gay Novel Might Be Here", *The Atlantic* 31 May 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/05/a-little-life-definitive-gay-novel/394436/>. Yanagihara is more widely concerned with queer art and artists. See, for example, her moving essay on David Wojnarowicz, "The Burning House", *The Paris Review* 2 July 2018, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/07/02/the-burning-house/>. See also *Take Out: Queer Writing from Asian Pacific America*, edited by Yanagihara, Quang Bao and Timothy Liu (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).
 64. Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, 415.
 65. Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, 348.
 66. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 220.

67. Krasznahorkai, *Animalinside*, 14.
68. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 13.
69. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 13.
70. Besides Skylark and her parents, others are busy cultivating versions of themselves they can tolerate. The local newspaper editor and aspiring poet Miklós Ijas, for example, “affect[ed] sensitivity, as he always did when alluding to his unrealised literary ambitions and seeking recognition” (106).
71. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 32.
72. Ákos is preoccupied with the unjustness of Skylark’s lot, which suggests an unacceptable mismatch between what is (necessity) and what ought to be (the good). He is tormented by the idea that pure chance had sealed Skylark’s fate, and that, “good girl” that she is, she does not deserve it. As a foil to Skylark, Ákos thinks of the town’s operetta singer, Olga Orosz. Like his daughter, Orosz “wasn’t even young any more. Past thirty, for sure, but perhaps even over thirty-five” (94). But far from being punished for her loose morals, Orosz is universally admired. “Is there no justice?” (94), he wonders. “Upon the head of this abomination, this lecherous, almost biblical fornicator, surely sulphurous rains should fall. Instead she was swamped with flowers” (94).
73. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 213.
74. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 218.
75. Laura McMahon, *Animal Worlds: Film, Philosophy and Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 122.
76. McMahon, *Animal Worlds*, 125.
77. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 213.
78. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 86.
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80. Kosztolányi, *Skylark*, 87.
81. Yanagihara, *A Little Life*, 386.

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PART VIII

Contemporary Literature



Speculative Humanisms: Postwar Universalism and the Question of the Animal

Seán McCorry

The term “humanism” in the singular is unable to capture the vast, heterogeneous set of culturally and historically differentiated ideals, politics, and ontologies that have been subsumed under that title. Putting things rather broadly, humanism names a set of values which prioritize human reason and community above all else (including, typically, claims made on behalf of the divine or the nonhuman environment). At the centre of humanism is the contention that the human individual (called the “humanist subject” in philosophy) is rational, sovereign (master of itself and its world), and universal (so that all humans are basically alike in terms of their capacities, rights, and responsibilities).

This chapter attempts to delineate the varying transformations that humanism and the human—and their corollary, the nonhuman—underwent in various institutional and cultural contexts in the period that followed the Second World War. The humanist subject was reconceptualized in this period as a generic universal subjectivity—an avatar of universal humanity set against the racist national-particularism of the defeated fascist states. A closer examination of postwar humanism, however, reveals a discourse which is deeply troubled by the figure of the animal, a figure whose position at the threshold of the community of ethical and political subjects marks the limit point of the modern slogan of universal brotherhood. In this chapter I aim to illuminate these entanglements of institutional humanism and the question of the animal. My aim is to show that the turn towards universal humanism always depended on

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the simultaneous abjection and silent retention of the concept of the nonhuman, and in particular the animal. My contention is that texts which attempt to intervene in or reformulate the boundaries of political humanism are always and necessarily texts about species difference, whether or not they consider the lives of nonhuman animals.

The political crises of the first half of the twentieth century (and more specifically, the institutional response to these crises) marked a decisive event in the historical reconstitution of the concept of the human. The ideology of nationalism found a bloody apotheosis in the Nazi genocide, and the cosmopolitan turn which forged the international order of the postwar world demanded that the concept of the human be refigured in the name of universal humanity. In the aftermath of genocide and under the new threat of nuclear annihilation, this move to defend universalism took on a particular urgency, as George Hutchinson has recently pointed out: “Maybe humanity would be scared into a functional unity to remake the world, or maybe everyone would die”.¹ In response to what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) named as the “barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind”, the turn towards universalism gathered momentum through the increasing influence of supra-national institutions (principally the United Nations and its various agencies) which would supply the regulative ideals of the new humanity.² In the words of the German-Jewish-American political theorist Hannah Arendt (herself an embodiment of the new post-national cosmopolitan order), “just as the family and its property were replaced by class membership and national territory, so mankind now begins to replace nationally bound societies, and the earth replaces the limited state territory”.³

The universal here is assumed to be coextensive with “the human”, a concept which itself is presumed to be transparent and to name a discrete, clearly bounded object. The critique of the subject that has been elaborated in the critical-theoretical debates of recent decades insists instead that our concept of “the human” is by no means fixed. Moreover, when this analysis is complemented by a critical attentiveness to the question of species, it becomes clear that one’s membership in the human community is something which is always at stake in a variety of political conflicts, behavioural norms, and socio-cultural practices (including, ironically enough, practices pertaining to the killing and eating of other animals), such that “being human is not a given, it is achieved”.⁴

As Matthew Calarco has noted, in such expressions of universalism, “concern for [...] the universal never extends beyond a simple and rather uncritical anthropocentrism”.⁵ It is as though the category of the universal can only come to contain positive contents through the exclusion of that which is held to be (for whatever reason) beyond its purview, and the pervasive humanism and anthropocentrism of postwar formulations of universality identify this excluded remainder with the nonhuman in general, and nonhuman animals in particular. As Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson have shown, this exclusionary mechanism persists in contemporary justice struggles that seek to expand the sphere of moral concern to include marginalized human communities, where attempts

to incorporate animal justice claims within these wider liberatory struggles are imagined as endangering a fragile anthropocentric universalism.⁶ The questions which organize my investigation are these: To what extent do claims to universality depend on an act of constitutive exclusion? How far, and in what ways, does the figure of the nonhuman fulfil this function in the institutional and political context of the postwar period? And how far can speculative literatures provide alternative ways of conceptualizing the relations between universality and species membership?

INTERSTELLAR COSMOPOLITANISM IN *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) is a novel which, in combining the fantasy of a universal "human family" with the generic conventions of science fiction (SF), reimagines the postwar cosmopolitan project of unity across nations on an interstellar scale. The novel's protagonist, Genly Ai, exemplifies what we might call a cosmopolitan subjectivity. Ai is an Envoy, a representative of an affiliation of human planets known as the Ekumen. His task is to establish contact with the natives of Gethen for the purpose of integrating them into the interstellar community of universal humanity. This process of expansion and integration closely echoes the postwar orientation towards supra-national political humanism. The action of *Left Hand* is preceded by a period of turbulence and dissolution in the interstellar community: "The Age of the Enemy", from which "all the central worlds are still recovering, [...] reviving lost skills and lost ideas, learning how to talk again" (11). This turn towards cosmopolitanism in Le Guin's novel can therefore be understood as a response to the political crises of the twentieth century, offering what Fredric Jameson has described as a "liberal 'solution'" in which the Ekumen is "a kind of galactic United Nations".⁷ Like other human populations (including the Terrans—that is, us), the Gethenians are the descendants of colonists planted by the first humans from the planet Hain. With the passage of millennia and the dissolution of the links between "centre" and "periphery" that were established by the original colonial project, the Gethenians have become wholly isolated and ignorant of the existence of human populations of other planets. Due to this cultural isolation from the galaxy's other human communities, Gethenians have long-since forgotten the diversity of the human species, taking themselves to be exemplary humans and understanding non-Gethenians as freakish quasi-humans.

Genly Ai, then, comes to Gethen as an alien whose humanity is in question. Distinct biologically as well as culturally, Gethenian bodies are substantially different from Ai's now unfamiliar Terran morphology. Most strikingly, Gethenians are ambisexual. When not in *kemmer* (a cyclical period of reproductive fertility in which they can take on attributes of either sex), "normal" Gethenians are neither male nor female. This peculiar sexual morphology functions as a

particularly striking manifestation of difference, and thus of a potential fracture in the posited identity of all humans which is the condition of Ekumenical community. Ai's diplomatic task is to subsume morphological difference under the rubric of identity. On his approach to Argaven, "king" of Karhide (one of two major Gethenian nations), Ai presents the king with "a little gallery of Man: people of Hain, Chiffewar, and the Cetians, of S and Terra and Alterra, of the Uttermosts, Kapteyn, Ollul, Four-Taurus, Rokanan, Ensbo, Cime, Gde and Sheashel Haven" (29). Ai's exhibition reflects the anti-racist project ("We come all colours", 29) of postwar humanism, not least Edward Steichen's landmark 1955 photography exhibition *The Family of Man*. Following Steichen, Ai's representational strategy captures manifold differences in order to, paradoxically, produce the effect of identity.

Le Guin underscores her commitment to a conventionally humanist metaphysics of subjectivity through her elaboration of the technique of "mind-speech" that forms a link connecting (at least in principle) all descendants of the Hainish colonization to one another. A form of telepathy, mindspeech has a physiological basis, but requires in addition the attainment of a certain level of cultural sophistication. As Ai explains, it is "a side effect of the use of the mind. Young children, and defectives, and members of unevolved or regressed societies, can't mindspeak. The mind must exist on a certain plane of complexity first" (204). Mindspeech, then, attests to the transcendence of cognition over "primitive" materiality, having as its condition of possibility the unity and self-presence of the (modern, adult, human) subject.

In *Left Hand*, Le Guin offers a kind of history of Western civilization in miniature. She situates the political universalism of the Ekumen within a developmental narrative which proceeds from the supposed semi-humanity of pre-modern forms of social organization, through the very different forms of inhumanity that characterize modern nationalism and bureaucratic state-building, to the promise of a cosmopolitan and properly humanist future represented by mindspeech and interstellar community. As the novel opens, it is "always Year One", and the concept of "the unitary Now" (1) which organizes Gethenian temporality indicates a society which has not yet emerged into history. The Gethenians are therefore potential, though not yet actual, members of the cosmopolitan human community, lacking as they do the requisite modern conception of linear, progressive time. Le Guin's representation of Gethenian society links the absence of modern nationalism (and its violence) to the lack of a concept of historical development. Ai's first destination, the kingdom of Karhide, combines an advanced level of technological development with a semi-feudal mode of social organization. For example, Estraven, Ai's host in Karhide, declares that "Karhide is not a nation but a family quarrel" (5).

A species politics is implicit in this refusal of national-historical subjectivity. As Ai points out, "On Gethen, nothing led to war". Personal feuds and familial vendettas were common, at least in Karhide, "but they did not go to war. They lacked, it seemed, the capacity to *mobilize*. They behaved like animals, in that respect; or like women" (39). Ai links this feminized and animal-like low level

of social organization to the weak nationalism of the Karhidish people. To be properly human, then, one must forego the immediacy and intimacy of informal, disorganized social relationships (here coded as feminine, inhuman, and “primitive”). The thoroughly human subject chooses instead to become modern, substituting historical development for the perpetual present, and replacing inchoate pre-national consciousness with nationalism (which in turn will cede to universalism, as we shall see).

Gethenian theology replicates the tension between these competing temporalities in the split between the Handdara and Yomeshta faiths, and this split is again mapped onto an ontology through which different systems of belief are registered as more or less (in)human. “The Old Way of the Handdara” is founded on ethnic and geographic particularity: “You have to go back to the Old Land if you’re after the Old Way” (38). In contrast, “one can be a Yomeshta anywhere” (*ibid.*). Faxe, a Handarra mystic, “looked at [Ai] out of a tradition thirteen thousand years old: a way of thought and way of life so old [...] as to give a human being the unselfconsciousness, the authority, the completeness of a wild animal, a great strange creature who looks straight at you out of his eternal present” (57).

If Faxe’s traditional authority lends him “the completeness of a wild animal”, this is because Handarra temporality renders impossible any attempt to oppose the present to the historical process. Like the impoverished “animal” of the humanist tradition, Gethenians are characterized by perfect immanence to their environment, here conceived temporally rather than spatially. Where animals are conventionally imagined to be so thoroughly immersed in their natural environments as to be indistinguishable from them, humans are supposed to be fundamentally unnatural, existing outside of environmental determinants and therefore able to take control of and master their environmental worlds. Similarly, modern humanity is imagined as a historical animal, taking ownership of the historical process and directing its actions towards social progress; conversely, the weaker humanism of the Gethenian traditionalists inhibits this sense of distance from their (temporal) environment, and the Handarra experience of time is analogized to an animal’s experience of its habitat.

This temporality is already under pressure when Ai arrives on his mission from the Ekumen. Technological and cultural development in Karhide has meant that its inhabitants “had finally, in the last five or ten or fifteen centuries, got a little ahead of Nature” (83), and Karhide’s rival Orgoreyn—a kind of bureaucratic-collectivist culture whose name puns on “organ” (or tool) and “reign” (or rulership)—is still more developed. This transcendence of the non-human is accompanied by the emergence of new ethical practices which redraw the boundaries of community. The novel opens with a ritual in which Argaven, king of Karhide, lays the foundation of a new building. Estraven, Ai’s host, points out that “Very-long-ago a keystone was always set in with a mortar of ground bones mixed with blood. Human bones, human blood. Without the blood-bond the arch would fall, you see. We use the blood of animals, these days” (4). Here, Karhide’s transition from tradition to (inchoate) modernity is

marked by the sacrifice of the animal, whose death guarantees the stability of the human world. Karhide's more recent building practices therefore reflect a kind of proto-humanism by purchasing human community and solidarity through animal sacrifice.

The emergence of modernity on Gethen forms the thematic core of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and the novel's consideration of modern state violence enters into a dialogue with the political project of mid-twentieth-century political humanism. Under the pressure of historical development, national consciousness takes root in Orgoreyn, inciting in response an incipient national awakening in Karhide which threatens to provoke the first Gethenian war. *Left Hand*, then, proceeds without interruption from the foundation of national states to the deferred violence of a military standoff between world powers. The novel's solution to this crisis returns us to the ascendancy of the ideal of cosmopolitan political subjectivity in the postwar period. Genly Ai (representing the wider Ekumenical community) offers a possible escape from the nationalist violence of modernity. According to the Commensals of Orgoreyn (a kind of bureaucratic ruling class), "he brings the end of Kingdom and commensalities with him in his empty hands" (70). The Yomeshta cult—a theological tradition that rivals the "timeless" Handarra faith—is distinguished by its attunement to history and its orientation towards universality, and is therefore particularly well placed to apprehend the cosmopolitan promise of the Ekumen. One Yomeshta devotee proclaims that "We must halt this rivalry with Karhide before the New Men come. [...] We must forego *shifgrethor* [a feudal honour code], forbid all acts of vengeance, and unite together without envy as brothers of one Hearth" (123).

The mutual antagonism of Karhide and Orgoreyn can only be dissolved by the extension of the boundaries of community (or "Hearth") made possible by political cosmopolitanism. Internationalism thus appears in *Left Hand* as the consummation of a humanist teleology of historical development. The transformation of modes of social organization (and the limits of political community) proceeds from a pre-historical, pre-national feudal monarchism based on the immanence of time, through early modern national chauvinism and organized warfare, before culminating in "the general interest of mankind" (16) to which the Ekumen is devoted.

I want now to turn from these figures of universal human identity to the material condition against which they are articulated: the cultural and morphological variety of human life. My claim is that the political aspiration to universal community, which seeks to encompass both cultural differences and a diversity of bodily forms under the rubric of human identity, cannot reconcile its respect for the various physiological and social differences between "peoples" with its desire to circumscribe the limits of community as only human.

UNDOING THE HUMAN: SF, COSMOPOLITAN HUMANISM, AND SPECIES DIFFERENCE

In some remote corner of the universe, effused into innumerable solar-systems, there was once a star upon which clever animals invented cognition. It was the haughtiest, most mendacious moment in the history of this world, but yet only a moment. After Nature had taken breath awhile the star congealed and the clever animals had to die. —Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense”⁸

The triumphal humanism of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which concludes with the dissolution of national chauvinism through the successful incorporation of Gethen into the Ekumenical community, enthusiastically proclaims the utopian potential of political cosmopolitanism. Le Guin’s variety of cosmopolitanism is founded on the identity of the human species across manifest difference, and in this sense she echoes those voices in postwar political discourse that aspired for a non-nationalist settlement to the crises of the twentieth century.⁹ In what follows, I want to complicate this assertion of identity. I argue that the figure of “the human”, which provides the ontological foundation for the universalist political settlement, starts to come undone when inserted into the generic conventions of SF, in ways that have implications for thinking human identity and difference both in connection with the postwar humanist turn and more broadly.

One obstacle to the elaboration of universal humanist subjectivity is the difficulty in reconciling a commitment to human exceptionalism with the interstellar scope of the novel’s fictional vision. Fantasies of interstellar settlement establish a new context for human action which, by virtue of its scale, calls into question our ontological centrality. This *topos* of decentred humanity is not specific to Le Guin, or even to SF, but recurs persistently whenever pretensions to human exceptionalism are thought on a cosmological scale. For Nietzsche, we “clever animals” marvel at our capacity for “higher” intellectual function, taking it as an index of our transcendence of the nonhuman world. The invention of “cognition”, that hallmark of humanist subjectivity, is in this account “the haughtiest, most mendacious moment in the history of this world”. What human chauvinism forgets in its hubris, according to Nietzsche’s aphorism, is the exposure of all life to nonhuman forces which exceed our capacity to master them, and which, given enough time, will prove fatal to the species.

Of course, Nietzsche’s smart hominids were confined to a single planet, unable to flee their dying solar system. The postwar SF imagination, spurred by the extraordinary contemporaneous development of space technology, was far better placed to imagine the escape from terrestriality. But the flight from earthbound finitude into the seeming infinitude of space demands a certain conceptual readjustment. The ontological and epistemological anthropocentrism which identifies universality with the experience of a single, exceptional species becomes less tenable in the SF imagination, with its proliferation of

sapient but nonhuman forms of life. Efforts to think difference beyond humanism often want to domesticate the challenge to humanist universalism posed by this imagined heterogeneity of life by figuring aliens as exemplary liberal subjects or, conversely, as “mindless” predators to be eradicated, as in Ridley Scott’s *Alien* (1979).

The first of these two strategies is in evidence in Immanuel Kant’s proto-SF thought experiments, which grapple with the possibility of extraterrestrial non-human intelligence: “It is noteworthy that we can think of no other suitable form for a *rational* being than that of a human being. [...] Therefore we populate all other planets in our imagination with nothing but human forms, although it is probable that they may be formed very differently, given the diversity of the soil that supports and nourishes them, and the different elements of which they are composed”.¹⁰ Kant’s analysis testifies to the difficulty of conceiving of the heterogeneity of life without imposing a schema of intelligibility that reduces difference to identity.

Humanist evasions notwithstanding, the proliferation of forms of life in SF means that “the human” shows up—if at all—as one species among many, and thus the pretensions of human exceptionalism can no longer be maintained—without great conceptual, symbolic, and physical violence at least, as in the fictions of interstellar human imperialism. With the figure of intelligent alien life, SF refuses those interpretations of evolutionary biology which posit the human as the necessary *terminus* of evolutionary development (a reading that is easily dispatched in Stephen Jay Gould’s 1997 essay “Redrafting the Tree of Life”). Likewise, one can no longer legitimate human dominion over the non-human world by appealing to the supposed uniqueness of cognition. Such a claim becomes unavailable in a universe populated by clever nonhumans.

SF’s elaboration of a multiplicity of forms of life thus substantially complicates the hierarchical stratification implicit in the human/nonhuman opposition. This undoing of established orders demands a new kind of attention to the category “human”, figuring it not in terms of the old humanist commonplaces but rather as something strange and potentially surprising. This estrangement is expressed in the terminological innovation by which humans become “Terrans” in SF taxonomies of species.¹¹ Their ontological centrality no longer guaranteed, humans pass from the position of “unmarked” or generic subjectivity to the “marked” specificity of one sapient species among others.

In one sense, this estrangement of the human by its insertion into a more-than-human interstellar community simply recovers the originary estrangement that follows from our own everyday existence within multi-species communities. As Sherryl Vint has noted, “the very concept of the alien is one that expresses a human interest in – and struggle with – the reality of living with a different being”, of whatever species.¹² The strategies of estrangement that characterize the generic conventions of SF (alien worlds, invented species) invite us to reflect anew on an aspect of our terrestrial existence to which political humanism is largely indifferent: that we find ourselves already amongst “alien” forms of nonhuman life and that to take these lives seriously (ethically

as well as ontologically) is to recognize that our propensity to install ourselves at the centre of our intellectual systems is ontologically untenable and politically pernicious.

In what follows, I pursue this strategy of decentring the human in multi-species communities by reading Le Guin's (para-)humanist cosmopolitanism together with Jameson's insistence on the utopian and politically radical potential of SF, a genre that has "inherit[ed] the vocation of giving us alternate versions of a world that has elsewhere seemed to resist even imagined change" (223). The unfamiliarity of SF worlds and the effect of estrangement produced by the genre's representational conventions creates a certain distance from our terrestrial practices that allows us to glimpse the contingency of our conceptual orderings, and, in turn, to think the relations between species, community, and universality otherwise than as violence and exclusion.

The cosmological scope of Le Guin's fictional vision brings to the fore these questions of incommensurability, political community, and cultural difference—or species difference (in SF the distinction becomes instructively imprecise). At the very beginning of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Genly Ai underscores the difficulty of establishing a univocal truth across difference: "I'll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my homeworld that Truth is a matter of the imagination. The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling" (1). What emerges in this encounter across difference is a concept of truth as an aesthetic practice, modulated by the limits of "homeworld". That is, truth is always shaped by a certain ethnocentric perspective; understanding cannot overcome difference once and for all, but must embrace an aesthetic-pluralist practice of multiple, culturally specific epistemologies, in which no participant can claim ownership or ultimate veridical authority: "The story is not mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed I am not sure whose story it is; you can judge better" (1). The speculative encounter with intelligent life on other planets (or by analogy, with nonhuman life on our planet) impels an expanded epistemological practice that goes beyond the anthropocentric limits of terrestrially bound thought. What Donna Haraway has called (following Freud) the "Copernican wound", the cosmological decentring of the human, is here recast in positive terms as an incitement to translation across difference, and an invitation to expand notions of community.¹³

In Le Guin's utopian project, it is primarily morphological differences (and the cultural practices that follow from them) that need to be translated and reconciled under the rubric of cosmopolitan humanist community. The project of reconciliation is complicated by the manifest diversity of morphologically and culturally differentiated modes of being-in-the-world. It is these figures of difference to which I now turn. Where postwar humanism sought to incorporate *all* humans into a singular moral community, it took pains to limit this expansion of community to the species boundary. My contention here is that universalism's expansion of moral inclusion is a process which is not easily arrested. SF can reveal some of the ways in which distinctions between various modes of difference (whether differences of culture or of species) become

difficult to defend as criteria for arbitrating the limits of moral community—in other words, for making distinctions between those who count as our fellows, and those (usually nonhumans) to whom we have limited or negligible obligations.

Ai's ethnographic method explicitly imagines the cultural and morphological gap between Terran and Gethenian in terms of species difference: "Can one read a cat's face, a seal's, an otter's? Some Gethenians, I thought, are like such animals" (12). This inhuman inscrutability, in which the Gethenian gaze resists re-cognition, is rooted in their peculiar sexual morphology. From the limited and anthropocentric vantage point of Terran ethnographers, this predominantly genderless (or single-gendered) society is "quite impossible for our imagination to accept. What is the first question we ask about a newborn baby? Yet you cannot think of a Gethenian as 'it'. They are not neuters. They are potentials, or integrals" (76). Under a regime of regulated gender identity, properly human subjectivity seems to demand the specification of sex; one must first be a "he" or a "she" in order to become a person. As Judith Butler has argued, "'Sex' is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility".¹⁴ The morphological difference between Terran and Gethenian thus repeats a familiar *topos* of thinking human and animal difference. Possessed of an agency that is clearly of a different order than inert matter, they are nonetheless illegible as subjects (to a Terran) because of their sexless morphology. In the Terran imagination, Gethenians are neither clearly subject nor object; like animals, they resemble but also differ from (normative) humans in ways that cause them to elude easy classification.

Gethenians, too, link an ideal of sexual morphology to a concept of species. Explaining the concept "female" to the Gethenian King Argaven, Ai finds himself having to "use the word that Gethenians would apply only to a person in the culminant phase of kemmer, the alternative being their word for a female animal" (29). Argaven, disgusted, announces that any bi-sexual human culture must be "a society of perverts" (*ibid.*), "pervert" being the Gethenian term for individuals who permanently inhabit a single sex identity. Argaven's response evokes the ethnocentric finitude which determines the limits of human community: "I don't see why human beings here on earth should want or tolerate any dealings with creatures so monstrously different" (30).

At play here is a dynamic that was also operative in twentieth-century ethnic and racial nationalism: an ethnocentric orientation which imagines one's own community to be exemplary humans and assesses the humanity of other cultures in terms of their proximity or distance from one's own cultural and racial norms. The interstellar scope of Le Guin's narrative uncovers the ethnocentric foundations of any appeal to paradigmatic humanness. The cultural (and thus historical) contingency of any claim to exemplary human subjectivity is exposed by the intercession of the "alien" Terran, Genly Ai, whose socialization into an entirely different understanding of paradigmatic humanity calls into question

the putative universality of *any* paradigm. Where competing claims to paradigmatic humanness exist (in Orgoreyn and Karhide, say, each of whom regard the other as savages), this suggests that it is not so much the case that one claim is superior to its rivals; instead, the fact of competing claims gestures towards the emptiness of the signifier “humanness”. In common with the postwar turn towards humanist universality, the internationalist project of the Ekumen seeks to supersede rival human cultures’ claims to ethnic superiority. Morphological difference now appears as a banal fact, but efforts to partition difference into hierarchically stratified “races” are refused, and the invention of an ethnocentrically foreclosed concept of “humanity” which excludes non-paradigmatic humans is recognized (rightly) as unjust.

We can take this point further and recognize that abandoning the regulative ideal of paradigmatic species types (as seems to happen in SF, however momentarily, with the multiplication of species variations) calls into question the effectivity of the concept “species” altogether. Without a figure of exemplary humanity against which to measure the differences of the plural “humanities”, the concept “human” becomes unavailable as a means of delimiting political and ethical communities; there are only biological variations without determinate “species”, and it becomes impossible to think any humanism that is not also an inhumanism. This, finally, is what both Le Guin and the whole postwar universal humanist project are unable to concede.

By refusing to think of difference in terms of natural kinds or races, the Ekumen follows its postwar analogue—the United Nations and in particular its Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—in insisting on the universal community of the human species. In spite of this promising decoupling of community and race, a certain anthropocentrism limits Le Guin’s utopian project. She celebrates difference at the level of culture and “race” while maintaining that humans (however diverse) form a singular, morally exceptional group that can be neatly differentiated from all forms of non-human life—a strategy which she underwrites by appealing to the common origin of all varieties of humanity. As Genly Ai avows, “We are all men, you know, sir. All of us. All the worlds of men were settled, eons ago, from one world, Hain. We vary, but we’re all sons of the same Hearth” (28–29). This invocation of the biological kinship of all human varieties, which echoes the uses of the theory of monogenesis in anti-racist biology,¹⁵ establishes the “anthrotypic group” (28) as the proper limit of ethical and political community, leaving non-anthropomorphs outside of the sphere of moral consideration.

The common origin of the varieties of humanity on the planet Hain further impels a retrieval of the notion of paradigmatic humanness. The concept of the “Hainish norm” (201) anchors morphological variation in a regime of normativity which arrests difference and establishes a form of type-species. The ethical and political upshot of this taxonomic strategy is to partition the continuum of biological life with a view to recuperating human (or, at least, humanoid) exceptionalism. The ontological difficulty of translating continuities of

variation into clearly demarcated species has troubled evolutionary biology since Darwin, who was “much struck [by] how entirely vague and arbitrary is the distinction between species and varieties”.¹⁶ In a mid-twentieth-century context, Ernst Mayr’s *Systematics* (1942) confronted “how impossible it is to find a completely adequate and satisfactory species definition”, making reference to “some authors for whom species are merely abstractions”, and who argue that “all organisms form a continuity, which the taxonomist breaks up into species merely for the sake of expedience, to be able to handle them better in the museum drawers”.¹⁷

The species type or norm licenses a strategic break with respect for morphological (or, for that matter, cultural) difference, identifying the universal with those who substantially resemble paradigmatic humanity. In this analysis—and here Le Guin exactly replicates the logic of postwar cosmopolitanism—the wing of Mayr’s museum that is dedicated to the hominid species is expanded, supplemented by some late additions, but still carefully kept separate from the sections devoted to nonhuman life. This humanist commitment sits uneasily with the text’s proliferation of varieties of humanity, which continually threatens to undo the putative centrality of any type or norm, and which invites the refusal of anthropocentrism which follows from the posthumanist reading of the generic conventions of SF that I sketched above: namely, the contingency of every norm in the face of the destabilizing encounter with alterity.

The project of postwar universal humanism, of which *The Left Hand of Darkness* is both representative *and* a limit case, strove everywhere to embrace difference even as it carefully managed and incorporated it into a familiar, anthropocentric hierarchy of species. The emergence of universal humanity as the subject of the postwar political community, while often little more than notional in a world still dominated by European colonialism, nonetheless represented a substantial advance for marginalized populations. However, the universalizing priorities of cosmopolitan humanism were mapped out according to a strategy that permitted—and perhaps demanded—the exclusion of nonhuman life from consideration. The paradox of postwar humanism was that so many of its articulations of universality were expressed through appeals to biological life, where the post-Darwinian demonstration of the kinship of animal species renders efforts to establish ethically significant differences between human and nonhuman especially problematic. Taken seriously, and in excess of any claims she makes in the novel, Le Guin’s insistence on community across morphological difference leads not to the culmination of political humanism but to its dissolution. This is to be welcomed, not in the name of anti-universalism or ethnic particularism, but in the name of a radicalized universalism that might forgo the violence done to those that humanism is constitutively incapable of recognizing as deserving of ethical and political consideration.

NOTES

1. Hutchinson, *Facing the Abyss*, 1.
2. Cited in Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 223.
3. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 257.
4. Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 10.
5. Calarco, *Zoographies*, 10.
6. Kymlicka and Donaldson, "Animal Rights, Multiculturalism and the Left", 116–117.
7. Jameson, "World-Reduction in Le Guin", 230.
8. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense", 173.
9. See, for example, UNESCO, "The Race Question".
10. Kant, *Anthropology*, 65. My analysis of Kant in this section is indebted to Tom Tyler, *Ciferæ*, 109–161.
11. Appropriately enough, this terminological innovation emerged in parallel to the postwar recalibration of humanist community, making its first appearance in George O. Smith's 1946 story "Pattern for Conquest" as a way of collectively describing humans in opposition to a nonhuman (in this case, intelligent alien) species.
12. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 136.
13. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 11.
14. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, xii.
15. Fortney, "The Anthropological Concept of Race", 36–37.
16. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 40.
17. Mayr, *Systematics*, 147–48.

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CanLit's Ossiferous Fictions: Animal Bones and Fossils in Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man* and Carol Shields's *The Stone Diaries*

Sarah Bezan

The very first animals on earth are absent from the fossil record. Undulating through oxygen-rich Cambrian waters nearly 600 million years ago, these original multicellular organisms were small, soft, and mutable forms that after death disappeared forever, mixed into the muck and silt of the ocean floor. That they lived and died is a matter of retroactive inference, evidenced only by their evolutionary successors—fan-shaped brachiopods, antennaed and multi-legged arthropods, and the like—that share their basic body plans. To trace the forms and structures of these bodies, and every other body since, is to assemble a unifying picture of the fossil record, drawing fragmentary remainders from the periphery to the centre of a narrative of development. Animal bones and fossils are integral to our understanding of the emergence of the human animal on an evolutionary timescale, but they also demonstrate the extent to which incomplete records can remind us of the bodies that hide in plain sight, along with those that are lost from the records altogether. Indeed, the remainders of animal bodies are arguably the substrate of narrative itself, plotted into forms that are invariably filled with and shaped by the impressions of life.

These absent presences are of central concern to what I call the “ossiferous fictions” of eminent Canadian women writers Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields. In my analysis of Atwood's *Life Before Man* (1979) and Shields's *The*

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473

Stone Diaries (1993), I argue that representations of animal bones and fossils in these novels foreground ossiferous processes in order to explore the relationships created through sexual reproduction. Atwood and Shields also consider (obliquely and sometimes insufficiently) the legacy of settler-colonialism in late-twentieth-century Canadian politics. Depicting the potential of ancient animal life to tell stories and connect bodies across time, Atwood's and Shields's ossiferous fictions can be regarded as texts that tell the stories of individual lives and deaths (microthanatographies) with stories of collective deaths on an evolutionary timescale (macrothanatographies). As transhistorical materials, animal bones and fossils also figure as hinges that open up alternative temporal realms and lifeworlds. These representations expand both the purview of our consideration of women's bodies in contemporary fiction and the equivalence of nonhuman animal lives that (much like the earliest animals on earth) establish the forms and structures that make all other stories possible.

The first part of this chapter focuses on "Ossiferous Sex" in *Life Before Man* and *The Stone Diaries* in order to show how sex becomes ossified—that is, stultified into inflexible patterns of relation and being, while also becoming rearranged and declassified through the making of bones. By bringing bodies into the fossil record through the pregnant female body (namely through the main character, Lesje, who repeatedly envisions the reanimation of prehistoric animals and becomes pregnant near the novel's end), sexual reproduction in *Life Before Man* can be understood as a way of drawing humans into closer proximity with nonhuman animals that appear in the ledger of life. Shields's narrative in turn reflects upon the capacity of sex to dislodge meaning and to anticipate women's (auto)biographical writing. In my comparative reading of these texts, I interpret ossiferous sex (and the pregnant female body in particular) as the basis for generating modes of expression that multiply perspectives on life and death beyond the human.

Turning to "Empirical Absences in the Settler-Colonial Imaginary", the latter part of this chapter discusses the metanarratives of settler-colonialism that lie embedded within Atwood's and Shields's writing. In these novels, animal bones and fossils can be read critically as pernicious modes of succession that encapsulate the displacement and genocide of Indigenous populations through the ongoing processes of colonization. The death by suicide of Chris (a Métis man and former lover of Elizabeth) is registered in *Life Before Man* as a kind of "empirical absence" around which the other characters constellate but which they do not fully acknowledge. Likewise, hovering at the periphery of Shields's narrative of the Stone family, the settler-colonial imaginary is bracketed by the construction of stone pyramids by character Cuyler Goodwill; in form and arrangement these resemble the *inuksuk*, or stone landmark, traditionally utilized by some Inuit peoples in Canada's arctic regions. While Shields's novel largely neglects to account for these resemblances, and ultimately for the impact of settler-colonialism upon Indigenous populations, I suggest that the appearance of limestone (a carbonate rock composed of the shells and skeletal fragments of ancient marine organisms) reframes settlement as a destructive act

of supplantation. Shields's depiction of limestone sourced from the prairie landscapes of Tyndall, Manitoba, the quarries of Bloomington, Indiana, and the flagstones of Scotland's Orkney Islands foregrounds the use of limestone as a building material by white settlers, but also as a record of earth's history. In my analysis of these texts, I will show that a deeper reflection upon animal bones and fossils opens up critical counterpoints for validating how these "empirical absences" might challenge the settler-colonial imaginary.

In viewing these intersections of sex and species extinction as enmeshed and indissoluble, this way of reading animals in twentieth-century Canadian women's writing is based on the very real material presence of animal remains that often go unregarded by critical readers of texts. In most cases, reading animal remains (in the profile of taxidermic specimens, industrial animal by-products, meat, fur, and so on) refocuses our attention to the social, political, and historical coordinates of the human—animal relationship which often escape our notice. My objective is to show that the meanings of prehistoric animal remains are in fact central to a critique of the fantasy of "newness" that often pervades Canadian texts by settlers, and which also maintains the apocryphal view of Canadian fiction as an expression of a kind of rugged survivalism.¹ Furthermore, ossiferous fiction is not merely a metaphor for past eras of creative writerly production (captured by Atwood's assertion that the Canadian writing landscape prior to the 1970s has "fossilized", much like the Burgess Shale of the Rocky Mountains²); rather, it is a way of attending to a unique sense of Canadian space and place—but also transcending it. This is a careful approach to fiction that seeks to home in on how the eons of animal lives and deaths that precede us also make us and our environs, shaping our landscapes, infrastructures, and ways of being.

ANIMAL BONES AND FOSSILS IN CANADIAN LITERATURE

The appearance of the animal bone or fossil in Canadian writing showcases the contrasting narratological scales of settler stories and nonhuman animals and environments, along with the threat of extinction or loss. Barbara Gowdy's 1998 novel *The White Bone*, for instance, places a quasi-magical elephant bone at the heart of an epic journey undertaken by a matriarchy of African elephants.³ As we learn from the young Mud (an elephant cow who narrates the pilgrimage), the "white bone" functions as a symbol of a place of protection from poachers that few members of the elephant convoy ever reach.⁴

Other Canadian texts in which animal bones and fossils emerge include Joan Thomas's neo-Victorian romantic fiction, *Curiosity* (2011),⁵ based on the life of nineteenth-century paleontologist Mary Anning, along with Dionne Brand's spare and soulful narrative poems in her *Ossuaries* collection from 2010, which articulate the (dis)assembly of human bones alongside mounds of "chalk, limestone, and dolostone" in the life of nomad Yasmine.⁶ Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993)⁷ concludes with a scene of digging limestone that Sharon Selby identifies as a critique of family mythologies encased in "Indigenous, immigrant, and

settler-invader narratives”,⁸ illustrating the deconstruction of Canadian meta-narratives of identity and belonging. In all these texts, readers move through and beyond elegy to explore how the emergence of deep time in the Canadian cultural imaginary restructures the strata of social and political life.

Retracing the blueprint of being, Don McKay’s poetry collection *Paradoxides* (2012) creatively responds to the emergence of trilobite fossils in the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland. McKay’s poetic rejoinder to the temporal and corporeal disjunction of deep time in the Canadian landscape locates *eros* as the reason for this disjunction, but also its legibility. The short narrative poem “Paradoxides” examines “a lustre/rising in the shale that, were it flesh, we’d call it a blush, since it/suggests some inward softening, some memory or hope coming/to the surface”.⁹ The repeated “wash-and-withdraw” of the tide, we read further, is due to the triturations of “Eros, erosion” that unearths a sprawling trilobite, breaking the shale “into literacy” and “demanding to be read”.¹⁰ This manifestation of the fossil record as a mode of composition fuelled by *eros* elucidates how sexual reproduction leaves behind material traces and structures that “dislocate space” and “infinite time”.¹¹ As we learn from McKay, the animal fossil anchors one’s own sense of material presence, but its exposure also jumbles relations between bodies across immense temporal scales.

The representation of animal bones and fossils in these works of contemporary Canadian fiction and poetry is useful for understanding the intersection of social and political histories in Canada (along with the animals, environments, and populations subjected to instrumentalized tools of colonization). But I view McKay’s consideration of *eros* in processes of fossilization as particularly generative for a reading of Atwood’s and Shields’s representations of “ossiferous” sex. As I demonstrate in the next section, this reading proceeds from the fact that reproductive sex between humans does not merely reproduce the human; it also reproduces a legible blueprint of being that is foundational to life and its continued expression. This view situates the human as a component (rather than the driving force or teleological end) of evolutionary development.

OSSIFEROUS SEX

Life Before Man is a novel keenly attuned to the problem of precedence and succession in the politics of sexual reproduction. The concept of “life before man”, as Linda Hutcheon has postulated, comes to mean the idea of the human species but also of man in terms of sex: “there could easily be a life *after* man—in the feminist and ecological sense as well”.¹² Atwood’s own posthumanist and ecofeminist leanings are well-documented on this point. Along with Alice Ridout’s criticism of Atwood’s “straddling environmentalism”,¹³ which grounds environmental imaginaries on the scale of politics and bodies (in *Surfacing*, and in *Oryx and Crake*, for example), Shannon Hengen writes that Atwood’s Kesterton Lecture on “Scientific Romancing” treats the ontology of the human as the “sub-sub-subtext” of the lecture, and further accounts for Atwood’s fascination with human and nonhuman survival and extinction in her

more recent fictions, such as the Maddaddam Trilogy.¹⁴ Yet according to Hengen, Lesje's realization in *Life Before Man* that "without the past she would not exist" suggests that Atwood's ecofeminist politics are rooted in a more fulsome view of how the human animal fits into the environment from an evolutionary perspective.¹⁵

While more generally contextualized by the setting of the natural history museum itself (the Royal Ontario Museum), this view of evolutionary succession is consistently aligned with the sexual relationships of the novel's central characters. Lesje, Elizabeth, and Nate, along with William and Chris (who is recently deceased at the time the narrative begins), are entangled in a complex web of sexual relationships that are mapped onto the events of extinction and loss. Atwood's representation of dinosaurs throughout the novel ultimately treats the rigid fossils on display at the museum as a metaphor for these five characters, who are, just like the fragmented piles of giant tortoise bones in Lesje's paleontology lab, "locked into patterns".¹⁶

These patterns of relation are explored in a key passage mid-way through the novel, in which Lesje ponders the meaning of adaptation and its limits as it relates to her own strained relationship with William and her ongoing affair with Nate, Elizabeth's partner. In the same moment, Lesje also contemplates the sex lives of dinosaurs. Part of her job, we learn, involves drafting a dinosaur media kit for schools that explains family life:

It's hoped that this kit will be as popular as the sale of the models of *Diplodocus* and *Stegosaurus* (grey plastic, made in Hong Kong) [...] But how much to tell? What, for instance, of the family lives of dinosaurs? What about their methods of egg-laying and—delicate subject, but always of interest—fertilization?¹⁷

Lesje further considers how the dinosaur egg fossil, while evidence of this fertilization, provides little in the way of an explanation for its extinction (other than by cosmic radiation, Lesje surmises). It also fails to answer the question of the primordial mechanics of reproduction (in other words: how do dinosaurs have sex?). Closing her eyes to envision a prehistoric scene of dinosaur couplings, Lesje "sees before her the articulated skeletons of the Museum exhibits, wired into a grotesque semblance of life. Who could possibly object to a copulation that took place ninety million years ago? The love lives of stones, sex among the ossified".¹⁸ Ossiferous sex, as it is conceived in Lesje's own imagination, seeks to revivify extinct animal bodies as a way of making sense of her relationship with Nate and Elizabeth. However, it is further associated with the threat of nuclear war and the acceleration of airborne pollutants and polychlorinated biphenyls (or PCBs) that Lesje worries have compromised her own capacity for "safe child-bearing".¹⁹

Fecund structures like eggs or eggshells (composed of calcium carbonate, the same substance that makes up bone) are a recurrent trope throughout the novel, serving as a model for reproduction that also more directly draws together the narratives of Lesje and Elizabeth. In the book's opening scene, for

example, Elizabeth is portrayed as a primordial “peeled snail”; her grief over Chris’s suicide has left her a cracked eggshell thickening the air with albumin.²⁰ Located “somewhere between her body”—neither inside nor outside of it—Elizabeth is not unlike the three porcelain bowls (created from bone ash and clay) on display in her sideboard, which “hold their own space, their own beautifully shaped absence”.²¹

Added to these ossiferous structures is Lesje’s emptied cup (a related metaphor to that of the empty shell or bowl) from the dinner party scene. Having been invited to Elizabeth and Nate’s home, Lesje finds herself unwillingly participating in a game of “Lifeboat”, in which the dinner guests make a case for their survival to avoid being hypothetically thrown overboard. While Elizabeth proclaims that she ought to be saved due to her “sensational cooking” and “very strong survival instinct”, another dinner guest argues that she should be not be saved because she is “almost past child-bearing age”.²² Lesje’s plea for salvation, uttered in awkward confusion before she overturns her cup on Elizabeth’s mushroom-coloured rug, is that she is able to interpret the history of bones. As she recovers from her embarrassment in Elizabeth’s bathroom, Lesje muses that sexual reproduction is, by contrast, a matter of *making bones*. She imagines an antediluvian scene of a birdlike *Ornithomimus*, reflecting that “everyone has a certain number of bones. ... You can’t name them all, there are too many, the world is full of them, it’s made of them, so you have to choose which ones. Everything that’s gone before has left its bones for you and you’ll leave yours in return”.²³

Along with the making of bones, this scene articulates the problem of succession (an axiomatic chicken-or-egg puzzle) that discomforts Lesje. Despite “ossifying” Elizabeth as a shark, Jurassic toad, or cephalopod in the privacy of her lab, Lesje realizes that the fraudulence of scientific objectivity is grounded in this problem of succession.²⁴ As the “first wife”, Elizabeth is the mother of Nate’s children but is nearing the end of her fertile period in the life cycle. Lesje, as Elizabeth’s successor, can only understand this set of relations on an evolutionary timescale that unites her own fleeting existence with the family structures of prehistoric animals. But just as “whole skeletons reproduce themselves” in the construction of plaster moulds and casts, so too is Lesje’s later confirmed pregnancy more than a year later a marker of a shift away from the business of “the naming of bones” to “the creation of flesh” as an act of life’s continuation.²⁵ In this way, Atwood enables her readers to interpret ossiferous sex not only as a conventional expression of desire but also as the assembly of reproductive remainders that accumulate in deep time, carrying life forward in new and varying forms. In *Life Before Man*, then, ossiferous sex is about the making of bones that enter into a fossil record, becoming legible to undetermined readers in an as-yet-unknown, but nevertheless awaiting, future.

Carol Shields’s *The Stone Diaries*, on the other hand, explores the idea of declassification and fossil records as the prerequisites for women’s (auto)biographical writing. But in the same way that Lesje’s pregnant body is understood to be misaligned in time and space (she “enters the Gallery of Vertebrate

Evolution the wrong way, past the EXIT sign”),²⁶ Shields’s narrative begins in an impossible place: with the scene of the narrator’s birth, as told by the narrator, Daisy Stone Flett. That the narrator can recount a scene that is impossible for her to witness is, according to Katherine Weese, an act of recovery that reverses the erasure of women’s voices from the canon of Western writing and self-consciously engages with the feminist modes of “storytelling and discourse”.²⁷ While Atwood adopts conventions of realism in *Life Before Man*, Shields’s novel more accurately fits into the genre of postmodern fiction due to its use of the fossil as a “box within a box” structure.²⁸ This figuration serves as a “metaphor for Daisy herself”, according to Nora Stovel, “for the aging Daisy is literally petrified by life, as she lives a calcified existence, a fossil in the flesh”.²⁹ Diverging away slightly from Stovel’s assessment, I contend that Shields’s interest in “ossiferous sex” is formulated as an act of accidental (dis)arrangement. In much the same way that a fossil is itself a rare form, composed under unique circumstances (the proper conditions of weather and burial that preserve the structure and form of the body), so too is Daisy’s (auto)biography an example of how the unplanned conditions of her environment make such composition tenable.

Animal fossils in *The Stone Diaries* are the accidental landscapes that shape Daisy’s own self-narration, beginning with the story of her birth in a hot kitchen in the summer of 1905 in the town of Tyndall, Manitoba. This story is detailed with a number of unlikely or unexpected occurrences (her mother, due to her size and weight, did not know she was pregnant, and the labour is happened upon by a peddler). Added to these accidents is the presence of an unusual fossil formation: a “Malvern pudding stone” composed of “three fused fossils of an extremely rare type, so rare that they have never to this day been properly classified”³⁰ that is used to compress a raspberry dessert for that evening’s supper. As Lisa Johnson argues, the manifestation of items like the Malvern pudding stone is an example of Shields’s use of “the available materials”, which remarks upon “the pursuit of what *isn’t* there—in the novel or character, in the reader or world—[by] attending to what *is*”,³¹ but which also weights things down, providing the reader “with a much needed sense of groundedness to counterbalance postmodernism’s often dizzying stories of textuality, interiority, and multiple realities”.³²

What makes Shields’s text particularly evocative for a reading of animal fossils is that the presence of prehistoric animal life does not merely serve as a metaphor for Daisy’s life (as in Stovel’s analysis) but is actually validated as a part of the process of “metamorphic exchange” in Shields’s creative practice. This concept of “metamorphic exchange”, described by Shields as a transposition from the organic to the inorganic material, views animal life as equivalent (and even foundational) to human creativity. “I am drawn to limestone”, Shields explains in an interview, “because it is an inorganic material but one made of organic matter, the trillions of seashells ground to powder and cemented over time. There’s something about the metamorphic exchange that enchants me”.³³ This creative artistry is extended to the role of the writer in

Shields's writing practice, which in Shields's own words originates in a desire to create women's writing that is drawn from "the absent narratives, the negative element of a photographic record".³⁴ Much like the photographic record, Shields describes the fossil record as a teeming substructure that incites a relationship between the human creator (namely, the stone carver) and the animals of the distant, but nevertheless present, past.

In *The Stone Diaries*, the dolomitic limestone of the Tyndall quarry is constituted by all manner of "gastropods, brachiopods, trilobites, corals, and snails".³⁵ This conflagration of prehistoric animal fossils serves not only as the basis for the town's own infrastructure but also as the means for uniting Daisy, her father, and her mother in varying forms of arrangement as the novel progresses. Daisy's narration of the circumstances of her birth in the kitchen with the Malvern pudding stone illustrates how the weight of the past figures into a wider view of prehistoric animal lives alongside, and embedded within, the story of individual death. These differing scales (from the expansive to the intimate) work to highlight the contingency that governs the unfolding fossil record.

This perspective is located in the pregnant body of her mother, Mercy Stone Goodwill, whose soft flesh resembles subterranean soft clay and whose "woman parts" are shaped like "seashells" that convey Daisy into the world before Mercy's death from eclampsia.³⁶ Called together by "accident, not history", the figures attending Daisy's birth (her neighbour, a peddler, the doctor, and her father) are recruited as witnesses by chance alone, "borne up by an ancient shelf of limestone ... rattling loose in the world between the clout of death and the squirming foolishness of birth".³⁷

Along with the transference of living flesh (Daisy) from dead flesh (Mercy), this metamorphic exchange is the result of transformative sexual encounters between Mercy and Cuyler, which work to "dislodge" the stone in Cuyler's throat, as well as to produce Daisy herself.³⁸ Yet while Cuyler waxes poetically about limestone in Indiana (at Daisy's first wedding reception), Daisy's own narration is at times interrupted and overtaken by male voices, including her father and the editor of the *Recorder* where Daisy writes as Mrs. Green Thumb. But in the novel's conclusion, in which she narrates her own deathbed scene, Daisy begins a metamorphic exchange that replaces her "living cells" with "mineral deposition", while "the folds of her dress, so primitive and stiff, are softened by a decorative edge, a calcium border of seashells of the kind sometimes seen on the edges of birthday cakes".³⁹ This descriptive language evokes the idea of limestone that is "soft as flesh" and resonant of what Johnson insists is a "bone-deep link between humanity and the natural world".⁴⁰ While Shields's narrator resists the ossification of language that might remove her from the centre of her own narration, the final scene's portrayal of birth and death reflects on the potentially productive and creatively contingent capacity of the fossil as the primary substance of life.

EMPIRICAL ABSENCES IN THE SETTLER-COLONIAL IMAGINARY

The contingent possibilities of metamorphic exchange in Daisy's narration are juxtaposed with more purposeful acts of settlement and monumentalization throughout *The Stone Diaries*. These are similar to the "ossified" arrangement of characters in Atwood's *Life Before Man* as expressions of succession and displacement. While the writing of both Atwood and Shields explores the potential for women's writing by white settlers to open up narratological scales beyond the human, it is important to consider how these texts sidestep the wider problem of human and nonhuman animal extinction and genocide in relation to Canada's history of colonialism, a mediation that is accompanied by a latent—or even constitutive—anxiety about settler origins. In *Life Before Man*, the recent death and haunting presence of Chris (a Métis man) ostensibly represents the loss and displacement of Indigenous populations. However, I argue that Atwood's portrayal of Chris's absence reproduces the trope of the "vanishing *indian*" described by Gerald Vizener and thereby fails to account for the continued presence and resistance of the Métis Nation. Likewise, the prominence of stone monuments (a metaphor for the lifelines of the Stone family) in *The Stone Diaries* could be read as an appropriation of the traditions associated with the *inuksuk* (or *inuksuit* in the plural form) by the Inuit, which itself perpetuates the settler-colonial fantasy of succession that is at the centre of my critique.

Absences in *The Stone Diaries* are, as I discussed in the previous section, captured in fossil forms or stones that unite Daisy, her father, and her mother in varying forms of (dis)arrangement. The pyramid that Cuyler Goodwill builds following the death of his wife Mercy in Tyndall (and later re-creates at his home in Indiana) is composed of stones he carves in the likeness of birds, fish, flowers, moons, snakes, bees, cattle, and botanical imagery.⁴¹ Unlike the *inuksuk*, which would traditionally mark caches of food or migratory routes, Goodwill Tower serves as a mausoleum, but is continually becoming destabilized by opportunistic tourists in search of keepsakes or by squirrels colonizing the space as a storeroom for nuts, in turn aptly capturing the history of white explorers who often dismantled *inuksuit* in the pursuit of souvenirs.⁴² Moreover, Cuyler's sense of ownership of the stone structure is undermined at several points throughout the novel as the narration crosses international borders, thereby illustrating the prehistoricity of stone, which precedes conceptions of settler nationhood. Given that the pyramids appear in multiple locations in the narration, we should read these carved animal stones and fossils as transnational materials that both make and unmake foundational ideas of "settled" Canadian identity. While *The Stone Diaries* does not fully explore how this shift in scope might enable a critique of metanarratives of Canadian settler identity, these stone materials function as the building blocks of a settler-colonial imaginary that self-consciously constructs a vision of Canada based on the practices of quarrying across the prairies at the turn of the twentieth century.

In *Life Before Man*, however, these absences are more varied: while Lesje refers to Nate's failure to move in with her as an "empirical absence",⁴³ she also reflects on her own striated settler background (characterized by Eastern European and Jewish ancestry) as a material presence that confronts the reality of "Jews reduced to gas molecules and vest buttons".⁴⁴ More strikingly, however, is the empirical absence established in *Life Before Man* that juxtaposes the cosmic vision of Elizabeth's planetarium screening with her memory of a sexual encounter with former lover Chris, the museum's taxidermist, upon "the floor of his workroom among scraps of fur, shavings of wood, beside the partly finished replica of an African ground squirrel".⁴⁵ This scene evinces Pauline Wakeham's assertion that the proximity of Indigenous bodies and stuffed animals in natural history museum dioramas mixes racial and species discourses into "narratives of disappearance and extinction".⁴⁶ As a case in point, Elizabeth problematically mythologizes Chris's identity as a Métis man, imagining him as "that mythical hybrid; archaic, indigenous, authentic as she was not".⁴⁷ Elizabeth's impression of Chris illustrates Vizener's critique of the colonizer's discovery of "uncovered bones and stones" that mark the vanishing *indian* as "the double other, the absence as a presence".⁴⁸ This portrayal protracts the inimical view of mythical hybridity that, according to Métis scholar Chris Andersen, fails to challenge the "dominant colonial national/historical narratives that marginalize or attempt to altogether erase [the] prior presence [of the Métis Nation]".⁴⁹

Chris's absent presence in *Life Before Man* is, in fact, more powerfully attributed to what Lesje remembers as his "impression of mass, as though he would weigh more than anyone else the same size, as if his cells were closer together".⁵⁰ This atomistic vision of loss is meant to signal the death, and more problematically the persistence, of Indigenous ways of being. Lesje associates Chris's memory with the one project she worked on with him, the *Mammals of the Mesozoic*, noting that the Mesozoic stands for "*Meso*, middle, *zoos*, life".⁵¹ Just as the dinosaurs "didn't know they were only in the middle" and "didn't intend to become extinct",⁵² Lesje's observation about the Mesozoic as an unreal and nonexistent place can be correlated with the ongoing genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples. This scene reveals how extinction and genocide are figured as prehistoric landscapes that are intractable and impossible to return to, and only capable of being reconstituted through the artificial reconstruction of bone and fossil in the museum, a space that has historically served as a deeply prejudicial institution that represents Indigenous ways of life as the trappings of a bygone era.

While Shields's novel only offers minimal room to reflect on the impact of settler stories forged out of stone, Atwood's *Life Before Man* potentially presents readers with extinction and loss as a metaphor for decolonization, which in turn offers opportunities for today's readers to think more deeply about the meaning of animal bones and fossils in colonial contexts. Given that Atwood's novel emerges at a particularly contentious time in Canadian politics (following a period of fervent separatist demonstrations by members of the Parti Québécois

and the Bloc Québécois),⁵³ *Life Before Man* registers, at least to some degree, a disquieting unrest with the settler-colonial imaginary. Furthermore, if extinction narratives in contemporary settler literature, as Hamish Dalley suggests, are tethered to the idea of persistence and survival that “when deployed as a narrative trope, offers settlers a chance to consider and disavow their demise, just as they consider and then disavow the violence of their origins”,⁵⁴ then Atwood’s novel may activate ways of thinking about prehistoric animals not only as the originary symbols of loss but also as a real and persistent material record that continues to shape Canadian landscapes.

As ossiferous fictions, *Life Before Man* and *The Stone Diaries* ultimately present an opportunity to think about the very real material records of animal life. By focusing on stories of loss, recovery, and rebirth, ossiferous fictions teach us to pay attention to the animal forms of life that form the very blueprint of our being.

NOTES

1. Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*.
2. Atwood, *The Burgess Shale: The Canadian Writing Landscape of the 1960s*, 10.
3. Gowdy, *The White Bone*.
4. Gordon. “Sign and Symbol in Barbara Gowdy’s *The White Bone*”, 76.
5. Thomas, *Curiosity*.
6. Brand, *Ossuaries*.
7. Urquhart, *Away*.
8. Selby, *Memory and Identity in Canadian Fiction: Self-Inventive Storytelling in the Works of Five Authors*, 88.
9. D. McKay, *Paradoxides*, 39.
10. D. McKay, *Paradoxides*, 39–40.
11. D. McKay, *Paradoxides*, 41.
12. Hutcheon, “From Poetic to Narrative Structures: The Novels of Margaret Atwood”, 22.
13. Ridout, “Margaret Atwood’s Straddling Environmentalism”, 35.
14. Hengen, “Margaret Atwood and Environmentalism”, 72.
15. Hengen, “Margaret Atwood and Environmentalism”, 81.
16. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 174.
17. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 136.
18. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 136.
19. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 134.
20. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 4–5.
21. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 4, 16–17.
22. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 148.
23. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 148.
24. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 257.
25. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 300.
26. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 301.
27. Weese, “The ‘Invisible’ Woman: Narrative Strategies in *The Stone Diaries*”, 103.
28. Beckman-Long, “*The Stone Diaries* as an ‘Apocryphal Journal’”, 132.

29. Stovel, "Written in Stone: Subverting Authoritative (Auto)Biographical Voice—Carol Shields's *The Stone Diaries* and Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*", 518.
30. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 38.
31. Johnson, "'She Enlarges on the Available Materials': A Postmodernism of Resistance in *The Stone Diaries*", 202.
32. Johnson, "'She Enlarges on the Available Materials': A Postmodernism of Resistance in *The Stone Diaries*", 209.
33. Shields, "An Interview with Carol Shields", *The Free Library*.
34. Shields, "Narrative Hunger and the Overflowing Cupboard", 30.
35. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 38.
36. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 36.
37. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 54.
38. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 105.
39. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 406.
40. Johnson, "'She Enlarges on the Available Materials': A Postmodernism of Resistance in *The Stone Diaries*," 210.
41. Shields, *The Stone Diaries*, 82.
42. Graburn, "Inuksuk: Icon of the Inuit of Nunavut", 71.
43. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 200.
44. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 20.
45. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 66.
46. Wakeham, *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*, 6.
47. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 152.
48. Vizener, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*, 30–31.
49. Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, 20.
50. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 56.
51. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 282.
52. Atwood, *Life Before Man*, 282.
53. For a history of separatism, visit: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/separatism>
54. Dalley, "The Deaths of Settler Colonialism: Extinction as a Metaphor of Decolonization in Contemporary Settler Literature", 32.

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Returning to the Animals' Gaze: Reflective Readings of Lionesses Marah and Sekhmet

Wendy Woodward

Reading South African novels, poetry, or works of nonfiction which figure animals and humans involves very specifically situated decisions on how to engage with these texts. Many South African writers depict entanglements between animals and indigenous beliefs in their novels: Zakes Mda in *The Whale Caller* (2005), K. Sello Duiker in *The Hidden Star* (2006), Don Pinnock in *Rainmaker* (2010), and Lauren Beukes in *Zoo City* (2010), for example. Animals and humans in these narratives do not exist in a rarefied, apolitical realm—they are all embodied beings who live in post-apartheid “realities” while trans-species connections echo the respect that shamanism has always accorded the nonhuman. My analysis in *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives* (2008) focused on how human–animal relationships have often been imagined in relation to postcolonial concerns which are paramount in South Africa’s young democracy.¹ This reflective essay finds the philosophy of “the animal gaze” and animal subjectivity still a useful analytic tool in offering a close reading of Linda Tucker’s *Saving the White Lions* (2013) and Henrietta Rose-Innes’ *Green Lion* (2015), but also extends discussion of trans-species entanglements into posthuman theories of embodiment. A reading of these texts shows that if the responsiveness of the animal gaze confirms the animal as a subject, an awareness of common human–animal embodiment is both affecting and affected.

The title of *The Animal Gaze* was drawn from Jacques Derrida’s “The Animal that therefore I Am (More to Follow)” (2002) which was one of the

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founding texts of human–animal studies in the humanities. Derrida portrays his naked self in the bathroom being gazed at by his cat in a complex essay which “contradicts Cartesian philosophies of animals as creatures lacking sentience or feeling, and posits human ontologies or theories of being in response to the gaze of the animal”.² Derrida’s essay is revolutionary in taking issue with the human–animal split from Aristotle to Lacan in western philosophy. In relation to an animal, he recognises the “naked truth of every gaze, given that the truth *allows me to see and be seen* through the eyes of the other, in the *seeing* and not just *seen* eyes of the other” (3). According to Derrida, however, only prophets or poets can imagine responding to the “address” of an animal and he knows of none. Not only did I take him to task for this provocation (which might, of course, have been merely playful) but also for his dismissal of his cat as “the absolute other” (3).

Indigenous knowledges, I proposed, can teach us more about human–animal relationships in their acceptance of nature and animals as kin. African shamanism, for example, “undermines fixed identities” of both human and nonhuman animals, as well as “crossing thresholds” (4). A decade later, the starting point of an analysis remains a writer’s figuring of human–animal relationships as well as a figuring of the significance of engaged nonhuman lives. Indigenous beliefs remain significant too as the recent publication of the edited collection, *Indigenous Creatures, Native Knowledges and the Arts: Animal studies in Modern Worlds* (2017) attests.

Perhaps the most significant recent nonfictional texts to draw from native knowledges in South Africa are those by Linda Tucker; one of these, *Saving the White Lions: One Woman’s Battle for Africa’s Most Sacred Animal* (2013), will be considered here in comparison with Henrietta Rose-Innes’ novel *Green Lion* (2015). Both figure charismatic but vulnerable lionesses, Marah and Sekhmet respectively, who are made to perform themselves as romantic, timeless conservation idols in close affinity with humans. Sekhmet inhabits The (fictional) Lion House in Cape Town, one of a pair of lions acquired to back-breed the extinct black-maned Cape lion. The nonfictional text tells a survival story of a single lioness; Marah was destined to be shot in the canned lion hunting industry which breeds lions indiscriminately, habituates the cubs to humans, and then cages the adult lions to be easy targets for “hunters”.³ Tucker, however, frees her to become “Queen of Lionesses”, the future matriarch of a growing pride of white lions in Tsau White Lion Heartland, a newly purchased wilderness area in Timbavati. If *Green Lion* comes close to satirising indigenous belief systems, in *Saving the White Lions* Tucker is sustained and inspired by lion shamanism. At the same time, both authors raise urgent ecological issues about the extinction of species as well as the pressing social problems of racialised inequalities.

Green Lion presents a chronologically fractured narrative which revolves around Sekhmet, the lioness, with Con as focaliser. Con’s estranged friend, Mark, has been attacked and badly mauled by Sekhmet’s mate Dmitri at The Lion House where he worked. Con is a misfit recently returned to South Africa

after years abroad, emotionally stunted in relationships by the guilt he carries. Unable psychologically to visit Mark in hospital, Con becomes the unpaid keeper of Sekhmet who is on her own since the euthanising of Dmitri. Partly through visiting Mark's elderly mother, who lives alone in a mansion housing a plethora of taxidermised animals, Con is able to face the buried trauma of the death of Mark's sister twenty years before. Mostly due to his negligence, she was taken by a large predator on a fenced-off Table Mountain repopulated with indigenous animals. In the present, he is seduced by a young woman, Mossie, of the Green Lion group which consists of quirky New Age people committed to appropriating "energies" from wild animals. She steals his keys and frees Sekhmet, who disappears. The Lion House is then transformed into the Green Lion Centre which merges arts and sciences in conservation education.

In *Saving the White Lions* the conservation of these very particular lions follows on from Tucker's *Mystery of the White Lions* which situates the white lions (not albinos but leucistic lions, with a recessive gene) within indigenous knowledges. They are sacred beings with whom humans can connect psychically; their well-being is prophetic of the ecological state of the planet according to the beliefs of lion shaman, Maria Khosa, and Credo Vusamazula Mutwa who is a sanusi, the highest rank of sangoma or native medicine practitioner. Some years before, Tucker's life and that of some friends had been saved by Khosa when they were trapped in the middle of an angry pride of lions in Timbavati Nature Reserve at dusk in an immobilised, open Land Rover. Khosa appeared seemingly out of nowhere walking among the lions with two grandchildren on foot and another on her back. Miraculously, her presence calmed the lions so that an occupant of the vehicle could negotiate the shadowy bush back to the camp to get help. Tucker subsequently resumed her life as a fashion model in Europe until a lengthy illness, like a shamanic calling from the ancestors dictating a re-evaluation of her life, motivated her to return to South Africa in order to study lion shamanism with Khosa. *Saving the White Lions* tells of her efforts to do just that, against almost impossible odds.

FROM THE GAZE TO EMBODIMENT

The literal gaze between human and nonhuman animal recurs in both these texts, and its texture is an indication of the nature of the trans-species relationship. In *Saving the White Lions*, once Tucker has organised for Marah and her cubs to be transported to their sanctuary, a significant moment occurs when the lioness's "Nefertiti eyes beam straight into [her] soul".⁴ That the animal is mythologised as an ancient Egyptian princess suggests a romanticised relationship on Tucker's part, yet the lioness is accorded a power and an agency confirming that she is a familiar being rather than an "other". Earlier, Tucker claimed a deep telepathic connection with Marah: "I know how Marah is feeling, and she can read my thoughts. Marah and I are as one" (96). Her identity has been constructed in response to the lion's gaze through the

commitment to learning from and about them that informs her heroic activism on behalf of the white lions.

For Rose-Innes in *Green Lion*, the lioness's gaze is less easily accessed for Con in his burgeoning obsession with Sekhmet. The "communion with the lioness was unpredictable"⁵ (2015, 160); she would reveal parts of herself to him, almost coquettishly, even "lift her eyes momentarily from her bloody meal to meet his gaze through the glass" but he "could never see the whole" (160). In refusing to openly address the man by means of her gaze, especially after her mate has been euthanised, Sekhmet looks at Con only for a moment and with a bloodied muzzle through the glass which keeps her captive and a spectacle. Unlike the intensity and agency of Marah's gaze, Sekhmet's refuses a sense of kinship with the desiring human. Traditional humanism would dismiss Tucker's respect for a sacred animality, regarding humans at the apex of creation and locating the human mind far above the animal body. According to humanism's dualistic categorising, animals cannot be subjects, as both Marah and Sekhmet are; they are deemed to lack language, be unconscious, and to exist without fear of death or a sense of the trajectory of their lives.

Significantly for the present discussion of trans-species entanglement, Rose-Innes does not dismiss the possibility of any connection between Con and Sekhmet, but depicts it more dramatically through representations of their embodiment. The shock of the first encounter when her "slamming body sent a jolt through the cage bars and into his blood" (160), heightens Con's senses and destabilises the boundaries of his human self, rendering him feral with a preternatural awareness of "things hidden, hiding, looking down from the dark mountain" (160). In an instance of profound connection between animal and human, the latter's stable sense of self is fragmented and drawn into the realm of animality. A connection through an awareness of separate bodies gestures to posthuman thought about human and animal.

Posthumanism, which has reinvigorated philosophical discussions of cross-species relations, theorises embodiment as common to both human and non-human animals. For Cary Wolfe, posthumanism necessitates a shift from a belief in a stable, shored-up human body divorced from animal embodiment and "opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy inherited from humanism itself".⁶

[Posthumanism] forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualising them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of 'bringing forth a world'—ways that are, since we ourselves are human *animals*, part of the evolutionary history and behavioural and psychological repertoire of the human itself. (xxv)

In the human–lion encounter above, Rose-Innes implicitly critiques what Wolfe refers to as "normative subjectivity ... which grounds discrimination

against nonhuman animals" (xvii) as Con becomes sensitive to the "entire sensorium" of the lioness's being.

After Con's seduction by Mossie (whose name means "sparrow") next to the cage of the roaring Sekhmet, the lioness finally responds to Con's desire for connection—as though the enactment of his sexuality has rendered him more appealing to her. In spite of Sekhmet's incarceration, she asserts her own desires:

Sekhmet had come to the bars and laid herself out, was pressing her length against them as if offering her warmth, or seeking his.... He could feel her heat against his cheeks and forehead, smell her reek. At last his fingers came to rest, very lightly on her spine... he must have exhaled; and then drawn in the lion's breath, a potion, a sleeping draught (186).

Con's resultant hypnotic sleep affords Mossie the opportunity to spring Sekhmet, who is never subsequently traced, from her cage.

Mossie is a member of the afore-mentioned Green Lion group of "animal nutters" in Con's words (162), who want to heal illness through the alchemy of the Green Lion, asserting in their manifesto that they "*seek to devour the energies of the wild*" (162). Again, human-lion connections are compromised and the animal gaze is foreclosed in the group's exploitation of wildness. Rose-Innes has a disturbingly mutilated taxidermised lion as the mascot of the Green Lion group. The lion, hunted a century before by Mark's great-great-grandfather, suffered "[t]errible indignities": the eyes are uneven, one "stitched on like a monstrous teddy bear's" with the fur "streaked with bilious green" (41) and a tennis ball thrust between the jaws. Not only is the body of the lion parodied in taxidermy, but it emblematises the instrumentalisation of wild creatures, both in colonial times and the present, in hunting and in an appropriation of the animal's being.

If lion bodies are sacrificed to self-centred human desires for trans-species connections in *Green Lion*, Tucker's longings to hold Marah are figured differently, if not unproblematically, and in her text's use of images. The front cover photograph pictures a blissful union of an attractive woman and a beautiful white lion. The lioness is etherealised. Her colour renders her otherworldly, magical, rare. Both human and animal are prone in yellow grass which sets off the darkness of the woman's hair and clothes and segues into the astonishing lightness of the lioness's coat. In the text, we read that this photograph was taken when Tucker secretly gained illicit entry into a canned hunting operation where Marah was housed at the time, yet Marah's relaxed pose indisputably denotes utter abandonment to the joy of being with the human lying alongside her. In "The Body We Care For" (2004) Vinciane Despret theorises how both human and nonhuman animal identities are co-constructed and how the latter can choose to be "pervaded" by humans in "practices of domestication".⁷ This practice is, for Despret, free of power inequalities because it is not based on an animal's "docility" but instead on his/her "availability" which is informed by

trust (123–4). Such practices, according to Despret, “create and transform through the miracle of attunement” (125). In Despret’s terms, both Tucker’s body and Marah’s body are “affected and affecting” (125) in a “shared experience, an experience of being ‘with’” (131). Granted, the capturing of this image might suggest a mere performance of emotion; nevertheless, the harmony between lioness and woman contradicts biopolitical hierarchies, with any sense of a clichéd longing for a timeless romance queered by the ominous gunights trained on Marah’s neck as part of the jacket design.

In another instance of embodied entanglement between Marah and Tucker, when the lioness and her cubs finally reach their temporary home in the Karoo after a long flight, Tucker surreptitiously lies down next to the lioness, who is still drugged from the travels. Her secrecy is an attempt to escape the censure of her partner Jason Turner, a lion scientist, who is adamant that Marah should not be further imprinted on humans (103 f). Tucker acknowledges this imperative even as she contravenes it in her longing for connection with Marah.

Laying one arm across her warm, soft flank ... I breathe in that exquisite talcum-and-fresh-cut-hay scent... That indescribable yearning to be cuddled up with her, as a member of the royal pride, is actually realizable—just for the briefest star-crossed instant.... If I were granted one wish it would be to shapeshift and join Marah’s pride in lioness form, forever one with my sublime lion family (356).

In Tucker’s shamanist perceptions of the lions they are both immanent and transcendent as she yearns for this shamanist “being with”. This moment of anthropo-zoo-genesis is complicated, however, in that Marah is not a conscious participant in this embodied attunement. Tucker might have zoomorphised herself, but Marah, asleep, cannot be an “affected” body even though she is an “affecting” one (125).⁸ Still, to use Despret’s terms, Tucker has “activate[d] [her] object as a subject, a subject of passion, a subject producing passions, a subject of questions, a subject producing questions” (131), and she has not “de-passioned’ knowledge” (131) which Turner, the lion scientist, attempted so earnestly and unwittingly to do.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES AND THE COLONIAL IMAGINARY

In South Africa, the conservation of “wild” animals has been historically vested in colonial thinking with national parks exclusionary, racialised endeavours. As Jane Carruthers puts it, they have been “divisive institutions” generally, but in South Africa in particular “the national park idea is sectional, even ethnic” and has undermined any putative sense of “national unity”.⁹ An acknowledgement of and adherence to shamanic ways of being, on the other hand, demonstrates a deep respect for indigenous, animist worldviews of animals. Both texts discussed here bring in animism in relation to conservation, even if *The Green Lion* does so tangentially. Sekhmet is mythologised eclectically in the novel, partly by epigraphs of cross-cultural quotations—most relevantly here from the

Bushman informant/Kabbo's dream of a fellow-lion and from a 2000-year-old praise poem to Sekhmet "Lady of Flame, Lady of Slaughter, Eater of Blood" on an ancient Egyptian temple. Tucker, as we have read, locates Marah exclusively within lion shamanism as taught to her by Credo Vusamuzula Mutwa and Maria Khosa.

From Khosa, the Lion Queen, Tucker learns that the universe is "meaningful" and replete with love and healing and that "the White Lions are the holiest animals on the African continent, and consequently, ... to harm a White Lion is to harm the land, to kill a White Lion is to kill the soul of Africa" (9). Timbavati, the ancient Tsonga name for the home of the white lions can be translated as "'the place where the starlions came down'" (10). Mutwa explains that the lions came from Sirius and the Orion constellation (29), which Tucker felt in her heart "stemmed from a profound truth" (29). Mutwa takes the significance of the white lions beyond Africa: "White Lions hold a secret that could save humanity in this time of crisis. They are the guardians of the human soul, and they invite us to reawaken our own souls in order to protect our planet" (28). It would be easy to mock the grandiosity of such beliefs connected with white lions, yet Tucker's quest to save the white lions is endorsed by First Nations leaders internationally who all nurture prophecies about white animals, considered "sacred signs from Nature and the fulfilment of ancient prophecy" (71).

It would be easy, too, to critique Tucker's privileged whiteness in relation to lions: the photogenic ex-model returns from Europe to save charismatic African predators for Africa. Donna Haraway contextualises the whiteness of much-publicised women primatologists in *National Geographic* as "a romance of race with its plot mapped out in the history of western expansion", but in Tucker's unreserved commitment to the teachings of Khosa and Mutwa, she reverses the colonial imaginary.¹⁰ She learns with humility from a Tsonga shaman and a Zulu sanusi as well as grounding "animist logic" which usually "reabsorbs historical time into the matrices of myth and symbol", as Harry Garuba points out.¹¹ Thus Tucker's acceptance of precolonial beliefs does not constitute a generic New Ageism which flattens differences and subtleties of far-flung indigenous wisdoms. Rather than reifying her teachers as shamans dwelling on a transcendent, ahistorical plane, Tucker acknowledges their contemporary historical locations and the political difficulties they have lived with. Mutwa's life has been one of loss and tragedy because of his beliefs; Khosa is hemmed in by her poverty, which makes the prohibition of her "priestly" practice of sharing the lion's kill even more unfair. The authorities of Timbavati disallow it as "carcass robbing" (17). These details clearly situate the white lions in complicated relationships to humans.

In her novel, Rose-Innes foregrounds the colonial imaginary and its contemporary relevance in the depiction of Mark's family home as overwhelmed by taxidermised animals, all killed in colonial hunting practices. Rachel Poliquin suggests that "taxidermy always tells us stories about particular cultural moments, about the spectacles of nature we desire to see [and] about our

assumptions of superiority".¹² The profusion of stuffed animals in the novel signifies murdered embodiments of racialised colonial assumptions about indigenous animals and people. "Imperial antagonism for African hunting was based on the ideology that to subsist on game (as Africans did) or to sell it (as Boer settlers did) was 'less civilized' than to kill for amusement" as Carruthers puts it.¹³ This biopolitics has endured in the present day in Mark's home because his father is committed to respecting the hunting prowess of his ancestors. For the adult Con, visiting Mark's bereft mother in her huge home, the aura of "[d]eath and chemicals" still shocks him with the spectacle of horror: "The passage was wall-to-wall furred, feathered, clawed and winged" (39).

Apparently timeless animality can be made to compensate for the sterilities of a "civilised" world. Poliquin avers that "animals seem to offer themselves as direct access to truth, to a reality that exists above, beyond, prior to representation" (81). Surprisingly, Tucker admits that she "can understand why people want to tame, cage, hold, trap, box, and keep captive beautiful wild creatures, in the hope of capturing their essence" but counters this human longing with the imperative for "wild" animals to have "freedom" (356).

POSTCOLONIAL REALITIES

The surrounding area of Tucker's Tsau White Lion Heartland in Timbavati, a sanctuary which she purchased, has been labelled one of the "poverty nodes" (364) of South Africa. As Haraway reminds us, "efforts to preserve 'nature' in parks remain fatally troubled by the ineradicable mark of the founding expulsion of those who used to live here".¹⁴ Tucker and her "godmother", who donated the funds for the purchase of the land (as well as for the lions), engage in forms of local restitution which begin like the staging of white largesse. Bearing gifts, they visit the local Tsonga school to attend the prize-giving, an annual celebration awarding learners' achievements, but the eco-educational programme at the school is not based exclusively on the generosity of the white visitors. The teacher has produced a play which incorporates the late Maria Khosa and her rescue of Tucker and friends (the story has passed into local lore) as well as a general celebration of the local white lions and their significance. A song compares Marah with Mandela "Queen of the Lions,/Like Nelson Mandela, you spent your whole life in prison,/because people are scared of your greatness!" (369). For Tucker the performance is "a cultural renaissance out of the humblest circumstances" (369)—a vindication of the reintroduction of the lions. Cynically, one cannot deny that racialised economic inequities still flourish, but the materiality of the lions has enlivened and inspired local children who now value their indigenous conservation heritage.

Rose-Innes in turn satirises animal-inspired performances in the urban zoo, renamed the Green Lion Centre. Without live embodied animals after the disappearance of Sekhmet, the zoo is set for closure until Elyse, Con's ex-girlfriend, decides to use the stuffed animals which Mark's mother is delighted to donate. Elyse's theatre company rejuvenates the colonial trophies which visitors to the

zoo admire. These “taxidermied animals are its perfect emblems”, Con thinks. “Never particularly rigorous scientific documents, these ones are now almost wholly imaginary creations” (258). If zoos, as Dale Jamieson argues “distract us from the truth about ourselves and what we are doing to nature”,¹⁵ then this performance centre distracts its visitors from live embodied animals even more so. Nature is fabricated in hybrid performances which entrance the audience, both adults and children. Decaying taxidermised animals are made to perform the wild which is now entirely accessible to the viewers to admire at close quarters. These stuffed animals are more dependable than fickle live lions; taxidermy, for Poliquin “exists because of life’s inevitable trudge towards dissolution. Taxidermy wants to stop time” (6). This is what conservation will come to, Rose-Innes seems to suggest—stuffed animals being made to perform, an utter fabrication, a sop to Edenic longings for close connections with long extinct animals, with no live animals in sight.

In her absence, Sekhmet is made to perform herself, becoming an urban legend who is spotted occasionally in “fantastical circumstances” (261): routing muggers in the central business district, leaving her imprint at a tomb of a Muslim saint, taking part in dogfights, living with a playboy in a Johannesburg penthouse, appearing at dawn on Durban beachfront. Immediately after Sekhmet’s disappearance, Con, frantic to find her, sneaks onto the fenced-off Table Mountain. Sekhmet, to Con’s relief, is not on the mountain and at risk of being hunted, but a newspaper reports the death by mauling of the girl-child, Nadja Baard, on the Cape Flats with its windswept, sandblown, townships and informal settlements, a legacy of apartheid geographies. Sekhmet was not seen however. She remains a shadowy predator whose mysterious killing of a sacrificial child at risk in a poverty-stricken township mirrors the unsolved death of Mark’s upper-middle-class sister years before on the mountain.

The ending of *Green Lion* is haunted by the absence of Sekhmet just as the whole novel is haunted by the absence of Dmitri and the failure of the misguided project to backbreed the extinct Cape Lion. *Green Lion* seems a narrative of despair with “real” but captive lions supplanted by humans performing with animal prostheses. Wildness has been contained and domesticated; conservation is a safe, predictable performance for children after the deaths of two vulnerable girl children. Tragically and metonymically, the embodied black-maned lioness has been reduced to a lacuna, a Sekhmet-shaped blank that urban legends can only try to fill in the face of her disappearance. Tellingly, no embodied animals exist in the zoo or, verifiably, in the larger environment, no lions remain to address humans through their gaze.

More positively, in *Saving the White Lions*, a pride of white lions survives through Tucker’s efforts, after she was addressed by the gaze of the lions. A narrative endorsing and inspired by shamanist beliefs, the nonfictional text celebrates Tucker as a “gladiator” (42), and a “heroine-saviour” (63). Tragically, her broader quest to save all white lions can only be partially successful, given the ongoing threat of the lucrative canned hunting industry, which markets taxidermised, disembodied lions, their gaze forever foreclosed. Still, the ending

of *Saving the White Lions* has Marah, the celebrity, filmed by three separate crews as she moves from the comforting, enclosed boma, where carcasses are provided for her and her cubs, to the wilderness where she will have to hunt for herself and her offspring for the very first time. The text tells a sustaining story of love and trans-species connection between human and lion. If Rose-Innes imagines Con's desire to connect with Sekhmet as realistically doomed to disappointment and endless deferral, Tucker's apparently otherworldly shamanist longing for relationship with the white lions finds embodied form in Marah, a subject who responds to the human with her animal gaze.

NOTES

1. See Woodward, *Animal Gaze*.
2. Woodward, *Animal Gaze*, 2.
3. For more information about this inhumane industry see <http://www.cannedlion.org/> and <http://www.bloodlions.org/>
4. Tucker, *Saving*, 360.
5. Rose-Innes, *Green Lion*, 160.
6. Wolfe, *Posthumanism*, xv.
7. Despret, "The Body", 125.
8. Despret, "The Body", 125.
9. Carruthers, "Nationhood and national parks", 126.
10. Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 154.
11. Garuba, "Animist materialism", 270.
12. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 10.
13. Carruthers, "Nationhood and national parks", 127.
14. Quoted in Rutherford, *Governing the Wild*, 197.
15. Quoted in Gruen, "Dignity", 219.

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“Without the Right Words It’s Hard to Retain Clarity”: Speculative Fiction and Animal Narrative

Sherryl Vint

The trick of being a phenomenaut is to integrate them [multiple sensory inputs] into the sense of a whole. This Ressay isn’t just an object, but a way of being me.

—The Many Selves of Katherine North (loc 2428–2429)

For all the good that science achieves, it’s important not to lose sight of the fact that it’s a discourse of the third person; its aim, the seizing and solidifying of the other. Science permits only one Truth, one Reality. But what if there are other valid ways of knowing? What if the world is not one, but multitude, with as many ways of being as there are beings? What if literature were the opportunity to glimpse such refractions, thrown by the world as though from a diamond?

—Emma Geen, afterword to the novel (loc 5577–5581)

Emma Geen’s *The Many Selves of Katherine North* (2016) is told in the first-person voice of Katherine (Kit) North, a phenomenaut who works for ShenCorp in Bristol, UK, sometime in the future (King William is on the throne). Although this work is always told from Kit’s point of view, her experience of

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self is multiple. ShenCorp is a “consciousness projection provider” and Kit works in the research division, linking her neurological senses to various Ressys: synthetic biological, 3D-printed versions of animal bodies that integrate into the habitats of real animals, interacting with them and collecting data. This is what it means to be a phenomenaut: just as astronauts “sail” among the stars, phenomenauts journey into the phenomenological experiences of different bodies. As she experiences each new animal body, Kit narrates her phenomenological world, reminding us of the multiple worlds inhabited by various species and reinforcing that they have agency and affect, even if they experience these qualities differently than do humans. This innovative narrative style, enabled by the speculative fiction (sf) motif of consciousness projection, enables Geen to address one of the most challenging quandaries regarding literature and animals: how can literature represent animals as more than metaphors—as agents in their own right, co-creators of meaning with humans—without falling into the trap of speaking for or anthropomorphizing them?

Geen makes this dilemma a focal point. Briefly, the two sides of this debate might be summarized by a comparison of J.M. Coetzee’s character Elizabeth Costello’s defence of literary over philosophical traditions for representing animals with Thomas Nagel’s contention that both modes of discourse inevitably show us only human *ideas about* the animal, never the animal itself. In *The Lives of Animals*, Elizabeth argues that literature can provide a perspective on animal being that philosophy, as a discipline dedicated to theorizing the particularities of human experience, has refused. For Coetzee, “the poets” can cultivate a capacity for empathy with and creative understanding of animals through attempts to narrate their experience; even if this narration is not strictly “true” of the animal’s experience, it opens us imaginatively and, ultimately, ethically to thinking about animals as beings who have emotions, desires, and cognitions. On the other hand, in “What Is It Like to Be a Bat”, Thomas Nagel, a philosopher, argues that all we can ever do is imagine what *a human* might make of the experience of behaving like another animal, since our different embodiment from theirs which means we can never simulate their true experience.

Geen sets up her novel in a way that seems to counter Nagel by enabling Kit to share the physical sensorium of the species whose Ressay she inhabits, but as I shall argue further below, she also complicates her vision of this technology to remind us that it is still only ever an approximation, if one that she finds more enabling than would Nagel. We learn at the end of the novel that the entire book has been addressed to a fox who stays with Kit during a period of time when she is homeless. While much of the novel is about the ways that the Ressay experience enables Kit to approximate an animal’s phenomenology and hence better understand its world and actions within it, the denouement focuses on Kit’s connection to an animal across their distinct embodiments. *The Many Selves of Katherine North* is an example of what Susan McHugh calls narrative ethology and a demonstration of how speculative fiction is an ideal narrative form for expressing animal agency. Speculative fiction has long been interested in narrating from imagined perspectives that exceed or reconfigure

the human, taking seriously at the level of a text’s ontological world that non-human characters are fully people. *The Many Selves of Katherine North* is exemplary of how this capacity of speculative fiction can be used to represent the complexity of animal lives, while preserving a recognition that they are different from—which need not mean inferior to—human ones.

The novel tells Kit’s story in two chronological sequences, one moving conventionally from past into present as Kit recalls her time in the programme, and another that moves into a further future after Kit has made a break from ShenCorp, that includes flashbacks that gradually reveal why she left. The sections have recurrent, alternating chapter titles: Come Home, which refers to the experience of returning to consciousness in one’s Original Body, and Uncanny Shift, the phenomenaut’s term for the “foreignness of this new world” (loc 695) of nonhuman embodiment. In one such transition, Kit says “Right now I’m a stranger, even to myself” (loc 696), a phrase that resonates with the critical definition of science fiction as the “*literature of cognitive estrangement*”¹: the genre has the capacity to reinvent the given, enabling us to see it as contingent and open to change. Where a realist novel might allow us to assume that animals are non-sentient objects or symbols for themes relevant to the human characters, speculative fiction operates at a different ontological level, positing a new world with its own taken-for-granted truisms. Speculative texts invite us to inhabit such worlds, to share their “estranged” assumptions, and perhaps to recognize through this that the material, given world is also not as fixed as we might once have believed. In a speculative text, animals may be people as much as are humans. This is Kit’s perspective on the animals she interacts with as she inhabits bodies like their own in her work as an immersive ethologist.

Telling stories about observed animals was foundational to establishing ethology as a research methodology as valid as laboratory studies, if not more so, McHugh contends. Combining the science of careful observation with a humanistic concern with subjective experience and relationships, narrative ethology “affirms the ways in which ethology and fiction alike proceed from the complicated operations of affect and leads to an ethics premised on feelings honored as concrete, intense, and shared.”² This is an apt description of many sections of the novel that narrate Kit’s experiences of animal embodiment, beginning with her interactions with a fox cub she names Tomoko—it is relevant that “Kit” is both a shortened version of Katherine and the name for a fox cub, and that the Japanese name Kit gives the cub, Tomoko, ends with the characters for child when written in kanji. It is clear that Kit shares sensory capacities with Tomoko, but the novel is always careful to remind us that Kit still filters these phenomenological experiences through human ways of framing their meaning. For example, trying to interpret the scent of another creature that Tomoko notices first, Kit notes “having a good nose doesn’t automatically mean I can understand scents” (loc 326).

Geen takes great care to try to portray Kit experiencing the world differently through the individual capacities of specific animals: when she is a spider, her

vision is blurred and indistinct, and at first the experience of producing silk is unnerving: “Juices are oozing from my rear and hardening into weight” (loc 703). Later, as an octopus, with much of her neuronal material outside the brain, she finds herself constantly surprised by the activities of cephalopod embodiment: “Without looking, it’s impossible to tell where my limbs are at any moment, though the influx of information would fry my mind if I could. Eight tentacles make the inbuilt Ressay neural matter necessary, but it also means that each limb comes worryingly close to autonomy” (loc 1372–1374). As a snake, she is frightened by her co-worker whose heat signature—the snake’s primary way of seeing—makes him appear as if some devil on fire, and later back in her own body and taking a shower she comments, “Even the water disconcerted me until I realised what was missing was the glow of its heat signature” (loc 2593).

Geen never lets the reader forget that these animal experiences are what Kit-as-a-human interprets, only ever an approximation via aligning neurological connections in her Original Body to a Ressay brain organized by entirely different logics. Moreover, as becomes clear in a subplot about false information planted in the Ressay of another phenomenaut, what Kit experiences is as much virtual reality as material embodiment: the data from the Ressay system is processed by a computer that seeks the best way to map its outputs to the inputs of Kit’s human senses. The more distant the animal body is from her mammalian one, the more challenging it is to create these connections. Nonetheless, real data can be obtained from these experiences: a number of encounters demonstrate that other animals perceive the Ressay bodies as just another member of their species—as rivals, potential sexual partners, pack members or prey—and thus they behave towards Kit in a way that allows her to draw valid conclusions about them. Kit could choose to lessen the intensity of any negative sensations such as hunger or pain, but as a committed researcher concerned for animal lives she is firmly against such manipulation: “Fiddle too much and your sense of reality will dissolve. To reach any understanding of an animal, you have to play by the same rules. Resses aren’t a toy” (loc 1924). For Kit, then, identifying with the animal is not a mere recreational pastime but a committed project of mutualism: even though Kit’s material body is not put at risk during her Ressay projections, if she does not allow it to experience the hardships of animal life via the interface, she will learn nothing true.

Despite the technical limitations of the mapping, living in Ressay does offer “concrete, intense, and shared” (McHugh 218) experiences of animal being, a capacity that is denied or minimized by the profit-driven side of ShenCorp. When Kit’s fox Ressay is hit by a car, for example, her boss encourages her to shake off the trauma and her feeling that she died, leading Kit to reflect that “even on a normal Come Home, there’s always the sense that the world I return to should have somehow shifted, a corner of the curtain pulled back. But perhaps it’s not the world that changes” (loc 530–533). In Kit’s reflections here, we see something of the power of speculative fiction to shift our perception of the material world beyond the text, using the estranged world within

the text. Kit begins to recognize that although the human sensorium will always be her default home world, this world-for-her-as-human is not identical with *the world* in a totalized sense. The experience of being in Ressay—and the reader’s participation in these experiences via first-person narration—change Kit from the kind of human imagined through a default of human exceptionalism into what we might think of as a posthuman who sees the world through a rubric in which humans are just another animal among many.³ Encountering a baby, for example, Kit observes, “I blink at it and look away, only remembering after that this is friendly for cats, not babies” (loc 493–494). Trying to find Tomoko again in her human body after the fox Ressay is killed, Kit struggles to recognize a neighbourhood where she has lived for weeks, so different does it appear through human senses. Returning to a house where food was left for the foxes in the yard, she notices gnomes in the garden for the first time and interprets them as territory markers, a fusion of human senses (visual dominance) and animal sociality (this interpretation). As a fox, these figures were invisible, but she also points out that this failure to see the world of other creatures works in both directions: “It’s not like humans often notice the markings of other animals” (loc 1008). Kit thus begins to experience the human world as merely one option among myriad phenomenological realities.

The world changes with the Come Home, but so does Kit. As these encounters reveal, she also begins to fuse default human ways of being in the world with approximations of animal ones, and her continual first-person narrative links the two through multiple embodiments. Frequently her observations stress that the differences among modes of perceiving and being are not as absolute as the history of philosophy would have it. Tomoko plays with a doll she finds in the trash, for example, even though she interacts with Kit only when Kit is in fox form, and thus did not learn this activity from proximity to humans. Similarly, there is no presumption that human embodiment is necessarily superior. When she decides that she must run away from ShenCorp, Kit spends a few weeks living on the street and finds that her Original Body is ill-suited for dealing with the weather, trying to find shelter, or being able to survive on available food. Her time in Ressay has given Kit an estranged perspective on human embodiment and the norms of human culture, enabling her more clearly to see its continuities with animal life and its wilful blindness to these commonalities. She often identifies more strongly with the animal world, and confides, “It’s bizarre to stand alongside other humans again, to walk in step as they make their way to work or the shops. I keep expecting someone to call out—‘impostor’, ‘not human’, ‘not one of us’. Can’t they see through the thinness of skin?” (loc 1286–1288). Here the novel both challenges the default presumption that human ways of being are inevitably superior to animal ones—Kit frequently finds the opposite to be true—and effectively uses the technique of immersion in an alternative environment to puncture the sense that our quotidian one is either natural or necessary.⁴

The phenomenauts undergo continuous psychiatric evaluation which includes a test of responding to pictures that randomly show either an animal

or their own image, requiring them to pick “self” or “not self” for each. Kit refuses to take this protocol seriously, counting for three seconds for each selection to ensure no conclusions can be drawn. Her dis-identification with humanity is in part motivated by people’s poor treatment of other species: “People can never stand the challenge of another point of view. It was there when I told people about my job; clear in the curling of lips or widening of eyes. Once or twice people simply turned away. Animals are just animals, they would proclaim, for eating, for servitude, for entertainment, not for understanding” (loc 1337–1340). Phenomenauts are told they must never “relinquish their humanity” (loc 751), a phrasing that draws attention to the fact that identifying with a particular way of being human is a choice, reiterated by protocols. A posthuman vision is evident in this depiction of Kit as someone who embraces a different kind of being human, one that is capacious enough to acknowledge her many selves in their multiple morphologies.

The novel walks a delicate line between using the phenomenaut technology to show the validity of animals’ other realities and ways of knowing and insisting that over-identifying with this otherness is a pathology. Kit has legitimate reasons for being suspicious of ShenCorp, as I will discuss further below, but her desire to retreat fully into animal embodiment is also connected with a wish to escape the difficulties in her human life. At least part of this affect is related to her sense that animals are disappearing from the world, and that she is helpless to make changes *as a human*: “Everything is so fragile, so ephemeral. Seven years. Seven years of projecting, and what have I really understood? What have I really changed? Species are still being wiped out. The world is still being abused. And Mum...” (loc 5541–5543; ellipses in the original). Her mother, a zoologist, taught Kit to love and respect animals, and her mother’s example is part of what alienates her from the corporate values that drive ShenCorp’s research: “there wasn’t a creature that she didn’t love. For the longest time that’s what I thought zoologists did—loved. It was a shock when I started at ShenCorp and realised that some people were more interested in animals in the abstract” (loc 813–817). Yet by the time Kit is fully immersed in the phenomenaut programme her mother is a shell of her former self, her mind lost to dementia.

For Kit, then, her grief over losing her relationship to her mother is inextricably bound up with her grief about animal extinction in the world around her. In brief scenes when Kit goes home, she interacts with her mother’s body—feeding her, manoeuvring her wheelchair—but her mother seems less present, less a subject, than the animals with whom Kit interacts. Although Kit finds it easy to communicate with animals without the mediation of language, her mother’s failing memory is coded as a loss of cognition, of selfhood, and so there are fewer possibilities to connect with a cognitively impaired human than there are to connect with a nonhuman species, at least in Kit’s experience. She describes her mother as changed, evident in “the slightly shiny puffiness of her flesh, in the distance of her eyes, twitching about their sockets as if seeking escape” (loc 3488). Her mother’s changing body symbolizes for Kit the inverse

of what the Ressay bodies offer: while the latter are an extension of Kit’s capacity to experience the world and understand other consciousnesses, her mother’s changed body emblemizes increased limitation and distance from self. Describing a disturbing encounter when her mother’s leg twitched uncontrollably, Kit finds the experience literally alienating: “It was my mum—part of her—and yet for a moment it had been in the control of something—*else*” (loc 2488). Neither Kit nor the novel seems to offer the possibility that an ongoing embodied connection between Kit and her changed mother can be as enriching as those Kit experiences with the animals, although this sense of grief is clearly about how the changed body emphasizes her mother’s mortality. In anecdotes Kit shares about her mother’s gradual decline, both loss of memory and loss of mobility feature prominently, always as harbingers of the looming loss of her mother’s life.

Kit tells us that she is confused by human sexuality, and in passing notes that she has amenorrhea, despite her age of nineteen. Kit is also the oldest phenomenaut: most are early adolescents, a programme decision taken because most lose the plasticity of mind necessary to continue projecting by this age, or else they begin to experience Neo-Body Dysmorphia and are no longer allowed to participate. Although from one point of view this suggests that Kit’s preference for animal over human experience is something child-like, which she must move beyond to enter into a mature, adult stage of her life, the novel is not quite this simple. Rather, instead of collapsing all into a binary in which identifying with animals is a childish fantasy, *The Many Selves of Katherine North* repeatedly validates the reality of Kit’s experience of animal embodiment. The problem lies precisely in seeing things in such binary terms, that is, that Kit wants only to be in animal Ressay and not to face the challenges of her life as a human. Yet, as the title implies, all are aspects of her self—in a doubled way: first, the theme that selfhood persists across diverse phenomenological states and, second, the caution that these encounters remain Kit-as-animal rather than some kind of abstract or transcendent essence of animal being. Yet although these animal experiences remain Kit’s self, not a “fox self” or an “octopus self”, this fact does not diminish the novel’s capacity to prompt readers to recognize animal selfhood. Rather, just as Kit’s mother loved animals in their individuality, not in the abstract, the novel offers a complex vision in which we can never truly know or *be* the animal other, but nonetheless the imaginative extension of ourselves into animal bodies is intellectually and ethically productive. Kit’s desire to escape her human side is what takes her beyond ethology and into delusion, and thus her healing at the end involves accepting dimensions of her human life that exceed her work as a phenomenaut.

This connection to animals resists both the substitution of human ideas about the animal for the animal itself and the idea that there is such a gulf between human and animal experience that we can never legitimately know anything of the animal. Kit calls her phenomenaut experience a “suspension Bridge” between two types of being, something that bridges this valley between distant phenomenological worlds. Here the specific metaphor is important:

this is not a fixed bridge, fully buttressed so as to make passage from one side to the other imperceptible, but rather a bridge sustained by tension between the two sides, one that might move and shift in response to weight moving across it. The suspension bridge is a model of dynamic and tentative connection, not a rigidly fixed line of equivalence. Kit achieves a more adult relationship to her phenomenautic research when she learns that life is not about finding the correct embodiment through which she can know everything, as she once believed, but “perhaps life is about boundaries? Breaking them, building them back up, guarding against the yawn of infinity?” (loc 5537–5540). Although the narrative thematically privileges Kit’s respect for animal subjectivity and uses form to let the audience share the experience of animal embodiment with her, it ends by asserting that Kit needs to prioritize her human self in this assemblage—she can seek to understand other animals, but she can only ever *be* a human.

Kit is persuaded to embrace more human relationships in her future, as she projects one last time into a fox body. She goes into the projection while holding the fox Ressay in her arms and wakes up *as* the fox in the arms of a human body she now refers to in the third person: “My back is crushed by her arms. I rise and fall with the movement of her chest. I have to scabble at her shoulders to pull myself loose” (loc 5394–5396). Able to say goodbye to being a fox and to mourn Tomoko on her own terms, Kit also readies herself to face a human world in which relationships are mediated through language, something she compares unfavourably to the clearer language of chemical scents and dominance displays in her animal bodies. Returning to human embodiment and walking home with her handler, now her lover, Buckley, Kit sees a fox who has steadfastly been her companion during her time living on the streets. The whole narrative has been addressed to this fox. Talking to her at the beginning of the novel, Kit ponders, “Where did this need to speak come from? I’ve always had an uneasy relationship with such human quirks” (loc 215–216). In the conclusion, as she looks into the fox’s eyes she experiences connection *and* distance, noting “My flesh thrills beneath that look, my amusement emerging as mist in the cold air. I could never have truly understood. I could never truly become. But sometimes, the trying is enough” (loc 5561–5562). This encounter—the attempt at connection in the absence of the expectation of full identity—is the core of the novel’s narrative ethology: unlike when Kit interacts with animals while in Ressay, experiencing an approximation of their senses and enabling a more imaginative and affective connection to them, here Kit encounters the real fox across the “suspension Bridge” of species difference. She cannot be the fox but *trying to become* fox creates something between them, a capacity for recognizing the fox world is as meaningful as the human one, just different.

A number of scenes focus on the importance of narrative to such encounters and to the inter-species ethic that follows from them. Although Kit resists the efforts of the psychological assessment protocol to police her affective identification with animals, she does find useful her therapist’s invocation to

“self-narrate” so that she might “encompass the experiences from each ResExtenda body under one story”—one self. She disarticulates this practice from the therapist’s anthropocentric insistence that “only [the therapist’s] version of events is ever deemed correct, deemed healthy” (loc 855–858) and self-narrates to the fox. Kit’s attempt to put her animal-embodied experiences into human languages constitutes the Suspension Bridge that allows one to traverse this distance/difference, the unstable and movement-sensitive bridge capturing the provisional, always-changing nature of attempts to connect across species differences. It also figures the need to move slowly and carefully so as not to project human experience onto animals and thereby erase their otherness. Kit frequently reminds herself that *experiencing animal senses* is not identical to *being* that animal, even as it provides the grounds from which to find further ways to be cognizant of animals’ needs while in a human body.

Embodied experience is crucial for this process, both Kit’s within the narrative and Geen’s thoughtfully researched depiction of animal sensory capacities through which she poetically conveys Kit’s voice in each body. The capacity of metaphor to evoke not only new cognitions, but also new sensations through evocative description is important here; it is why narrative, rather than the austere language of scientific report, can convey something meaningful about the lived experience of animal being. Kit notes that although she reads reports on each species before projection, “no number of words can prepare you for the raw experience. Besides, there’s only so much you can learn from a document written by bioengineers who’ve never projected in their lives” (loc 618–621). The novel never lets readers forget that the ontology of an individual of another species is an inaccessible space, but simultaneously it demonstrates how allowing readers (and Kit) imaginatively to participate in this space, via its poetic evocation of an animal’s phenomenology, enables us to recognize multiple ways of knowing and being—a truth about the world even if not a strictly human truth.

Kit’s ability to balance a desire to be an animal with respect for its difference is contrasted with a proposal to extend ResExtenda technology from research into tourism. Kit has strong reservations about this plan, correctly anticipating that it will manipulate data and experience to create a false version of animal experience, enabling tourists to live out their fantasies about other species. The tourism mode of phenomenautism is about the abstract and generalized human notion of the animal, while Kit’s research version is closer to ethology, a scientific practice of close observation of animal behaviour. Diverting this technology to a commercial rather than research application would result in a Ressay experience of purely representational animals, based on their meanings to human culture, rather than a material engagement with animals met on their own terms. Kit’s objections to the tourism programme, and her more shocking discovery that ShenCorp has created human Ressys—including one of her, used to fulfil the promotional duties she refuses to continue—lead to her flight from the compound and her period of homelessness.⁵

Kit's descriptions of the struggles she faces as a phenomenaut conducting research stand in stark contrast to how the tourism programme can only ever be an anthropocentric fantasy, not a bridge across species difference:

Buckley and I would put so much effort into these papers; all those carefully built observations, arguments, "facts". Even on the bus home, I'd keep working; for lack of another surface, mapping the document onto the back of a hand where words flexed with skin as if tattooed. But sometimes I'd wonder, for what? Such marks could never match the experience itself. However much Buckley and Mr Hughes praised me, I'd squirm at their fundamental insufficiency. Because how do you cram the lived experience onto a page? the words available to me were never enough. Something would always slip the sentences. Human language developed around human bodies, it never quite fits other ways of being. ... The more I came to understand, the more difficult it was to disseminate. Knowledge that seemed perfectly self-evident in Ressay became confused, even insane, back in my Original Body. Truths just wouldn't translate. (loc 1202–1212)

This failure of factual language suggests one of the reasons why animal narratives—imaginative, poetic descriptions of animal agency and affect and cognition—are important tools for those committed to thinking ethically about human-animal relations. Moreover, the contrast between tourism and ethology as applications for the technology of ResExtenda reinforce why speculative fiction, especially science fictions that seek to extrapolate from known science, is so useful for connecting us to animal experience: it is a mode of narrative ethology that draws from what is known from ethology itself, as Geen's attention to the radically different senses of each Ressay conveys.

Kit later laments, "B-movies make it seem so simple—kill them before they kill us. If peaceful, a simple 'take me to your leader' will suffice; after all, most aliens are just blue space ladies beneath the tentacles. But octopuses have no language; no leader to be taken to if they had. And yet the octopus's eyes are studying me as intently as I am it" (loc 1435–1438). Here she notes the difficulty not only of conveying to humans what she has learned of animal being, but also of trying to speak in languages of gesture, scent, visual display, and other protocols through which animals communicate with one another. Texts that want to tell simple stories, such as B-movies, rely on a representational rhetoric that reduces all difference to anthropocentric projection, where supposedly alien characters are simply humans with cosmetic differences, such as the blue skin in Kit's example. In contrast to these failures, however, thoughtful speculative fiction, like *The Many Selves of Katherine North*, which extrapolates carefully from science, in this case ethology, can recognize the complex challenge involved in seeking to represent what is alien.

Fredric Jameson, by contrast, argues that the inevitable failure to represent the alien—the radical break with the world as we know it—is what gives the best of its political power. For him the alien stands in for utopian possibility, and he asks, what if "its otherness were unknowable because it signified a radical otherness latent in human history and history praxis".⁶ While for Jameson,

drawing on Karl Marx, this radical otherness inevitably leads back to human agency and the possibility of a more just social world of humans, a posthuman version of this conception is possible. Here, the unrepresentable alien figures for animal subjectivity, a radically different being we should imagine and respect, but one we can never fully inhabit or convey. Drawing on Jameson’s work and on Alain Badiou’s theory of the event as emblem of radical change, Phillip Wegner argues that science fiction is an “evental genre”, a way of engaging with the world (rather than just a type of content). As Wegner explains, Badiou argues that the event cannot be communicated but only encountered, much like Kit suggests that factual language cannot capture her discoveries as a phenomenaut. Wegner argues that, even if sf cannot represent the radical difference that exists beyond the event, it can nonetheless narrate the world that exists around this “void of the event”⁷ and thus inspire in its readers the need to keep other possibilities imaginatively alive. *The Many Selves of Katherine North* offers a nuanced depiction of the politics of representing animal experience, showing us that not all animal narratives are equally helpful for cultivating imaginative sympathy and facilitating understanding.

A B-movie version of animal narrative anchors the tourism project. Objecting to this anaemic vision of animal selves, Kit protests, “phenomenautism is about understanding other animals, not using them for fun” (loc 1942). It is not that she objects to the treatment of the Ressay bodies, she clarifies, but she objects to the commodification of animal experience: “Phenomenautism is meant to be about understanding other perspectives, not buying them as some—some—luxury items” (loc 3111). Her concern is with the damage that tourists can do in these bodies to other animals struggling to survive, the violence inherent in treating their habitats as “playgrounds” (loc 3107), and also with the epistemological violence of reducing animals to their associations within the human imagination.⁸ And they are borne out by two early clients: one as a tiger wantonly kills other animals in clumsy, painful ways, and without exhibiting the need to consume them; another inadvertently creates panic in an elephant herd, resulting in the trampling death of an infant elephant. These tourists want sanitized and ultimately abstract versions of the animals, despite projecting into material bodies, as Kit derisively observes: “the beta tourists haven’t been keen to engage with the banality of their bodies, as if defecating degrades them, despite carrying it out daily as humans. Misled by buzzwords and marketing, they really seem to believe that there is an ‘animal experience’ separable from the flesh” (loc 4250–4255). Marketing research reinforces the conclusion that Ressay tourists are not interested in understanding animals but merely in reinventing themselves by inhabiting animal bodies—about which they have misleading, mythic ideas.

McHugh argues that “story forms serve as spawning grounds for forms of species and social agency” (19). Narrative can allow us to imaginatively participate in the lives of other species and can inspire us to a concern with their welfare, but narratives can also become a distorting influence that replaces animal experience with human fantasies about them. This novel, then, documents

the promises and risks of narrating animal lives by way of the contrast between Kit's embedded experience with other animals and phenomenological tourism. This is a contrast between Kit's provisional conclusions and a sense of animals' autonomy, and tourist consumers who inhabit animal bodies for brief periods, manipulating inputs to make materiality align with their fantasies. In thinking about connections between literature and animals, it is important to seek out the "right words", as the quotation in my title announces, words that celebrate the power of the literary to offer us a refracted glimpse of the many other worlds we move through as we encounter animal being. Yet we should never mistake these refractions for the original light of animal being. In its focus on creating new worlds and new subjects, on never taking for granted the quotidian world and its limited contingencies, speculative fiction is a powerful way to tell animal stories.

NOTES

1. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 15.
2. McHugh, *Animal Stories*, 218.
3. There are many works that understand posthumanism as the deconstruction of humanism, a version of the human predicated on its difference from the animal, that assigns certain capacities to the human (cognition, communication, emotion, memory, etc.) based on asserting that animals do not have them. Jacques Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I Am* argues that this entire philosophical history is based on a misrecognition of both human and animal capacities. A number of scholars categorize as posthuman narratives that take animal agency seriously, including McHugh, Cary Wolfe's *Animal Rites*, Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*, and my *Animal Alterity*. Posthumanism recognizes that animals have complex lives as much as do humans, even if their experiences are different from those of humans.
4. This technique of the "alien" view of what normally goes unexamined in human culture is a typical narrative device in speculative fiction. It dates back at least as early as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726): after spending years among the Houyhnhnms Gulliver finds humans strange and barbaric. While Swift seems to be using this idea largely in a metaphorical way, to lampoon human hubris, a foundational work of speculative fiction such as H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1897), which imagines Martians invading London and seeing humans as prey animals for food, couches his reversal more directly in the scientific possibility of a different biological foundation for life as it might have evolved on another planet.
5. Space precludes me going into this in detail, but Dr. Shen, who invented the technology, is forced out of her company by a Board of Directors narrowly focused on profit, led by Mr. Hughes, Kit's boss. Some within the corporation continue to resist this trajectory, which is why Kit can later reconcile with her handler, Buckley, once she confides in him. The existence of human Ressys also points to themes about the ethics of projecting into animal bodies at all: Kit feels severely violated when she learns that a version of her body is animated by someone else, although she is initially promised that only she will use it. The novel thus

raises questions about the relationship between self and body, questions we might extend to the ethics of inhabiting the morphology of another species.

6. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 118.
7. Wegner, *Shockwaves of Possibility*, 51.
8. Another set of themes I do not have space to discuss emerges from the fact that Kit’s research speciality is endangered species. Her time as an octopus, when she experiences firsthand the disruptions of human activity in the ocean, demonstrates how Geen uses the sensory detail of phenomenology to cultivate in her readers a concern for other species: ‘the roar is more force than sound. Water torn. I tumble, vertigo like pain, my innards smashed jelly. Only for the roar to stop. As abruptly as it began. I fall to the seabed, stark taste of sand across my head, guts a beaten drum. For a while all I can do is lie, watching the silt resettle into a silence so pure it’s hard to believe that it was ever broken. ‘that’ll be the oil rig. You OK?’ Buckley says. “Just about.” Although if that happens a lot, I’m not going to be” (loc 1390–1395). There is also a suggestion that among the things Kit seeks to avoid about the human world is the ongoing evidence of massive climate change.

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Jesmyn Ward's Dog Bite: Mississippi Love and Death Stories

Bénédicte Boisseron

Gaston Bachelard's vision of the oneiric house nestled in the arms of childhood memory is a timeless and relatable picture. French philosopher Hélène Cixous, however, offers a different schema in which, not the house, but the dog is the mnemonic or symbol of yesteryear. As the childhood home fades with the passing of time, Cixous's dog anchors the enduring mental presence of a time and space long gone. When Cixous reminisces about her home in Algeria, returning in spirit to 54 Bd. Laurent-Pichat forty years later, Fips the dog is the only one who oneirically comes out to greet her, waiting for her in the house of her French Jewish *pied noir* family (*pied noir* meaning a French living in colonial Algeria during the French rule), the childhood home that she will never see again in person. As she says, "the manifestation of Fips is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement. At this very moment he is piercing the frail but solid cloud that separates our now from before, and I see him as if I saw him right here in reality, as if he saw me, as he looks at me" (151). The vivid presence of Fips against the yellowed background of the family home is all the more enduring, given that Fips left several scars on Cixous's now old body: "I have his teeth and his rage, painted on my left foot and on my hands" (152). Those scars are everlasting imprints of the retaliating rage of a dog who was neglected not only by a young Cixous oblivious of a pet's affective needs but also by the "Arab" community who aggravated the watchdog by throwing stones at the house of his Jewish *pieds noirs* owners.

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The adverb “doggedly” reminds us that dogs are commonly seen as the embodiment of persistence and, as such, they may be the best fit to address the endurance of memory, be it individual or collective. The dog figure also carries an analgesic effect on past memories, like a canine lick on open wounds. The dog, as a mediator of pain, is a good figure to politically engage stories about the past. Cixous’s dog is chronotopic in Paul Gilroy’s sense of the term, in its spatial and temporal evocation of a historical trauma. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy sees the slave ship as the chronotope of the Middle Passage, calling it the “central organizing symbol” (4) of the cross-Atlantic slave trade. As the slave ship pinpoints the spatio-temporal impetus of the black diaspora, the dog, in his own right, is also a central organizing symbol of a historical trauma. In Cixous’s Jewish *piéd noir* childhood in Algeria, the personal is inevitably enmeshed with the national and the ethnic, and the dog is not immune to this intricateness. Cixous’s dog bite-inflicted scars conjure up a time and a place where it all happened—“it” referring chronotopically to colonial Algeria as a specific place and historical era. Compared to Gilroy, Cixous offers an extra layer of complexity with her chronotopic dog. Gilroy’s image cannot account for the enduring impact of the Middle Passage, since the slave ship is crystalized in a given time and place like a J.M.W. Turner painting. Turner’s 1840 famous painting *The Slave Ship* captures a scene of chained enslaved Africans being thrown overboard. Though the image of the slave ship refers to the nineteenth-century slave trade, this relic cannot capture the enduring and modern impact of that trade. The dog, on the other hand, is alive and his bite is still very much crawling on that human skin. The dog and his bite are fit to map out the enduring effect of colonial subjection, be it in Algeria or, as we shall see here, in Mississippi.

During her childhood, African-American author Jesmyn Ward also suffered a traumatic dog attack by the family dog, a pit bull named Chief. It was a violent incident for which she, like Cixous, felt responsible. In her memoir *Men We Reaped* (2013), Jesmyn Ward recounts the loss, within the span of a few years, of five young men dear to her, including her brother. The stories of those deaths are woven into a portrayal of a community basking in the warmth of mutual love while showing resilience against racist and economic adversity in a predominantly black, poor, and rural part of Mississippi. Towards the beginning of the memoir, Ward says that she learned about sudden violence through Chief, her pit bull dog. Ward’s father had adopted a full-grown pit bull after his last one, the one that Jesmyn used to cuddle with, died. One hot day, Chief the new pit bull was busy getting acquainted with a stray female outside. The young Jesmyn, sitting right next to the two dogs and feeling annoyed, hit Chief on his back to shoo him away. The attack was unexpected.

He growled and leapt at me. I fell, screaming. He bit me, again and again, in my back, in the back of my head, on my ear; his stomach, white and furry, sinuous and strong, rolled from side to side over me. His growl drowned all sound. I kicked, I punched him with my fists, left and right, over and over again. (57–58)

Chief was going for Jesmyn's throat; fighting back saved her life. Upon returning from the hospital, Jesmyn's father shot Chief in the head and buried him. The author writes, "I did not tell them that I had started the fight. I felt guilty. Now, the long scar in my head feels like a thin plastic cocktail straw, and like all war wounds, it itches" (80). The itching scar foreshadows the telling of the five deaths of young black men. For each successive death, all resulting from sudden violence (murder, suicide, and car accident), Ward would feel guilty to be the one who survived, the one who beat the odds against the macabre dance of rural Mississippi. For each death, it would be as if the initial scar itched again, reminding her that she is at fault for not being the one shot in the head and buried in the backyard.

While Ward's memoir is poised to bring attention to the precariousness of young black lives, the human deaths that are put in juxtaposition to the wrongful death of Chief add a unique intersectional layer to the book. "My own lesson in sudden violence involved pit bulls, of course" (59) Ward writes. By connecting the animal death with that of young black men, Ward addresses the entanglement of black and animal fungibility through intertwined stories of wrongful deaths and survivor's guilt in a society where the chances to be randomly killed fall on some types of beings more than on others.

In "The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning" Claudia Rankine examines the enduring precariousness of black life within the context of Black Lives Matter. The author brings us back to the 1955 Emmett Till case, the tragic story of a young African-American boy from Chicago beaten to death in Mississippi for having allegedly whistled at a white woman. For Rankine, the now well-known newspaper photograph of young Till's corpse laying in an open casket speaks to the way that the black community has learned to cope with the violent and untimely death of their own. By choosing to publicly expose the disfigured face of her dead son, Till's mother was asking the nation to grieve black death at the hands of white supremacy, and this at a time when widely available pictures of lynched African-Americans hanging from trees had desensitized America to the sight of dead black bodies. Black Lives Matter resonates in the call of Till's mother because, as Rankine says, still today, "a sustained state of national mourning for black lives is called for in order to point to the undeniability of their devaluation" (155). The videotaping of black men shot or killed by a police officer's choke hold, pictures of Michael Brown's dead body lying on the street for all to see, the ubiquitous face of Trayvon Martin plastered online, are all part of a continuing effort to (re-)sensitize America to the institutionalized racism behind the mundane reality and sight of a black body killed by sudden violence.

Granted, public mourning may desensitize the nation all the more to black death, given the over-exposure of the black corpse. This is the reason why Saidiya Hartman, in *Scenes of Subjection*, a book about plantation violence, opted to focus on more subtle forms of violence rather than to expose yet again the ravaged black body to her readership. Hartman writes about the infamous whipping scene at the beginning of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*: "I have

chosen not to reproduce Douglass's account of the beating of Aunt Hester in order to call attention to the ease with which such scenes are usually reiterated, the casualness with which they are circulated, and the consequences of this routine display of the slave's ravaged body" (3).¹ Yet again, what makes the scene in Douglass's memoir all the more pathos-laden is the fact that the violent whipping is depicted through the eyes of the young Douglass as a witness. As he says, "I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing" (20). The pathos of the whipping scene is conveyed through the eyes of the young witness in a deferred type of empathy, as if the dramatic effect of the scene itself could not stand alone, as if Douglass knew that empathy for black affliction easily wears off.

Ward's memoir sends a similar message. The five deaths in Mississippi are too routine to stand the test of time, and only Ward can make us feel the impact of those deaths through writing of her own suffering. Ward reminds us that the pain over the black ravaged body can only be experienced vicariously through the pain of the black griever: Till the mother, Douglass the nephew, or Ward the sister and friend. As Rankine says, "we live in a country where Americans assimilate corpses in their daily comings and goings. Dead blacks are a part of normal life here" (147).

By using the incident of the pit bull unjustly shot in the head as a harbinger of the untimely deaths of young black men, Ward indirectly relates the routineness of black death to that of the animal in a rhetoric of the *abattoir* where the killing of lives is sanctioned and death not grieved. Seen through a species and racial paradigm, bodies are made to be generic and therefore fungible entities. As John Berger says, animals are "mortal and immortal. An animal's blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was a Lion, each ox was Ox. This—maybe the first existential dualism—was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected *and* worshipped, bred *and* sacrificed" (7). In the logic of the *abattoir*, the body is not grievable because it is incidentally undying. The generic group (Ox) too often prevails over the individual (ox). The dead ox is always replaced by another ox, which gives the impression that the animal has not died. But in truth, the Ox always outlives the ox.

The animal is then only a *mot*, a word, like Jacques Derrida's *animot*, meaning that the individual animal, made of flesh and blood, is always already essentialized and deprived of existence through human cognition. The animal is a generic condition, a word, a concept that does not bleed when it dies and is not mourned when it no longer is. Derrida writes, "from the outset there are animals and, let's say, *l'animot*. The confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of the animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority; it is also a crime" (416). Reducing the animal to an *animot* is a crime against so-called humanity—"humanity" referring here to the uniquely human right to live. And having no right to live is something that, according to Frank Wilderson,

affects both the animal and the black since the logic of the abattoir indiscriminately applies to what is not deemed human. There is a term for it: N.H.I., No Humans Involved. Within the context of the Rodney King beating case, as Sylvia Wynter explains,² the acronym was used by “public officials of the judicial system of Los Angeles to refer to any case involving a breach of rights of young Black males who belong to the jobless category of the inner city ghettos” (42). The No Humans Involved acronym reminds us that, as Claire Jean Kim says, race and species are always defined in exclusionary terms, in terms of what they are not.³ Even the currently popular and intended to be non-anthropocentric and anti-speciesist term “non-human animal” plays with an exclusionary rhetoric that unintentionally evokes a normative humanness. And again, this humanness is an indicator for who has a right to live.

For Wilderson, the black condition is similar to that of the cow in a slaughterhouse, for cows fight for their lives, while the meatpackers, deemed “humans”, fight for better living conditions, the right to live being already given for them. But as Wilderson suggests, the right to live is not given for the black man, it is the reason why his condition is more like that of the cow than the meatpacker. “Let us not refer to the question as ‘the negro question’. Instead, let us call it the ‘cow question’” (233). Wilderson provocatively says, as he locates the black condition within the realm of the abattoir. In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin uses the term “aura” to describe the essence of the object lost in the mechanical reproduction of art. His essay is a eulogy to a bygone era of true emotions and authenticity in a world that now “extracts sameness even from what is unique” (24). Derrida holds a similar view on the scientific use of animal life and the mechanical production of animal death. “Everybody knows what terrifying and intolerable pictures a realist painting could give to the industrial, mechanical, chemical, hormonal, and genetic violence to which man has been submitting animal life for the past two centuries,” Derrida writes (395). But instead of avowing these “self-evidences (395) as Derrida also says, our society is even more empathetically detached from the modern fate of the animal. Just like Cixous, Derrida is a Jewish *piec noir*. Cixous and Derrida share a common Judeo-Franco-Algerian colonialist experience, and along with it they share the double alienation of being Jewish in France and French in Algeria. Yet, while Cixous capitalizes on that experience to address the entangled patterns of oppression between racism and speciesism in a colonial context, Derrida tends to steer clear of such concerns in his anti-speciesist discourse. Derrida has been known to be uneasy with the topic of French colonialism in Algeria.⁴ Derrida’s cat, in that regard, is no Fips.

As to Benjamin, the Black Lives Matter movement could be seen as part of a global concern for this modern lack of aura and empathy in an era of mass incarceration and industrial farming. The routineness of black death is like the mechanical nature of death in a slaughterhouse, a place where life no longer matters. Each lion was a Lion, each ox was Ox, and Trayvon Martin was just a black man. Benjamin and Derrida view our emotional detachment to animal

exploitation as an eminently modern phenomenon, just as Berger talks about a pre-nineteenth-century era where one used to take the measure of animal sacrifice. But all things considered, the lack of empathy for animal fungibility is not new, it has only grown exponentially in our modern era. Animals have always been subordinated to humans in the chain of Being and therefore prone to extermination. The proportion of its commodification is what Derrida and Berger seek to underscore. Likewise, as Wilderson argues, America cannot mentally go back to a pre-lapsarian time where things used to be different because the Black was never treated as unique and grievable. The ungrievable black life is the very foundation of a society built on the back of the chattel black slave. As Saidiya Hartman says in *Lose Your Mother*, we live in the afterlife of slavery.⁵

Even though the cow question differs in some aspects from the negro question, the logic of the abattoir brings those two questions into dialogue. The abattoir entails a logic in which Chief the pit bull is shot in the head and buried in the backyard because the dog is by essence a pit bull that could be replaced by another pit bull. It is up to Ward now to show that her brother was not just a black man who could be replaced by another black man, but that he was instead a uniquely beloved brother, son, and friend. It is also her role to show that a pit bull is not merely a pit bull but a unique being who will get on and under your skin for the rest of your life, just like for Ward whose pit bull Chief comes back to haunt her novel, *Salvage the Bones* (2011). Ward's story follows a family bracing for Hurricane Katrina in the small Mississippi coastal town of Bois Sauvage. The story is told through the eyes of Esch, a young African-American girl going through the early stage of a hidden pregnancy. Esch's narrative gaze focuses on her brother Skeetah and his loving relationship to his pit bull China who has just delivered puppies. Esch is, soon like China, about to become a mother but, unlike China, she suffers from unrequited love. The family—Esch, Skeetah, and two more brothers—has been raised by a father after the death of their mother who readers learn later passed away while giving birth to Esch's youngest brother.

The parallels are obvious: the mother, the daughter, and China all caught in the throes of pregnancies and childbearing, all three so vulnerable and so strong at the same time. As Skeetah says, anyone who gives birth is stronger after: "They got something to protect" (96). Motherhood is uniquely trans-generational and trans-species in the novel, and love is too. The author says about Skeetah building a shed for China, "he is building her a house. He is watching over her, gauging her for sickness. He knows love" (103). Esch longs for that kind of love, the love that only a dog man and his dog can share. China is a fighting dog and Skeetah does not spare her, even while she is still nursing. The fight is violent, her breast has been torn apart, but because she is a mother, and mothers know how to fight, China will win the fight. After the victory, Skeetah is devoted to nursing his dog back to health.

Skeetah unwraps China's breast, and it hangs free, already bruised and wilted from disuse, it is a dark mark on her, marring what was once so white, so pristine. The scar makes what remains even more beautiful. Skeetah looks at China like he would dive into her if he could and drown. (192)

Esch is mesmerized by this kind of love, the complex and controversial love between a dog man and his fighting dog, what Colin Dayan refers to as "another kind of love" (96) and Harlan Weaver calls "some kind of love" (701). Her envious look at Skeetah's love for China comes from the fact that she seems to be only experiencing the fighting part of life, with none of the nurturing companionship that she seems to see in Skeetah's care for China. But inversely, what Ward is showing us between the lines is that China is left to fend for herself, with her dog owner Esch and his at times questionable choices as her only source of so-called "care". Echoing that sense of vulnerability, Skeetah is also left to fend for herself with her secret pregnancy. Her precarious situation is all the more poignant in the context of her own mother's death during childbirth, a potential effect of a failing "care" system too.

Ward's depiction of a love story between a southern black man and a pit bull within the context of Hurricane Katrina is pregnant with meaning. Like Cixous' Fips, China is a chronotopic dog pointing to the here and now of Hurricane Katrina, and particularly to the poor government response to the disaster. Hurricane Katrina ignited one of the first social media-induced collective outcries against the fungibility of black lives. But interestingly enough, this outcry was initiated by a disturbing interspecies comparison. The images of pets being rescued by animal rescue organizations while black residents were left behind, standing on roofs waiting for help or lying dead on the ground, have struck a chord in the public opinion, leading some to wonder if black lives truly mattered in America. Kanye West was the first to vocalize his concern with his now famous line about the president overseeing rescue efforts, "Bush doesn't care about black people".⁶ Michael Eric Dyson would follow suit, arguing that "it is safe to say that race played a major role in the failure of the federal government—especially for Bush and FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] head Michael Brown—to respond in a timely manner to the poor black folk of Louisiana because black grief and pain have been ignored throughout the nation's history" (24).

More than feeling that Bush did not care about black people, the real issue would ultimately boil down to whether America cared more about animals than black people. As Melissa Harris-Perry argues on a blog for *The Nation* in the context of Hurricane Katrina, "many African Americans feel that the suffering of animals evokes more empathy and concern among whites than does the suffering of black people".⁷ But Claire Jean Kim duly reshapes this historiographic perspective by arguing that Hurricane Katrina should not be used as a platform to pit animal life against black life since interspecies arm wrestling only re-inscribes the very pattern of subjection that the comparison meant to undo. As she says, "in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Black lament, 'We

Are Not Animals' was a bid for the recognition of Black community. But defending Black humanity does not logically require reinscribing the subordination of nonhuman animals" (286). Kim's point is a compelling one, especially when seen through Ward's lens. The question should not be articulated as a zero-sum calculus; it should not be a question of choosing to save one over the other.

Ward, like Kim, reorients the debate in her novel by showing a young black man determined to save his pit bulls. Skeetah's father and brother do not want China and her puppies in the house. The house is for human protection only. The two men think that the dogs should stay in their shed while the hurricane comes through. But as Ward writes, "'life is a struggle. Everything deserves to live,' Skeetah says. 'And her and the puppies going to live'" (213). By having Skeetah committed to saving his pit bulls, Ward gives agency to the black man. Skeetah is now the one rescuing the dog instead of being the one waiting for his rescue and competing with the dog for survival. Ward reshapes the historiography of Hurricane Katrina by choosing to underscore black and animal solidarity and unconditional love for each other. "That's cause some people understand that between man and dog is a relationship. [...] 'Equal'" (29) as Skeetah says.

This special *kind* of love, to paraphrase Dayan and Weaver again, is not flawless, or blameless, but the point is that, as Dayan argues in *The Law Is a White Dog* and *With Dogs at the Edge of Life*, institutionalized cruelty, violence, and killing are more insidious and potentially harmful than the kind of relationship that a dog man may entertain with his dog. As Dayan says in the context of the war on terror, "the worst cruelties belong to a politer world" (*The Law*, 107). The law breeds a type of violence that is unmatched by individual beings and yet goes unnoticed because it operates under the guise of righteousness. Dayan looks at cases in which animal rescue organizations have exhibited a lack of nuances in their putative "humane" rescue efforts, as they proceeded to massively euthanize fighting dogs deemed dangerous with the goal of breed extinction. The author sees this lack of nuances as symptomatic of a law-abiding repressive apparatus that unapologetically inflicts the greatest violence in the name of the greater good. High moral grounds function at the level of the *animot*, dismissing the individual for the sake of an intangible existence. Dayan sees righteousness as one of the biggest evils of our modern era. "Pious rectitude and humanitarian judgement alarm me" (105) as she simply puts it.

Kim reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of the 2016 Harambe controversy, a case in which a gorilla was shot to death by a zoo worker in a Cincinnati zoo to save the life of a three-year-old African-American boy who landed in the captive enclosure. The Harambe case created another race/species bone of contention, just like with Hurricane Katrina, leading some to flaunt a Gorilla Lives Matter message in defiance of the Black Lives Matter slogan. But what particularly interests Kim in the Harambe case is how conservation practices see right through the ox in their pursuit of saving the Ox—to use Berger's terms. Incidentally, the zoo director looks at Harambe as undying. Though his

blood “flowed like human blood” (Berger), his species was immortal. As Kim explains in “Murder and Matter in Harambe’s House”,

Before Harambe’s body was cold, zookeepers rushed in, made an incision in his scrotum and extracted sperm to place in a “frozen zoo” for safekeeping. Thane Maynard [the zoo director] was then able to say to the press: “There’s a future. It’s not the end of his gene pool” (Schwartz, 2016). Note the absence of a subject in Maynard’s first sentence. He could not plausibly say “There’s a future for Harambe”. Who is it or what is it then that has a future, according to Maynard? (42)

When concerns over bio-diversity are at play, the species (Ox) will take precedence over the animal (ox), the generic trumping the individual. The elision of the individual is therefore particularly salient in conservation discourses. As Kim says, “Harambe’s gene pool. This slippage between species representative and individual, or, more precisely, the substitution of the former for the latter, is how we have come to talk about wild animals in the Age of Conservation, or at least those whose numbers have dwindled enough to earn the designation “endangered” (42).

The lack of nuances in righteousness tends to smooth out the complexity, ambiguities, and contradictions of existence in favour of grand ideals. And there is nothing more complex and ambiguous than the love of a dog man for his dog, hence the need to eradicate the very existence of that kind of love in pursuit of eradicating the kinds of domination and violence it is intertwined with. The messiness of it all is what Ward is able to convey in her novel. In her depiction of two pit bulls mating, Ward writes, “when he and China had sex, there was blood on their jaws, on her coat, and instead of loving, it looked like they were fighting” (8). Love can coincide with infliction of pain in a way that African-American writer Kiese Laymon has brilliantly shown in his 2018 memoir, *Heavy*. There is an abundance of “Mississippi-ness” and “black body-ness”⁸ as he calls it in an interview, in his writing. Laymon’s *Heavy* digs deep into black southern love, the beauty of it and the violence of it too. Laymon’s mother raised him well and broke him too, literally, with the weight of her repeated “whuppings”. Laymon does not shy away from the complexity, destructiveness, and violence of his mother’s love. She would be so gentle and fiercely abusive in the same day, he wishes that she would have stuck to one form of physical touch. “Days, and often hours, before you beat me, you touched me so gently. You told me you loved me” (5). This, all at once, violent and nurturing love pressing against the backdrop of white supremacy is what Laymon and Ward’s writings are made of, it is their Mississippi-ness. After China’s final fight, “Her breast is bloody, torn. The nipple, missing” (174), Ward writes. Laymon’s mother did not have to whup her son to perfection, just as Skeetah did not have to make his dog fight when she was still nursing, but they did, in a strange *kind of* love. They thus depict, as Cixous says, “the awful complexities that make love twisted bloody and criminal up to the belated hour of softness” (152).

NOTES

1. The well-known nineteenth-century photograph of Gordon, or “Whipped Peter” the former slave whose back gruesomely scarred by the master’s whip, is another example of the raw and now somehow iconic display of the ravaged black body.
2. “How did they come to conceive of what it means to be both human and North American in the kinds of terms (i.e. to be White, of Euroamerican culture and descent, middle-class, college-educated and suburban) within whose logic, the jobless and usually school drop-out/push-out category of young Black males can be perceived, and therefore behaved towards, only as the Lack of the human, the Conceptual” (“No Human Involved”, 43).
3. “Rethinking the human begins with the recognition that the human has always been thoroughly exclusionary concept in race and species terms—that it has only ever made sense as a way of marking who does *not* belong in the inner circle” (*Dangerous Crossings*, 287).
4. For more on Jacques Derrida’s ambivalent position regarding the Algerian war, see Edward Baring, “Liberalism and the Algerian War: The Case of Jacques Derrida”. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Winter 2010), 239–261.
5. “If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment” (*Lose Your Mother*, 6).
6. See the video of Kayne West going off-script during an NBC telethon for Hurricane Katrina with his now famous 2005 “Bush doesn’t care about black people” phrase here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIUzLpO1kxI>
7. See “Michael Vick, Racial History and Animal Rights,” Melissa Harris-Perry, *The Nation* (December 30, 2010), <https://www.thenation.com/article/michael-vick-racial-history-and-animal-rights/>
8. See interview between Lolly Bowean and Kiese Laymon at the Chicago Humanities Festival, November 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm_IJD-Iybg

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Shared and Hefted Lives in Twenty-First-Century Shepherds' Calendars

Catherine Parry

There is, at present, little literary critical work on relationships between humans and animals in life-writing, despite the frequency with which writers accord significance to animals in their autobiographies and memoirs. James Rebanks's *The Shepherd's Life* (2016) and Amanda Owen's *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess* (2016) are memoirs which describe the lives of two hill shepherds in northern England, and the significant animals are—unsurprisingly—sheep. Rebanks's and Owen's textualisations of their lives as hill farmers take the form of shepherds' calendars, in which the activities of the shepherding year are organised by season or month. The form in turn reveals the nature of a particular kind of human-animal relationship in agriculture, one that they align, through their cyclical narratives, with the naturalness of the turn of the seasons. The concept of hefting lies at the centre of how Rebanks and Owen imagine their relationships with sheep and landscape as they analogue their own sense of belonging to northern England's mountains, moors, and fells with a capacity in the Herdwick and Swaledale sheep they breed to be hefted to—to bond with—a specific area of land. The writers' sense of their own hefting proposes a shared human-ovine experience of the hills, but one which, at the same time as it bespeaks shepherds' imaginative and emotional relationship with their farms and their shepherding lifeway, manifests a more uneven form of affective relationship between the shepherd and sheep.¹

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The primary concern of both writers is to convey their shepherding practices as the continuation of centuries of hill farming life, and their relationships with their sheep emerge as an effect of their storytelling, not as its object. Rebanks lives with his wife and two daughters in Matterdale on the edge of the Lake District, and shepherds a flock of hefted Herdwick sheep. He describes his memoir as not only his own story, but also “the story of a family and a farm”, a reflection on the forces that have shaped his landscape, and “a retelling of the history of the Lake District—from the perspective of the people who live there, and have done for hundreds of years”.² Rebanks claims a heritage of centuries of farming knowledge, and his concern is to mount a defence of his ancient shepherding lifeway. His seasonal narrative emphasises his perception of the mutuality of his own life with sheep, landscape, and history. Amanda Owen’s *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess* speaks of a life very similar to Rebanks’s, as she and her husband shepherd their flock of hefted Swaledales and raise their (now nine) children at Ravenseat Farm in Swaledale, North Yorkshire. Her narrative has a less literary, more popular discursive style than Rebanks’s, and its appeal depends at least in part on her previous appearances on television as a shepherd who is both a woman and the mother of a large family, but it creates a similar lens through which hill shepherding and the practice of hefting are viewed as authentic, traditional, and worthy engagements with land and flocks.

Vinciane Despret argues that prevailing assumptions by humans about sheep can be destabilised by asking questions which “allow sheep to be more interesting”.³ Describing primatologist Thelma Rowell’s removal of competitive constraints on the behaviour of each of her small flock of 22 sheep by giving them 23 bowls of food each day, Despret says that such a research method expands “the repertoire of hypotheses and questions proposed to the sheep”. Rather than compelling her sheep to interact in competition for food and making assumptions about their behaviour based only on such conditions, Rowell offers them an opportunity to negotiate friendships, enmities, or other social relationships in more open conditions that may not only include competition for food, but also invite the possibilities created by other factors. Rowell’s method, Despret says, gives “all the chances to the sheep” by offering them choices in response to a proposition; they are given chances to be more interesting to us (360). Thus, sheep can be reconceived as beings with desires and imaginings of their own, instead of through a conventional vernacular that views them as limited, silly creatures with little individual will or character. Rebanks’s and Owen’s life-writings are filled with stories about distinctively individual sheep and assertions that “sheep are not stupid”,⁴ but at the same time, shepherding is a commercial enterprise, and they, and indeed probably almost all farmers, view compassionate care and engagement with their livestock as coherent with eating them. This chapter takes up the complex conditions of shepherds’ relationships with their sheep in explorations of *The Shepherd’s Life* and *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess* to consider their textual mediations of twenty-first-century farming. It asks if their

analogs of hefting propose a shared experience of land and lifeway that makes the sheep interesting on their own account, or if they perform a cultural validation of meat eating that, in Despret's terms, awards sheep few chances to become interesting in ways beyond that of edible livestock.

THE SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR

Shepherd's calendar life-writing is a narrative form that deploys the annual turn of the seasons as an ordering principle. In *The Shepherd's Life* and *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess* the natural year functions as a device for organising representations of human agricultural activities and experiences, and weaves them together with the activities of non-human species, climate, natural processes, and landscapes, and with the lives and farming methods of past shepherds.⁵ Such a formal association between narrative, rurality, and nature in the twenty-first century runs in tandem—in the UK at least—with a general counter-urbanising trend,⁶ incorporating popular interest in less environmentally destructive living and the consumption of what Mara Miele calls happy meat, a category of product that seeks to extenuate potential consumer guilt about meat eating by growing animals in high-welfare environments.⁷ The current popularity of agricultural life-writing more generally draws attention to contemporary unease at increased pesticide and synthetic fertiliser use, and the possibility that pressure to improve agricultural efficiency may further erode farming's ancient entangling with soil and the changing seasons, and lead to US-style feedlot meat-growing systems. Hill sheep farming in the UK, though, appears to have resisted the worst of industrialising agribusiness by keeping its flocks out at pasture all year round,⁸ and to a British culture involved in what Robert MacFarlane describes as a sentimental "nature romance" with the countryside, this seems—as Rebanks's and Owen's publishing success attests—to have some appeal.⁹ There are, then, connections between the seasonal round of hill shepherding activities, cultural trends, and the contemporary popularity of the shepherd's calendar life-writing, which, through its cyclical narrative form, performs a naturalisation of human agricultural activity and an authentication of the traditional methods employed by hill shepherds.

The figure of the shepherd occupies a romanticised position in the British cultural imagination. Shepherding is infused with Christian overtones of lamb-like innocence, and perceptions of pastoral bucolic simplicity and the authenticity of rural life, which from the eighteenth century onwards has, Philip Armstrong says, offered an increasingly urbanised British population the "imaginary compensation" of escape from the transient values and noise of the modern world into an innocent and harmonious connection with nature and self.¹⁰ Preceded by such works as Edmund Spenser's *Shepheard's Calendar* poem, James Hogg's *Shepherd's Calendar* essays, John Clare's shepherd poems from his *Shepherd's Calendar* collection, and John and Eliza Forder's photographic essay *Hill Shepherd*, Rebanks and Owen represent their rural lives as dictated by the seasonal cycle. They emphasise the hard work, the misery of

bad weather, and their distress when animals die, but they also reiterate the spiritual satisfactions of shepherding and, in so doing, reinforce a pastoral cultural identity of the good life.

The shepherd's calendar form offers Rebanks and Owen a method to articulate more than the autobiographical story of a human; their calendars are multi-stranded narratives which weave together the lives of shepherds, farming families and communities, agricultural markets and systems, rural landscapes, the natural environment, and sheep. The chronological rendering of the farming year underpins Rebanks' and Owen's texts, but there are multiple temporal dimensions inside the linear arrangement of months and seasons. *The Shepherd's Life* and *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess* are characterised by their articulation of a set of relationships between place, living entities, and, as Michael Woods puts it, rural space as "the routine repetition of complexly multifaceted performances" by such entities in "everyday practices".¹¹ These "everyday practices", each carried out at a particular time in the shepherding year, are described in a temporally thickened present tense, in which when we are told that "[b]y the end of May, all our yows [ewes] have been returned to the moor"¹²; we understand we are being told not only that the sheep have been returned to the moor *this* year, but that this happens every May, and always has.

The framework of an episodically and cyclically repeating present is embellished with information about the task or event in question, with anecdotes that happen every year during a given farming activity and perform its character, such as persuading a ewe who has lost a lamb to foster an orphan by making a little familiar-smelling jacket from the skin of her dead baby to put on the orphan. There are also anecdotes specific to a given year, diversions into the history of place and task, and into general commentaries on farming. Entwined with these non-progressive episodes, anecdotes and digressions are progressive but disrupted narratives of sheep, farm, and family. As with the entangled—shared and hefted—lives of the Rebanks and Owen families and their farms, sheep and landscapes, the texts entangle their telling of human, farm, and animal stories with the telling of the natural processes around which those stories are formed. Calendars in general propose that time is organised in linear, progressive, rational order, but the shepherd's calendar, by making the May of now also every past May and every May to come, proposes the persistence of a deep underlying natural order in shepherding, and appeals to urbanites' curiosity about traditional lifeways.

PYRAMIDS

The earliest evidence of sheep domestication dates from 9000 years ago in north-eastern Iraq, where they were kept for milk, and sheep remain integral to human civilisation, offering the facility of meat, wool, and milk packaged into a relatively easily manageable body.¹³ Wool was once the foundation of British wealth, Philip Walling says, but the purpose now of most of the national

flock—numbering approximately 34 million—¹⁴is to produce meat.¹⁵ Most of this flock participates in a complex stratified cross-breeding and distribution strategy for growing meat, one that makes all of Britain into sheep-rearing pasture by designing breeds to match terrain and climate. This system is unique to Britain, and Walling describes it as the “sheep pyramid”.¹⁶

Sheep such as Rebanks’s Herdwicks and Owen’s Swaledales occupy the top layer of the sheep pyramid. They form a genetic reservoir of pure-bred mountain and hill breeding flocks from which two broader strata in the pyramid descend. Pure-bred hill ewes are crossed with upland rams such as the Blue-faced Leicester to produce the pyramid’s next layer of cross-bred breeding ewes (e.g., a Swaledale ewe crossed with a Blue-faced Leicester ram produces a cross-breed known as a mule). The cross-breed ewes are then crossed with lowland meat rams (terminal sires) such as Suffolks, Beltexes, or Meatlincs to make butchers’ lambs for slaughter. At each layer of the pyramid sheep are progressively moved down hill so that lambs raised on poorer mountain fodder put on weight rapidly on richer lowland pasture. Overall, the facility of the sheep pyramid to make all the UK’s landscapes into productive meat-growing resource structures the lives, experiences, reproductive activity, and deaths of most sheep in the UK, although, according to the National Sheep Association, market pressures and new technology have instituted movements away from the stratified system.¹⁷

Breeders have been attempting to create the perfect butchers’ sheep for over two centuries, resulting in breeds such as the Beltex. For Walling, Beltexes are “square barrels of meat with a leg at each corner”, the “ugly and meaty” expression of a culture that demands cheap food. Walling, who farms Herdwicks, declares that he would find no joy in rearing sheep with such “depressing functionality of purpose”.¹⁸ Rebanks, likewise, rejects “improved” meat breeds such as the Beltex, not only because they are unsuited to his inhospitable land, but because he believes his native-breed Herdwicks and fell-farming methods privilege ecological and economic sustainability above an industrialised meat-growing system that depends on unsustainable and ecologically damaging external inputs. His Herdwicks are, nevertheless, intimately connected with Beltexes for they are part of the sheep pyramid and thus equally implicated in a system dedicated to the efficient production of Beltex-style meaty cheapness.

BECOMING-WITH THE LAND

Rebanks and Owen farm Herdwicks and Swaledales, breeds which produce strong lambs on poor fodder, but these sheep did not become commercially (and, from Rebanks’s and Owen’s perspective, aesthetically) attractive breeding stock by natural means. Like other livestock species, Sarah Franklin says, “the biology of the domestic sheep ... is inseparable from human history—and vice versa!”, for “what [sheep] ‘are’ cannot be extricated from what they have been made and bred to be”.¹⁹ Rebanks’s and Owen’s favoured breeds “are” sheep “made and bred to be”, according to the National Sheep Association,

“[h]ardy, thick-coated, able-bodied, excellent mothers” who provide the genetic material to maximise meat or wool production from Britain’s soil and climate.²⁰ This is a plural process, for as sheep have been shaped by humans to yield economically viable meat from the landscape, so sheep and landscape shape each other. This shaping is intensified in the practice of hefting. According to a report made to DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) by ADAS (Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (UK)), “hefting is a system of livestock husbandry based on territorial instincts. ... All wild and feral sheep have a strong female home range tendency and this natural instinct has been encouraged in discreet flocks”,²¹ at least in part by culling persistent wanderers and breeding only from those with stronger hefting instincts and abilities.²² Hefting is a flock management system that makes productive and controlled use of unfenced pastures and at the same time creates sheep who know where to find good grazing and shelter on their heaf (the piece of moor to which they are hefted), and whose bodies have adapted to thrive on the herbage specific to that heaf. As John Gray puts it, “sheep are their relation to the landscape”; they are literally made by their landscape.²³ At the same time, Rebanks claims that Lake District shepherds have “shaped this landscape, and ... [been] shaped by it in turn” (3) in centuries of shepherding work, and thus shepherds might—like their sheep—also be their relation to the landscape. This entanglement is central to Rebanks’s and Owen’s conceptions of themselves as shepherds.

For these authors, the practice of hefting describes a shepherd’s affiliation to and experience of the hills, and emerges as an effect of their shepherding life-way. They stress their sense of the value of their working connections and emotional engagements with flocks, farms, and land, and speak of lifeways richly suffused with the satisfactions of community and of the sometimes transcendent experience of life on the hills. For Owen, the shepherding life is one in which “the rewards ... far exceed the difficulties” (1), and in which, “through working the land I feel a connection with those who went before” (342). Rebanks evokes a sense of the sublime lonely glory of the hills as he speaks of “the thrill of timelessness” up on the fells, and “the feeling of carrying on something bigger than me, something that stretches back through other hands and other eyes into the depths of time” (285). His shepherding life, he says, has “an earthy, sensible meaning” (284), and he has a “love of, and pride in, this place” (55), a Lake District shaped by the work of many generations of shepherds and by the “paths worn by sheep over the centuries” (282). He and Owen conceive of themselves as hefted to the hills, and their language invests shepherding with the notion that human endeavour, livestock and nature live in harmony, and chimes with the British nature-romantic imaginary.²⁴

In Rebanks’s and Owen’s stories, hefting invokes a shepherd-sheep-landscape conjunction, which can be framed through Donna Haraway’s concept of “natural-social relationalities”, in which nature and culture, material and semiotic, body and mind, are entangled in a matrix of relating. Haraway describes human and non-human animal relating in this matrix as a knotting together in

which bodies and meanings are co-shaped or co-constituted; beings are in a state of “becoming-with” in a relational web composed of multiple figures—sheep/shepherd/shepherding/land/tradition/history/economics/politics—which are “not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another”.²⁵ In their co-constitution, beings are in a mutual relation and in their being-with they become hybrid. For Rebanks and Owen, the matrix for their co-constitution with their environment is shepherding, and hefting the means by which the knots are tied. In their shepherd’s calendar life-writings form the analogisation of humans with hefted sheep, and an emphasis on the social virtue of traditional shepherding methods, claims a mutual belonging of shepherd, sheep, and land.

For Rebanks, hefting is an environmentally sustainable, morally and ethically defensible, and spiritually satisfying farming practice: it is a “material-semiotic” knotting of living beings, lifeway, ecology, and agricultural product which confirms hefting’s rightness as a land use. The National Sheep Association agrees, viewing hefting as integral to the character of hill landscapes. It argues that the loss of hefted flocks after the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak and changes to agri-environment schemes have resulted in lower stock levels on hills, and consequent encroachment of scrub and bracken has led to “substantial degradation in the uplands”.²⁶ Rebanks prefaces *The Shepherd’s Life* with dictionary definitions of hefting that refer to its Old Norse origins (xi) and locate it as the keystone of his story. This frames and mediates his text with a profound sense of tradition and ancient belonging to the Lake District. He represents hefting as participating in “a farming pattern fundamentally unchanged from many centuries ago” in which “things are driven by the seasons and necessity, not by our will” (20). Moreover, he describes his hefted sheep as “half-wild” (7) creatures who resist being fenced in but do not stray from their “heaf” because they have been “taught their sense of belonging by their mothers as lambs – an unbroken chain of learning that goes back thousands of years” (9). Rebanks’s language invokes ideas of sheep whose “half-wild” and thus half-natural preferences are respected by shepherds, and who are farmed according to the natural constraints of weather and soil rather than by industrialised modern methods. Hefting may, then, in Rebanks’s terms, be a farming practice which offers sheep some choices and freedoms. At the same time, hefting proposes an aesthetic of human, land, and sheep flourishing, so that when Rebanks speaks of “the vast harvest of breeding sheep, meat and wool” (40) that comes down off the fells each autumn he invests his method of growing meat with a sense of health and worthiness.

Rebanks’s vision of hefted farming as worthy and sustainable land use is not shared by environmentalist George Monbiot. Where Rebanks sees wildflower meadows and an agricultural landscape of pastures maintained in good heart with drains dug many centuries previously, Monbiot sees fells “reduced by sheep to a treeless waste of cropped turf whose monotony is relieved only by erosion gullies, exposed soil and bare rock”. He describes sheep-farming in the

Lake District as the cultural “fairytale” of an Arcadian idyll that obscures an environmental disaster.²⁷ Rebanks acknowledges that his perspective is one among competing stories from tourists, walkers, and rewilders, among others, of how the Lake District should be, but *The Shepherd’s Life*, subtitled, *A Tale of the Lake District*, is his claim for respect for the story of the “native” (88), “forgotten” (xx) people who created that landscape, a story which has, he says, been ignored and overwritten. He argues that when shepherds call the Lake District “our” landscape, we mean it as a physical and intellectual reality. There is nothing chosen about it. This landscape is our home and we rarely stray far from it, or endure anywhere else for long before returning” (4). In the manner of a hefted sheep, he feels he has a bond with the landscape that is prior to conscious thought and that emerges from the literal presence of the land in his body, and constitutes an instinctive tie to it.

If Rebanks’s concern is to marshal hefting as a defence of the shepherding lifeway, Owen deploys hefting to articulate her experience of place and motherhood. A picnic trip with her children to collect a wandering sheep is exciting because they are “heading off our heaf and straying into foreign territory” (56), she says, analogising, with the concept of the heaf, her own and her children’s attachment to the farm. For Owen, hefting describes the intimate knowledge of and emotional affiliation to Ravenseat that she has acquired in her daily walking of the farm and the moors, and which she passes on to her children—in the manner of a ewe to her lambs—by assimilating them into the daily activities of the farm from birth. The proposition of a correspondence between the relationships of human mother with child and ewe with lamb and of both species’ “becoming-with” the land is appealing (particularly as Swaledales are valued for their good mothering and ability to raise strong, hardy lambs). But this is an easy analogy that romanticises the sheep by framing their lives in terms of love and nurture, rather than in terms of breeding stock that produces an annual crop of meat stock. Hefting is an analogy which describes human and sheep “becoming-with” the land, but it is not the full context of a “becoming-with” of human and sheep for while the two species are intensely entangled, power relations remain uneven.

BEING ALONGSIDE

Sheep are part of a hill shepherd’s identity, but the concept of becoming-with does not fully articulate the complexity of sheep-shepherd relating. Non-human animals, whether real or textual, are for humans a complex composite of empirical and imagined features and functions. Humans’ material and ethical engagements with animals are responses to this composition rather than to the creature itself. The flesh, wool, and temperaments of domesticated sheep have been shaped across centuries of close working relationships with humans; they are, Rebanks says, “cultural objects” (170). Their bodies are the material product of human needs, desires, and imaginings of biddable, woolly, and meaty livestock, and also the aesthetic product of an imaginative human

relationship with how sheep should look and how they should inhabit the rural landscape. Relationships between sheep and shepherd are thus conditional and asymmetrical.

Joanna Latimer's conceptualisation of human-animal entanglements as characterised by partial connections and divisions which "do not reduce humans with non-human animals to hybrids", offers a method with which to articulate the points at which Rebanks's and Owen's hefted shepherding identities diverge from the lives of their sheep.²⁸ In short, for shepherds the hefting of sheep provides the means for them to name their co-constitution with the land, but does not necessarily describe a sheep-shepherd hybrid. Latimer's concept of "being alongside" opens out how their connections are more partial than the mutuality and hybridity Haraway sees as the ideal for interspecies relating.²⁹

A shepherd's relationship with his or her sheep is lived and conceptualised with individuals and with the flocks into which those individuals are collected. For a shepherd, a flock is a constant entity with a recognisable identity, composed of a fluid procession of individuals who, nevertheless, maintain the character of the flock. For sheep, the flock is a form of complex social organisation in which individuals interact following the social rules of their species, and hefting in particular provides the conditions for long-term relationships to form as sheep may spend most of their natural lives with the same heaf-mates. As shepherds, however, Rebanks and Owen enter into relationships with their flocks in ways more closely related to human identities and sheep aesthetics than to the flock as a formation born of ovine social complexity.

Herdwick flocks in the Lake District were, allegedly, first formed 1000 years ago when newly arrived Vikings crossed their own sheep with indigenous Celtic sheep. These flocks now look very different to their proposed tenth-century forebears, having since been subjected to many generations of selective breeding for environmental fitness and function. The location and identity of such flocks, however, remain unchanged, for a flock belongs not to an individual but to a farm, with its name, continuing presence, and genetic heritage maintained by the preservation of hefting, shepherding traditions, and Commoners' grazing rights. In Rebanks's words, "The flocks remain; the people change over time" (38), framing the flocks as intimately entangled with the landscape and with history, ancient entities that exceed the transience and ephemerality of individual lives.

Owen's narrative endows her Swaledale flock with a similar sense of the contrast between her own impermanence at Ravenseat, and the continuity of flock and farm. She is only "passing through" (341), and like the centuries of farmers who preceded her, she is the guardian (342) of Ravenseat's flocks and moors, in a relationship with and responsible to their past and for their future. Such responsibility includes preservation of the character of Ravenseat's flock; Owen says that "[t]here are small but distinct physical traits that are passed down from generation to generation [of sheep] ... kenning your sheep is about being able to recognize your own type from others of the same breed" (96).

Ravenseat's Swaledale flock is a distinctive entity characterised by aesthetic and functional features which have been selected for by its present and past shepherds. These selections refine sheep for fitness to the environment at Ravenseat and the meat and breeding market to which the Owens sell their lambs.

They also follow fashions among breeders for particular markings or body shapes, and pursue the individual ambitions of the shepherd as he or she searches for their ideal sheep. As Rebanks says, "I know exactly what the perfect Herdwick tup [ram] looks like because it struts around in my head. I measure all my real ones against it" (170). Here he appears to be delineating the "intermittency and partialness of human-animal connections"³⁰ when meat animals are grown in a matrix that incorporates human identity, commerce, aesthetics, and affect.³¹ For a shepherd, the nature of the relationship with his or her flocks embodies a unifying ideal, but one of no meaningful benefit to the individual sheep in that flock. It is instead, in significant proportion, determined by the establishment and maintenance of a flock identity predicated on an individual shepherd's imagining of the perfect example of the breed, and efforts to produce lambs unified by their consonance with that ideal.

Many of Rebanks's and Owen's stories recount relationships between individual sheep and shepherds that espouse inter-species connection. Owen writes that

I know many of the sheep: the bad ones, the good ones, the old favourites. I know the wild ones who will put their heads down and refuse to move for the dog, and the wanderers who will turn up late at somebody else's pen miles off their patch. I also know the gluttons who will take a swipe at your legs with their horns and trip you up when you're feeding them. (96)

Her sheep are, she says, "free spirits and wander off on their own little adventures" (286). They are, then, capable of some self-determination and curiosity and, despite appearing similar, are possessed of dissimilar traits, preferences, and interests that make at least some of them individually recognisable to her. In a lambing season anecdote, she describes removing—out of necessity—one of a ewe's twin lambs for bottle-feeding. The ewe returns late at night with her remaining lamb, noisy and obstreperous, having made an "epic journey" (113) over moors and walls to retrieve her missing baby. Struck by the ewe's intelligent, angry determination, and devotion to her lamb, the Owens return him to her. This ewe, individualised by her memorable behaviour, is forgiven for climbing walls.

She is an exception, however, for "ratchin" (66) sheep, those distinguished by repeatedly jumping walls and gates to reach better grass, are not usually tolerated, and such "rogue" (66) individuals will be despatched to market or the abattoir. Distinctiveness in a sheep does not, then, necessarily earn privileges. Owen's decision to reward the ratchin' of the devoted mother, but not that of greedy self-serving sheep whose "free spirits" are not in accord with the

commercial goals of the farm, illustrates the purposeful selectiveness of human connections with and disconnections from livestock.

To a sheep, the flock is a social condition, but to a shepherd, the flock is enrolled in a “shepherding culture” (Rebanks, 11) of small-scale agribusiness characterised by caring for and taking personal pride in producing an animal that is both fit for purpose and close to the perfect tup or lamb. Good mothers and strong lambs indicate high welfare farming and healthy sheep who might well be living happy and contented lives, and Owen has no doubt that her farming methods produce animals that are “healthy and happy” (249). She grieves for the pain and fear suffered by a brutally savaged ewe, *and* she is proud of the fat and healthy lambs Ravenseat sends to market. “People have to eat” (249), she says, diverting attention away from the benefit she derives from those fat, healthy lambs and from their suffering when they are sold and slaughtered, and towards farming as a fundamental human necessity. Rebanks, likewise, writes emotively of the death of an elderly ewe, *and* also speaks of the tastiness of Herdwick meat. Human-sheep relating here is not one of mutuality, for the objectives and outcomes for each species are different. Their lives are connected, but not at all points, and they can be described as “being alongside”, in which there is “a conjoining of contingent and different ‘parts’, none of which is simply subsumed into a whole” (Latimer 2013, 79). As Bruckner et al. write, “being alongside” recognises both a farmer’s love of and joy in the close connections they have with their animals’ lives, and the “partial disassociation” required to maintain the “asymmetrical power relations which place farm animals as destined for food”.³²

CONCLUSION

Rebanks’s and Owen’s shepherd’s calendars function as the life-writing of individuals, lifeways, and landscape, and as statements of shepherding knowledge and practice. They demonstrate their diligence and expertise in the care of their livestock, and for them the practice of hill shepherding is a lifeway suffused with pride, compassion, and belonging, intimately entangled with the lives of sheep and the shape of the land, and endorsed by the respectability of its ancient heritage. Their narratives are invitations into the romance of shepherding and the lives of their stock. Their hefted ewes may spend most of their lives with the same heaf-mates and thus can express their species’ natural capacity to form complex social attachments (or enmities), and have the freedom to stray if they so wish, so hefting methods may offer sheep choices and more interesting lives. Their hefting, however, unlike that experienced by their shepherds, confines them with invisible walls so that they may be owned, controlled, and, ultimately, eaten. Rebanks and Owen emphasise their sense of belonging to their hill farms and valorise their entanglement with sheep through shepherding and the shaping of sheep to environment and function, but while they develop their own spiritual genesis in the experience of hefting, they meditate little on the experiences of the sheep themselves in this shaping. The human making of

sheep's fitness to environment is taken to be a good in itself for the sheep: sheep are in their right place in a fitting congruence of desire in which where sheep prefer to be is where humans want them to be.

Haraway argues that there is “no way to eat and not to kill, no way to eat and not to become with other mortal beings to whom we are accountable, no way to pretend innocence and transcendence or a final peace”. The properly ethical responsibility is, then, to learn how to “eat well” by “knowing more” and “feeling more”, and Rebanks and Owen perform this responsibility by revealing the previously little-known culture of shepherding in Britain.³³ They do not, however, bring us “face-to-face, [and] body-to-body” with the “fleshly historical reality”, as Haraway puts it, of sheep's lives and deaths.³⁴ Rather, by focusing on traditional practices and a sense of their own hefting as valorisations of livestock farming, their stories produce a contemporary cultural mediation of meat eating. The shepherding life seems spiritually, emotionally, and physically satisfying for a human, but for a sheep, whose individual preferences are inseparable from those bred into it by humans, the shepherded life, depending for longevity as it does on reliable lamb production and coherence with an imaginary ideal sheep, is uncertain and, for most, short.

NOTES

1. With thanks to Rupert Hildyard for his original work on farming life-writing in “A case study in the literary construction of the rural idyll”.
2. James Rebanks, *The Shepherd's Life: A Tale of the Lake District*, xx.
3. Vinciane Despret, “Sheep do have opinions”, 360.
4. Amanda Owen, *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess*, 114.
5. See also, for example: A G Street, *A Year of My Life*; Peter West *Memoirs of a Farmer*: Adam Henson, *Adam's Farm*; *My Life on the Land*; Tom Duncan, *Magic Moments: Four Seasons on a Scottish Hill Farm*, David Kennard, *A Shepherd's Watch*, John and Eliza Forder, *Hill Shepherd*.
6. Gary Bosworth and Peter Somerville, “Introduction”, 1.
7. Mara Miele, “The taste of happiness: free-range chicken”.
8. Walling, *Counting Sheep*, xvi.
9. Robert MacFarlane, “Where the wild things were”.
10. Philip Armstrong, *Sheep*, 103.
11. Michael Woods, *Rural*, 279.
12. Owen, *A Year in the Life of the Yorkshire Shepherdess*, 133.
13. Armstrong, *Sheep*, 28.
14. DEFRA, 2016.
15. Walling, *Counting Sheep*, xiii.
16. Walling, *Counting Sheep*, xvi.
17. National Sheep Association. “The Complementary Role of Sheep in Upland and Hill Areas”, 7.
18. Walling, *Counting Sheep*, 233, 234.
19. Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures*, 54–56.
20. National Sheep Association, “UK Sheep Farming”.

21. Davies et al. (ADAS), "CTE 0707 Assessment of the impact of hefting (heafing or learing) Ref. no. BD1242", 6.
22. National Sheep Association, "The Complementary Role of Sheep in Upland and Hill Areas", 7.
23. Gray, "Hefting onto Place", 226.
24. MacFarlane.
25. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 66, 4.
26. National Sheep Association, "The Complementary Role of Sheep in Upland and Hill Areas", 8.
27. George Monbiot, "The Lake District's world heritage site status is a betrayal of the living world".
28. Joanna Latimer, "Being Alongside: Rethinking Relations amongst Different Kinds", 93.
29. Latimer, "Being Alongside", 79.
30. Latimer, "Being Alongside", 79.
31. Bruckner et al., "Naturecultures and the affective (dis)entanglements of happy meat", 46.
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PART IX

New Directions



The Biopolitics of Animal Love: Two Settler Stories

Nicole Shukin

I. ANIMAL LOVERS

If one follows some of today's most prominent (post)Marxist and feminist cultural theorists, the politics of love variously concerns how love's multitudinous potentials are domesticated within the "bourgeois couple" or family,¹ subsumed into the social and reproductive labour of making capitalist subjects,² or routed into cruelly optimistic "love plots" which seduce individuals into impossible dreams of a good life and foreclose upon queer alternatives.³ The content of these family and couple forms, capitalist logics, and seductive plots is usually simply assumed to be human. Yet this assumption risks overlooking the other species, not to mention lively bots and (in)animate things, that increasingly constitute the objects and subjects of love in the literatures and cultures of many modern liberal democracies. The number of human-animal marriages officiated by websites like marryyourpet.com, for instance, has soared in recent years regardless of the fact that such interspecies unions are symbolic rather than legal in substance. Although the politics of love across species lines has received comparatively little critical attention (with several notable exceptions, including by scholars exploring taboos on bestiality),⁴ it is arguably a linchpin within many powerful plots of biopolitical modernity. I propose that this has something to do with the way that interspecies love becomes historically and imaginatively bound up with the biopolitical state, particularly settler-colonial states which themselves begin to assume the traits

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of a liberal individual and *feeling subject* over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In what follows, I trace a modern biopolitics of interspecies love through two twentieth-century fictions featuring animal lovers: Jack London's 1906 novel *White Fang* and J.M. Coetzee's 1999 novel *Disgrace*. The animal lovers in both novels include humans who love animals as well as animals who love humans. At least, a fiction of reciprocal love across species lines is presented by both authors. *White Fang* and *Disgrace* bookend the twentieth century with animal stories that index dramatic mutations in the two settler-colonial geographies in which they are set: Canada's Yukon Territory during the Klondike gold rush of 1896–1899 and post-apartheid South Africa as it emerges out of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the late 1990s. In between these two moments, unrepentant forms of colonial rule were overthrown in many parts of the world and an era of postcolonial reconciliation emerged as various heads of state began offering apologies for systemic wrongs such as human rights violations in apartheid-era South Africa, Japan's wartime conscription of Korean comfort women, Canada's Indian Residential Schools, and stolen generations of Indigenous children in Australia. As Jacques Derrida notes, the period after the Second World War is witness to a remarkable "globalization of forgiveness".⁵ How interspecies love bears upon the politics of reconciliation and forgiveness is one of the questions provoked by *White Fang* and *Disgrace*.

Reading for what these two fictions have in common enables me to begin sketching a literary history of loving biopower. This literary history not only links fictions in which interspecies love is thematically focal, it also examines literary techniques designed to excite feeling for animals, raising questions around literature's implication in the biopolitical production of affect and subjectivity. My guiding contention is that literature's ability to generate animal affect is what renders it biopolitically instrumental (or, potentially, resistant) within a larger field of modern biopower in which even nonhuman animals are involved in the plotting of postcolonial reconciliation.

In this history, literature is more closely imbricated than we might imagine in biopower as a modern form of power that governs humans and nonhumans as species or biological "populations" *and* addresses them as individuals.⁶ Both *White Fang* and *Disgrace* raise questions of literary responsibility around the fictional production of animal affect and animal subjectivity. If twentieth-century fictions featuring animal love plots are susceptible to serving as resources of settler sentiment and postcolonial sorryness, this is both because settler societies enshrine a liberal individual subject whose humanity hinges on their powers of sympathetic feeling and because around the second half of the twentieth-century settler states themselves begin acting like humane subjects capable of feeling regret for historical wrongs and of reconciling with those they have injured. As Michel-Rolf Trouillot contends, a collective entity like a state can only "commiserate or show remorse" for those it has injured if it adopts the affective character of a liberal subject, a postcolonial pathetic fallacy on a grand scale.⁷ The plot grows even thicker when not only the human and

the state take shape as feeling subjects in the mould of the liberal individual, but certain nonhuman animals as well. This is arguably one of the biopolitical effects of twentieth-century fictions that endow other animals with “love lives”, that is, lives organized around and defined by a feeling subjectivity previously reserved for humans.

The idea that liberal feeling should constitute the grounds of human–animal relationship was incubating in the West long before settler animal stories picked up the thread. As Ivan Kreilkamp notes, nineteenth-century animal welfare and anti-cruelty movements hailed readers with scenes of animal suffering, calling them to be pathic witnesses capable of feeling with and for the pain of other creatures. Kreilkamp observes that at least since William Hogarth’s 1751 prints entitled *Four Stages of Cruelty*—prints “which show the progress of a boy who begins by torturing cats and dogs and ends at the gallows for murder”—it had become “a truism of English culture that cruelty to animals led to cruelty and violence against human beings”.⁸ Compassion for other animals was posited as the very condition of humans’ humanity. According to this school of thought, the greater the sympathetic capacity to feel with and for animals, the more one’s humanity was qualified or proven. Colleen Glenney Boggs traces a similar discourse of humanness back to John Locke’s claims in his 1693 *Thoughts on Education* “that we gain our humanity by performing acts of kindness to animals”.⁹

If biopower refers to how particular kinds of subjects are cultivated within a field of productive and caring rather than repressive or cruel power,¹⁰ then it is the human as a subject of liberal feeling, specifically a subject formed through feeling for animals, that is under production in these discourses. Yet what appeared to be of less interest to humanists like Locke and Hogarth was the subjectivity of the animals in the equation; animals appeared largely as the pathetic victims and passive objects of humane feeling rather than as themselves subjects-in-the-making. It appeared to be of little consequence to the liberal tradition that animals might themselves exercise agency in rousing or responding to the feelings they inspired in humans, whether it be by reciprocating the love or, possibly, rebuffing it.

It is precisely the possibility of animals’ reciprocal participation in the drama of modern feeling that London explores in his animal stories, many of them narrated from the animal’s point of view. London makes room in his naturalist literary philosophy for animals as subjects of love—not just objects—under the right historical conditions. These conditions are personified by the liberal-minded “love-master” who enters White Fang’s life (and, allegorically, biopolitical modernity) with a renunciation of cruel modes of animal discipline and punishment.¹¹ Almost a century later, Coetzee engages questions of animal affect within the very different context of a new South Africa that in the 1990s renounces retributive justice in favour of a restorative model. Coetzee does so in part by probing the ethical potentials and limits of the sympathetic imagination. His character Elizabeth Costello’s explicit reflections on the sympathetic imagination in *The Lives of Animals* supply just one of Coetzee’s views on the

ability to imagine oneself into the being of another. The character of David Lurie in *Disgrace* offers a different commentary on the ethics of feeling one's way into the experience of another being, one that is more explicitly linked to the state project of reconciliation in South Africa.

So how might the fictional production of animals' love lives constitute, perhaps surprisingly, one of the preconditions of postcolonial reconciliation? Can fictions that dramatize human–animal feeling in modern times be placed within a history of biopower that extends to the public hearings held as part of truth and reconciliation commissions in settler-colonial societies at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century? Truth hearings function like paralegal courts in which a feeling humanity itself is on trial. Whether it be victims whose humanity has been violated or perpetrators whose humanity is in question due to the atrocities they have committed, the hearings excite a desire for evidence of feeling in the participants, particularly remorse in perpetrators who pledge to tell the truth in exchange for amnesty (in the case of South Africa). Searching for signs of remorse in perpetrators involves settler-colonial societies in a certain production of the truth of the subject, as Michel Foucault would put it, and specifically the truth of their feeling. What role do settler animal stories possibly play in the truth-telling procedures that become so pivotal to the redeemed liberal settler and postcolonial state over the course of the twentieth century?¹²

Derrida observes that “the concept of a crime against humanity” which is core to apologies and forgiveness after the Second World War effectively reinscribes the “sacredness of the human”.¹³ He implicates the Abrahamic language of reconciliation in “a process of Christianisation which has no more need for the Christian church”, recalling that there is no concept for crimes against animals or animality (31). Restorative justice treats the historical suffering of animals as irrelevant to the task of redeeming the humanity of humans and facilitating a peaceful transition of political power (in those cases where a transition of power was at stake, such as in South Africa). Coetzee's *Disgrace* fictionally asserts, however, that the fate of animals is crucial to decolonizing the love plot. That is, animals are pivotal to exposing the project of reconciliation to a more radical politics of love that challenges the European model of the human that colonized Africa in the first place.

Sympathetic individuals and states may seem beyond reproach in their desire to consign human cruelty to a dark chapter of the past and to install compassionate, commiseratory relations in their place. Love can indeed be radical and unsettling, Lauren Berlant contends, when it springs out of a non-sovereign place or state of existence.¹⁴ But the sovereign subject and sovereign state may be surreptitiously rescued rather than undone through the expansive reach of European languages of love, whether secular-humanist, religious ... or animal.

The question is: how do London and Coetzee's literary animals serve (or subvert) the subject of feeling upon which reconciliatory projects turn? Do their animal stories forgive or foil the sovereignty of the human and of the settler subject as it shifts in the second half of the twentieth century to speaking a

universal language of reconciliation? That both novels scandalized the ruling cultures of their time suggests that their treatments of animal affect aren't obviously, or immediately, instrumental for power. President Theodore Roosevelt lambasted London for claiming his animal stories were "realistic".¹⁵ Himself a big game hunter, Roosevelt declared the loving and reasoning animals in London's stories wildly anthropomorphic. As for *Disgrace*, upon its publication in 1999 the African National Congress under President Thabo Mbeki criticized the novel not for its representations of animals but for its volatile depiction of the gang rape of a white female settler by three black men. The racist affect potentially ignited by Coetzee's plot understandably concerned a government that had just come through years of reconciliatory work as a condition of its transition to power. But it also betrayed the postcolonial state's efforts to censor works of literature that failed to support its own love plot, that is, the spirit of reconciliation upon which a new nation-building project rested. That the animal content of *Disgrace* passed without comment from the censors suggests that unlike Coetzee, most South Africans believed that "the question of the animal" had little relevance for the politics of reconciliation.

II. THE WOLFDOG AND THE LOVE-MASTER

In the first book in his popular wolf trilogy, *The Call of the Wild* (1903), London depicts the "devolution or de-civilization", in his own words, of a domestic dog seduced by the wilderness of Canada's Yukon territory during the period of the Klondike gold rush.¹⁶ In *White Fang* London flips the narrative coin by depicting a Klondike wolf's journey from the coldness and cruelty of the North to his "love-master's" estate in California. The savage/civilized binary upon which so many discourses of colonialism turn functions as a reversible conceptual grid through which London extrudes the "clay" of his canine characters.¹⁷ Following the naturalist precept that environmental and social conditions determine the shape of an individual, London explores how the "plasticity of his [White Fang's] clay", which grows hateful under conditions of cruelty, can be remoulded within an environment of love (100).

The love plot unfolds via a series of masters who represent the forms that animal life can take depending on the "laws" that sculpt it. The first master is the Wild itself—the "savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild" (3)—that exerts a sovereign power of death over all of life. The law of the Wild, like the "law of meat", governs humans and animals without distinction. The novel opens with the scene of two white trappers realizing that along with their sled dogs they themselves are but meat to a pack of hungry wolves on their trail. Nature's indifference to whether meat is human or nonhuman finds an echo in London's literary naturalism, particularly in the nondiscriminatory range of narrative points of view he offers in *White Fang*. After opening with the trapper's perspective, the novel's point of view shifts without any hint of species favouritism to that of a female wolf in the pack and subsequently to that of her cub, White

Fang. London's animal story, like the Wild itself, would appear to be radically anti-humanist in refusing to privilege a human perspective.

However, the human masters who subsequently enter the narrative complicate this. With the entry of White Fang's love-master, in particular, London arguably ends up rescuing settler humanism (by which I mean ideals of liberal human subjectivity advanced by settler-colonialism). Consider the first human who governs White Fang: Grey Beaver. A racist caricature of male indigeneity, Grey Beaver is presented as the first but also least among the "gods" encountered by the wolfdog (99). Grey Beaver represents neither human cruelty nor love, but rather a "primitive" form of animal mastery that involves by turns the provision of physical protection and disciplinary beatings. While not malicious, Grey Beaver's beatings suggest that Indigenous cultures lack the liberal awareness that inside an animal there exists a nascent subject of feeling. "Grey Beaver never petted nor caressed", observes the wolfdog (116). Through White Fang's affective assessments of his masters, London naturalizes a racial and sexual hierarchy: "Grey Beaver himself sometimes tossed him a piece of meat . . . And such a piece of meat was of value. It was worth more, in some strange way, than a dozen pieces of meat from the hand of a squaw" (116). Not only will the novel channel a discourse of white superiority through the seemingly apolitical animal, male superiority also figures in the theory of human value *felt* by the wolfdog, given as an indisputable truth of animal feeling.

The historical recognition of animals as liberal subjects of feeling only comes with the arrival of white gods to the Indigenous territories called the Yukon, although their initial incursions into the Northland occur under the sign of gold rather than love. White Fang first experiences the power of white gods in the shape of the vicious control that his second master, Beauty Smith, wields over him. Betrayed by Grey Beaver, who sells White Fang to Beauty Smith for drink money (causing White Fang to *feel* the inherently unfaithful nature of Indigenous people as another ostensible truth), the wolfdog is subjected to Beauty Smith's pathological abuses of power. Beauty Smith capitalizes upon White Fang's clay—hardened through his struggle for survival in Grey Beaver's camp—in a dogfighting ring that pits the soft dogs of newcomers against the wild animal as a fighting machine, entertaining Klondike gold rushers with a spectacle of bloodsport. Subject to this killing enterprise and to senseless beatings, "The Fighting Wolf" becomes a force of pure hate (180).

It is into this history of settler and human cruelty in the expropriated Northland that the love-master, Weedon Scott, will burst. That each master in London's novel represents a progressive stage within a developmental model of history that consigns Indigeneity to the time of childhood is made clear: "Grey Beaver was as a child-god among these white-skinned ones. To be sure, White Fang only felt these things. He was not conscious of them. Yet it is upon feeling, more often than thinking, that animals act; and every act White Fang now performed was based upon the feeling that the white men were the superior gods" (89). Animal affect secures the veracity of white superiority while appearing politically unmotivated by human discourses of scientific racism or Social

Darwinism. In view of the truth-effect of animal feeling, the question becomes: what other truths will animal affect serve to validate in *White Fang*?

Consider the love-master's entrance into the narrative. Scott enters just when White Fang has met his first serious match in the ring, a bulldog that unexpectedly gets the better of him by locking its massive jaws upon White Fang's neck. Breaking through the bloodthirsty crowd that is watching, Scott intervenes to save White Fang's life. He first enters as a saviour, in other words, who rescues the suffering animal from death. But Scott also arrives as moral redeemer of a "beastly" humanity which does not yet embody the feeling for fellow creatures that is the proof of liberal subjectivity. "You beasts!" he cries to the onlookers, and to Beauty Smith in particular, ironically relying on an animalizing rhetoric to describe the inhumanity of white men who make a spectacle of animal suffering (193).

The coming of Scott not only saves the animal, it introduces a higher law of love that allegorically redeems the sins of fellow settlers whose passion for gold has turned them into cruel and petty sovereigns. His coming *makes good* the historical wrongs of those whose scramble for land and wealth in Indigenous territory is embarrassingly raw during the Klondike gold rush. Although the narrative reveals that Scott is himself a "minin' expert said to be friends with the Gold Commissioner" (198)—and although his father Judge Scott's estate in southern California also bespeaks significant settler entitlement—his sympathy for animals serves to set him apart in a class defined not only by socio-economic status but by the liberal possession of *humane* feeling.

Now, by the end of the twentieth century, the moral legitimacy even of sympathetic liberal settlers like the fictional love-master will be shaken. As Haydie Gooder and Jane M. Jacobs note in relation to the current-day "sorry movement" in Australia, when settlers learn of the colonial injustices suffered by Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders, they can find in the act of apology a means of legitimizing their presence on the continent and rescuing "settler subjectivities" from bad conscience.¹⁸ While the dramas of postcolonial apology and forgiveness which unfold at the century's end could not perhaps have been dreamed of at its beginning, what I am suggesting *is* incipient in *White Fang* is a tale of interspecies love that works in remarkably similar ways to redeem settler humanity.

For this plot to work, however, it isn't sufficient for animals to remain pathetic or passive objects of sympathy. They themselves must be brought to life as liberal subjects of feeling, capable of reciprocating the love of humans and, more specifically, of settler men. London's novel moves in this direction the instant Scott saves White Fang from the ring. From that moment on, the wolfdog's hard clay is gradually softened through the love-master's cultivation of the animal's capacity for feeling. Scott's gentle touch goes "to the roots of White Fang's nature, and with kindness touched to life potencies that had languished and well-nigh perished. One such potency was *love*. It took the place of *like*, which latter had been the highest feeling that thrilled him in his intercourse with gods" (212). Hence begins, too, White Fang's journey towards

what might be called voluntary servitude, a servitude that as Mark Seltzer notes is not without erotic overtones which London must carefully manage to keep the taboo of bestiality at bay.¹⁹ As White Fang himself reflects, “the great love in him, ever surging and struggling to express itself, succeeded in finding a new mode of expression. He suddenly thrust his head forward and nudged his way in between the master’s arm and body. And here, confined, hidden from view all except his ears, no longer growling, he continued to nudge and snuggle” (219). Reciprocating Scott’s love “required nothing less than a revolution” in the animal (219). Indeed, London’s description of the animal’s achievement of liberal subjectivity as a “revolution” is striking in its biopolitical connotations. Unlike a political revolution, this one simultaneously realizes an animal’s “life potencies” and affirms the superiority of the loving human and settler, legitimizing his rights to land, house, family, and animals.

Settler love arguably must be requited in this modern plot (just as postcolonial apologies must be accepted) for liberal subjectivity to be rescued as an aspirational ideal and universal good that can be approximated *even by nonhumans*. Readers might be wary, then, of how London’s animal story sacralizes the liberal humanity of white “gods” at the dawn of a century in which settler cultures will be charged with so much historical wrongdoing. The revolution in *White Fang* doesn’t overthrow the dominant Western human subject but instead redeems them in advance of the actual political revolutions and anti-colonial struggles to come. While the “snuggle” between wolfdog and settler excites powerful affect, especially because London endows the animal with subjective insight into his own emergent feeling, it arguably diverts the more radical task of decolonial love. As Coetzee’s work suggests, decolonizing settler subjects and societies may require far less forgiving forms of animal affect.

III. SAVED BY THE GRACE OF DOG

David Attwell relays an extraordinary anecdote while describing Coetzee’s relation to censorship in apartheid-era South Africa:

One of the urban legends circulating in South Africa at the time was that the censors had banned the children’s book *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell on the grounds of its title. The actual story behind the banning of *Black Beauty* is more intriguing: a consignment of books arrived by airfreight in Johannesburg of which the dustcovers, labelled *Black Beauty*, were neatly wrapped around copies of Chairman Mao’s *Little Red Book*. Whoever had chosen to smuggle Mao into apartheid South Africa using this title had miscalculated.²⁰

If animal stories are deemed good covers for the smuggling of revolutionary material past South African censors, it is because they are assumed to be the furthest thing from political. Yet this assumption misses how the literary production of animal affect is imbricated in high-stakes plots of biopolitical modernity, especially those in which histories and futures of settler humanism are in

question. *Black Beauty* could certainly be added to the literary history of loving biopower being sketched here. Sewell's story of human-equine love is a significant precursor of twentieth-century fictions of interspecies love, particularly those that deploy an animal's first-person point of view to generate maximum affect.

Paradoxically, with *Disgrace* Coetzee smuggles an animal love story with unsettling implications for the liberal settler subject into post-apartheid South Africa under cover of a story about race, rape, and reconciliation. The plot revolves around the sexual misconduct and fall from grace of a white settler academic, David Lurie. This middle-aged professor of Romantic literature describes himself as "a servant of Eros" when he becomes infatuated with a young female student, Melanie.²¹ Shortly into their brief affair Lurie forces unwanted sex upon Melanie, an act he represents as "not quite" rape by drawing upon the resources of European romanticism to rationalize and indeed forgive acts committed in the name of Eros. Yet it is the second rape presented in *Disgrace*—the rape of Lurie's daughter Lucy by three black men driven by hate rather than love—which most scandalized South African authorities. By paralleling Melanie's fuzzy or "grey" violation with the black-and-white rape of Lucy, Coetzee is arguably commenting upon the historical impunity to rape allowed white settlers versus the moral panic ignited by the prospect of black sexual violence. *Disgrace* can be read as an allegory of the eroticization of colonial conquest more broadly, and of the forms of retributive and restorative justice that respond to it.

At least two European languages of love come under scrutiny in *Disgrace*. If the first is the secular language of European Romanticism that Lurie teaches when the University of Cape Town allows him to offer a course on Wordsworth or Byron (his "masters," as Lurie calls them), the second is the Christian language of reconciliatory love with which he collides. When Lurie is called before a University tribunal to respond to the charges laid against him by Melanie—a scene evoking the Truth and Reconciliation hearings held across South Africa between 1996 and 1998—he protests its search for signs of remorse. After he pleads guilty to the charges laid against him, a member of the tribunal questions whether his words truly spring from a place of "contrition", to which Lurie responds: "I have said the words for you, now you want more, you want me to demonstrate their sincerity. That is preposterous" (55). Lurie resists the expiry of one model of feeling subject (the Romantic ego) and its replacement by another (the guilty repentant). As for Coetzee, who certainly knows his Foucault, the Christian language of truth and reconciliation is no less problematic than the secular language of Romantic love which it examines, functioning like a giant confessional that subjects the postcolony to procedures of truth-telling largely derived from Western traditions.²²

In between the two options of an unrepentant Romanticism that poetically licenses settlers' "rights of desire" and a Christian drama of remorse and forgiveness designed to usher in an era of postcolonial reconciliation, Coetzee

appears acutely aware that Europe continues to dominate the politics of love in South Africa.²³ So what kinds of love might be possible beyond these options?

It is in light of this question that Coetzee's inclusion of nonhuman animals in the novel's complex love plot can be approached. Lurie not only relies on the Romantics to justify his sexual exploits—"Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires," is the line from Blake he sinisterly quotes to his daughter when defending his affair with Melanie—he also criticizes the "animal lovers" with whom Lucy associates (69, 72). Upon leaving his job at the university, Lurie heads to his daughter's landholding in the Eastern Cape for refuge. At her suggestion, he agrees to make himself useful during his stay by helping out at a clinic run by an animal lover, Bev Shaw. At first, he is as dismissive of "animal-welfare people" as he is of the tribunal members who seek contrition from him, telling Lucy that "to me, animal-welfare people are a bit like Christians of a certain kind. Everyone is so cheerful and well-intentioned that after a while you itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging" (73).

Coetzee will narratively punish his character for this cavalier remark by shortly visiting both "raping and pillaging" upon father and daughter. It is only following Lucy's rape and his own assault by three men whom he suspects are known to Lucy's black neighbour, Petrus, that Lurie finds himself unexpectedly becoming an animal lover. He will no longer scoff at Bev's claim that the animals they treat can "smell what you are thinking" or at the possibility that animals might have souls (81). As he grapples with how to care for Lucy following her rape, he finds himself spending more time in the theatre of the animal welfare clinic, where he is gripped by the lethal business of euthanizing animals. He begins disposing of their corpses after seeing workmen at the incinerator "beat the bags with the backs of their shovels before loading them, to break the rigid limbs" (144). Thus he becomes, as he puts it, "a dog-man: a dog undertaker" (146).

The affect generated by this plot-line might cause readers pause: is sympathy being won for Lurie and Lucy through a turn of events that casts white settlers as the victims of violence? Does sympathy for a character who begins to feel for animals affectively absolve him of his historical culpability? These questions become more acute as Coetzee depicts Lurie's growing bond with one dog, in particular: "Of the dogs in the holding pens, there is one he has come to feel a particular fondness for. It is a young male with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it" (215). As Lurie notes, "he is sensible of a generous affection streaming out toward him from the dog. Arbitrarily, unconditionally, he has been adopted; the dog would die for him, he knows" (215).

It is at this point that an animal's love enters the story as a species of *grace*, bestowed upon a human who has done little to earn or merit the animal's affection. Theologically speaking, grace is a gift of unconditional love that cannot be earned or deserved; it is as arbitrarily decided as a lottery. Lurie's good work tending to the dignity of dog corpses, in other words, is irrelevant to the love that streams out towards him from the dog. But Coetzee revolutionizes the

theological concept of grace—the unmerited favour of a sovereign God—by making its source the immanent life of an abandoned dog soon to be euthanized. With this gesture, he arguably begins to decolonize the state-led project of reconciliation that risks perpetuating the “process of Christianization” (Derrida) advanced through European colonialism. Coetzee also implicitly critiques the power assigned to the Commission to dispense grace—in the form of political amnesty—to perpetrators of human rights violations who promised to tell the truth. By shifting the source of grace (amnesty) to one of the most non-sovereign and powerless bodies in South Africa, Coetzee challenges the humanist framework of reconciliation.

But is it any better if the settler is fictionally forgiven through the grace of dog instead of god? Arguably, the animal grace evoked in the novel doesn't finally absolve settlers of a history of wrongs *or* redeem the value of liberal subjectivity. The “problem of sex” with which the novel opens is far from “solved” by the end; that Coetzee shows Lurie picking up a prostitute “younger even than Melanie” suggests his resistance to the idea that animal love reforms the settler (194). The grace of an animal is no final (ab)solution, but is instead presented by Coetzee as a contingent chance for the settler to imperfectly relinquish the rights of man and the rights of desire underpinning colonialism in South Africa. Grace, especially in the form of animal immanence imagined by Coetzee, unsettles the power of the liberal individual subject to reform or perfect themselves through their own actions. This species of love both comes from and effects a state of powerlessness in which human and animal are thrown upon the mercy of one another.

With the character of Lucy, we see Coetzee most carefully imagining what it would mean for settlers to respond to the demands of decolonial love without re-enshrining the liberal subject of feeling. Instead of taking recourse to her rights as a human, settler, and woman by reporting her rape to the police, Lucy defies the discourse of liberal feminism voiced by Lurie when he urges her to file a report so that her rapists don't enjoy the added victory of silencing a woman who is “*too ashamed to tell*”, (110). Instead of asserting her inviolable rights, Lucy submits to the decolonial lesson of learning to live “[w]ith nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity”. When her father replies, “Like a dog”, Lucy responds, “Yes, like a dog,” taking what is for Lurie the abject end to which his daughter has come and affirming it as a place from which decolonization might begin (205). If for Lurie the dog still signifies abject life, for Lucy the biopolitics of decolonial love starts with a refusal of the human exceptionalism upholding settler-colonial cultures in South Africa. Decolonial love has less to do with how one feels than with the pragmatics of learning how to live outside of the plots of liberal subjectivity. Turning dog-likeness into an affirmative through the character of Lucy, Coetzee imagines a reconciliatory alternative to state-led projects of truth-telling, criticized by many for symbolically pronouncing a new South Africa without significant material redistributions of land, labour, and wealth.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the literary history of biopower which I've been sketching, seemingly disparate issues of the twentieth century—animal stories, the politics of truth and reconciliation, settler humanism and decolonial love—can be seen to be intimately interconnected.

While it may in some respects be unfair to compare the biopolitics of a twentieth-century animal story written prior to the decolonizing movements and reconciliatory projects-to-come with a novel written in clear view of these developments, what is merited is a comparison of how London and Coetzee use “the resources of fictionality” to produce animal affect.²⁴ As already noted, the subjectivity which London narratively grants *White Fang* at first suggests a sharing of the resources of fictionality without species distinction. However, by subjectively impersonating the wolfdog's emotional intelligence and love life, London's fiction also deploys animal affect in suspect ways to certify the superiority of white “gods”. Finally, it is in London's narrative choice to have the animal return his master's love (with interest!) that I propose *White Fang* redeems settler humanism.

Coetzee's novel also culminates in a dog's unconditional love for settler man. But by apportioning the resources of fictionality differently, Coetzee imposes limits on the literary production of animal affect and the truth of animal feeling. For instance, he refrains from representing the experiences of the historically subordinate, human and nonhuman. The affective lives of Lurie's student Melanie and of his daughter Lucy, of Lucy's black neighbour Petrus (not to mention of Petrus's wife, one of the most peripheral figures in *Disgrace*), and of animals are all off-limits for Coetzee. His view of the sympathetic imagination thus arguably diverges from the one voiced by Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, when she says there is “no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another”.²⁵ In settler-colonial contexts, the act of imagining oneself into the being of another may too closely resemble the historical license exercised by European settlers to penetrate the geographical, cultural, and bodily interiors of others. Unlike London, Coetzee refrains from fictionally inhabiting the subjective perspective of a nonhuman animal and so keeps open the possibility that animal affect may *not* redeem the settler's word as good. This formal limit on the reach of the sympathetic imagination denies us the fiction of an animal's affective validation of human versions of events, and in this sense can be described as unforgiving. Coetzee's restraint guards literature against the relentless subsumption of human and nonhuman life into a universally *legible* form of liberal subjectivity.

This significant difference between *White Fang* and *Disgrace* begins to illustrate the sorts of comparative readings that open up when we understand modern literary history to be, among other things, a history in which the biopolitics of animal love is at stake.

NOTES

1. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 352.
2. See Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity* and Federici, *Revolution At Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*.
3. Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 171.
4. See, for instance, Boggs, *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity*.
5. Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 3.
6. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*.
7. Trouillot, "Abortive Rituals," 173.
8. Kreilkamp, "Petted Things," 103.
9. Boggs, *Animalia Americana*, 35.
10. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.
11. London, *White Fang*, 206.
12. When truth commissions are Indigenous-led, the politics of truth-telling and of affect are far more unsettling of the liberal subject. See Susan McHugh's study of the Inuit-led Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), which inquired into a massacre of sled dogs by the Canadian Mounted Police. "'A flash point in Inuit memories': Endangered Knowledges in the Mountie Sled Dog Massacre," 149–175.
13. Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism*, 30.
14. Berlant, "A Properly Political Concept of Love," 683–691.
15. See Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*, 93.
16. *The Letters of Jack London*, 18.
17. London, *White Fang*, 100.
18. Gooder and Jacobs. "'On The Border Of The Unsayable': The Apology in Postcolonizing Australia," 232.
19. Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines*, 169.
20. Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 58.
21. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 52.
22. It is important to note claims by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela that the TRC was also guided by the African philosophy of Ubuntu.
23. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 89.
24. Attwell refers to "a struggle for control over the resources of fictionality itself" in relation to Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*. See Attwell's *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, 92.
25. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, 80.

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Companion Prosthetics: Avatars of Animality and Disability

Michael Lundblad and Jan Grue

James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) is one of the highest-grossing films of all time.¹ It is also problematic on many counts, from its manifest white-saviour complex to its reification of heteronormative and patriarchal social structures. On the fictional planet of Pandora, the indigenous "humanoid" Na'vi are idealized as a species committed to ecological balance, even as they violently subjugate nonhuman animals.² The main character Jake Sully, a human trained as a US Marine and now using a wheelchair, embodies ableist fantasies by leaving behind his imperfect human embodiment for a human-controlled and supremely able "avatar" Na'vi body. From our perspective, both the wheelchair and the avatar bodies can be seen as forms of prosthetics. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have developed the concept of "narrative prosthesis", which can be applied to the alternate foregrounding and erasure of Jake's disability.³ Jake's newfound dependence upon his wheelchair motivates his desire to join the Na'vi world, where he is not only able to walk and run, but also to fly, once he learns how to interact with the flying creatures of Pandora. But this kind of inter-species relationship can also be seen as a kind of prosthesis, particularly

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557

when flying these creatures is revealed to be a crucial element in both coming-of-age rituals and the means for propagating aerial warfare.

Donna Haraway's work on "becoming with" companion species might suggest another approach to these relationships, particularly with her well known and productive theorization of the various ways that interactions between species can transform companions into new configurations, constituted by the interaction itself, rather than reinforcing the idea that "we" are all autonomous individuals prior to encounters with others.⁴ *Avatar* is rife with prosthetic relationships that blur the lines between human and animal, human and machine, and even animate and inanimate objects, raising the possibility of more productive conversations about the interface between disability and animality. Our argument in this chapter is that the problematic aspects of the film are not only interrelated, but also productive for developing what we will call *companion prosthetics*. We develop this concept from origins in disability studies, animality studies, and human-animal studies, illustrating the fertile new ground that exists when these fields meet.⁵

CHARTING PROSTHETICS

In *Avatar*, in addition to Jake using a wheelchair and an avatar body, we find a military colonel operating a cyborg exoskeleton, the Na'vi riding and flying other species, and both sides of the ultimate battle flying planes and warships. The difference between the Na'vi flying on creatures known as ikran and Jake using his wheelchair evokes the classic comparison of a wheelchair and an airplane in disability studies. According to early British social model scholars such as Mike Oliver, disability is socially, politically, and economically constructed, such that not being able to fly could also be constructed as a disability, which would make the airplane not so different from the wheelchair.⁶ Critics of the "classical" British social model have pushed back against this kind of one-dimensional analysis, emphasizing, for example, the significance of species norms in understanding how disability is constructed.⁷ Most human beings are capable of walking, but not flying. There are other questions we can explore in *Avatar*, though, related to traditional hierarchies of social value: dependence vs. independence, for example, or compensatory vs. augmentative prosthetics, or animal vs. human. We want to rethink the entire concept of prosthetics, in other words, specifically in a context where nonhuman animals are no longer mere objects.

Prosthetics have a long association with disability, though the borders of both categories and concepts are distinctly porous. Just as disability can be said to begin where normative embodiment ends,⁸ a prosthesis (from Gr. "in addition" + "place") is a special kind of object meant to replicate or replace a body part—as opposed to objects with a distinct function. Does this mean that a wheelchair counts as a prosthesis, since it is used as an alternative mode of locomotion, rather than a replacement for the limbs that walk? Famous historical examples of artificial body parts, such as the astronomer Tycho Brahe's

impairment	disability	able-bodiedness (normate)
compensatory		augmentative
dependent		autonomous
<i>wheelchair</i>		<i>airplane</i>

Fig. 1 Negative constructions of prosthetic hierarchies

silver nose, were replacements in form only, and contemporary prosthetics are often a compromise between appearance and function. Prosthetics rarely map precisely onto the capability they are meant to mimic, but they influence and even transform the embodiment of their users, sometimes in unexpected ways. In addition to the form/function axis, prosthetics are troubled by the apparently dichotomous relationship between *compensation* and *augmentation* (see Fig. 1). Disability is linked with prosthetics by a logic of inferiority; when prosthetics cross the line from compensatory into augmentative territory, the user of the prosthetic is no longer “truly disabled”.

It is difficult to conceive of an airplane as a compensatory device, since human beings cannot fly. This brute fact is, however, species-specific. Relative to any given member of the Na’vi species in *Avatar*, the average human is clearly disabled on Pandora, with potential “diagnoses” ranging from restricted growth through various forms of myopathy or myasthenia to, if the Na’vi’s ability to communicate with other species is considered, multiple forms of sensory and possibly cognitive impairment. Only the use of technologically sophisticated prosthetic devices, such as exoskeletons, computers, and helicopters, allow the humans to reach a semblance of functional normality.

Jake is the narratively compelling hero of *Avatar* because of his complex embodiment, but that embodiment is swiftly elided as the story unfolds; disability in art is particularly susceptible to mimetic bad faith.⁹ And indeed *Avatar* has been taken to task by disability scholars for promoting “compulsory able-bodiedness”.¹⁰ Jake’s apparent consciousness is “saved” from his disabled human body and transferred into his (able) Na’vi body, while, at the environmental level, the military base on Pandora is conspicuously (and implausibly) wheelchair-accessible, saving the storytellers the trouble of dealing with mobility or access issues. Following Mitchell and Snyder, Jake’s disability is *prosthetic to the narrative*, initially drawing attention to itself but subsequently “forgotten” whenever convenient. In this vein, Wetherbee argues that *Avatar* is about disability only “insofar as [Jake’s] paraplegia represents a primary cog in the movie’s narrative mechanics”.¹¹ The ontological status of prosthetics is difficult to disentangle from both environmental *and* narrative contexts as well as species-specific norms.

Prosthetics, in disability studies, challenges the notion of autonomous subjectivity and agency. Wheelchairs, canes, and artificial limbs have histories of usage; they also interact intimately with individuals’ senses of embodiment,

inanimate	animate
cane	guide dog
wheelchair	horse (e.g. for transportation)
	personal assistant

Jake Sully's avatar?

Fig. 2 Simplistic constructions of prosthetic agency

such as the feeling for “peripersonal space”.¹² They represent a direct linkage between “natural” bodies and “cultural” objects, or, as in the case of guide dogs, naturecultural others, nonhuman animals that arguably perform a prosthetic function. This territory is potentially fraught with tension. The Independent Living movement, originating in Berkeley in the 1960s and 1970s, has long championed the use of *personal assistants*, individuals who work directly for disabled people, rather than medical or other institutional bureaucracies. For a person with quadriplegia, it is not uncommon to refer to a personal assistant as “my arms and legs”. In this case, it is a human other who is aligned with a prosthetic function.¹³ One possible implication is that prosthesis is really about *agency* (see Fig. 2). But this is too simplistic; with both humans and nonhuman animals, the agency of the other can never be wholly ignored, and the theoretical concept of agency has different genealogies in different critical fields.

Jake’s avatar—an artificial object made to resemble the body of a Na’vi—is a nexus of these dichotomies and tensions. Is it animate or inanimate, responding to stimuli but perhaps exhibiting no agency until Sully’s mind is linked with it, “driving” it? Is it a whole-body prosthetic, replacing his natural body, and does it not actively affect him by providing another experience of embodiment?

FROM AGENCY TO ANIMACIES WITH COMPANION SPECIES

To chart the various prosthetics in *Avatar* according to their relative agency we might think of a hierarchy of sorts.¹⁴ This begins with Jake’s wheelchair, up through the exoskeletons used by humans on Pandora for everything from manual labour to armed battle. Next might be the helicopters and warplanes, followed perhaps by Jake’s Na’vi avatar, before moving up to the flying ikran ridden by the Na’vi, presumably with minds of their own. The Na’vi also think for themselves, but are linked problematically with “animal” or ‘savage’ instincts that might seem to construct their own agency below the level of the white humans attempting to either exploit or save this extraterrestrial jungle. But this kind of mapping would require a more popular—if not naive—understanding of agency, which is a concept that has been challenged and developed through a range of theoretical frameworks, from actor-network theory to

systems theory to various forms of poststructuralism and posthumanism. According to Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris, actor-network theory (ANT), for example, “can be defined as a semiotics of materiality that is symmetrical with respect to human and nonhuman agents”.¹⁵ Knappett and Malafouris point out that agency can be conceptualized “as variously distributed and possessed in relational networks of persons and things. . . . In other words, for ANT what we call actors or agents are essentially the products or effects of networks. That means that no primacy of the human actor—individual or collective—over the nonhuman actor can be accepted on a priori grounds” (xi).¹⁶ Human-animal studies as a field has also revealed how agency can be conceptualized beyond the human species, perhaps most persuasively through the work of Haraway and Jacques Derrida, among many others.¹⁷ Building upon this work, we can suggest alternative ways of charting comparisons between the different forms of prosthetics that are on display in *Avatar*.

Mel Y. Chen’s work is particularly useful for highlighting how *animacy* need not be an intrinsic quality for some entities and not others, but rather a dynamic element for all kinds of actors, from humans and animals to words and things. Some human beings can become less animate than others, then, if we consider how those with severe impairments or terminal illnesses can be problematically constructed as somehow less than human. Historically, discourses of animality have constructed certain groups of people as somehow less “human” than others, while animals themselves have been constructed as “lower” as well.¹⁸ But Chen reveals that these hierarchies are not always stable, and various kinds of “slippage” can thus be productively used to undermine the supposed “naturalness” of the hierarchies themselves.¹⁹

Not only is Chen discussing “gradations of liveness”, in other words, but also the ways that the same matter (or actor) can move up or down in terms of animacy, depending upon specific circumstances and contexts (167). Engaging with theorizations of the body via Judith Butler, immunity via Roberto Esposito, matter via Jennifer Terry and Stacy Alaimo, the molecular via Deleuze and Guattari, and queer phenomenology via Sara Ahmed, Chen connects animacy theory to queer affect, including curious relationships such as one that can happen between a human being and a couch (189–221). As Chen points out, “It seems that animacy and its affects are mediated not by whether you *are* a couch, a piece of metal, a human child, or an animal, but by how holistically you are interpreted and how dynamic you are perceived to be. . . . Human ‘patients’ get defined, via their companion technologies, as inanimate, even as they zip right by you in a manual wheelchair” (210). We would add that the animacy of the wheelchair itself can also be productively explored, in the same spirit of Chen’s theorization.

In this sense, the concept of animacy can help to address a conundrum brought up by John Law and Annemarie Mol in “The Actor-Enacted: Cumbrian Sheep in 2001”. Instead of exploring a wheelchair, Law and Mol begin with a question that is nonetheless relevant, asking whether a sheep can be an actor. Their conclusion, ultimately, is, “Anything is, or might be, or

might be said to be, an actor. So the point is not *who* has done it. Instead, what become more urgent are questions about *what* is happening. What do actors *do*?"²⁰ In the case of sheep in the Lake District of England at risk of being killed to stop foot and mouth disease in 2001, the key is to situate them in relation to different practices, to show how they are "enacted" and enact others through diverse networks, and to escape social-science debates between structure and agency. Instead, drawing upon Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway, Law and Mol note that material semiotics "disentangles agency from intentionality" (58). But there remains the difficulty of distinguishing between "active entities" and passive ones, since "being enacted" might sound more passive: "Here we hit a linguistic obstacle. The English language makes it easy to write sentences that are active or sentences that are passive. But writing somewhere in between 'doing' and 'being done to' is much more difficult" (58, 66).²¹ This is precisely the point where Chen's theorization of animacies can help. Whether we are talking about sheep or a couch or a wheelchair, we don't need to make a simple distinction between active and passive actors. Instead, we can explore how different animacies animate different actors at different times, and in relation to various situated networks.

According to Chen, despite the dominance of traditional ways of thinking about animacy hierarchies, there can also be the possibility of resistance. There can be "rejoinders launched by contemporary animacies (unintended reimaginations of kinship and intense intimacies)", even if "they slip in particular privileged terms of sexuality, race, and ability" (234). But Chen's hope, ultimately, is for "an ethics of care and sensitivity that extends far from humans' (or the Human's) own borders" in order to find "queerings of objects and affects accompanied by political revision, reworldings that challenge the order of things" (237). We want to build upon this kind of ethic while circling back to the various forms of prosthetics in *Avatar*. But we do not want to suggest that our ultimate goal is to treat wheelchairs, along with various human and nonhuman others, equally. The point instead is to show how animacies can lead to slippages rather than binary oppositions between human/animal and human/machine, as well as traditional hierarchies related to disability, such as dependent/autonomous and compensatory/augmentative.

Arguably, dependence can be transformed into positive forms of "kinship and intense intimacies". Such forms are not, however, well accounted for in the literature on prosthesis. We are intrigued, then, by Haraway's concept of "companion species" in the middle of *When Species Meet*, when she takes a perhaps surprising turn to consider the life of her father, a sportswriter who happened to use crutches and wheelchairs at different times in his life. As Haraway veers away from nonhuman animals, it might seem a bit of a stretch to include what might otherwise be the subject of a personal memoir. But the link, for Haraway, is to think of the wheelchair as being in a "companion-species relation to the boy; the whole body was organic flesh as well as wood and metal; the player was on wheels, grinning" (167). This intriguing idea of her father's boyhood wheelchair as somehow like a companion species, particularly when it allows

him to play baseball, is echoed later in his life when crutches allow him to race on a track or learn enough balance to compete in ping pong tournaments. At the end of his life, though, when he uses a “talented cyborg wheelchair” once he can no longer manage crutches on his own, we are told, “This chair never quite became a beloved significant other. This partner was overwhelmingly about loss from which there would be no exit. It was a much fancier chair than the one of his youth, but it no longer signified getting well and going to the games. This chair, this transaction between wary companion species, was about the practice of dying” (173–74). One question this passage raises is whether a “companion-species relation” is inevitable—such that any relation between a human and a wheelchair can be described that way—or if Haraway is suggesting instead that this kind of relation only rises to the level of a “companion-species relation” if both “species” are creating something new—and presumably significant—through the interaction.

Later Haraway compares her father’s interactions with prosthetics to her own primary example of a “companion-species relation” with her dog Cayenne, with whom she competes in the sport of agility. In this context, she is aiming for a “zone” which is “about speed, for sure, but speed organically braided in a joint, subject-transforming dance. ... Not a wild dash, but trained regard” (176). The implication, then, seems to be that the ideal form of interspecies relations would lead to some kind of transformative—and largely positive—affective experience. But the development of the idea that both dog and wheelchair can be seen as “companion species” is left largely up to the reader, since Haraway does not say much more about it. Instead, what is implied is a distinction between “becoming with” other species and specific partners, which seems to be about the inevitable ways that beings are co-constituted by their intra-actions, and the potential for those intra-actions sometimes (and hopefully more often) to be based upon respect for the other, responding to that other, and ideally leading to the possibility of flourishing with that other. There seems to be a recognition that many forms of “becoming with” might not necessarily lead to a “companion-species relation”, if they do not include regard and response.

The implication also seems to be that particular relationships—Donna and Cayenne, her father and his boyhood wheelchair, rather than the one at the end of life—illustrate a “companion-species relation”. But this seems to suggest that what we might call the prosthesis in these examples—including a dog as a kind of augmentative prosthesis in relation to competition—will not themselves have different levels of animacy at different times during their relationships with Haraway or her father. Isn’t it possible that her father’s boyhood wheelchair at times could have been used in a more mundane and utilitarian way in his everyday life? How about when Cayenne is not running agility competitions with Donna, or is just bored? While we certainly think there are meaningful differences between dogs and wheelchairs, between nonhuman animals and mechanical or technological prosthetics, what happens if we consider their potential for animacy in a more dynamic way (see Fig. 3)?

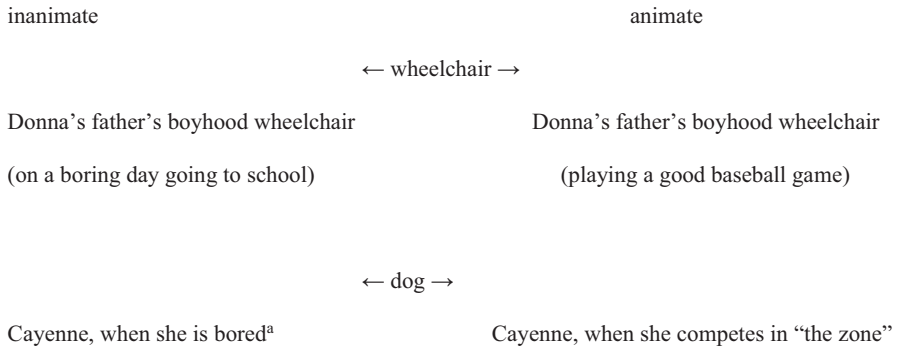


Fig. 3 Dynamic animacies of companion species. (a: As Agamben has explored in *The Open*, boredom in Heidegger's thinking is supposed to define the human as opposed to the animal. Haraway's own conception of "the open" intentionally diverges from Heidegger's, but is nonetheless interesting to consider in relation to the possibilities of "becoming with" other species. See Agamben, *The Open*; and Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 367–368n28, 334n16.)

What, then, about the example of the airplane once again? The goal here is not to suggest that impairment does not exist, that there is no difference between a wheelchair, a dog, and an airplane, or that the only problem is the construction of barriers to particular forms of embodiment. Our goal, instead, is to suggest that a prosthesis itself need not necessarily be an obstacle to the possibility of a "companion-species relation", even if that possibility might be much more severely restricted in some cases rather than others. Further, it is not necessary to deny species norms when it comes to definitions of impairment. As Tom Shakespeare points out, "While both aeroplanes and wheelchairs enable individuals to overcome the natural restrictions of their bodies, walking is part of normal species functioning for human beings, whereas flying is not".²² Shakespeare's critique of Oliver is echoed by Dimitris Anastasiou and James M. Kauffman: "Disabled or not, we may feel restricted because we cannot fly without a special device. But our inability to fly is only a thought experiment when it comes to disability, simply because naturally flying human beings do not exist. Having accepted our common biological constraints as human beings, we find it wise not to ignore the law of gravity".²³ But what happens if we consider prosthetics as potentially both compensatory and augmentative in relation to species norms, if we are interested in challenging the idea that using a prosthesis must always signify a negative form of dependence?²⁴ What if we consider the "thought experiment" represented by the planet (or actually moon) known as Pandora as a way to illustrate both species norms and the possibilities for "becoming with" other "species" of prosthetics that exhibit different kinds of animacy in different circumstances?

CHARTING ANIMACIES IN *AVATAR*

As we suggested earlier, all human beings can be seen as impaired on Pandora, regardless of whether they might use a wheelchair on Earth or not. It is impossible for humans to breathe the air on this planet without masks. Humans are also little people compared to the Na'vi, whose species height pushes upwards of ten feet for mature adults. Much of the criticism of the film builds from the assumption that the Na'vi are a thinly veiled allegory for Indigenous people living on Earth, in areas such as the Amazonian rain forest, evoking a romanticized representation of Rousseau's "Noble Savage". Those critiques are crucial to make, but we also want to suggest that it could be productive to remember that the Na'vi are also literally a different species, such that human relations with them can be seen as inter-species as well. The use of the range of prosthetics already mentioned provides productive opportunities for developing the ideas of animacy and companion-species relations further.

Animalizing the Na'vi is particularly problematic, however. Within the film the corporate CEO—Parker Selfridge—describes the Na'vi as "blue monkeys" and "fly-bitten savages that live in a tree", while Miles Quaritch, the scar-faced military villain, sees bombing as the way to "scatter the roaches". He goes on to say, "Our only security lies in pre-emptive attack. We will fight terror with terror". One of the scientists reveals that it is "some kind of shock and awe campaign", with "daisy cutters" the presumed method of choice. When Quaritch confronts Jake late in the film, he taunts him with, "How does it feel to betray your own race?" But Jake becomes the white man who can supposedly save the natives, fighting back against the oppressive and greedy imperialists, in defence of what can easily be seen as a construction of the settler-colonialist fantasy, or what Shepherd Krech has identified as "the Ecological Indian".²⁵

One of the ways the Na'vi exemplify "harmony" with nature is their ability to "queue" or bond with other animals and life forms. Tendril-like filaments hidden within the hair-braid of the Na'vi can be intertwined with similar tendrils in other species, including the Tree of Life. As Claire Molloy points out, however, these bonds seem to indicate the often violent subjugation of animals to the will of the Na'vi, controlling them completely with their minds. Without calling them prosthetics, Molloy nonetheless draws relevant parallels: like the Amplified Mobility Platform suits that we have previously referred to as exoskeletons, "the Na'vi and animals are reduced to bodies which can be conquered and controlled whether by technological means (transferring the rational human mind into a Na'vi body), by spiritual means (rebirth into a Na'vi body but retaining the rational mind of a white western male) or by biological means (connecting and controlling the animal body with the human[oid] mind)".²⁶ While there are examples in the film that could certainly be read according to this kind of thinking, there are also more complicated and nuanced possibilities to consider, instead of assuming the inanimacy of these various forms of prosthetics at all times and in all circumstances.

Jake's "bonding" with an individual ikran is a particularly important example to consider. Once he has learned enough about the Omaticaya clan of the Na'vi, taught by the chief's daughter Neytiri who has been instructed to show him their ways, Jake must bond with an ikran to prove his worthiness as a warrior. Climbing up into the mountains and cliffs where the ikran live, Jake must wrestle and subdue the male ikran who tries to kill him, in order to force his "queue" into the unwilling ikran. Molloy notes that Jake "breaks" the ikran in a way that could be seen like the "breaking" of a horse, or, "variously as a depiction of rape, homosexual rape and bestiality", a ritualized action that results in "the brutal subjugation of animals against their will" (187–88). Yet there are other elements to consider here, beginning with Jake's first flight which by no means indicates immediate and complete control over the ikran. Instead, this "learning to fly" scene indicates the will of the ikran *not* working in conjunction with or subordinate to Jake, at least initially, resulting in dizzying dives and bumps against the cliff faces, before Jake manages to communicate what he wants to do (fly straight).²⁷ Neytiri's and other Na'vi interactions with their ikran partners (or prosthetics) do not seem to suggest such coercive relationships, perhaps more in line with highly skilled ways of communicating with instead of "breaking" a horse. The ikran, along with various other species, also joins the ultimate battle at the end of the film without being controlled by any Na'vi, although it is assumed that they are sent by the spirit of nature known as Eywa to help.

More important, perhaps, is a kind of joy that can be found in flying together, including both humans and Na'vi avatars riding helicopters into the stunning landscapes, forests, and jungles that form the backdrop for the film. There is a certain kind of delight and wonder that can be found here, which makes it less surprising to connect inter-species "queueing" with the bonding that happens both when humans "link" with their Na'vi avatars (thus being able to move around in their avatar bodies) and when the Na'vi "mate" (or have sex) with each other. Why must we assume that the other in these cases must be only inanimate prostheses? If Jake can say to Neytiri, before they bond, "I've already chosen, but this woman must also choose me", why can we not see potential here for different forms of bonding? Rather than subjugating or simply using an inanimate prosthetic, which admittedly seems common in the film, there also seems to be the possibility of a different kind of "queueing": waiting for the response and consent and desire of the other, before creating something new together.

This kind of model might suggest a valorization if not romanticization of Indigenous peoples once again, particularly if we see the Na'vi as human(oid) rather than nonhuman. From an ecological perspective this way of thinking could be seen as an effective critique of capitalist corporations chewing up the environment for profit. Joni Adamson has shown how certain Indigenous groups have in fact applauded the film, despite their annoyance at the white hero. She has also connected this kind of message to Cameron's own intent, including his efforts on behalf of the Arara people fighting a dam project in

Brazil.²⁸ For Molloy, whatever positive environmental message there might be, the costs for animals is too high: “Animals are treated as expendable in discourses that construct particular forms of nature . . . as vulnerable and in need of defence. *Avatar* thus gives us pause to consider the extent to which the disposability and subjugation of animals has been normalised by paternalistic forms of environmental protectionism” (178). But both Molloy and Adamson, from our perspective, assume too much when they assume that the Na’vi can only be read as a human allegory, rather than a nonhuman species, or an occasion for thinking further about prosthetics.

Jake’s desire is to become a fully fledged Na’vi, rather than a Na’vi avatar with a human body still back in a research station. While it makes sense to critique this desire from the perspective of narrative prosthesis, it can be seen as less problematic if we pull together these various threads, we’ve been exploring that connect through a rethinking of prosthetics. If we think of the avatar *itself* as a nonhuman species—like an animal, but also like a wheelchair, potentially—then Jake’s ultimate transformation need not be seen exclusively as overcoming the need for a prosthesis, but rather as the possibility suggested through embracing a different kind of prosthesis and “queueing” up to see how something new could be created, once the animacy of the prosthesis is recognized and responded to. Jake’s successful transformation is ultimately into a life form that has never been seen before: one created by the fusion of a human being and a genetically-engineered Na’vi body with animacy of its own. This kind of cyborg creature need not be only science fiction, as Haraway argued decades ago.²⁹ It could also be compared to other kinds of possibilities that are *not* pursued but only suggested by the film.

During the ultimate battle we see a crystallization of different prosthetics all engaged in trying to kill each other, and we might wonder if any of these relationships actually have more potential than others. But what is the “truth” or “true form” in any of these prosthetic relations? Which one prevails in a more figurative sense? Can we distinguish so clearly between the “real” Jake and his avatar? What about Quaritch and his exoskeleton, or Neytiri and the animal she rides? While those prosthetic relations might seem more utilitarian than Jake’s, they still include the possibility of “queueing” with a prosthetic other, whether it be animal or machine. We can imagine, again, not only that better relations might be possible, for example, with a nonhuman animal other, but also that the interaction with a prosthesis could lead to something more than just the simple “use” of an other. There are animacies here, in other words, that complicate and blur the lines between subjects and objects, humans and animals, humans and machines that illustrate different kinds of “becoming with”.

But the film suggests an important distinction, ultimately, between Jake’s avatar and these other prosthetics. None of the others leads to a desire to irrevocably “become” something entirely new through the prosthetic relation, such as in Jake’s case that would erase the line between human and avatar, between human and prosthetic. It is undoubtedly true that the film emphasizes Jake’s paralyzed human legs as tragic, but perhaps there is better potential

when we consider his desire to truly become something different, to experience pleasure and joy through a prosthesis, when he meets another species, which in this case happens to be a hybrid Na'vi body. For Jake, there is no turning back, no possibility for returning to what he was before the encounter with a companion species. One possibility for reading his ultimate fate is to see him, as Molloy does, as “a fully functioning hegemonic masculine ideal, with all the strength of the native Na'vi but with the rational white Western mind in control of the fantasy of the hyper-muscular primitive body” (190). Another way of reading the outcome is to move beyond this mind/body dualism, to embrace a more phenomenological understanding that can help us to see how there are various ways for us to embrace *companion prosthetics*, recognizing the fluctuating animacies of prosthetic others.

COMPANION PROSTHETICS

Prosthetic others in this film tend to remain in the category of what we would like to call *avatar prosthetics*, as opposed to *companion prosthetics*. A machine or a nonhuman animal or even another human could be seen as a kind of avatar, if we recognize that some prosthetic relations are used mostly in order to “play” or merely function in the everyday world, or, conversely, a fantasy world. As we have suggested earlier, it is productive to consider these apparently utilitarian relations in more complex ways, such that an analogy could be drawn to Haraway’s theorization of “becoming with” another species. But we propose the idea of companion prosthetics to suggest an analogy that goes beyond Haraway’s idea of companion-species relations, which do not necessarily characterize all inter-species relations. If Haraway’s “becoming with” can be seen as descriptive and “companion-species relations” as prescriptive—in the sense that it suggests better or more meaningful intra-actions—then “avatar prosthetics” can be seen as similarly descriptive, while “companion prosthetics” becomes more prescriptive in turn. Disability and animality can function merely as avatars in narratives such as this film, as examples of narrative prosthesis, if they reinforce simplistic and problematic hierarchies and suggest states only to be transcended or cured. Companion prosthetics, in our view, can be defined as those moments or periods when an animated actor responds to the animacies of a prosthetic other. This is not a definition of a relationship in general such as, perhaps, Haraway and Cayenne, but rather the idea that companion prosthetics can come and go even within the same relationship, when something new is created between a prosthetic other and one who is dependent upon it, between the other who in turn responds to animacies as well (see Fig. 4).

This understanding of prosthetics allows us to rethink traditional distinctions between impairment, disability, and the normate (see Fig. 1). Humans across this spectrum can be dependent upon prosthetic others, can indeed be co-constituted with prosthetic others in ways that need not be seen as always or only negative or restricted only to those with impairments. Species-specific

<i>avatar prosthetics</i>	<i>companion prosthetics</i>
animacies ignored	animacies responded to
affect only from user	affect co-constituted
binaries reinforced	binaries deconstructed
(mind/body, agent/prosthesis)	(phenomenological, humanimal)
static relationship	fluctuating animacies
← human with wheelchair →	
← human with airplane →	
← human with dog →	

Fig. 4 Responding to prosthetic others

impairments can lead to compensatory prosthetics, but that relationship can fluctuate between avatar and companion prosthetics, depending upon how the user responds to the animacies of the prosthetic other. Similarly, what might be seen as an augmentative prosthetic relation between a human and her dog might sometimes tend to be more like avatar than companion prosthetics, or vice versa. It becomes more difficult, then, to maintain compensatory vs. augmentative as the most meaningful distinction or hierarchy to maintain between impaired people and the normate ideal.

Many theoretical schools in disability studies, from the universalist approach associated primarily with Irving K. Zola³⁰ to the dismodernist approach of Lennard Davis,³¹ are to some extent concerned with deconstructing the largely unhelpful dichotomy of able-bodied vs. disabled. The point of this exercise is to allow more space for other modes of being, to allow for greater breathing space, and to acknowledge forms of embodiment that are often culturally disavowed or subjected to erasure. For Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, too, the de-centring of the normate means removing socio-cultural as well as ethical-ideological restrictions upon kinds of living.

None of this amounts to a denial of vulnerability of particular forms of embodiment; precisely the opposite. Companion prosthetics is for us a way to foreground the dependency of beings upon others, always under particular circumstances. If we acknowledge that supposedly neutral objects such as wheelchairs, canes, glasses, or hearing aids shape human relationships with the world, sometimes in unpredictable ways, sometimes exercising their own form of animacy, then the fantasy of normative integration evaporates even without a consideration of impairment effects. The inclusion of nonhuman animals in

the category of a prosthetic helps to highlight the ways that animacies can affect the intra-actions between humans and their prosthetic others. Such relationships are germane to human existence in general and perhaps to disability in particular, as everyday activities can be contingent upon the use of wheelchairs and walking aids, but also guide dogs, for example. Such objects may take on idiosyncratic characteristics, even personalities, for their user, which is perhaps easier to see if it is a nonhuman animal. The phenomenon applies far beyond disability, for example to cars or items of clothing, but is particularly striking in certain disability-related contexts. Once again, we do not deny difference here—between a car and a guide dog and a cane, for example—but choose to focus instead upon the ways that responding to a prosthetic other can allow the relation to rise to the level of companion prosthetics. The lines between prosthetic others that might happen to be human, animal, technological, or machine become less important than the recognition that we are all dependent upon various kinds of others.

The reciprocity and intimacy of companion prosthetics need not be wholly positive, however, and power imbalances and situated contexts must be acknowledged and explored. While we recognize and support the need to resist constructions of impairment as always already negative, we also want to suggest that significant affective responses to the animacies of prosthetic others need not necessarily lead to the kind of joy or pleasure that Haraway suggests with her dog. Melancholy, dread, or a sense of peacefulness can also be powerful affective responses to prosthetic others, for example. We also do not want to suggest that physically active movement is necessarily more animate than, for example, what might have happened between Stephen Hawking and the prosthetic others (human, technological, and mechanical) that allowed him to express himself and write books. We might think here again about Haraway's example of her father's powered wheelchair, signifying (for her, though not necessarily for her father?) being-towards-death, which implies malign or at least negative aspects to this kind of relationship. For Haraway, this seems to disqualify that particular relationship from a companion-species relation. But for us, the possibility remains that there could have been moments or periods of companion prosthetics for her father and his wheelchair that would be harder to see but nonetheless still responsive to the animacies of the wheelchair at some times more than others. An analogy could be drawn, then, with non-human animal prosthetics, whether they be compensatory or augmentative, that illustrate significant and meaningful affects that might not be positive but are co-constituted through prosthetic intra-actions.

Avatar contains its own fantasies—many of them—and its final scenes encapsulate the ambiguity that informs them. As Neytiri sees Jake, as Jake ultimately embodies the potential of companion prosthetics in the form of a new Na'vi body, he also retains the ability to reinforce traditional animacy hierarchies, with the rational mind of the imperialist and heterosexual white male at the pinnacle. In the final shot, with an extreme close-up of his Na'vi face as he suddenly opens his eyes, confirming that the “transfer” into his new body has

worked, the ideals of “raised consciousness” and merging of identities are supposed to erase the power imbalances and ideologies that structure the world of Pandora. That might remain a problematic fantasy for many viewers in the end. Nevertheless, the cracks and fissures of that world—the impossibility of constructing a truly impenetrable fantasy—allow for some hope of theoretical advancement and practical acknowledgement. On our planet, we are left with an ongoing question: how can we encourage and enable various prosthetic relations to go beyond disability and animality as mere avatars and into companion prosthetics?

NOTES

1. “All Time”.
2. See, for example, Molloy, “Animals” and Adamson, “Indigenous”.
3. Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*.
4. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.
5. For more on distinctions between these terms, see Lundblad, “Introduction”.
6. Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement*; and *Understanding Disability*.
7. Thomas, *Female Forms*; Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*.
8. Davis, “Constructing Normalcy”; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*.
9. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation*; Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation of Disabled People”.
10. Palmer, “Old, New, Borrowed and Blue”.
11. Wetherbee, “The Cinematic Topos of Disability”, 42.
12. Galli et al., “The Wheelchair as a Full-Body Tool”.
13. See also Neumann and Gundersen, “Care Parading as Service”.
14. This desire could be seen as resonating with the kind of critique that Ingold makes in “When ANT meets SPIDER”. Ingold argues against the principle of symmetry in actor-network theory which, in his view, “ignores the real complexity of living organisms as opposed to inert matter” (214).
15. Knappett and Malafouris, “Material and Nonhuman Agency”, xi; with reference also to John Law, “After ANT”.
16. This edited collection as a whole provides a useful survey of genealogies and debates in various fields in relation to the concept of agency, and whether or how to theorize it in non-anthropocentric ways. The fields covered include archaeology, anthropology, sociology, computer science, cognitive science, philosophy, and human geography.
17. See, for example, Haraway, *When Species Meet* and *Staying with the Trouble*; Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.
18. See Lundblad, *The Birth of a Jungle*.
19. Chen, *Animacies*, 106.
20. Law and Mol, “The Actor-Enacted”, 74.
21. The language of “passive entities” can also be found in Asdal and Ween’s useful brief history of the concepts of the actant, agency, and “liveliness” in “Writing Nature”, the introduction to an interesting and important special issue on the topic in *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology Studies* 2.1 (2014), 6.
22. Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, 51.

23. Anastasiou and Kauffman, "The Social Model of Disability", 452.
24. For an important study of guide dogs, including when and how they become positively desirable, see McHugh, "Seeing Eyes/ Private Eyes: Service Dogs and Detective Fictions", in *Animal Stories*, 27–64.
25. See Krech, *The Ecological Indian*.
26. Molloy, "Animals", 179.
27. For more on the phenomenological techniques and technics of the experience of flying in this film, see Richmond, "On Learning to Fly".
28. Adamson, "Indigenous", 154.
29. For Haraway's cyborg manifesto, along with her companion species manifesto, see *Manifestly Haraway*.
30. Zola, "Toward".
31. Davis, *Bending over Backwards*.

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Denizen Habitations: Spaces of Solidarity in Recent South Asian Fiction

Sundhya Walther

Saeed and Nadia, the refugee protagonists of Mohsin Hamid's 2017 novel *Exit West*, squatting in the grand house in London where a mysterious portal—a “door”—has deposited them, see a fox in the garden one evening. No one else sees the animal; one person even tells them that they didn't see an actual fox, but a manifestation of “themselves, their love”.¹ Other residents suggest, by turns, that the fox has come from the countryside, or through one of the strange doors, or that, in fact, it's simply another urban resident. Saeed and Nadia themselves “were both amazed to see it, and wondered how such a creature could survive in London, and where it had come from”.² The fox is a creature out of place in this environment, and its appearance introduces a note of wonder into Saeed and Nadia's experience that is separate from the harrowing magic of the doors, a sweetness that momentarily relieves the relentless difficulty of their situation. At the same time, the parallel between the fox and the protagonists is clear. The questions that Saeed and Nadia ask about this creature—how does it survive? where did it come from?—could also be asked about them by citizens of the countries into which the refugees are transported; it might even be asked by readers, from whom Hamid withholds certain key information, such as the name of Saeed and Nadia's home country, and the origin and nature of the “doors”. The different responses to the fox reflect a desire to locate it and to fix it in its proper place. They also suggest the impossibility of satisfying this desire, as the fox remains dislocated from any space. Is

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575

the fox “wild” from the countryside? Is it a migrant from the “doors”? Or is it a denizen, an unsanctioned, unacknowledged resident of the garden, of the neighbourhood, of the city?

In *Exit West*, the connection between Hamid’s fox and his protagonists suggests that, as the other refugee says, the fox is a metaphor—not for Saeed and Nadia’s relationship, but rather for their existence as denizens in London, and more broadly in the “West” of the novel’s title. Animals are so often denizens in novels. They are the unacknowledged, illegitimate inhabitants of the central, human stories that novels try to tell, and yet they frequently hold up the affective scaffolding on which the human stories rest. *Exit West* doesn’t have a situated human story; its subject, migration, is reflected in a form that is, as reviewer Sukhdev Sandhu writes, in “constant motion”.³ Here, the fox takes on a different importance: it intrudes into a human story that is about intruders and intrusions, and its denizenship within the novel runs parallel to that of the human protagonists. Saeed and Nadia are part of an influx of refugees, claiming space in the xenophobic atmosphere of Brexit-era Britain. Foxes are an established and successful denizen population in London, having (as biologists say) “colonised” the city after the Second World War.⁴ In some ways, Saeed and Nadia aspire to the status of the fox, who is at home even as it is out of place. The couple, so totally unmoored—having left their home and arrived in a random location in the “West” through a magical portal—don’t move through this space with the ease of a fox, and certainly cannot slip through it without attracting notice. As their community is besieged by state authorities, the quiet infiltration of this creature signals a technique of subversion to be mimicked by human denizens; the fox shows Saeed and Nadia something about denizen survival, and in so doing forms a slippery kind of alliance with them, passing on some of its power to the human refugees. This brief meeting thus forms a denizen habitation within the novel, a space created by solidarity that reaches across borders, in this case those of species, that is momentarily shared by three beings who are all on uncertain footing in this posh London garden.

DENIZENS AND THEIR SPACES

Denizenship is a status that depends on ephemeral processes of dwelling, and a term that applies to both human and nonhuman animals who are defined by their unstable relationship to the spaces where they live. The word “denizen” means both an inhabitant and an alien, a contradiction that exposes the fragility of denizen belonging, and engages the sense of being “in-between” that has followed the denizen since its beginnings as a category (as I will discuss below).⁵ Human denizens, including so-called illegal immigrants, refugees, and the urban poor and homeless, have an uncertain and precarious place in the social fabric. Like these human denizens, nonhuman denizens, who live in and around human settlements but whose presence there is unsanctioned, inhabit an indeterminate zone of belonging. “Denizen” is a designation that applies to ever greater numbers of beings, both human and nonhuman, as these

individuals and populations seek out living room in the context of increasing spatial, legal, economic, political, and environmental pressures.

In this chapter, I consider the place of denizens in three recent novels from South Asia: Hamid's *Exit West*, Vivek Shanbhag's *Ghachar Ghochar* (2017), and Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). Each of these novels presents a different perspective on the emancipatory possibilities that are open to human and nonhuman denizens; the connections evoked in *Exit West* are foreclosed in *Ghachar Ghochar* and laid open by *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. As Hamid's novel demonstrates, denizens exist in an uncertain relationship to the spatial and conceptual order of modern state formations. The magical doors throw into relief the exclusion of denizens, in this case refugees, from the "imaginative geography" of Western nations, even as denizens are increasingly significant material presences in these spaces.⁶ The irruption of denizen populations into the ordered spaces of the modern West engenders efforts to re-place these denizens by holding or fixing them—conceptually in categories like refugee, criminal, and illegal, and physically in spaces like camps, prisons, and slums. These denizen designations in turn dislocate their inhabitants from normative forms of spatial and political legitimacy, including citizenship, education, work, and democratic participation. As these novels show, however, in this disempowerment, we can sometimes also find new forms of solidarity emerging, denizen alliances that work to reframe denizenship itself. This reframing occurs in and through what I will call denizen habitations.

Denizen habitations are conceptual spaces in which denizens offer gestures of recognition to one another that make possible new forms of alliance. By making room for such solidarity, they subvert the efforts of state power to put denizens in place. Though these spaces are precarious, they hold out a utopian promise: they eschew rigidity, they make and adapt and transform in the alchemical way of necessity. Denizen habitations can appear in the interstices of legitimized space, like those small pockets of a city that are un- or disused. I don't make these claims to provide an alibi for the powers that relegate denizens to unliveable lives, nor do I want to essentialize or universalize the multiplicity of forms of denizenship. Instead, I want to suggest that in denizenship, disenfranchisement and disempowerment can spark off a generative power that is sometimes to be seen in these multispecies denizen habitations. Moreover, these habitations might work, in the context of both political and environmental crises, to reconstitute the denizenizing of the world as potential, rather than (or at the same time as) catastrophe.

THE PRECARIETY AND PROMISE OF DENIZENSHIP

Denizenship is an urgent question at this moment when increasing numbers of beings are faced with barriers of all kinds to their physical and political thriving. Guy Standing's *A Precariat Charter* examines the growth of the precariat, a class dependent on insecure employment, and who therefore experience insecurity in many aspects of their lives.⁷ Standing argues that part of the rise of

such precarity is that, across the world, citizens are being made into denizens. He approaches denizenship as an “in-between” status, one of (non-)belonging. Standing traces the concept of denizenship from Medieval England, where a denizen was an outsider granted permission to live and work in a particular community: a denizen “gained some of the rights of a citizen of the town, but rarely all of them and not necessarily forever”.⁸ For Standing, the term “denizen”, as its usage evolved in relation to the developing concept of national citizenship, retained its connotation of someone “in-between”. Denizenship is a status marked by a lack of status: neither insider nor outsider, citizen nor alien, the denizen floats on the favour of state power. Today, the condition is one of floating in perpetuity, with the hoped-for destination—spatial, social, and political legitimacy—ever receding.

Animal denizenship has been a subject for analysis in some key works exploring the status of nonhuman beings in relation to human power over their lives and their living spaces. In *Zoopolis*, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka aim to categorize nonhuman animals and place them into a variety of social contracts with human beings, with the ultimate aim of constructing a non-exploitative multispecies society. Companion and farmed animals, in the *Zoopolis*, would become citizens, and would demand the same duty of care and protection from society at large that human citizens do. Groups of so-called wild animals would constitute sovereign nations. Between these two categories of citizen and sovereign is the blurry domain of the “denizen”. The denizen is neither companion nor wild, neither integrated into human society nor completely independent. This category includes such animals as London’s foxes, as well as pigeons, rats, coyotes, and others, who live as the disavowed, shadow populations of modern urban space. Denizens, both human and nonhuman, complicate Donaldson and Kymlicka’s clean and orderly political vision, and somewhat frustrate their efforts to apply established human models to multispecies relationships. When confronted with denizens, they acknowledge that their ideas can only be provisional.⁹

Mick Smith approaches the idea of denizenship differently from Standing as well as Donaldson and Kymlicka by interrogating the hierarchies on which both models depend. Smith rejects citizenship as a positive model of rights and responsibilities; instead, he suggests, we all should aim to become denizens as a way of living responsively to and with our injured planet. For Smith, denizens are co-creators and co-habitants in a community that eschews ecological sovereignty, which he defines as “human dominion over the natural world [...] in all its many guises”.¹⁰ In place of this sovereignty, Smith proposes a “radical ecology” which, instead of “the political paradigm of (human) citizenship, [...] suggests a constitutive ecological politics of subtle involvements and relations between more-than-just-human beings, the denizens who together compose the world”.¹¹ Denizenship for all beings is thus an aspiration, rather than a status to which certain beings are consigned. Being a denizen still means a kind of disempowerment, since it involves relinquishing sovereignty, but Smith takes from this disempowerment a potential for reconfiguring all relations on

earth, even those between living beings and the inanimate world. Denizenship appears as a state of openness, a mode of being laid bare in relation to our multispecies others. From this openness can arise provisional, contingent, and “ecological communities” that move beyond human domination, towards the work of co-creation and co-belonging.¹²

For Smith, denizenization signifies a world of beings free from (human) ecological sovereignty but, for human denizens, it is often access to sovereignty that is the desired goal. As Standing observes, denizenship by definition means an exclusion from rights and protections for vulnerable human populations. We are confronted, then, with this conflict between urgent human interests and a utopian ideal that would admit nonhuman beings into a collective: how can we approach this conflict responsibly and responsively? The sovereignty that makes denizens of both humans and animals is intent on borders, categorizations, and orderings. For this reason, the very existence of denizens, and the fluidity of that category, holds a certain promise. As Standing observes, this fluidity means precarity: denizens are vulnerable because their status is uncertain. But this uncertainty also confers potential. The significance of *multispecies* denizenship is precisely that it refuses the rigid categorizations of power—in this case, as they apply to species. Rather than asserting the humanity of these populations, what would it mean to denizenize all beings, as Smith does in his utopian formulation? What can we learn from denizen habitations and denizen alliances that can change the way we interpret our relations with ourselves, our others, and our world?

THE REFUSAL OF SOLIDARITY IN VIVEK SHANBHAG’S *GHACHAR GHOCHAR*

Vivek Shanbhag’s novel *Ghachar Ghochar* is a text that is concerned with sovereignty, as Smith defines it, as a form of violent domination by one group of denizen beings over another. *Ghachar Ghochar*, originally written in Kannada and published in English translation in 2017, is, as Parul Seghal notes, “an austere little tale” that delves into the dark heart of a family as they claw their way from poverty into wealth.¹³ In this novel, the drive to ascend the class hierarchy destroys any possibility of a denizen habitation. The nameless narrator’s family resists their denizen status by suppressing another denizen population that takes up residence in their home: ants. The family lives in a cramped dwelling, where their life, according to the narrator, is marked by deprivation, and completely shaped by capitalist aspiration.¹⁴ First, it is the narrator’s mother, the main protector of the home space, who struggles to eradicate the ants, becoming so preoccupied that she sits up all night tracing their movements. Eventually, the rest of the family joins her battle, becoming, the narrator says, “increasingly desperate and violent” and eventually “openly cruel”.¹⁵ It is notable that some pages of this brief and tautly constructed novel are devoted to the family’s interaction with the ants. Many people might react with

similar disgust to a kitchen overtaken by thousands of ants; in this novel, however, the family's reaction is remarkable as an example of their resistance to the conditions of their life. They are willing to go to any lengths to get rid of the ants, and this struggle to maintain a pristine living space eventually degrades into an enjoyment of violence. In a novel that traces the moral progress of this family in inverse proportion to their increasing wealth, their cruelty towards this denizen population signals their willingness to cause harm in pursuit of their own gain. Later, on the narrator's honeymoon, he kills an ant: "I noticed an ant on the window frame and casually jabbed at it with my forefinger".¹⁶ His new wife, Anita, is upset by the action; she sees it as part of the "senseless violence human beings indulged in", and the narrator asks, "How was I to explain to her my history with ants? It would make no sense to someone who hadn't lived through something similar".¹⁷ Shanbhag here highlights an act of violence that might seem inconsequential to many readers—the squashing of an ant—and makes it emblematic of the desperate and insular ethos of the family, which protects itself and its status at all costs. Anita is right to be unsettled; later, it is she who will be casually squashed.

Ghachar Ghochar documents the movement from denizenship to citizenship, as the narrator's family gains social and spatial legitimacy through capitalist gain. Shanbhag shows how this movement occurs through the exercise of sovereignty over other denizens; the violence towards the ants stands for all the violence this family has performed as they have engineered their social rise. This neat satire demonstrates the limitations of holding citizenship as an aspiration for denizen populations in the context of India's (and specifically Bangalore's) burgeoning capitalist expansion. In this context, denizens, regardless of species, are pitted against one another in constant competition for resources, just as Shanbhag's human family and the ants battle over the space of the home.

In such a space of conflict, no denizen habitation is possible. *Ghachar Ghochar* offers no look outside of the narrator's claustrophobic perspective, which is "ghachar ghochar" (a nonsense phrase meaning inextricably tangled) with that of the other family members. In other texts, however, denizen habitations arise as sites of emancipatory potential, potential that reaches outside neoliberal teleologies of progress. One such text is Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, a novel that could not be more different from *Ghachar Ghochar*, with its sprawling and expansive collection of characters, stories, and voices, all of which add up to a compassionate representation of the forms and practices of denizenship in contemporary India.

HABITATIONS OUTSIDE THE GRID IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE
MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS*

Near the end of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, a Kashmiri resistance fighter, spending a final night with his lover of many years, reads a poem she has written in a notebook: "How to tell a shattered story? By slowly becoming everybody. No. By slowly becoming everything".¹⁸ These lines provide insight into their author, Tilo, as she has worked to incorporate the story of Kashmir and the place of her lover, Musa, in its struggle; they also reflect the project of the book as a whole, which is constructed as a collection of shards from broken stories and stories of breakage. As Roy says, it is a book with a "shattered heart".¹⁹ The focal point of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is Anjum, a *hijra*, or transgender woman, whose various attempts to find home and community take her through an itinerary of the struggles and crises of contemporary India.²⁰ In the end, she is able to create a multispecies denizen habitation that provides space for many shattered stories, including her own. Tilo's poem suggests a vision of a denizen world, one that finds wholeness by rejecting categorization. This is denizenization as a movement, a process, a work of becoming, wrought, in Tilo's case and in Roy's case, through text and writing.

Roy describes her novel as "book of porous borders", one that works against categorizations that preclude denizen solidarity.²¹ She argues that, in such categorizations, we see "the politics of making a grid of class, of caste, of ethnicity, of religion. And then making the grid ever more fine is very much part of how you rule the world".²² The novel explores this oppressive "grid" by taking two unstable borders as its main subjects: the border between men and women, which is the space occupied by Anjum, and the border between India and Pakistan, which is the space occupied by Kashmir. Both spaces are contested, and the parallel that the novel draws between them is explicit. Anjum's first *hijra* friend, Nimmo Gorakhpuri, tells her that, for trans people, "[t]he riot is *inside* us. The war is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us".²³ This use of a decades-long political conflict over land to analogize trans experience, and vice versa, is questionable, but the overall effect is to suggest that, while contested spaces are subject to great violence, they can also house a kind of promise, a denizen futurity. Roy says of Anjum that she "doesn't accept this grid. She breaks it, and comes out. [...] And that, for me, is so sweet".²⁴ It is the multispecies denizen habitations of the novel that make room for this sweetness.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness begins with a brief meditation on the deaths of denizen animals: Delhi's population of vultures has been poisoned by Diclofenac, which Roy claims has been given to cows in order to increase their milk productivity.²⁵ The passage ends: "Not many noticed the passing of the friendly old birds. There was so much else to look forward to".²⁶ This opening establishes the novel's recognition of denizens, noticing their presence, or absence, where the dominant gaze slides across their bodies without seeing. Here, the spirits of the vultures remain to contest the oppressive driving force of modern Indian capitalism. Nonhuman animals populate the novel in many

significant ways: there is a critique of cow protection as a form of Hindu nationalist violence; there is a gorgeous and beloved goat slaughtered for Eid, and an ugly and beloved one who survives; there is the white mare Payal, ridden through the city by a gentle con man who calls himself Saddam Hussein; there are roosters, dogs, kittens, insects, magical bulls, and the ghosts of vultures. What brings these animals together is that they are almost all denizens, living in loose and contingent relationships with sanctioned human homes and settlements, or sharing space and status with human denizens.²⁷

Anjum is introduced to us as a resident of a graveyard, a place to which she has come for refuge after leaving the Kwabagh, the “house of dreams” that the *hijras* share. Anjum is traumatized by her experience of the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, which targeted the state’s minority Muslim population, and this trauma drives her away from her *hijra* community, with whom she has lived since adolescence, and into isolation. In this graveyard, she gradually creates a dwelling place not just for herself, but for a number of other denizens, human, nonhuman, and spirit, a place which is eventually called Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services.²⁸ As Alex Clark observes, the Guest House becomes a “sanctuary, protected by willpower from the turbulent outside world”.²⁹ And yet, while this denizen habitation is protected and protective, it is also reflective of that threatening outside world; Roy’s novel catalogues most of the crises of contemporary India, from vast disparities of wealth to gender inequality, from religious fundamentalisms to environmental destruction, from Bhopal to the Narmada Valley to Kashmir. This wide-ranging political engagement is part of what Clark calls the novel’s “patchwork” effect,³⁰ as each conflict, injustice, and inequality contributes to the denizenization of India, and in turn to the vast denizen cast of Roy’s novel.

Guy Standing notes six ways in which former or would-be citizens can be denizenized, which include criminalization, not being able to meet the financial costs of citizenship, and “by not conforming to moralistic norms”.³¹ In *Ministry*, we not only have a survey of the many challenges facing the nation, but also a collection of beings who represent most of the paths to denizenship that Standing describes. He notes that denizenship is not just a status relating to migration; people can be denizens of their own nations, thanks to a “‘tiered membership’ model of society” that arises in the context of globalized neoliberal capitalism.³² Roy shows us these tiers as they exist in India through her collection of denizens: Anjum and the other *hijras*, whose gender identity places them outside of “moralistic norms”; Saddam, whose low caste, hatred of Hindu fundamentalism, and petty crimes, render him multiply denizen; Tilo, whose connection to Musa and commitment to Kashmir put her on the wrong side of state power; Zainab and Saddam’s host of unwanted animals, each one wounded in some way and rejected by human society; Zainab herself, and, finally, Miss Udaya Jebeen, both abandoned girl children, who eventually become the much desired daughters of a loose denizen family. This community makes a denizen habitation of the graveyard, a place where these different forms of denizenship are brought together in contingent but resilient denizen

alliances. Anjum tells Saddam, “Once you have fallen off the edge like all of us have, including our Biroo [a dog who lives with them] [...], you will never stop falling. And as you fall you will hold on to other falling people. [...] This place where we live, where we have made our home, is the place of falling people”.³³ She conceives of her own status as a never-ending plummet of denizenization, but a plummet in which she can reach out to catch the hands, or paws, or hooves of other denizens in moments of solidarity. Denizen is therefore, for Anjum, not a category that can be fixed in time or place, assigned a square in Roy’s “grid”. Instead, it is characterized by a constant movement that offers promise as well as pain. The diversity of residents in Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services shows that denizen is a capacious as well as precarious category, and that denizen habitations are *accommodating*. According to Roy, these characters share “unorthodox kinds of love” from which emerge a “solidarity of the heart”.³⁴ Where state power wants to fix denizens in their narrow categories (refugee, criminal, orphan, *hijra*, stray), denizen habitations have fluid borders and uncertain delimitations; they bleed in all directions.

The ending of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is enigmatic, a notable opening to interpretation in a book that is explicit about the messages it wants to impart. The novel ends with everyone in Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services asleep,

except for Guih Kyom the dung beetle. He was wide awake and on duty, lying on his back with his legs in the air to save the world in case the heavens fell. But even he knew that things would turn out all right in the end. They would, because they had to. Because Miss Jebeen, Miss Udaya Jebeen, was come.³⁵

Arifa Akbar sees this moment as part of the novel’s “democracy of voice”, since even this small creature is given his shard of subjectivity.³⁶ This conclusion reaches gently towards its tiny denizen creature in a way that recalls the honeymoon violence of Shanbhag’s narrator in *Ghachar Ghochar*; Guih Kyom would not likely have survived a night in that household. Filippo Menozzi argues that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* traffics in an “aesthetic of the inconsolable”, in which writing cannot offer any “healing or reconciliation”.³⁷ Menozzi takes this term from the novel’s dedication, “To, The Unconsoled” [*sic*], and yet, in Tilo’s poem, and here, in the novel’s last sentences, there does seem to be a gesture towards consolation, even if it is a delicate and fleeting one. Roy’s previous novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), concludes not with the oppressive violence that is the climax of the story, nor with its chronological end, but with a moment of promise, when the doomed inter-caste lovers part but plan to meet “tomorrow”.³⁸ Lau and Mendes argue that romance is “a form of rescue” in Roy’s novels that is integral to the political commentary; similarly, Charlotte Sinclair observes that “characters find joy and love and friendship in the most inauspicious circumstances” and that Roy represents “optimism as a rebel stance”.³⁹ Like *The God of Small Things*, this novel too ends with an emancipatory impulse; these denizens have found space in one another, in an alliance

that crosses all of their various borders, and they have placed their hope in a child.

Miss Udaya Jebeen is the abandoned baby of a Maoist rebel, named after Musa Yeswi's daughter who was killed alongside her mother in Srinagar. At her first appearance, this second Miss Jebeen is surrounded by denizen animals: "A thin white horse tethered to the railing, a small dog with mange, a concrete-coloured garden lizard, two palm-striped squirrels who should have been asleep and, from her hidden perch, a she-spider with a swollen egg sac watched over her. Other than that, she seemed to be utterly alone".⁴⁰ This protective denizen community forms a habitation around the vulnerable child.⁴¹ The last lines of the novel suggest that generational denizenship can give rise to a kind of power and that a denizen can be a force for good in a world of rigid strictures and oppressive categorizations. It isn't clear, however, to what degree this promise is kept in the world of the novel. The denizen characters hold power within an extremely circumscribed orbit—namely, Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services—that is vulnerable at any moment to violent incursions from the state. Is there then a power to be found in this very vulnerability? The novel's ending suggests that the world will be denizenized, and that this is how "things" will "turn out all right" and the shattered story will be told. But if this is the case, then Roy shows us this denizenization in its most neonate, incipient stages.

The conflicts and crises that the novel documents so faithfully are not shown to be solved or even solvable by or through denizens and their denizenship, and there is no sense that the denizen habitation that Anjum has managed to conjure out of a graveyard will expand its influence across the city, let alone the world. It is difficult, therefore, to identify precisely in what way the advent of Miss Udaya Jebeen, the denizen child, presents such a grand potential. But it is perhaps the point that, though everyone invests something in the child, this grandest hope emanates from the smallest creature, the dung beetle Guih Kyom. As in *The God of Small Things*, Roy evokes the power that lies in smallness.⁴² Nilanjana Roy calls *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* "an elegy for a bulldozed world", populated by "outcasts".⁴³ Decca Aitkenhead writes that "the endless parade of oddballs and eccentrics can get a little exhausting [...]" but Roy's policy of indiscriminate inclusion [...] is the literary expression of solidarity, and the fundamental theme both of Roy's politics and of the book".⁴⁴ This community formed of outsiders amounts to something like Mick Smith's vision of a denizen world; Roy's radical denizen collective rejects sovereignties of all kinds. Instead, these denizens carefully tend alliances grown in the shared mulch of their multiple and multiplying exclusions, and ultimately cultivate a habitation that thrives outside of India's ruling "grid".

In this chapter, I have highlighted three representations of multispecies denizenship that offer a spectrum of responses to this status shared across species lines. In *Ghachar Ghochar*, the human family violently disavows any connection to the resident population of ants, and this violence is the precursor of the wide swath of harm cut by their upward social trajectory. *Exit West* holds out a

different possibility: in the brief encounter between the human protagonists and the fox, we glimpse the potential for denizen solidarity. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, this solidarity is fully articulated through a large and diverse denizen community. Roy's novel of porous borders demonstrates the dynamic forms of anticolonial and anticapitalist critique that can emerge from denizen habitations. As greater numbers of beings across the world are made denizen, it is worth looking to these accommodating spaces to find new, non-sovereign kinds of power. The capaciousness of denizenship allows us to envision a community outside the "grid", that paradigm of domination which has done so much harm. Denizen habitations offer a way of reorienting ourselves towards a world in crisis, a change of perspective that, even if only momentary, has the potential to reconfigure our relations with our many others, beings with whom we must try to share an increasingly denizenized earth.

NOTES

1. Hamid, *Exit West*, 137.
2. Hamid, *Exit West*, 137.
3. Sandhu, "Exit West by Mohsin Hamid", n.p.
4. Jones, "The Secret Life of London's Foxes", n.p.
5. "Denizen". Def. 2a, b. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
6. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said uses the term "imaginative geography" to name the affective mapping through which a space (or time) is made sense of by the discourses that seek to define and demarcate it (55).
7. Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, n.p.
8. Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, n.p.
9. Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 215.
10. Smith, *Against Ecological Sovereignty*, xi.
11. Smith, *Against Ecological Sovereignty*, xviii
12. Smith, *Against Ecological Sovereignty*, 217–18
13. Seghal, "A Great Indian Novel Reaches American Shores", n.p.
14. The neighbourhood is actually "lower middle class" (Shanbhag, *Ghachar Ghochar*, 39), but the narrator represents it almost as an informal settlement, "teeming" (39) and lacking infrastructure.
15. Shanbhag, *Ghachar Ghochar*, 46–47.
16. Shanbhag, *Ghachar Ghochar*, 78.
17. Shanbhag, *Ghachar Ghochar*, 79.
18. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 436.
19. Roy, "Arundhati Roy on *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*", n.p.
20. Transgender is not a precise translation for *hijra*, an ancient category that also includes intersex people, drag performers, and eunuchs, and traditionally excludes transgender men and nonbinary people. Though Anjum rejects the word, the younger *hijra* characters identify her and themselves as trans, so I have chosen to use this terminology. For some thorough and nuanced discussions of *hijra* history and experience, see Reddy, Revathi and Murali, Ahmed and Singh, and Jaffrey. For an account of debates about such terms in academia, see Stryker, Currah, and Moore.

21. Roy, "Full extended interview", n.p.
22. Qtd. in Aitkenhead, "Arundhati Roy on why it took 20 years to write her second novel", n.p.
23. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 23.
24. Qtd. in Aitkenhead, "Arundhati Roy on why it took 20 years to write her second novel", n.p.
25. This representation of the dairy industry is one of many comments in the novel on the hypocrisies of Indian cow protection. This particular moment unites denizens and livestock animals in their subjection to capitalist and state power. For further information, see Thom van Dooren's fascinating exploration of vultures, cattle, and diclofenac in *Flight Ways*.
26. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 1.
27. Roy has not commented on the kinds of animals who appear in the novel, but she has said that, like other boundaries in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, that between human and animal is "porous" (Roy, "Full Extended Interview", n.p.).
28. *Jannat*, which means "paradise" in Urdu, is also a colloquial name for Kashmir, so the word connects the two main narrative threads.
29. Clark, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy Review", n.p.
30. Clark, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy Review", n.p.
31. Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, n.p.
32. Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, n.p.
33. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 84.
34. Roy, "Full Extended Interview", n.p.
35. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 438.
36. Akbar, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy—Review", n.p.
37. Menozzi, "Too much blood for good literature", 3–4.
38. Roy, *The God of Small Things*, 340.
39. Lau and Mendes, "Romancing the Other", 6. Sinclair, "Arundhati Roy", n.p.
40. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 96.
41. Roy herself apparently relies on denizen solidarity for her security in the face of frequent threats to her home and person; she says, "For me, everybody – the cab drivers, the cigarette sellers, the stray dogs – those are my security. There are many street dogs who sleep on my stairs [...] who look very fierce, though they're not" (qtd. in Aitkenhead, n.p.).
42. In that novel, her twin child protagonists control the novel's idiom and point of view, which suggests that, while they are totally subject to adult will in their family and community, their love of language empowers them. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* lacks this clarity of perspective, as Seghal points out (Seghal, "Arundhati Roy's Fascinating Mess", n.p.); while the denizen characters control some of the novel's space, they don't have hold of its voice. This seems an opportunity missed by a writer previously so skilled in creating linguistic room for denizen voices.
43. Nilanjana Roy, "Book Review", n.p.
44. Aitkenhead, "Arundhati Roy on why it took 20 years to write her second novel", n.p.

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Plagues, Poisons, and Dead Rats: A Multispecies History

Lucinda Cole

An issue of the *British Medical Journal* in the summer of 1908 contained an account of what the author(s) called “enteritis”, a severe intestinal disorder that struck twelve residents of an apartment building on July 18.¹ All of the afflicted residents had eaten in the same dining room, so at first health officials suspected a food-borne illness, but they were unable to locate a specific cause. Then, on July 30, health officers reported a bad smell in a room close to the suspected dining-room. After taking up the floor, they found forty dead and decomposing mice lying alongside a hot-water pipe, “where they had probably gone to get warmth on feeling ill” (1548). At that point the physicians and health inspectors discovered that a rat poison called “Liverpool Virus” had been laid down, on torn pieces of bread, two days before the first human resident was stricken. “The Liverpool Virus” was one of many new rat poisons that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their creation driven by both medical and economic concerns. “Mice lighten your purse”, reads one advertisement (Fig. 1). “You cut away the gnawed loaf”, it warns, which, together with the nibbled candle, butter, and biscuit, exemplifies “waste—waste and waste”. What distinguished this poison from others, however, was its claim to be species-specific—affecting only “Rats, Mice, and Moles” rather than pets or other beings. As the medical journal’s report of twelve suffering humans attests, this claim turned out to be false.

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589

Fig. 1 1913 Advert for the Liverpool Virus.
(Courtesy of The Skittish Library)

Mice lighten your purse

MICE waste and spoil more than they eat. You cut away the gnawed loaf—the candle—the butter; the nibbled biscuit you throw out; waste—waste and waste. Save that money. Do away with the mice; all of them. Get a tin of "Liverpool Virus" to-day. It spreads a fatal disease amongst the whole colony. They die out-of-doors. It is easy to use and safe—guaranteed harmless to everybody and everything but Rats, Mice, and Voles.

LIVERPOOL VIRUS
Regd

wipes out Mice & Rats

Sold by all chemists. In tins. Instant ready for use, for mice only 1/6. Stronger for rats and mice 2/6 and 4/-. Or by post 1/6, 2/10 and 6/6 from Evans Sons, Leach & Webb Ltd., Hanover Street, Liverpool.

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Nevertheless, in its very failure, this episode of the Liverpool Virus poisoning opens up a complex set of issues crucial to how we conceive of animal studies as a discipline, especially in its relationship to the history of medicine. Most obviously, in its promise of a species-specific poison, the “Liverpool Virus” seems symptomatic of a complex fantasy structure based on the assumption that humans are physiologically distinct from the creatures with whom we share a natural and built environment. Not only do we share with other animals—and perhaps especially rats—similar needs, tastes, desires, and susceptibility to toxins, but over 70 per cent of diseases are vector-borne or zoonotic—that is, capable of crossing species bounds. In recognition of this species interdependence, a group of veterinarians, physicians, and environmentalists recently created the “One Health” movement, founded on the assumption that “human health (including mental health via the human–animal bond phenomenon), animal health, and ecosystem health” are “inextricably linked”.²

Its goal is to “promote, improve, and defend the health of all species” through interdisciplinary cooperation.³ Since 2000, the movement has produced a number of books crucial to animal studies, notably *Animals and the Shaping of Modern Medicine: One Health and Its Histories*; this foundational essay collection demonstrates how medical history, which is usually imagined in human terms, is equally determined by animals and their diseases. Removing distinctions between nature and society, and citing foundational animal studies scholars such as Donna Haraway, One Health emphasizes the agency of non-human animals in human medicine; from the perspective of One Health, issues such as emergent diseases, food insecurity, food safety, and climate change demand that we abandon traditional disciplinary distinctions for the sake of “integrated, coordinated efforts” in which the health of humans is considered in relation to the health of other animals and the environment.⁴

Working in the spirit of the One Health Movement, this broad historical essay considers the links among zoonotic disease, methods of rat control, and their environmental impacts. It proceeds chronologically from the seventeenth century, at the beginning of Europe’s imperial efforts and at the height of bubonic plague, to the early twentieth century, when the source of the plague was identified. One version of this story is already familiar: humans died en masse from a mysterious disease spread through global trade; after the development of germ theory, rodents and their fleas were demonized as disease vectors. This is not—or at least, not entirely—the story I want to tell. Instead, I will focus on three key, usually fatal multispecies relationships: those between humans and rats, as exemplified in the literature of colonial expansion, including Daniel Defoe’s 1719 monument to individualism, *Robinson Crusoe*; those between cats and rats, as exemplified in shipboard travel literature; and those between all these animals and rodenticides in early twentieth-century epidemiological literature. This broad historical approach models the need for a robust One Health movement, an interdisciplinary supplement to both the medical humanities, focused almost exclusively on human health, and to the mainstream concerns of animal and environmental studies. Seeing human health as embedded in a multispecies world could serve as a kind of prophylactic against the anthropocentric thinking that leads to newer, more dangerous, and more profitable versions of the toxic Liverpool Virus.

THE COLONIAL FANTASY

In 2011, the Nature Conservancy began a two-phase project to eradicate non-native animals that had been introduced in the seventeenth century to the Galapagos Islands, and have been breeding there ever since. After removing goats, cats, pigs, and burros, conservationists turned their attention to rats, whose population density had reportedly reached about one rat for every square foot on Pinzon, the main island. In what one newspaper describes as the “biggest raticide in the history of South America”, Ecuador began dumping 22

tons of poison, designed to kill 18 million rats, eliminating (if all goes according to plan) the entire rat population by 2020.⁵

The ancestors of these doomed Galapagos rats traveled from Europe and colonial South America on trading vessels and pirate ships, and there is strong evidence that, even in the early modern period, colonizing rats already posed a significant threat to imperial ventures. As I have argued elsewhere, rats destroyed harvested grain and devastated food systems—especially on board ships and on islands—and European mercantile and colonial aspirations depended, to a great extent, on battling vermin to (at best) a standstill.⁶ Not surprisingly, then, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts dramatize these struggles by restaging the ravages of traditional plague literature as a series of biopolitical management crises—stories about human efforts to organize “life” in ways that conform to real and imagined human needs. *Robinson Crusoe* deploys vermin in this manner to promote a colonialist fantasy of seemingly endless growth and infinite profitability. Defoe transforms rats and other vermin from the ubiquitous threats that slither and crawl through seventeenth-century plague narratives and travel writing to controllable populations, animal and human: rats, birds, wolves, and hostile indigenes fall victim to the same violent technologies, namely, traps, toxicants, repellents, barriers, and banishment.

In the voyage narratives that Defoe drew on for *Robinson Crusoe*, rats run rampant. In William Dampier’s accounts of his circumnavigations in the 1690s and early 1700s, rodents pose a dire threat to shipboard provisions. Leaving Cape Corrientes on the west coast of Mexico to sail across the Pacific to the East Indies, Dampier describes the crew’s fear at having their meager provisions ravaged by shipboard rats: “we had not 60 days Provision, at a little more than half a pint of Maiz a day for each man, . . . and we had a great many Rats aboard, which we could not hinder from eating part of our Maiz”.⁷ Dampier’s fellow buccaneer, Woodes Rogers, preyed on Spanish shipping along the coasts of Peru and Chile in 1708–09 and found that even when he stole grain, it was quickly “much damag’d by the [shipboard] Rats”.⁸ After Rogers rescued the Scots sailor Alexander Selkirk, marooned for three years on the island of Juan Fernandez off the Chilean coast, he described the living conditions that Defoe fictionalized in *Robinson Crusoe*. Selkirk, according to Rogers, was

much pester’d with Cats and Rats, that had bred in great numbers from some of each Species which had got ashore from Ships that put in there to wood and water. The Rats gnaw’d his Feet and Clothes while asleep, which oblig’d him to cherish the Cats with his Goats-flesh; by which many of them became so tame, that they would lie about him in hundreds, and soon deliver’d him from the Rats. (128)

Selkirk’s term “pester’d” is derived from the “pest”, an alternate term for the bubonic plague, but here is used in the general sense of pestilence. Before Selkirk semi-domesticates the cats as a kind of feline Swiss Guard,

rats—reproducing, like the cats, “in great numbers”—literally threaten to eat him alive. Richard Steele retells Selkirk’s story but, in describing the rodent infestation, obscures the shipboard origins of both cats and rats: “His Habitation was extremely pester’d with Rats, which gnaw’d his Cloaths and Feet when sleeping”.⁹ To defend him against them, “he fed and tamed Numbers of young Kitlings, who lay about his Bed, and preserved him from the Enemy” (123). Particularly for Steele, a patriotic Englishman, rats figure as “the Enemy” and mark the dark, even verminous side of an emerging global economy. Transported to islands, vermin disrupt native ecologies and become integral, and often threatening, components of a new biopolitical order linking eighteenth-century colonialism to today’s Nature Conservancy narrative.

The enduring popularity of *Robinson Crusoe*—it went through about 1000 editions and adaptations before World War I—depends on Defoe’s narrative sleight of hand in banishing rats from Crusoe’s island: the rats that plagued Selkirk, devastated Rogers’ pirated grain, and continue to swarm, 300 years later, through the Galapagos, are almost completely exiled from the novel.¹⁰ Defoe mentions rats only three times in *Robinson Crusoe*, all of them in relation to a single bag of grain. Scavenging on his shipwrecked vessel for provisions, he finds “a little Remainder of *European* Corn which had been laid by for some Fowls which we brought to Sea with us, but the Fowls were kill’d; there had been some Barley and Wheat together, but, to my great Disappointment, I found afterwards that the Rats had eaten or spoil’d it all”.¹¹ The bag of grain is chicken-feed; the shipboard fowl, intended as food for sailors on transoceanic vessels, already have been eaten, perished in the shipwreck, or been killed by rats. Later, Crusoe discovers the bag of barley and wheat and then decides to take the nearly empty bag of corn that, he supposed, “was all devour’d with Rats” (114). Seeing “nothing in the Bag but Husks and Dust”, he shakes it out once he returns to the island; a month later, miraculously, Crusoe sees “a few Stalks of something green shooting out of the Ground” (114). The providential preservation of grain against the threat of hungry rats leads to his meditation on the nature of this agricultural miracle:

for it was really the Work of Providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that 10 or 12 Grains of Corn should remain unspoil’d (when the Rats had destroy’d all the rest), as if it had been dropt from Heaven; as also that I should throw it out in that Particular Place, where it being in the Shade of a high Rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it any where else at that time, it had been burnt up and destroy’d. (115)

Because grain seeds quickly succumb to moisture, whether rain or rodent urine, Crusoe attributes the fact that a few seeds remained “unspoil’d” to divine intervention. The “Work of Providence”, in securing a suitable ecological niche for the seeds, protected from the effects of the tropical sun, reaffirms the values and assumptions of a colonial food system. Strangely, however, the rats that helped themselves to the poultry feed have disappeared. Unlike

Selkirk, then, Crusoe is not “pester’d with” rats. And the agricultural economy of his island depends not simply on the providential *presence* of European corn but on the *absence* of the rats that by this time plagued real European colonists. After all, given the fragility of food supplies in these overseas ventures, rats could spell the difference between a life-sustaining colony and one, like England’s first Bermuda plantation, in which a sustained rodent infestation could wipe out a colony’s food supplies in a matter of weeks.¹²

Yet, in closing this section, it is important to emphasize that cats could not by themselves guarantee conditions hospitable to agricultural and commercial ventures. Samuel Clarke, reporting on the fate of the above plantation, describes how colonists “used all diligence for the destroying” island rats, including “nourishing many cats, wild and tame”, but to little avail: after two years, though the rats continued to flourish, many of the colonists had died.¹³ Nor were the cats always able to thrive. Admittedly, many examples exist of introduced cats multiplying into large feral colonies, so it is within the realm of possibility that Selkirk was “much pester’d with Cats...that had bred in great numbers”, and that Crusoe eventually has to shoot them “like vermin”. But cat colonies were themselves subject to other island predators, most of them also brought by ship. Describing Juan Fernandez island in 1748, for example, almost half a century after *Robinson Crusoe*, Commander George Anson reports that most of island cats had been eaten by dogs: of “the cats reported in Selkirk’s time”, he claims, “there is scarce one alive”.¹⁴ Significantly, however, rats “keep possession” of the islands, according to Anson, thereby creating conditions for the targeted poison campaigns of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (102).

THE FANTASY OF TECHNOSCIENCE

Given the 300-year history of rat infestations in European colonies, the total erasure of rats on Crusoe’s island is noteworthy, if not cognitively jarring. The island’s imagined environment is not an open, dynamic ecosystem, but a closed world that allows Crusoe to hunt, gather, farm, and store under metaphysically secured conditions. Unable, apparently, to imagine a successful agricultural colony that accommodates vermin, Defoe banishes them from the island, a form of magical thinking not far removed from efforts on the part of the medieval Catholic Church to anathematize vermin by cursing them.¹⁵ The fantastical nature of Crusoe’s closed world links his project to similar efforts, in our century, to exterminate rodent populations in what we (wrongly) perceive as discrete and isolated spaces. In this section, I turn away from island colonies to ships and their ports, where, increasingly, poisons replace cats as the preferred means of rodent control.

Rat-catching cats had long been supplemented with poisons. Early husbandry and rat-catching manuals often recommend *nux vomica*, strychnine, found in China but developed by seventeenth-century Germans specifically as a rat poison. *Nux vomica* and arsenic remained the poisons of choice

throughout the nineteenth century. The rodenticide industry, however, ratcheted up considerably after 1894, when bubonic plague was identified as a rod-shaped bacterium called *yersinia pestis* after its discoverer Alexandre Yersin. By 1900, animals of all species—goats, dogs, cats, jackals, and pigs—were being exposed to or injected with the bacterium in the hopes of discovering which animals, other than humans, could be carriers. The deadly fate of rats was solidified when one important study concluded that rats are more likely than most animals to contract plague “under natural conditions” and “are, of all animals, the most important in the spread of the disease”.¹⁶ Two years later, an international German study concluded that “the plague in its wanderings follows...the routes of the great traffic and takes root in seaports”; and because “large numbers of rats” infested seagoing vessels, rats were likely vectors.¹⁷ In response to the scientific recognition of rats as disease vectors, the Incorporated Society for the Destruction of Vermin was established in Britain in 1908. At the inaugural meeting of this Society, its founder, Sir James Crichton-Browne, noted a number of agents for destroying vermin: guns, traps, ferrets, terriers, poisons such as phosphorous and arsenic, and “bacteriological preparations” such as Danyze’s virus, probably the essential ingredient in the “The Liverpool Virus”.¹⁸ “The cat”, as a contemporary noted, “did not make the list”.¹⁹

Although cats continued to accompany sailors on their journeys, by the twentieth century, several phenomena—increasing global rodent populations, the identification of rats as primary plague carriers, the creation of public health organizations—seem to have congealed into a shared assumption: that the traditional shipboard cat was powerless against rodents. The *Nautical Gazette* of 1913 makes this explicit: most shipboard rats reproduce so rapidly that “the ship’s cat is quite unable to cope with the pests, no matter how enthusiastic or hardworking he may be”.²⁰ At the same time, focus shifted to containment and fumigation. Whenever any ship suspected of carrying plague or other contagious illnesses arrived at a US port, it had to be moored away from the dock, with anti-rat guards placed on cables and hawsers to prevent rodents from leaving the ship. Public health officials located and tested sick or dead rats; if any of the rats were found to carry the plague, all rats on the ship were destroyed and cremated, and then the ship was disinfected. To eradicate rodents, fumigation became a regular practice, sometimes, apparently, over the objections of ship captains.

An article in a 1914 volume of *Public Health Reports*, shortly after the Surgeon General began to encourage the periodic fumigation of ships, includes this photograph of a couple dozen dead rats and one dead cat.²¹ The photograph (Fig. 2) had been sent by the Surgeon General of New Orleans with a somewhat cryptic memorandum: “Every quarantine officer”, it begins, “is familiar with the old plea of shipmasters that there is no use of fumigating the cabin of a vessel because there is a cat on board which is an excellent ratter and renders it impossible for rats to live in the cabin”:



CAT AND RATS FROM CABIN OF S. S. ETHELHILDA.

Fig. 2 From *Public Health Reports* April 17, 1914. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4570698>. (Courtesy of Jstor)

The inclosed pictures are the result of not believing this story. The British steamship *Ethelwilda* arrived at this station...from the West Coast of Africa. The captain assured me that it was impossible for any rats to be in the cabin of the vessel because of the presence of an exceptionally good cat. The cabin was nevertheless fumigated. Through the irony of fate the cat was forgotten. When the cabin was opened up the inclosed picture shows the result. Every part of the ship had many rats. The picture is limited however to what was found in the cabin. One cat, 24 rats. (928)

Although the picture was intended to be humorous—a jab at opinionated ship captains—its humor nevertheless is instructive. The multi-species death shot is intended to be taken as a testament to the superiority of modern, technoscientific practices over traditional ones, including the traditional value of the cat as a human symbiont. It is also indicative of a scientific trend, a concerted effort to document the effectiveness of poisons as a way to contain, if not eliminate, infected rats.

By 1900, researchers from many nations—Germany, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and Great Britain among them—began publishing elaborate tables of all the dead animal bodies collected from fumigated ships. By 1903, it had become common knowledge that fleas, in addition to rats, carry the plague; now ships were surveyed for fleas, with particular attention to *Xenopsylla chopis*, identified as *the* plague carrier.²² Reports on fumigated ships during this period record thousands and thousands of exterminated animals—in the case of New York, 18,265 rats, 7886 fleas, and 742 mice recovered from 1913 ships over a

two-year period.²³ The Surgeon General describes the procedures for eradicating vermin: all arriving ships were treated with hydrocyanic acid (prussic acid) and then searched for dead rats, which were bagged and brought to laboratories. Scientists searched dead rats for fleas and tested them for plague; if the tests came back negative, health officials compounded an emulsion from the livers and spleens of the dead rats and then injected it into healthy guinea pigs, just to make sure. The dead fleas, in turn, went through a series of baths—potassium hydroxide, alcohol, and then xylol—after which they were mounted in balsam and identified under the microscope according to species. “A separate record is entered for each ship”, writes the general, “giving the date for both rats and fleas”.²⁴

The sheer volume of these early twentieth-century studies, the thousands of rats and fleas bagged and mounted on slides, indicates the extent to which contemporary public health regimes differed from those only thirty years earlier, when local societies, like Chrichton-Browne’s, sprang up to combat port rats with dogs, ferrets, traps, and bacterial rodenticides. Empirical observations that grounded earlier and mostly agricultural methods of rat destruction, according to Karen Sayer, gave way, in the twentieth century, “to a new, formal methodology grounded in capturing data, one shaped by an international knowledge exchange within non-agricultural fields such as medical research and disease control”.²⁵ These new studies, in ways that Robinson Crusoe would probably approve, attempted to determine under which temperatures, and on which routes, flea populations flourished or diminished. By now, however, rat populations had gone so global that the *number* of shipboard rats, their *density* on ships, did not differ substantially by port of origin. The “single exception” was the coast of West Africa, for a simple reason; instead of carrying grains, ships departing from these ports were loaded with “nitrates, ores, iodine, cotton”, and “other non-food materials, which are not attractive to rats”.²⁶

Increasingly—and chillingly, in retrospect—these studies also became preoccupied with the efficacy of fumigants, in most cases either hydrogen cyanide or Zyklon B, a cyanide-based pesticide, invented by German scientists in 1920. Two decades later, it was the weapon of choice to exterminate over a million people in Nazi death camps. Technologies developed to kill rodents presumed to be diseased, in other words, were used by the Nazis to kill humans degraded to the status of diseased rodents. By this I do not mean to suggest that the mass extermination of rodents and ethnic genocide are equivalent in value. But what we see in both cases is the violence of a sacrificial logic, as that has been described by René Girard, made possible on a mass scale by advances in the manufacturing and distribution of poisons. As Girard argued in *Violence and the Sacred*, the (human or animal) beings that are subject to sacrifice are distinguished “by one essential social characteristic: between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance”.²⁷ As we have seen, violence against rodents is critical to the scientific apparatus of public health: perceived as disease vectors; they are

exterminated en masse, sacrificed in the name of human health and progress. Nazis, in turn, associated Jews with rodents so that Jews could be killed, through similar means, without objection from other Nazis, also in the name of public health. The promise of this technoscientific regime in both cases is that mass poisonings can return islands, or ships, or nations, or national identities to their “rightful” owners, and that hundreds of thousands of murders will remain unavenged, and unmourned.

THE FANTASY OF CONTAINMENT

The failed Liverpool Virus, Crusoe’s magically exorcized rats, the overmatched shipboard cats, and Zyklon B are linked in a network of material and symbolic associations that unite the past and the present, the ecological and the ecocidal, the generative and the genocidal. Repeatedly, in defense of human profits and health, we have deployed poisons to protect some perception, real or imaginary, of a pristine nature or a purified culture that may or may not have existed. The twenty-year effort to rid the Galapagos islands of introduced species, including 180 million rats, was described by one specialist of the Nature Conservancy as an “expensive but totally necessary war”.²⁸ “War”, in this instance, is more than a metaphor; Phase 1 of the Galapagos project was conducted by helicopters armed with barrels of poison; Phase 2 substitutes for helicopters comparatively less expensive but equally lethal drones. These drones, according to Craig Morley, an invasive-species specialist in New Zealand, have a chance to change how scientists view conservation work. “You used to be able to see your opponent”, he claims. “Now, you just a press a button and...fire a missile”.²⁹ Drones, he makes clear, provide a kind of moral distancing. “You become a little bit detached”, he says, “from the reality that you have killed something or somebody over there”.³⁰ Environmental news sources represent the poison itself as a kind of clean, targeted killing. An article in the *Mother Nature Network* admires what it calls a “special poison” developed by Bell Labs that, they say, will “dissolve after a week”: “even the rats that ingest the poison...won’t be a danger to the environment, as the toxin contains a special substance that will cause the rodents’ bodies to quickly dry up and decay”.³¹ These news accounts make it seem as though modern science finally is able to accomplish what Defoe could render only in fictional form: rodent-free islands.

But what, really, is this “special poison”? The Galapagos rat poison is a modified version of bromadiolone or brodifacoum. In 1948, an anti-coagulant called Warfarin, developed to treat a cattle disease, was approved for use as a rat killer.³² By 1951, it was “commonplace” in American agriculture, shortly to become “widely adopted”.³³ It also was marketed as a treatment for human heart disease at around the same time. At first, like the “Liverpool Virus”, Warfarin seemed a genuine improvement over arsenic and strychnine. Both of these old standbys killed rats immediately upon ingestion; this meant that rat carcasses around the bait trap warned away other rats. Warfarin, in contrast,

took effect only after a series of meals. Poisoned rats could wander for days, bleeding internally, looking for a place to die away from the bait station. Without a dead rat to signal danger, other members of the colony did not become what scientists call “bait shy”. Yet a different problem emerged with Warfarin: some rodents begin to develop resistance.³⁴ So, at the request of the World Health Organization, Imperial Chemical Industries of London developed a second generation of anti-coagulants that killed after a single feeding, causing rats to hemorrhage internally and then to bleed out. The chemical “magic” that allows the rodent bodies to “quickly dry up and decay”, as described in *Mother Nature News*, is probably a sodium chloride, which was and still is advertised misleadingly as depressing the thirst of a dying rat; if the animal drinks no water, the logic goes, the process of putrefaction is accelerated. More rapid decomposition means less exposure for other human and animals to stinking and still-edible bodies.

This is only a partial solution. Anti-coagulants, modified or not, have a long half-life, which means they can endanger non-targeted animals who come along and eat the rat’s dead or dying body. Farmers recognized this fact early on and, aware of this likelihood in the Galapagos, wildlife managers tried to trap and relocate native hawks and iguanas before dropping poison—a strategy that was largely successful in limiting the deaths of what pesticide companies call non-target animals. Yet ecology can blend into ecocide, as a piece recently published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology makes apparent. In “Raptors and Rat Poisons”, Cathy Bell describes how twenty-nine chemical companies began mass marketing this poison, or some version of it.³⁵ What was supposed to have been conceived as a means of “mass destruction”, then, as an especially violent tool of wildlife management, began to appear in agricultural supply companies and big box stores. In urban situations, where second-generation anti-coagulants seemed an easy solution to long-standing rat problems, reports began to come in of cat and dog poisoning. Not surprisingly, raptors, who feed largely on rodents, began manifesting various stages of poisoning. Since many of these raptors (such as the bald eagle) are protected species, the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States tried to curtail commercial use; it gave big-box stores three years to sell their remaining stock. Loopholes, however, remained for farmers and exterminators using tamper-proof bait boxes. Worse yet, three of the twenty-nine companies refused, so continued selling to consumers. A 2015 report from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology reports that a whopping 86 per cent of all birds brought into the Tufts Wildlife clinic over a four-year period tested positive for anti-coagulant rodenticides.³⁶ At this moment, no comprehensive policies exist to address the ecological effects of our chemical war against rats; because it is expensive to test dead animals for evidence of rodenticide, few organizations actually have tracked the collateral damage to everybody, short term as well as long term.

These dead animals—humans, rats, cats, birds, squirrels, many more unnamed—remind us of how many bodies lie in the wake of scientific “progress” and how naive it is to imagine a magic poison that can deliver humans

either from the consequences of our own complicated histories or from our enmeshment in multispecies life. More positively, they compel us to confront the delicate interconnections among humans and non-humans whose populations shrink or expand, thrive or decline, in relation to each other. Animals share our susceptibility to disease—the bubonic plague crosses species bounds—but also, crucially, to environmental hazards caused by efforts to eradicate it. In addition, climate change and the loss of natural habitat for thousands of animal species force animal populations, wild and domestic, into new and often dangerous proximities, increasing the likelihood that viruses, as they evolve, will jump species boundaries, evolve again, and multiply vectors for the transmission of virulent pathogens.

Under these circumstances, an animal studies that takes seriously the goals of the One Health movement becomes both appropriate and timely. One Health recognizes that “some of the most important health threats faced today are not species specific”, that they can only be “tackled by interdisciplinary working across the domains of human medicine, veterinary medicine, and the life sciences”.³⁷ Its practitioners call for reframing of the history of science, reimagining it as a history of interspecies interactions. It is not enough, from this perspective, to know that that bubonic plague is zoonotic and that it passes from rat-fleas to humans. Instead, as I have tried to illustrate, the familiar, human-centered narrative exists within and overlaps with several other multispecies dramas: the story of shipboard rats, colony cats, *mus vomica* plants, and the live bacteria of the Liverpool Virus. These other narratives make clear the blind spot of technoscientific efforts to eradicate rodents; mass exterminations take place in an increasingly shrinking world where boundaries between one species and another are often unpredictable and always porous.

NOTES

1. Handson and Williams, “Account of an Epidemic”, 1548.
2. “One Health Initiative”.
3. “One Health Initiative”.
4. Woods, et al., *Animals*, 3.
5. Watts, “Ecuador Drops Poison”.
6. Cole, *Imperfect Creatures*, 143–171.
7. Dampier, *A New Voyage*, 281.
8. Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage*, 220.
9. Steele, *The Englishman*, 123.
10. Free, “Un-erasing *Crusoe*”.
11. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 94.
12. Cole, *Imperfect Creatures*, 145–47.
13. Clarke, *A True and Faithful Account*, 27–28.
14. Walter, *A Voyage Round the World*, 102.
15. Evans, *The Criminal Punishment and Prosecution of Animals*, 3–5.
16. Clemow, “Plague in the Lower Animals”, 1218.
17. *Public Health Reports*, “Germany”, 319–20.

18. Buchanan, "Cats as Plague Preventers", 1285.
19. Buchanan, "Cats as Plague Preventers", 1285.
20. *Nautical Gazette*, 20.
21. *Public Health Reports*, "Ship Rats and Plague", 928.
22. Williams, "A Rat and Rat-flea Survey of Ships", 446.
23. Williams, "A Rat and Rat-flea Survey of Ships", 445.
24. Williams, "A Rat and Rat-flea Survey of Ships", 444.
25. Sayer, "The 'Modern' Management of Rats", 236.
26. Williams, 445.
27. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 13.
28. Platt, "Galapagos".
29. Marris, "Drones Unleashed".
30. Marris, "Drones Unleashed".
31. Platt, "Galapagos".
32. Platt, "Galapagos".
33. Sayer, "The 'Modern' Management of Rats", 260.
34. Quy, et al. "Control of Rats Resistant to Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides".
35. Bell, "Raptors and Rat Poison".
36. Bell, "Raptors and Rat Poison".
37. Woods, et al. *Animals and the Shaping of Modern Medicine*, 14.

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Last Chance to See: Extinction in Literary Animal Studies and the Environmental Humanities

John Miller

The current mass extinction crisis is one of the most urgent contexts in which the developing critical reflection on the literary representation of animals takes place. As Akira Mizuta Lippit observes in a much-quoted passage, “animals recede into the shadows of human consumption and environmental destruction, ... ecospheres are vanishing, species are moving toward extinction”.¹ Consequently, a “new breed of animals now surrounds the human populace—a genus of vanishing animals”.² In exploring how animal being has come to be “constituted by that state of disappearing”,³ Lippit draws on John Berger’s seminal analysis of the ways in which the increasing absence of animals from daily life in the nineteenth century activated a compensatory mechanism that was, in part, responsible for the development of zoos. Because animals are gone, we are compelled to look for them. The extinction crisis thus creates an imaginative drive to catch creatures in textual and visual representation: to mourn for them, to cathect with them, to agitate for their protection.

Literary analysis of the representation of endangered species might be thought of as a key nodal location between a number of intersecting and sometimes clashing critical positions. Since extinction is an issue with profound impacts on ecosystems, questions of biodiversity have drawn a good deal of attention in the environmental humanities. At the same time, because extinction self-evidently proceeds through animal death, it is also an important theme for the understanding of the cultural representation of animals, which is to say

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animal studies in the common shorthand. There are evident areas of overlap between these two perspectives. As Frederike Middelhof and Sebastian Schönbeck summarise, animals “cannot be fully grasped without their environments, whereas, in turn, environments cannot be conceived without the animals living in and affecting them”.⁴ Although they are overlapping in their concern for nonhuman worlds and human–animal relations, the environmental humanities and animal studies can be thought of as distinct undertakings, distinguished by their focus on either the larger scale of the ecosystem or landscape (in the case of the environmental humanities) or on the more intimate scale of individual creatures (in the case of animal studies). Extinction evidently bestrides this critical division although not without tension: conservation often involves violent measures (the culling of invasive species for example) which sit uncomfortably with animal studies’ investment in pro-animal ethics. Moreover, the environmental humanities and animal studies are not the only critical perspectives at play in the narration of extinction. Since ecologies are more diverse in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the postcolonial world, the representation of extinction frequently occurs within a fraught geo-political situation. Global conservation movements, as we shall see, are imbricated within a continuum from colonisation to decolonisation to globalisation that comprises the evolution of global capital, a historical development that impinges on a variety of critical approaches, postcolonialism most obviously, but also Marxism and feminism among others.

The multiple levels of debate around biodiversity loss provide the basis for extinction studies, a subfield of critical enquiry premised, as Cary Wolfe explains, on the understanding that extinction is “*never* a generic event and [...] *always* a multi-contextual phenomenon requiring multidisciplinary modes of encounter and understanding” (original emphasis).⁵ Or, as Deborah Bird Rose, Thom van Dooren and Matthew Chrulew put it, the aim of extinction studies is to engage with “stories that help us to inhabit *multiply*-storied worlds in a spirit of openness and accountability to otherness” (original emphasis).⁶ This commitment to multiplicity involves some awkward balancing of divergent perspectives; van Dooren explains how conservation stories need to “navigate between the violence of conservation, with its various forms of sacrificial and captive life, and the violence of extinction”.⁷ Many questions in biodiversity conservation do not have easy answers and extinction studies endeavours to wrestle with rather than to reconcile such complexities.

There has been significant cultural production of extinction narratives since the 1980s, particularly as part of what Graham Huggan has described as the “new subgenre” of eco-travel writing.⁸ I focus here on one distinctive and enduring example of this textual form. *Last Chance to See* was first conceived by the British science fiction novelist Douglas Adams and the biologist Mark Carwardine for a radio series in 1989. It then became a 1990 book by Adams and Carwardine. In 2009, several years after Adams’s untimely death, *Last Chance to See* was revived with the actor and comedian Stephen Fry replacing Adams and working alongside Carwardine to produce a TV series and then a

follow-up book. As such, *Last Chance to See* is something like a franchise that condenses the visual demand of extinction literature into a neat proposition: it is not enough for animals to survive, they must be witnessed. The 1990 book version I concentrate on here contains narrative accounts of five sets of animal encounters. In Indonesia, they meet Komodo dragons; in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), they visit mountain gorillas and Northern white rhinos; in New Zealand, they locate kakapos; in China, they fail to locate any Yangtze river dolphins (now extinct); and in Mauritius, they set out to meet the world's rarest type of fruitbat.

Although *Last Chance to See's* title encapsulates the wider purpose and promise of extinction writing, it is notably different from the majority of texts on the topic. As Ursula Heise summarises in *Imagining Extinction*, extinction narratives tend to operate through the "genre templates of elegy and tragedy".⁹ *Last Chance to See* is, by contrast, conservation in a "comic rather than an elegiac mode".¹⁰ Heise offers a brief but significant account of the text that pivots on its importance as a counterpoint to overly familiar, even hackneyed environmentalist tropes, notably the "declensionist" perspective in which "the awareness of nature's beauty and value is intimately linked to a foreboding sense of its looming destruction".¹¹ In "breaking away from doom and gloom scenarios",¹² *Last Chance to See* is a text that meets Heise's desire for accounts that provide a "more affirmative vision of our biological future".¹³

Heise's argument about *Last Chance to See* develops as part of a chapter on extinction narratives that is mainly conceived as an analysis of environmentalism. Anxieties about extinction, she explains, have "typically focused on places and species",¹⁴ which is to say they are concerned with larger ecosystemic and environmental/cultural categories more than they are with the lives of the particular animals. In later chapters, Heise tackles the division between animal studies and the environmental humanities head-on and seeks to defend an ecological ethic against an animal ethic, most thoroughly in the context of invasive species. It is hard, she contends, to imagine how a framework committed to the moral worth of individual animals could "possibly determine what the 'welfare' of a particular individual means without reference to species".¹⁵ This orientation provides me with an invitation to use *Last Chance to See* (and Heise's reading of it) to demonstrate the necessity of an animal-focused approach as an ingredient of and supplement to an ecological perspective. In doing so, I reconfirm the awkwardness of extinction studies' commitment to "inhabit multiply-storied worlds". My aim is not to provide a complete account of the relationship between ecological and pro-animal perspectives or a thorough manifesto (were one possible) for their future, mutual development, but instead to demonstrate one important element of the impasse between ecological and animal-centred perspectives, and one that demands more attention in the representation of extinction: namely, their subtly divergent approaches to global capital.

Emerging via the cultural might of the BBC and with a focus on the tropical and (for the most part) postcolonial world, *Last Chance to See* invites

engagement with the ways in which the representations of endangered species are readable as part of economic history. As Huggan concludes, environmental travel writing is a genre “haunted by its own imperial/colonial spectres”.¹⁶ Accordingly, I begin by discussing *Last Chance to See*’s publication at a time when global capital and biodiversity conservation were being brought into close association, before showing how the text works against this political grain (and against its colonial spectres) by offering a sharp critique of capitalist environmental cultures. While this agenda forges a kind of ecological consciousness, there are complex ethical issues in the way the text figures encounter with animals that Heise identifies as a salutary corrective to elegiac literary aesthetics, but which make for less comfortable reading when considered from a critical perspective concentrated on the lives of animals. In emphasising these moments, Heise foregrounds *Last Chance to See*’s credentials as an ecological text, but is far less interested in the way it facilitates an appreciation of the creaturely dimension of our extinction crisis, which is to say extinction’s arrival through the pain and death of individual sentient beings with an urgent interest in their own survival. In exploring the differing investments of ecological and pro-animal readings via Heise’s influential environmental humanities approach, I argue that an animal-centred perspective is necessary in order to fully draw out both the force and ambivalence of the text’s anti-capitalist stance.

EXTINCTION AND GLOBAL CAPITAL

Adams is most famous for his science fiction comedy *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (1978), and, despite evident generic differences, it reveals strong continuity with *Last Chance to See*. *Hitchhiker’s* has notable ecological and pro-animal credentials, most satisfyingly in its ego-puncturing assault on human exceptionalism. Adams’s famous twist is that the world is actually “commissioned, paid for, and run by mice”, who are not insignificant “little white furry things” as is generally supposed, but rather “protrusions into our dimension of hyper-intelligent, pan-dimensional beings”.¹⁷ *Hitchhiker’s* begins, moreover, with a comic set piece that foregrounds ecological politics. Arthur Dent protests against the demolition of his house to build a bypass through the countryside only to discover that Earth itself is to be demolished as part of the construction of a “hyperspatial express route”.¹⁸ The comedy’s widening of scale from the local to the galactic makes the point that if we are prepared to sacrifice specific environments to supposedly greater goods then we might as well accept the sacrifice of the entire planet to an even greater (or at least bigger) cosmic good. As we shall see, Adams brings a similarly quirky and subversive, though far more localised, imagination to the question of global biodiversity conservation (and with the exception of Mark Carwardine’s afterword, the book is written from Adams’s first-person perspective). *Last Chance to See*’s movement from radio, to text to TV also echoes *Hitchhiker’s* migration across media (from radio in 1978, the first book in 1979 and the first TV series in 1981). As the most lucrative of these textual forms, TV functions as the

inevitable final destination; in the case of *Last Chance to See* this evolution highlights a process of commodification whereby the franchise's disappearing animals become established as a form of cultural capital.

Importantly, Adams's and Carwardine's travels take place at a historical juncture in the development of international policy about biodiversity during which discourses of global capital begin to subsume political debates about extinction on the international stage. In 1987, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) convened a working group on "the harmonization of existing conventions related to biological diversity".¹⁹ This, in turn, led to an agreement on the "need to elaborate an internationally binding instrument on biological diversity", which resulted in the development of the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD), a landmark in global conservation that opened for signature at the 1992 Rio "Earth Summit" and came into force in 1993. In preparing the convention text, the CBD secretariat took pains to embed its ecological agenda within a wider political and ethical terrain. As a sign of the "world community's growing commitment to sustainable development", the CBD "represents a dramatic step forward in the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources".²⁰ If the acceleration of global environmental degradation can be located, to a substantial degree, in the expansion of European empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with all the inequity that entailed, the CBD, correspondingly, in ameliorating environmental problems sought to engage with the larger question of the disequilibrium of wealth and power, a point that, as we shall see, features notably in Adams's narrative.

Despite the CBD's idealistic rhetoric, it stimulated some sharp criticism. For Vandana Shiva, rather than a "dramatic step forward" in postcolonial environmental politics, the CBD comprised only a reaffirmation of the old world order supporting the familiar vested interests of the Global North in the guise of multinational corporations. Her evaluation opens with the assertion that the convention "started out primarily as an initiative of the North to 'globalise' the central management and ownership of biological diversity [...] so as to ensure free access to the biological resources which are needed as 'raw material' for the biotechnology industry".²¹ The CBD's vision of a global policy of biodiversity management in this analysis stands to renew rather than to overcome the legacies of colonialism. In order to reclaim the politics of biodiversity for a wider constituency, Shiva was instrumental in the inauguration of the Navdanya Institute in 1984, a "participatory research initiative" committed to "nonviolent farming, which protects biodiversity, the Earth and our small farmers" and which has achieved a number of significant successes in combating "biopiracy" (the appropriation of traditional knowledge by global corporations).²² Through this work, Shiva aims to refocus biodiversity as part of an environmentalism of the poor (to quote Joan Martinez-Alier's phrase, taken on by Rob Nixon)²³ and to contest the CBD's deferment to corporate vested interests.

Tellingly, the CBD's insistence on the "world community's growing commitment to sustainable development" presumes the universality of sustainability as a political goal. The passage of time has undeniably seen the idea of sustainable development gain further traction to the extent that, writing two decades on, Adrian Parr contends that it has been "seamlessly integrated into dominant modes of economic production and normative forms of political and civic life".²⁴ Or, as Artruro Escobar puts it, sustainable development "is a massive attempt ... to re-signify nature, resources, the Earth and human life itself", resulting in the "re-inscription of the Earth into capital via the gaze of science; the reinterpretation of poverty as an effect of destroyed environments; and the new lease on management and planning as arbiters between people and nature".²⁵ What the word "sustain" in sustainable development is intended to sustain is primarily a geo-political stasis that facilitates a certain kind of economy, leading to Escobar's identification of sustainability as "capital in its ecological phase".²⁶ In terms reminiscent of Shiva's, sustainable development, for Escobar, represents not the long-overdue entry of equity into world politics, but rather an initiative to "colonize the last areas of Third World social life that are not yet completely ruled by the logic of the individual and the market", a perspective that emphasises the importance of retaining a focus on global capital when reading western extinction narratives like *Last Chance to See*.²⁷ Although thinking about species and habitats in economic terms by no means originated in the 1980s, this period does mark a significant intensification of a longer process and the arrival of what Parr identifies as "the neoliberalization of life"²⁸; the defining element of national and transnational public policy debates on biodiversity loss comes to appear overwhelmingly economic.

This view is supported by the language of the Brundtland Report, a significant precursor to the CBD which emerged out of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, and was published with the universalising title *Our Common Future*, as if the manifold histories of the world might be compressed into a single world to come. The text leaves in no doubt the centrality of discourses of capital in the formation of global environmental politics: "species and their genetic materials promise to play an expanding role in development, and a powerful economic rationale is emerging to bolster the ethical, aesthetic and scientific cases for preserving them".²⁹ Importantly, The Brundtland Report insists on the imperatives of capital as part of a portfolio of reasons that combine to form an irrefutable case for the necessity of conservation. The common future that is envisaged here, though, is a future in which the language of the market moves ineluctably to the fore; the future for all of us is determined by capital. Our common future is the free market.

LAST CHANCE TO SEE AS ANTI-CAPITALIST COMEDY

The Brundtland Report's idea of a repertoire of values behind conservation begs reflection on how an *interplay* between ethics, aesthetics and capital has endured in writing about biodiversity. How does the primacy of capital in discourses of biodiversity become a matter not just of how conservation is legislated for, but of how forms of life are imagined? The development of sustainability as a hegemonic discourse of global capital for Shiva involves profound cultural effects. The title of the book in which she contends with the CBD's postcolonial politics makes this association strongly: *Monocultures of the Mind* argues that the "dominant political system" of "commercial capitalism" negates local knowledge to encourage a homogeneous, globalised system of knowledge.³⁰

Undeniably, *Last Chance to See* exists in dialogue with discourses of global capital, not least through an evident formal debt to the colonial past. In the narration of a series of journeys into the (for the most part) postcolonial wilds, Adams re-enacts the nineteenth-century literary modes of exploration and adventure through which the natural historian often functioned as the vanguard of imperial expansion. More specifically, if global capital is one of the primary drivers of biodiversity loss, there is a sense in which the text is inevitably bound up with capitalist logics. It is the vast scale of global environmental violence over the last centuries that creates the context in which *Last Chance to See* can unfold so that the text is premised on this violence. In searching for endangered species, Adams and Carwardine participate in a form of dark tourism, or thanatourism as it is sometimes known: travel to sites such as Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, for instance, in order to gain some kind of satisfaction from the spectacular disarray and trauma.

Ecotourism might immediately appear to function as a celebration of the diversity and aesthetic appeal of biological life, but it is also built on the management of death. The powerful demand for the cultural consumption of the diminishing variety of the Earth's biota follows a capitalist logic of scarcity. If (perhaps when) the global tiger population is reduced to a single wild specimen, it is hard to imagine that the beleaguered animal would not be pursued by travel writers and film crews determined on a final opportunity to translate its being into soaring prose or stunning cinematography. Likewise, endangered species offer a powerful boon to ecotourism precisely because of their endangerment; as Heise contends, the "more endangered a species is, the more valued it becomes, in a logic that resonates both with the capitalist valuation of scarce resources and with the cultural fascination, inherited from the Romantic age, with impending death—the aura of 'the last'".³¹ Animal death produces a peculiar kind of surplus value linked to the affective labour involved in its representation as ecologically significant. Huggan argues that one of the principle effects of nature documentaries (and it is worth recalling *Last Chance to See*'s TV adaptations here) is that "'disappearing' wildlife magically reappears".³² The danger here is that animal death is disavowed: that for all its structural

centrality, animal death is culturally occluded. Lippit's trope of the vanishing animal can be thought of, in Nicole Shukin's terms, as "profoundly idealizing", a representational convention that "allows capital to largely go missing as motive force".³³ Global capital thereby becomes a silent but crucial element of eco-travel writing.

Against these situational entanglements of eco-travel writing and global capital, *Last Chance to See*, rather than endorsing or reflecting such an economic rationale for conservation, derives a good deal of its comedy from critiquing the flattening effects of global capitalism. Adams and Carwardine are explicit in their engagement with the long historical processes of colonisation, decolonisation and globalisation. The decline of the kakapo, for example, was one of empire's many unforeseen ecological consequences; as Adams explains, when "European settlers arrived and brought cats and dogs and possums with them, a lot of New Zealand's flightless birds were waddling for their lives" (105). Much of the book's sardonic humour comes from its account of the multiple ironies of global tourism. The visit to Indonesia is particularly elucidating in this regard.

En route to Komodo to find the fabled dragons, Adams and Carwardine alight in Bali, that most extensively marketed of tourist destinations. Particularly, they find themselves in the "part of Bali which has been made almost exactly the same as everywhere else in the world for the sake of people who have come all this way to see Bali" (15). The monoculture ushered in by mass global tourism produces a world of "gift shops and hamburger bars" seemingly interchangeable to Adams's mind with Spain or Greece and populated by the same gangs of inebriated visitors (15–16). Accordingly, when Adams and Carwardine arrive in Komodo, encounters with the endangered Komodo dragons appear also to be mediated by global capital. The spectacle of a live goat being fed to a dragon in front of a group of mainly American tourists who have been choppered in to this remote Indonesian island is a rich and knowing moment. As the head of the dragon becomes wet with the thick green liquid from the goat's stomach, one of the watching tourists shouts a surprising response to his friend: "Al? Al, take a look at these binoculars and see how heavy they are!" (42). What draws the man's attention is not the grisly spectacle he has paid to witness, but the technological apparatus that is there to facilitate the intimacy of his experience. Adams is clearly dismayed and amused by a scene that is characterised both by an intense scopophilic desire and an overwhelming indifference: a hollow visual appetite that desires the world but views it with detachment.

For all the tourist's enjoyment of his binoculars, the experience of the Komodo dragon is ultimately disappointing. As another tourist complains: "I like the landscape... The dragons are just thrown in. If you were walking by yourself and you came across one that might be different, but it's kind of like a puppet show" (42–43). If Adams and Carwardine's title evinces the spectacular lure of endangered species, the episode in Komodo suggests that there also needs to be more to the encounter than mere sight. It is not enough to witness the creatures in the heavily mediated environment of the tourist; the meeting

needs an extra element, of surprise or of a larger, more earnest quest. The image of the “puppet show” is a forceful one. Set up for tourists like this, the Komodo dragon is emptied of its “meaning”; part of the enticement of endangered animals is transferred to their habitat and therefore to a larger sense of the postcolonial environment as a grand wilderness worthy of a true adventure. Certainly, this kind of ecological imaginary has proved to be a remarkably durable aspect of tourist culture (there is no shortage of companies offering adventure holidays characterised by their distance from metropolitan centres). Part of the role of the postcolonial explorer is to access these wildernesses on the audience’s behalf, to attain a more authentic encounter with the dwindling animal world. The role of eco-travel writing is to struggle towards a more resonant experience than a mere “puppet show”. For all the merriment of Adams’s writing, *Last Chance to See* leaves the force of its ethical commitment in no doubt. The text evinces a compelling critique of capital that represents the ideological core of the authors’ environmentalism. This element appears most strongly in the text’s denouement at three successive endpoints: in the final passage of Adams’s narration of the travels; at the end of a parable Adams closes with; and then in a final chapter written by Carwardine titled “Mark’s Last Word”.

If what makes *Last Chance to See* distinctive is its comic register, these endings all strike a more conventional elegiac note. Adams’s parting evocation of Mauritius at the end of their time there encapsulates a mournful atmosphere that counterpoints the humour elsewhere:

At dusk that day we stood by the side of another road, where we had been told we would have a good view, and watched as the world’s rarest fruitbats left their roost in the forest and flapped across the darkening sky to make their nightly forage among the fruit trees [...] I have a terrible feeling that we are in trouble (195).

As the last episode in Adams’s and Carwardine’s travels, the crepuscular setting for the fruitbats roosting is evidently gauged to be resonant, the sun setting, as it were, on another species; the bats flapping across “the darkening sky” operates metonymically as a sign of the larger catastrophe. This, as Heise argues, is a common ingredient of extinction discourse: in both science and art, “species serve as proxies for ecosystems and biodiversity”.³⁴ The global frame implied by Adams’s fruitbat emerges again in the next chapter when he relates the story of the Sibylline books in which an old beggar woman successively burns the twelve books containing “all the knowledge and all of the wisdom of the world” (196) because the residents of the city she visits are too deeply under the sway of gold to think of the need for wisdom. The story ends with one book remaining and the people of the city left to survive with the “remaining twelfth of all the knowledge and wisdom that had been in the world” (199). As an ecological parable about extinction, the story makes a clear political point: it is the profit motive that keeps us from apprehending more profoundly meaningful forms of value. Carwardine’s *crie de coeur* in the final chapter emphasises

the point. Having cited a familiar litany of anthropocentric reasons for facing up to the extinction crisis, Carwardine concludes with the reflection that:

There is one last reason for caring, and I believe that no other is necessary. It is certainly the reason why so many people have devoted their lives to protecting the likes of rhinos, parakeets, kakapos and dolphins. And it is simply this: the world would be a poorer, darker, lonelier place without them (206).

Carwardine's parting comment retains elements of anthropocentrism, but in a soft guise: one that privileges affect and aesthetics over use value. "Poorer" functions here metaphorically; the richness it counters is that of a fading biological abundance. "Darker" adds an aesthetic dimension and "lonelier" implies a sense of community with other creatures, based on a presumption that human fulfilment relies on an intimacy with other forms of life. The book ends with environmentalism as affect, with a feeling for the world and the creatures in it (or at least those creatures in it that we feel moved to identify with) as an important antidote to the advance of coarse economic calculations on biodiversity. Carwardine's final chapter is the last word in the double sense of being literally the book's end pages and also *Last Chance to See's* resonant philosophical conclusion.

What is significant about each of these three endpoints is their utilisation of the category of world as the criterion of anti-anthropocentric value. The metonymic logic of the fruitbat scene points to a larger frame of reference just as the two succeeding endings explicitly conceive of biodiversity loss in a planetary frame (the *world* without wisdom in the parable of the Sibylline books and the dark lonely *world* of "Mark's Last Word"). Thus, the tragedy of extinction is ultimately posed macrologically at these decisive moments in the text. What is at issue here is the *world* without the *likes* of these animals. Such an orientation towards the global scale expresses the all-encompassing ethical urgency of the extinction crisis, but does so at the risk of consigning those animals whose deaths comprise this crisis only to the generic level of the species. What matters in this framing is the knowledge of the species not the feeling of the being. I will shortly come to moments in the text at which Adams attends more closely to animal experience, but there is more to be said first about the way the text functions in a macrocosmic ecological register. Importantly, at key moments of human-animal encounter in *Last Chance to See*, Adams's literary aesthetics produce a comic distance from the sensate, vital creatures the adventurers track down, a literary device that has a significant bearing on the text's ethical effects.

TECHNOCULTURE AND THE POETICS OF ENCOUNTER

The moment of encounter with endangered species in extinction narratives is a highly charged narrative event that carries the sense of a climax or epiphany in a way evocative of the form's colonial antecedents. Although the gun is now replaced by the camera or the pen, encounters with rare animals still retain the

heightened energy characteristic of the hunt. That said, the poetics of encounter such writing ordinarily moves towards are rendered unconventionally in *Last Chance to See*. Adams resists the temptation to cultivate elevated textual aesthetics, preferring instead a comic bathos. Particularly, in the emotionally intensified moments of encounter with rare animals the text is structured around, Adams makes use of a technological frame of reference that works against an epiphanic register and resists cultivating a romantic sense of the magisterial natural world endangered by human activity. Watching a rhinoceros grazing in Zaire is like “watching a JCB excavator quietly getting on with a little weeding”; (94) its “huge muscles move easily under its heavy skin like Volkswagens parking”; (95) it hurtles off “like a nimble young tank” (96). Similarly, a Philippine monkey-eating eagle is “a wildly improbable-looking piece of flying hardware that you would more readily expect to see coming in to land on an aircraft carrier than nesting in a tree” (173). In a more extended metaphor, the kakapo is compared by Adams to the ill-fated British motorcycle industry: “It had things on its way for so long that it simply became eccentric. The motorbike industry didn’t respond to market forces because it wasn’t particularly aware of them”. Problems arise when highly competitive foreign machines appear: Japanese motorbikes for the British motorcycle industry, or, in the case of the kakapo, cats, stoats and other non-native species (113).

Evidently this pattern is part of the comic mode that Heise draws attention to, though casting these creatures in such machinic, even somewhat humdrum, terms has subtle ideological implications. Just as the satire on the tourist gaze in Komodo produced comedy as anti-capitalist critique, so the poetics of encounter elsewhere in the text operate through resistance to a certain commodification at work in the epiphanic mode of extinction writing.³⁵ The moment of encounter risks functioning as the text’s most valuable cultural capital and reiterating the spectral survival of colonial literary forms. Adams, again, stymies this association. Given his celebrity as a science fiction comedy writer and a self-professed gadget lover, Adams’s preferred metaphorical register is unsurprising and Heise finds this motif a salutary contrast to the more familiar “genre registers of elegy and tragedy”.³⁶ Moreover, there is, she argues, a specific basis for conservation advanced by Adams’s techno-cultural imagination: “It is precisely this inefficient, irrational unadaptedness of the natural world that makes it attractive and worth preserving for the narrator—the sheer unlikelihood of it ever having made it to the present day”.³⁷ Consequently, she argues, “the idiosyncracies of the sociocultural realm mirror and extend the contingencies of ecology and evolution”,³⁸ so that we are left with “an essentially comic awareness of the contingent events, habits and bodies it took to produce both humans and nonhumans in their present form”.³⁹ Heise’s analysis is persuasive and emphasises how *Last Chance to See* operates at arm’s length from an emerging economic rationale for biodiversity conservation. Adams’s quirky view is in a sense diametrically opposed to a commercial emphasis on usefulness by relishing whatever is purportedly useless. As such, the text produces an important corrective to the reductive economic vision of the CBD

and The Brundtland Report in two ways: it resists extracting cultural capital via a conventional poetics of encounters, and its figuration reveals an attraction to awkwardness and inefficiency that refuses a discourse of utility.

Heise concludes her discussion of Adams's and Carwardine's text in upbeat terms: rather than a "well-functioning natural realm disrupted by the advent of modern society, *Last Chance to See* implies a view of nature and culture as parallel and intersecting histories of experiments that continually succeed and fail". Accordingly, it points "to an understanding of extinction not only as narrative endpoint, but as the possibility of new beginnings—not the end of nature so much as its continually changing futures".⁴⁰ This leads her to value *Last Chance to See* for a "human commitment to value biological otherness" that it encourages.⁴¹ If "nature"—understood in a broad and complex way to include culture—were settled on as the ultimate determinant of value, there would be little to cavil with here. To put it another way, the endpoint of Heise's argument works coherently within the terms of the environmental humanities, by tying ethics to wider ecosystemic, evolutionary logics. Thinking through a specifically animal-centred ethics, however, makes Heise's line of reasoning less compelling. To think of extinction as part of an ongoing play of planetary life as Heise asserts does not attend sufficiently to the particular animal deaths through which extinction proceeds and to the geo-political contexts in which this happens.

For sure, at one level Heise's argument is a matter of ecological fact: species go extinct; new species emerge; beings and habitats are replaced by other beings and habitats. Heise acknowledges that the current extinction crisis is different in scale and cause from the ongoing pattern of background extinctions, but there is something like an ethics—or even economics—of fungibility at work in her recourse to the prospect of "our continually changing futures" which risks mirroring or even endorsing emerging neoliberal practices, such as biodiversity offsetting, by which creatures are understood to be exchangeable in the service of human interests. It is not just that a new world is emerging in through extinction. In casting the creatures it describes as generic, and in the case of the Volkswagen, mass-produced figures rather than individual, sensate beings, Adams's machinic imagery perhaps does not help distil the situation's urgency. It is the animals' action in the world and not their experience of the world that the text foregrounds in these techno-cultural figures. *Last Chance to See*, understood through Heise's reading, remains attached to the forces with which it contends and provides support for Huggan's wider conclusion about eco-travel writing that "the largest spectre that stalks the genre is not imperialism or colonialism but their primary operating agent, capital".⁴²

Against this, however, there is a vital political force to the insistence of beings as non-exchangeable ethical subjects rather than ecological units that Adams includes consistently in the text through comic speculations on animal experience which knowingly play with anthropomorphism and the limits of human knowledge. Adams is particularly keen to assert the simultaneous presence but unknowability of animal consciousness. Looking a Komodo dragon in

its “unwavering and disinterested eye”, Adams recounts a set of anthropomorphic stereotypes about lizards (emotional coldness and malignity) only to insist that the dragon “didn’t know anything about the horror, the guilt, the shame, the ugliness that we ... were trying to foist on it”. Instead, it carries on “going about its lizards business in a simple, straightforward lizardly way” (33). Similarly, face-to-face with a gorilla—that most over-determined of beasts—Adams reflects that we “look them in the face and we think, ‘We know what they’re like’, but we don’t. Or rather we actually block off any possible glimmering or understanding of what they may be like by making easy and tempting assumptions” (75). By drawing attention to the limits of cultural representation, Adams leaves space open for the realisation of animal interiority beyond the human gaze, even if—in fact, precisely because—that experience is inevitably closed to human realisation and resistant to commodification. Looking animals in the eye in this way embodies the stakes of extinction and shows that before we affirm the “possibility of new beginnings”, there is a vulnerable present to attend to.

Last Chance to See is an important text in the crucial work of focusing public and institutional attention on the extinction crisis. It is also a helpful text for thinking through the ways in which extinction is thought to matter and the tensions between critical perspectives. At one level, the tension between the environmental humanities and animal studies may seem an abstruse turf war between adjacent academic projects, but this strain between ecological and creaturely priorities also reveals something of the ethical parameters surrounding biodiversity loss in which the relation to neoliberal conservation agendas is vital. *Last Chance to See* draws attention wittily and compellingly to the world system of capital. Heise produces a reading that privileges the text’s affirmative ecological credentials with reference to the abstract category of an as-yet unrealised biological future rather than in relation to the text’s interest in animal consciousness. There are ways in which this systemic approach accentuates *Last Chance to See*’s reproduction of, even complicity with, capitalist modes of representing nature. In order to keep hold of the text’s anti-capitalist force, *alongside* its evident relationship to capitalist structures, we need to cultivate critical practices that remain anchored to the unapprehensible, or partially apprehensible, qualities of animal being and the ethical demands they make of us. This, ultimately, is what literary animal studies is for.

NOTES

1. Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 1.
2. Lippit, 3.
3. Lippit, 3.
4. Middelhof and Schönbeck, “Coming to Terms”, 14.
5. Rose, van Dooren and Chrulew, *Extinction Studies*, viii.
6. Rose, van Dooren and Chrulew, *Extinction Studies*, viii.
7. Cited in Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 158–59.

8. Graham Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits*, 52.
9. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 14.
10. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 51.
11. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 7.
12. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 53.
13. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 13.
14. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 19.
15. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 138.
16. Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits*, 8.
17. Adams, *Hitchhiker's Guide*, 125.
18. Adams, *Hitchhiker's Guide*, 30.
19. Secretariat, *Handbook of the Convention*, xvii.
20. "History of the Convention", Convention on Biological Diversity, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.cbd.int/history/>
21. Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind*, 151.
22. "Introduction to Navdanya", Navdanya, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://www.navdanya.org/site/component/content/article?id=2>
23. See Martinez-Alier, Joan. *The Environmentalism of the Poor* and Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.
24. Parr, *The Wrath of Capital*, 19.
25. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 202.
26. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 205.
27. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 198.
28. Parr, *The Wrath of Capital*, 72.
29. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 147.
30. Shiva, *Monocultures*, 9.
31. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 72.
32. Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits*, 83.
33. Shukin, *Animal Capital*, 13.
34. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 53.
35. Mark Cawardine takes pleasure in explaining *Last Chance to See's* difference from a "normal" nature documentary on his website. As he explains, "Created to make conservation accessible to people who wouldn't normally care about endangered species, *Last Chance to See* offers a uniquely hilarious but thought-provoking insight into the disappearing world around us". "*Last Chance to See*", accessed October 11, 2019, <https://www.markcarwardine.com/last-chance-to-see.html>
36. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 52.
37. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 52.
38. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 53.
39. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 53.
40. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 54.
41. Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, 54.
42. Huggan, *Extreme Pursuits*, 8.

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INDEX¹

A

- Abolitionism, 67, 74, 76n22
Abruzzo, Margaret, 364
Actaeon, 159, 160
Adam, 156, 199, 228
Adams, Carol J., 286
Adams, Douglas, 30n45, 606, 608,
609, 611–617
Adamson, Joni, 566, 567
Adorno, Theodor, 38
Adventure fiction, 424, 433
Ælfric Of Eynsham, 100
Aesop, 196
Affect, 58, 81, 98, 119, 186, 212, 215,
221, 248, 257, 284, 293, 297, 298,
336, 357, 386, 387, 500, 501, 504,
508, 517, 534, 542, 543, 545–550,
552, 553n12, 560–562, 570, 614
Afrofuturism, 66
Agamben, Giorgio, 243, 244, 256, 564
Agency, 6, 42, 43, 61, 83, 102, 106,
115, 118, 157, 158, 160, 190, 202,
231, 239–249, 270, 273, 274n4,
283, 330n14, 372, 416, 438, 444,
460, 468, 489, 490, 500, 508, 509,
510n3, 520, 543, 559–564,
571n16, 571n21, 591
Agential realism, 45, 241, 244
Agriculture, 10, 258, 261, 525, 598
Ahmed, Sarah, 183, 184, 190,
191n4, 561
Airplane, 558, 559, 564
Aitkenhead, Decca, 584
Akbar, Arifa, 583
Alexander, John, 286
Althusser, Louis, 39
Ambrose of Milan, 118, 119, 124n19
Anastasiou, Dimitris, 564
Anderson, Greg, 122
Andrews, Kerri, 234n6, 234n7
Androcentrism, 28n10
Angell, George, 372, 374
Anglin, Sallie, 188
Animal biography, 325
Animality, 1, 3, 4, 7, 40, 43, 62n7, 82,
83, 147, 156, 159, 160, 169, 196,
198, 201, 228–230, 232, 233, 254,
255, 312, 323, 326, 352, 385, 386,
391, 394, 437, 438, 449, 451n8,
490, 494, 544, 557–571

¹Note: Page numbers followed by ‘n’ refer to notes.

- Animality studies, 558
 Animal rights, 8, 38, 65–67, 69–71, 74, 75–76n22, 81, 82, 147, 240, 255, 266, 363, 368, 373, 398–400, 402, 403, 406
 Animal story, 8, 79–91, 203, 440, 510, 528, 542–546, 548, 552
 Animetaphor, 44, 156, 161
 Animot, 159, 162, 163n23, 516, 520
 Anson, Commander George, 594
 Ant, 579, 580, 584
 Antelope, 6
 Anthropoc principle, 23, 30n45
 Anthropocentrism, 15–27, 30n42, 38, 44, 45, 46n8, 54, 100, 177, 241, 322, 348–351, 433, 446, 450n8, 460, 465, 469, 470, 614
 Anthropoid ape, 213, 223n15
 Anthropomorphism, 6, 7, 23, 30n44, 30n46, 30n47, 41, 134, 195, 350–357, 616
 Anthroponormativity, 24, 30n42, 30n46, 30n47
Anthrōpos, 18, 22, 25, 27
 Anzaldúa, Gloria E., 82
 Ape, 112, 116, 211, 213–215, 218, 222n6, 223n15, 341
 Apocalypse (Apocalyptic), 270, 271, 273, 274
 Apparitions, 133, 136, 138n42
 Aquinas, Thomas, 75n19, 118, 119, 121
 Arctic, 272, 474
 Arendt, Hannah, 460
 Aristotle, 26, 69, 75n19, 200, 215, 488
 Armstrong, Nancy, 311, 312
 Armstrong, Philip, 8, 46n25, 406n1, 527
 Armstrong, Tim, 398, 400, 403
 Art, 3, 38, 45, 54, 73, 100, 119, 123n2, 130, 185, 186, 199, 218, 219, 231, 240, 256, 282, 291, 292, 299, 303, 308, 336, 348, 385–391, 413, 424, 450, 454n61, 454n63, 489, 517, 559, 613
 Asad, Talal, 364
 Asdal, Kristin, 571n21
 Ass, 190, 275n18, 341
 Attwell, David, 548, 553n24
 Atwood, Margaret, 473–483
 Auden, W.H., 292, 293, 335
 Audubon, John James, 336–338
 Augustine of Hippo, 142
 Austen, Cassandra, 280
 Austen, Jane, 272, 277–286
 Autobiography, 52, 159, 347–357, 411, 412, 414, 418, 525
- B**
 Bachelard, Gaston, 513
 Bacon, Francis, 156
 Baderoon, Gabeba, 41
 Badiou, Alain, 509
 Bagemihl, Bruce, 387
 Baker, Steve, 43
 Bald eagle, 599
 Balibar, Étienne, 39
 Ballantyne, R.M., 353, 354, 427
 Barad, Karen, 241–244, 246–248, 249n3
 Barbauld, Anna Laetitia, 255, 256
 Baret, Michael, 185, 186, 192n18
 Barolong, 427, 429, 431, 432
 Barthes, Roland, 38, 128–130
 Basilisk, 116
 Basket (Dogs (sic) Owned by Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein), 412
 Bat, 24, 202, 613
 Batchelor, Thomas, 261, 262
 Bate, Jonathan, 303
 Battus, 159
 Bayliss, William, 397, 398
 Bear, 144, 149, 168, 172–176, 313, 314, 426, 491
 Beast, 9, 10n6, 98, 111–123, 141, 148, 156, 157, 160, 161, 167–177, 190, 197, 199, 200, 202–204, 212, 245–247, 256, 257, 260, 261, 277, 278, 313, 324, 325, 348, 367, 378n39, 401, 423–433, 547, 617
 Beast fable, 195–204
 Beaver, 309, 310, 313, 314, 316n5
 Bee, 3, 4, 115, 118, 231, 300, 303, 428, 481
 Being alongside, 532–535
 Bell, Cathy, 599
 Benjamin, Walter, 229, 517
 Bentham, Jeremy, 147, 246, 255, 256, 362
 Berger, John, 2, 10n2, 42, 43, 516, 518, 520, 521, 605

- Bergh, Henry, 374
 Berlant, Lauren, 544
 Bertram, Lady, 272, 277, 281–285
 Best, Steven, 66, 67, 69, 75–76n22
 Bible, 138n42, 141, 199, 417, 424, 426
 Big cat, 424, 426, 433
 Billing, Annacarin, 47n51
 Bioaesthetics, 385–394
 Biocentrism, 62n3
 Biopolitics, 240, 253–262, 494, 541–552
 Biotechnology, 609
 Bird, 2, 6, 7, 56, 79, 83–89, 91, 103,
 104, 116, 117, 127–135, 146, 147,
 176, 197, 198, 201, 202, 253, 260,
 277, 292, 293, 296, 298, 301, 325,
 329, 330n16, 333, 334, 336–342,
 344, 345n9, 348, 367, 369,
 372–374, 388–391, 429, 439, 443,
 453n42, 481, 581, 592, 599, 612
 Birdsong, 127, 129–131, 135, 142,
 387, 389
 Biyela, N.G., 425
 Björck, Amelie, 43, 47n47
Black Beauty, 75n6, 347, 351, 353, 356,
 548, 549
 Black-maned Cape lions, 488
 Blake, William, 253, 550
 Blatant Beast, 168–177
 Blayre, Christopher, 398
 Blencowe, Sir John, 225
 Bloomfield, Robert, 259
 Blundeville, Thomas, 185, 186, 245
 Boar, 5
 Boatswain (dog), 265, 270
 Bob (the Terrier)
 Bobby (dog), 266
 Boer, Voortrekker, 429, 431, 432, 494
 Boggs, Colleen Glenney, 543
 Boisseron, Bénédicte, 66, 68, 76n24
 Booth, William, 370
 Bowerbank, Sylvia, 279, 280
 Brachiopods, 473, 480
 Bradshaw, David, 398
 Brahe, Tycho, 558
 Brand, Dionne, 68, 69, 71, 72, 475
 Broglio, Ron, 274
 Brontë, Charlotte, 321, 323, 324,
 328, 329
 Brown dog, 397–400, 402, 406,
 407n2, 407n4
 Brown, Duncan, 425
 Brown, Michael, 515, 519
 Brown, Thomas, 213, 216, 217
 Brummell, George, 389
 Brundtland Report, 610, 611, 616
 Buck, 308
 Buell, Lawrence, 22
 Bulgakov, Mikhail, 42
 Bull, 219, 402, 514–516, 518–521, 582
 See also Cattle
 Bulldog, 547
 See also Dog
 Bunyan, John, 424, 430, 431
 Burghardt, Gordon, 41
 Burnet, James, Lord Monboddo,
 213, 218
 Burns, Robert, 256, 257
 Burrows, E., 347, 350
 Burton, Antoinette, 369, 370
 Burton, Robert, 200, 201, 203, 204
 Bush, President George W., 519
 Butterfly, 1, 294
 Byblis, 159
 Bynum, Caroline, 155
 Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 253, 265,
 270, 271, 273, 549
- C**
 Calarco, Matthew, 451n9, 460
 Calepine, 169, 174–176
 Calidore, 169–175
 Calvin, John, 26
 Cameron, James, 557, 566
 Canadian women's writing, 475
 Cape fox, 428
 Caracciolo, Marco
 Carazo, Pau, 129
 Carnivory, 362, 363, 365–371,
 373–376, 378n43
 Carroll, Lewis, 254, 322, 345n13
 Cat, 54–56, 62n8, 69–72, 81, 122, 157,
 172, 184, 246, 254, 266, 322, 327,
 334, 343, 351, 354, 393, 424, 426,
 433, 447, 488, 503, 517, 543,
 591–596, 598–600, 612, 615

- Cattle, 101, 366, 367, 373, 374, 391, 392, 426, 481, 586n25, 598
See also Cow
- Catton, William, 17
- Cavendish, Margaret, 148–150, 248
- Cavendish, William, 187
- Cawardine, Mark, 618n35
- Cayenne (Dog), 563
- Cesariano, Cesare, 16
- Cetacean, 97, 98, 102, 106
- Chaka*, 423–426, 431–433, 433n1, 433n2
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 122
- Chameleon, 156
- Character, 5, 24, 43, 52–54, 61, 67, 72, 79, 80, 83, 88, 100, 114, 146, 147, 169, 176, 189, 190, 197, 198, 212, 214, 216, 220, 232, 241, 246, 265, 272, 273, 283, 284, 308, 311, 313, 314, 321, 322, 327, 350, 351, 356, 357n1, 364, 368, 376, 391, 392, 403, 406, 426, 427, 431, 438–441, 443–446, 448, 452n26, 474, 477, 479, 481, 500, 501, 508, 526, 528, 531, 533, 542–545, 550, 551, 557, 580, 583, 584, 585n20, 586n42
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 127–136, 146
- Chauncy, Richard, 232
- Chen, Mel Y., 182, 561, 562
- Cheyne, George, 362
- Chez, Keridiana, 440
- Chicken, 371
See also Hen
- Chief, 261, 425, 427, 431, 514, 515, 518, 566
- China, 362, 378n43, 518–521, 594, 596, 607
- Chopin, Kate, 273
- Chrisman, Laura, 429
- Christabel, 269–270
- Christian, 20, 44, 100, 112, 115–119, 121, 123n16, 131, 132, 142, 170, 171, 241, 245, 366–369, 372, 375, 378n39, 378n43, 424, 426, 430, 431, 527, 544, 549, 550
- Christianity, 31n56, 116, 142, 365, 368, 369, 373, 378n43
- Christie, Agatha, 398, 405, 406, 407n5
- Christmas, William, 233n6, 235n40
- Chrulew, Matthew, 352, 606
- Church of Euthanasia, 31n64
- Circe, 159, 160, 163n26, 217
- City, 55, 56, 72, 84–89, 92n19, 136, 145, 146, 198, 242, 271, 343, 344, 370, 373, 517, 576, 577, 582, 584, 613
- Cixous, Hélène, 513, 514, 517, 519, 521
- Clare, John, 256, 260, 293, 294, 527
- Clark, Alex, 582
- Clarke, Samuel, 594
- Classification, 115, 212, 337, 339, 345n13, 468
- Cobbes, Frances Power, 347
- Cobra, 393
- Cock, 388–391
- Cocker spaniel, 407n4, 411
See also Dog
- Coetzee, J.M., 204, 500, 542–545, 548–552, 553n24
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 253, 255, 269
- Coleridge, Stephen, 399
- Collings, David, 259
- Colonialism, 73, 432, 433, 470, 481, 517, 545, 551, 593, 609, 616
- Columbus, 158
- Companion animals, 52, 59, 216, 242, 348, 355, 412, 419
- Companion prosthetics, 557–571
- Companionship, 242, 273, 334, 344, 348, 349, 353, 355, 357, 447, 519
- Companion species, 242, 260, 347, 558, 560–565, 568, 570, 572n29
- Convention For Biological Diversity (CBD), 609–611, 615
- Coon, 70
- Copeland, Marion W., 212
- Cosmopolitanism, 461–465, 467, 470
- Cosslett, Tess, 350, 352, 354, 357n1
- Council of Justice to Animals, 326
- Couzens, Tim, 427, 429
- Cow, 260, 285, 322, 363, 365–368, 376, 432, 449, 475, 517, 518, 581, 582, 586n25
See also Cattle
- Cowper, William, 278, 279, 284
- Cowper Powys, John, 398, 403
- Cow protection, 366, 367, 378n25, 582, 586n25

Coyote, 578
 Crane, 232, 339, 342, 388
 Creativity, 2, 67, 173, 385, 387–389,
 391, 453n42, 479
 Creatureliness, 225–233, 373,
 437–450
 Crichton-Browne, Sir James, 595
 Cricket, 294, 297, 298, 302, 303
 Crocodile, 116
 Cronon, William, 90
 Crow, 116, 117, 119, 124n17, 197,
 232, 388
 Cruelty, 87, 146, 149, 249n3, 278–280,
 284, 330n16, 361–365, 368,
 371–374, 398, 399, 402, 406, 419,
 520, 543–546, 580
 Cuckoo, 131, 292, 293, 297
 Cultural ontologies, 51, 52, 56, 61
 Cumming, Roualeyn Gordon, 427
 Curlew, 104
 Cyborg, 157, 558, 567, 572n29
 Cygnus, 159

D

Da Vinci, Leonardo, 15, 16
 Dale, Corinne, 100
 Dampier, William, 592
 Danahay, Martin, 267, 271
 Danta, Chris, 203, 204, 395n3
 Daphne, 159
 Darwin, Charles, 9, 40, 62n3, 202, 204,
 338, 341, 386, 387, 389, 391,
 393, 470
 Davies, John, 200, 203
 Davis, Lennard, 569
 Dayan, Colin, 519, 520
 De Waal, Frans, 23, 30n44, 164n35
 Deer, 116, 253, 308
 Defoe, Daniel, 591–594, 598
 Deleuze, Gilles, 38, 41, 46n8, 386, 561
 Denizen (ship), 26, 575–585, 586n25,
 586n41, 586n42
 Deresiewicz, William, 283
 Derrida, Jacques, 7, 38, 44, 45, 76n24,
 144, 147, 148, 156, 157, 159, 161,
 162, 163n29, 195–198, 201–204,
 246, 248, 254, 255, 322, 325, 487,
 488, 510n3, 516–518, 522n4, 542,
 544, 551, 561

Descartes, René, 55, 119, 156, 157, 162,
 202, 203, 239, 246, 248, 249, 412
 Descola, Philippe, 114, 122, 123n2
 Despret, Vinciane, 491, 492, 526, 527
 Dewhurst, Frederic E., 22, 29n37
 Diana (goddess), 160, 161
 Dickens, Charles, 272, 324, 328
 Dickinson, Emily, 294, 295
 Dingey (animal character), 354
 Disability studies, 558, 559, 569
 Doberman, 70
See also Dog
 Dog, 55, 56, 59, 70, 71, 116, 118, 119,
 121, 122, 142–144, 149, 172, 184,
 203, 216–218, 220–222, 254,
 265–274, 281, 282, 284, 314,
 322–326, 328, 329, 348–350, 352,
 353, 355, 403, 404, 407n2, 407n4,
 411–420, 440, 513–521, 534, 543,
 545, 546, 548–552, 553n12, 560,
 563, 564, 569, 570, 572n24,
 582–584, 586n41, 594, 595, 597,
 599, 612

Dolar, Mladen, 128, 129, 137n16
 Dolphin, 97, 189, 607, 614
 Donaldson, Sue, 460, 578
Don Juan, 272
 Donne, John, 200, 204
 Door of No Return, 68, 69, 71, 73
 Douen (imaginary animal species), 74
 Douglass, Frederick, 515, 516
 Draper, John William, 17, 19, 25, 28n11
 Dreaded comparison, 65–74
 Dream, 59, 127, 131–136, 143, 222,
 424, 428, 444, 453n41, 493, 541
 Du Pont, Monsieur, 267
 Duck, 371, 440
 Dung beetle, 583, 584
 Dunlap, Riley, 17
 Durbeyfield, Tess, 321–329
 Dyson, Michael Eric, 519

E

Eagle, 104, 134, 135, 138n49, 599, 615
 Early modern, 9, 116, 141–150, 156,
 157, 159–161, 162n4, 163n9, 168,
 169, 171, 177, 183, 185–187, 189,
 190, 191n5, 196, 200–204, 212,
 244, 248, 464, 592

Earnshaw, Catherine, 273
 Earthling, 155
 Earthworm, 10
 Earwig, 5
 Echo (goddess), 67, 135, 159, 160, 312, 328, 405, 415, 426, 461, 465, 469, 487, 545, 608
 Ecology, 62, 90, 239–249, 531, 593, 599, 606, 615
 Edgeworth, Maria, 268
 Eland, 428
 Elephant, 118, 182, 266, 425, 475, 509
 Eliot, T.S., 292, 293, 335
 Ellis, Markman, 281, 282
 Endangerment (endangered life, endangered species), 298, 419, 511n8, 605, 608, 611, 612, 614, 618n35
 Enkidu (Epic of Gilgamesh), 155
 Epic, 99, 475
 Epstein, Richard A., 20, 24
 Erasmus (Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus), 196, 204n6
 Erickson, Peter, 182
 Erskine, Thomas, Lord, 279
 Escobar, Artruro, 610
 Esposito, Roberto, 561
 Estes, Heide, 104
 Eugenics, 315, 398, 399, 401, 403, 405, 406
 Evolution, theory of, 202
 Expanding circle, 26, 27, 31n63
 Extinction, 4, 8, 85, 91, 291–304, 310, 343, 344, 345n6, 394, 475–477, 481–483, 488, 504, 520, 605–617
 Eyre, Jane, 321–329

F

Fairer, David, 229, 230, 234n7, 234n9, 235n35
 Falcon, 286
 Farmed animals, 578
 Fawcett, Leesa, 81, 82
 Fehskens, Erin, 73
 Felski, Rita, 4, 41
 Femininity (feminine), 57, 136, 155, 158–162, 163n26, 183, 351, 440, 443, 463

Feminism, 5
 Ferguson, Moira, 351
 Ferret, 595, 597
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 17
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 26
 Fish, 1, 6, 100–102, 106, 108n32, 117, 176, 202, 266, 333, 337, 373–375, 481
 Fish, Stanley, 46n14
 Flea, 591, 596, 597
 Flesh fly, 198
 Flush (animal character), 411, 413–416, 418, 420
 Font, Enrique, 129
 Forder, Eliza, 527
 Forder, John, 527
 Fossil, 473–483
 Foucault, Michel, 38, 116, 258, 262, 544, 549
 Fowl, 199, 593
 Fox, 1, 57–59, 85, 100, 116, 146, 176, 197, 198, 201, 245, 315, 427, 428, 500–503, 506, 507, 575, 576, 578, 585
 Fox, Paula, 53, 54, 56, 57, 62, 116
 France, Marie de, 155
 Frankenstein, Victor, 272
 Franklin, Sarah, 405, 406, 529
 Freemantle, Bridget, 225
 Freud, Sigmund, 17, 40, 400, 402, 453n41, 467
 Frog, 146, 202, 341, 393
 Fruitbat, 607, 613, 614
 Fry, Stephen, 606
 Fudge, Erica, 42, 212, 281

G

Galileo (Galileo Galilei), 156
 Gandhi, M.K., 365
 Ganetz, Hillevi, 40
 Gannet, 104, 108n32
 Garber, Marjorie, 347
 Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie, 569
 Garrard, Greg, 44, 46n25
 Gascoigne, George, 200
 Gaston (animal character), 355
 Gastropod, 480
 Gatty, Margaret Scott, 220

Gavin, Michael, 212
 Geen, Emma, 499–502, 507,
 508, 511n8
 Gellinek-Schellekens, Josepha, 128
 Gender roles, 57
 Genesis (Bible), 20, 26, 31n56, 115,
 141, 142, 199, 201, 270
 Genette, Gérard, 54, 57
 Geraldine, 269, 270
 Gergen, Kenneth J., 53
 Gergen, Mary M., 53
 Gethenian, 461–464, 468
 Gibbes, Phebe, 361, 362
 Gilgamesh, 155
 Gillray, James, 363
 Gilroy, Paul, 514
 Ginger (animal character), 353
 Girard, René, 597
 Glick, Elisa, 389
 Gnat, 302, 303
 Goat, 6, 101, 367, 402, 582, 591,
 595, 612
 God, 20, 23, 26, 41, 113, 117, 131,
 132, 141, 142, 156, 159, 171, 186,
 199, 202, 348, 363, 367, 369, 394,
 414, 423, 426, 441, 546–548,
 551, 552
 Godwin, William, 272
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von, 23, 24,
 26, 30n47
 Goldman, Jane, 407n4
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 362
 Gooder, Haydie, 547
 Goose, 143
 Gorilla, 223n15, 520, 607, 617
 Gothic, 4, 38, 265, 266, 269, 274, 441
 Gould, John, 336–338, 342, 345n7
 Gould, Stephen Jay, 20, 22, 466
 Grandin, Temple, 65, 75n2
 Grasshopper, 294–298, 304n14
 Gray, John, 530
 Gray, Stephen, 430–432
 Great chain of being, 18, 19
 Greenblatt, Stephen, 198
 Greene, Richard, 231, 233n6,
 234n9, 235n35
 Greene, Roland, 158
 Greenfield, Stanley B., 99, 102
 Griffith, Richard, 363

Grosz, Elizabeth, 184, 386–390
 Grouse, 1
 Guattari, Félix, 38, 46n8, 561
 Guinea pig, 255, 343, 402, 405, 597

H

Haeckel, Ernst, 19–21, 26
 Haggard, H. Rider, 426–428, 432
 Haire, Karen, 430, 431
 Hajjin (animal character), 348, 349, 355
 Halbmayer, Ernst, 119
 Hamid, Mohsin, 79, 83–91, 575–577
 Harambe, 520, 521
 Haraway, Donna, 29n30, 144, 157, 242,
 254, 266, 274, 429, 467, 493, 494,
 510n3, 530, 533, 536, 558,
 561–564, 567, 568, 570, 591
 Hardy, Thomas, 325–328, 330n14,
 330n15, 330n16, 451n22
 Hare, 141–150, 248, 374
 Harkness, Margaret, 370
 Harris, William Cornwallis, 427
 Harrison, Peter, 197
 Harris-Perry, Melissa, 519
 Hartman, Saidiya, 68, 515, 518
 Hawking, Stephen, 570
 Hayot, Eric, 364
 Heaney, Seamus, 144
 Hearne, Vicki, 184
 Heathcliff, 273
 Hedgehog, 100, 334
 Hefting, 525–527, 530–533, 535, 536
 Heise, Ursula, 294, 607, 608, 611,
 613, 615–617
 Hen, 375, 391
See also Chicken
 Henderson, William, 17, 24
Henry V, 181–190
 Henryson, Robert, 145–148
 Henty, G.A., 427
 Herbert, George, 202
 Hervey, Clarence, 268, 269
 Hewitt, John, 217
 Hogarth, William, 543
 Hogg, James, 527
 Homer, 159, 215, 292, 412, 417
 Hopkinson, Nalo, 66, 72
 Hopwood, James, 220, 221

- Hormones, 398, 400, 402, 407n3
Horse, 2, 57, 59, 60, 75n6, 105,
181–190, 191n5, 191n11, 192n22,
192n29, 199, 200, 203, 284–286,
314, 326, 327, 353, 356, 566, 584
Hound, 143, 159, 160, 245–248, 272
Hovanec, Caroline, 400, 402, 403
Huggan, Graham, 606, 608, 611, 616
Hugh of Fouilly, 118
Human/animal boundaries, 79, 98, 204,
273, 325, 327
Human exceptionalism, 17, 18, 22, 24,
28n13, 29n30, 29n32, 45, 69, 80,
156, 157, 161, 162, 196, 438,
450n8, 465, 466, 503, 551, 608
Humanimal, 162
Humanism, 40, 156, 168, 202, 240,
386, 490, 510n3, 546, 548, 552
Hume, Kathryn, 99
Hundeshagen, Carl Bernhard, 17
Hunt, Alastair, 256
Hunting, 100, 141–150, 176, 240, 241,
244–246, 248, 249n3, 258, 284,
309, 426–429, 432, 433, 488,
491, 493–495
Huon De Mery, 131
Huxley, Aldous, 353, 398, 402, 403, 406
Huxley, Julian, 26
Hybridity, 156, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176,
312, 315, 340, 482, 533
Hydrus, 116
Hyena, 324, 423, 426
- I**
Iamblichus, 26
Identity, 24, 25, 40, 51–62, 100, 169,
176, 177, 183, 188, 191n5, 214,
215, 218, 226, 234n7, 260, 308,
310, 311, 314, 328, 329, 348, 349,
378n43, 392, 412–414, 416–419,
462, 464–466, 468, 476, 481, 482,
488, 489, 491, 506, 528, 532–534,
571, 582, 598
Ikran (Avatar), 558, 560, 566
Ingold, Tim, 571n14
Insect, 5, 162n4, 260, 293–297, 301,
337, 362, 393, 428, 582
Interspecies communication, 274
- Intimacy, 71, 80, 81, 191n3, 212,
216–218, 222n1, 327, 329,
347–357, 439, 447, 463, 562, 570,
612, 614
Irigaray, Luce, 387
Isibongo (Praise Poem), 425, 426
Isidore of Seville, 117, 123n16
- J**
Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman, 68
Jacobs, Jane M., 547
Jakobson, Roman, 42, 45
James, Henry, 54
Jameson, Fredric, 39, 461, 467,
508, 509
Janson, H.W., 213
Johnson, Samuel, 228, 229, 244
Jones, Owain, 286
Jonson, Ben, 195–204
Juba (animal character), 268, 269
- K**
Kakapo, 607, 612, 614, 615
Kant, Immanuel, 18, 24, 26,
27, 466
Karkov, Catherine, 103, 108n27
Kauffman, James M., 564
Kearney, Richard, 81, 82
Keats, John, 127, 135, 253,
291–304, 304n14
Keenleyside, Heather, 212
Kennedy, John, 23, 30n44
Kenyon-Jones, Christine, 253, 278
Kerr, Jeffrey, 66
Khosa, Maria, 489, 493, 494
Kim, Claire Jean, 66, 68, 82,
517, 519–521
King, Kingship, Kgosi, Chief, 430
King, Rodney, 517
Kingston, W.H.G., 427
Kipling, John Lockwood, 365
Kitten, 351, 354, 582
See also Cat
Knappett, Carl, 561
Knight, Edward Austen, 280
Knight, Elizabeth, 280
Knight, Fanny, 280

Knowsley Hall Menagerie, 337, 338,
342, 345n10
Kohn, Eduardo, 122
Komodo dragon, 607, 612, 613, 616
Kosambi, Meera, 372
Kosztolányi, Dezső, 437–455
Krasznahorkai, László, 437, 438, 445,
447, 449, 450n5, 450n8
Krech, Shepherd, 565
Kreilkamp, Ivan, 348, 543
Kristeva, Julia, 38
Kurke, Leslie, 196
Kymlicka, Will, 460, 578

L

Labé, Louise, 160–162
Labour, 25, 89, 173, 199, 260–262,
271, 479, 541, 551, 560, 611
Lamb, 171, 261, 262, 302, 323, 325,
328, 430, 528, 529, 531,
532, 534–536
Lamb, Charles, 267–269, 272
Landry, Donna, 191n5, 227, 233n6
Lansdowne, Lord, 368
Lapdog, 216–218, 220, 223n12, 281
Lark, 1, 2, 453n42
Last Of The Mohicans (Fenimore
Cooper), 307–315
Latimer, Joanna, 533, 535
Latour, Bruno, 122, 240, 242,
249n3, 562
Lau, Lisa, 583
Law, John, 561, 562
Lawrence, D.H., 20, 22, 29n32, 386,
388–394, 395n10
Lawrence, John, 278
Laxmidas, Labhshankar, 368, 369, 371,
375, 376
Laymon, Kiese, 66, 69, 521
Lazarus, Neil, 424
Lazzarato, Maurizio, 262
Le Comte, Louis-Daniel, 214
Le Guin, Ursula K., 80, 162, 461, 462,
465, 467–470
Leach, Elizabeth, 130
Leapor, Mary, 225–233, 233–234n6,
234n20, 235n30, 235n31,
235n35, 235n40

Leapor, Philip, 225
Lear, Edward, 333–344, 345n7, 345n8,
345n9, 345n10, 345n13, 346n14
Lecky, William Edward Hartpole,
26, 27, 362
Leoline, Sir, 269
Leopard, 423–426, 431
Léry, Jean de, 158, 159, 161, 162
Lestel, Dominique, 352, 355–357
Lévinas, Emmanuel, 266
Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 121, 124n27
Lewis, Matthew, 265, 272
Li, Chien-Hui, 399
Life-writing, 525–527, 531, 535
Lilford, Grant, 426
Liminality, 130
Lind-Af-Hageby, Lizzy, 397–399, 402
Linné, Tobias, 8
Linton, Isabella, 273
Lion, 43, 112, 115, 116, 118, 120, 146,
149, 196, 197, 423–433, 488–496,
516, 517
Lippit, Akira Mizuta, 43, 156, 161,
163n26, 605, 612
Litvak, Joseph, 281
Livingstone, David, 427
Lizard, 3, 158, 584, 617
Locke, John, 543
London, Jack, 542
Lovedale Press, 431
Lovejoy, Arthur O., 18, 28n21
Luath (animal character), 350, 352, 353
Lupton, Julia Reinhard, 228, 229,
233, 234n16
Luther, Martin, 147
Lydgate, John, 127–136
Lyndsay, David, 143

M

Macauley, Catherine, 279
Macer, Aemelius, 117
Macfarlane, Robert, 527
Machiavelli, Niccolò, 160
Mackenzie, John, 427
Malabari, Behramji, 369–376
Malafouris, Lambros, 561
Malthus, Thomas, 258–260
Manchon (animal character), 267

- Mandela, Nelson, 494
 Manicou, 73, 74
 Mao Zedong (Chairman Mao), 548
 March of progress, 20
 Mare, 285, 582
 See also Horse
 Markham, Gervase, 185, 186, 245
 Martin, Trayvon, 515, 517
 Martinez-Alier, Joan, 609
 Marx, Karl, 22
 Mason, Bertha, 323, 324, 326, 328
 Mastiff, 269, 270, 432
 See also Dog
 Matabele, 423, 427, 428, 431,
 432, 433n3
 Matjila, D.S., 430, 431
 Mayr, Ernst, 470
 Mbeki, Thabo, 545
 Mccall, Daniel F., 424
 McHugh, Susan, 38, 42, 191n5, 203,
 204, 272, 395n2, 423, 500–502,
 509, 510n3
 McLaren, Angus, 402
 Medieval, 9, 10, 97–103, 105–107,
 111–123, 123n2, 128, 130–132,
 141–150, 186, 196, 197, 253, 594
 Mee, Jon, 287n28
Megarhynchos, *Luscinia*, 128, 136, 137n7
 Mendes, Ana Christina, 583
 Menely, Tobias, 212, 228, 230,
 239–241, 256, 326, 363, 377n12
 Menozzi, Filippo, 583
 Mentz, Steve, 189
 Messenger, Ann, 231, 234n6,
 235n31, 235n35
 Metamorphosis (Metamorphic), 134,
 135, 156, 159, 162, 200, 202
 Metaphor (Metaphorical), 37–45, 423,
 475, 477–479, 481, 482, 500, 505,
 507, 576, 598, 615
 Metonym (Metonymical), 37–45
 Mhudi, 428–431
 Middelhof, Frederike, 606
 Miele, Mara, 527
 Migrant, 83–88, 91, 576
 Mikulak, Michael, 22, 29n41
 Miller, Alyce, 348
 Miller, John, 304n14, 426
 Milton, John, 270, 271, 412
 Misanthropy, 26, 363
 Mitchell, David, 557, 559
 Mize, Britt, 102, 103, 106
 Modernism (modern), 1, 3, 6, 9, 386,
 395n3, 399, 400, 412, 416
 Mofolo, Thomas Mokopu, 423–426,
 432, 433
 Mol, Annemarie, 561, 562
 Mole, 589
 Molema, Silas, 426
 Molloy, Claire, 566–568
 Monbiot, George, 531
 Mongoose, 73, 85
 Monkey, 20, 402
 Montaigne, Michel de, 157, 158,
 162, 190
 Montoni, Signor, 267
 Morano, Count, 267
 Morgan, Nicholas, 199, 203, 204
 Morley, Craig, 598
 Morrison, Mark S., 398
 Morton, Eugene, 129
 Morton, Timothy, 266, 363
 Mouse, 56, 145, 146, 196,
 232, 255–257
 Mouse (House and Field), 242, 257
 Mpe, Phaswane, 430
Mrs. Mouser, 347, 351, 354
 Mueller, Max, 369
 Munro, Alice, 53, 57, 60–62, 63n13,
 311, 312, 316n10
 Music (dog), 2, 129, 130, 187, 265,
 272, 302, 303, 313, 387, 389
 Mutton, 371
 See also Sheep
 Mutwa, Credo Vusamazulu, 489, 493
- N**
 Nagel, Thomas, 24, 500
 Narrative, 51–62
 Nash, Richard, 282
 National identity, 183, 308, 315, 598
 Natural history illustration, 336, 340
 Na'vi (*Avatar*), 557–560, 565–568, 570
 Necromancer, 273
 Neill, Crispian, 407n4
 Newfoundland, 270, 476
 See also Dog

- Newt, 116
 Nibert, David, 406
 Nicholson, George, 278
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 465
 Nightingale, Florence, 127–136,
 138n42, 253, 369
 Nixon, Rob, 609
 Nonsense verses, 333, 335
 Nussbaum, Martha, 3
- O**
- Oak, Gabriel, 328
 Octopus, 502, 508, 511n8
 Odysseus, 159
 Oerlemans, Onno, 106
 Oliver, Mike, 558
 Omega Point, 20, 30n45
 Orangutan, 214, 218, 219, 223n15
 Orca, 65–67, 97, 106
Ornithomimus, 478
 Orwell, George, 40, 203, 204
 Ossiferous Sex, 474, 476–480
 Oswald, Alice, 292
 Oswald, John, 278, 361, 362
 Otherness, 4, 55, 176, 177, 229, 254,
 277, 314, 388, 414, 504, 507–509,
 606, 616
 Outka, Paul, 70
 Ovid, 117, 118, 133, 155
 Ovington, John, 361
 Owen, Amanda, 525–536
 Ox, 43, 100, 444, 516, 517, 520, 521
 Oyster, 143, 370
- P**
- Pacioli, Luca, 23
 Paine, Thomas, 254, 256
 Palfrey, 181–190, 191n11
See also Horse
 Palmeri, Frank, 374, 378n45
 Pantherinae, 426
 Parr, Adrian, 610
 Parrot, 29n32, 143, 157, 266, 337, 338,
 341, 343
 Pastoral, 4, 167–171, 173, 175, 176,
 211, 231–232, 235n31, 425,
 527, 528
 Peacock, 374, 393, 394
 Pedersen, Helena, 8
 Perkins, David, 274n4, 279
 Perrins, Christopher, 129
 Petkeeping, 282
 Petrarch, 158, 159
 Pets, 143, 216, 267, 271, 273, 277,
 281–283, 286, 322, 325, 348, 349,
 355, 519, 589
 Phenomenology, 23, 37, 43, 181–190,
 241, 500, 507, 511n8, 561
 Philomela (Name of Nightingale), 127,
 133, 134, 138n44
 Phoenix, 143
 Pick, Anat, 227, 229, 230, 232, 234n20
 Pico (Pico Della Mirandola), 156,
 160, 161
 Pig, 55, 143, 160, 162n4, 203, 322,
 339, 373, 402, 405, 591, 595, 597
 Pigeon, 315, 374, 443, 444, 578
 Pip, 324, 325
 Pit Bull, 514–516, 518–521
See also Dog
 Plaatje, Solomon Tsheshiko, 423, 424,
 426–428, 430–433
 Plato, 30n42
 Pliny The Elder, 128–130, 136, 362
 Plotinus, 18
 Poetry, 2, 38, 97–107, 127, 130,
 141–150, 159, 160, 170, 171, 173,
 177, 182, 189, 211, 218, 225–229,
 233–234n6, 234n7, 234n20,
 239–241, 244, 248, 249n3, 279,
 291–304, 326, 334, 366, 424, 433,
 476, 487
 Poodle, 412
See also Dog
 Poole, Grace, 323
 Pope, Alexander, 229, 230, 241
 Porcupine, 100, 393, 394
 Pork, 370, 371
See also Pig
 Possum, 70, 612
 Posthumanism, 203, 240, 490,
 510n3, 561
 Predator, 98, 100, 116, 135, 184, 280,
 310, 371, 423, 424, 431, 466, 489,
 493, 495, 594
 Preece, Rod, 399

Premodernity (Premodern), 155
 Priestly, Joseph, 255, 256
 Primatt, Humphrey, 278
 Prince (animal character), 103, 188,
 196, 329
 Procne (Name of Swallow), 133, 134
 Professor Huxley, 353
 Prosthesis, 557, 558, 560, 562–564,
 567, 568
 Protogoras, 30n42, 30n52
 Psychoanalysis, 137n16, 335, 400,
 404, 406
 Pug, 272, 277, 281–286, 287n24, 352
See also Dog
 Puppy, 117, 121, 141, 273, 349, 432,
 518, 520
See also Dog
 Purdy, Jedidiah, 299

Q

Qoranna, 429, 431
 Queer, 5, 159–162, 183, 184, 187–189,
 191n3, 191n4, 191n5, 280,
 386–388, 420, 454n63, 541, 561
 Queer Phenomenology, 181–190,
 191n4, 561
 Quy, R., 601n34

R

Rabbit, 5, 47n51, 260, 315, 322,
 371, 405
 Race, 24, 25, 29n32, 38, 68–70, 74,
 75n6, 81–83, 91n14, 100, 161,
 307–309, 311, 312, 314, 315,
 316n11, 321, 323, 351, 376, 398,
 401, 405, 406, 411, 424, 427, 433,
 469, 493, 517, 519, 520, 522n3,
 549, 562, 563, 565
 Radcliffe, Anne, 274n6
 Ramabai, Pandita, 369, 372–376
 Ramachandran, V.S., 22, 24
 Rancière, Jacques, 47n47
 Rankine, Claudia, 515, 516
 Raptor, 83, 85, 135, 599
 Rat, 73, 74, 242, 321, 322, 578, 591,
 592, 594, 597–599
 Raven, 197, 312, 334, 335

Realism, 9, 45, 87, 212, 244, 322, 404,
 440, 441, 446, 479
 Realist fiction, 325, 327, 446
 Rebanks, James, 525–536
 Reed, John, 321–323, 326
 Refugee, 86–88, 575–577, 583
 Regan, Tom, 31n63, 69, 164n35, 363
 Relationality, 56, 61, 66, 530
 Renaissance, 9, 15, 18, 23, 156, 186,
 187, 191n5, 191n11, 205n25,
 205n32, 494
 Representation, 2, 4, 6–8, 10n2, 22, 40,
 45, 69, 75n19, 83, 88, 98, 100,
 106, 156, 168–170, 186, 211,
 213–216, 220, 227–229, 254, 256,
 257, 266, 280, 315, 316n12, 321,
 326, 352, 394, 397, 399, 424, 428,
 431, 449, 450, 462, 474, 476, 477,
 490, 494, 527, 531, 545, 565, 580,
 584, 586n25, 605–608, 611, 617
 Rhino, 607, 614
 Richardson, Angelique, 398
 Richardson, Dorothy, 398, 400–402,
 404, 406
 Richardson, Samuel, 212, 225
 Ricœur, Paul, 39
 Right whale, 97
 Rilke, Rainer Maria, 254, 294,
 451n11, 453n38
 Ritivoi, Andreea Deciu, 62n4
 Ritson, Joseph, 279, 362, 377n8
 Rival, Laura, 119
 Roach, 70, 565
 Robb, Peter, 367
 Robin, 302, 303
Robinson Crusoe, 591–594, 597
 Rochester, Edward Fairfax, 323–325, 328
 Rodent, 85, 591–595, 597–600
 Rogers, Woodes, 592, 593
 Rohman, Carrie, 29n32, 395n1
 Romantic (Romanticism), 9, 85,
 253–262, 265, 266, 268, 271–274,
 279, 285, 286, 315, 334, 362, 420,
 475, 488, 549, 550, 611, 615
 Rook, 6, 232
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 545
 Rooster, 112, 113, 115, 116, 388,
 389, 582
See also Chicken

- Rose, Deborah Bird, 231, 606
 Rothenberg, David, 130, 137n23
 Roughgarden, Joan, 164n35, 387, 388, 391
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 17, 223n15, 362, 565
 Rowell, Thelma, 526
 Roy, Arundhati, 577, 580–585, 586n24, 586n42, 586n44
 Roy, Nilanjana, 584, 585
 Rudy, Kathy, 41
 Rueckert, William, 293
 Russell, Francis, Duke of Bedford, 261
- S**
- Saint Ambrose, 106
 Salt, Henry, 29n23
 Sandhu, Sukhdev, 576
 Saraswati, Dayanand, 366
 Sayer, Karen, 597
 Sayers, Dorothy L., 398, 401–403, 406
 Schartau, Leisa, 397, 398
 Schiesari, Juliana, 201, 205n25
 Scholtmeijer, Marian, 47n45
 Schönbeck, Sebastian, 606
 Schwartz, Janelle, 272, 521
 Schweitzer, Albert, 26, 31n63
 Scorpion, 116
 Scott, Walter, 315
 Seagull, 104
 Seal, 4, 108n32, 468
 Searle, Edis, 347, 351, 354
 Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, 41, 249n3
 Seghal, Parul, 579, 586n42
 Sekhmet (animal character), 487–496
 Self-narratives, 51–62, 218, 479
 Selkirk, Alexander, 592–594
 Seltzer, Mark, 548
 Sensibility, 18, 22, 188, 213–215, 218, 220, 221, 223n8, 239–241, 246, 249, 277, 280, 285, 286, 298, 361, 363, 364, 371, 394, 454n63
 Serpent, 116, 309, 345n13
 Seth, Vanita, 156
 Settler-colonialism, 474
 Sewell, Anna, 75n6, 347, 351, 356, 548, 549
 Sexton, Jared, 68
- Sexuality, 38, 40, 70, 71, 81, 183, 216, 335, 386–389, 391, 392, 404, 420, 491, 505, 562
 Shakespeare, Tom, 564
 Shakespeare, William, 205n24
 Shanbhag, Vivek, 577, 579–580, 583
 Sheep, 101, 146, 167–177, 178n12, 260–262, 302, 322, 326, 373, 402, 426, 526–536, 561, 562
 Sheep breeds
 Beltex, 529
 Blue-Faced Leicester, 529
 Herdwick, 526, 529, 534
 Meatlincs, 529
 Mule, 529
 Suffolk, 529
 Swaledale, 529
 Shell, Marc, 281, 282, 362
 Shelley, Mary, 253, 271, 274
 Shelley, Percy, 377n8
 Shepherd, 135, 169–173, 176, 226, 232, 325, 326, 426, 525–536
 Shevelow, Kathryn, 222n1
 Shields, Carol, 473–483
 Shippey, Thomas Alan, 128
 Shiva, Vandana, 609–611
 Shklovsky, Viktor, 230
 Showes, Mrs., 220
 Shukin, Nicole, 310, 612
 Sidney, Sir Philip, 188
 Simons, John, 195, 196, 198, 201, 203, 204
 Sinclair, Charlotte, 583
 Singer, Peter, 31n63, 65, 164n35, 278, 363
 Singh, Julietta, 82, 585n20
 Skulker (animal character), 273
 Slavery, 65–71, 73, 74, 75n19, 76n22, 82, 168, 351, 363, 416, 518, 522n5
 Small, Albion Woodbury, 22, 24, 29n37
 Smith, Adam, 255
 Smith, Danez, 82, 101, 103
 Smith, Mick, 578, 579, 584
 Smut (animal character), 351
 Snake, 85, 116, 375, 481, 502
 Snowball (animal character), 351, 354
 Snyder, Sharon, 557, 559
 Solinus, Caius Julius, 118, 119
 Somerville, Peter, 239–249

Somerville, William, 239–249
 Sontag, Susan, 40, 41
 Sotho, Sesotho, 423, 424, 433
 Southern Africa, 423, 424, 428, 429, 431
 Spacks, Patricia Meyer, 229, 230
 Spaniel, 220, 221, 272, 407n4, 411
See also Dog
 Species, 9, 22, 24, 28n10, 40, 51, 52, 55–57, 59, 62, 62n3, 69, 73, 74, 75n6, 79, 80, 83, 84, 88, 98, 102, 106, 118, 119, 129, 136, 161, 169, 172, 184, 188, 190, 196, 203, 204, 212, 215, 218, 230, 231, 242, 247, 271, 273, 278, 279, 281, 282, 286, 293–295, 297, 298, 307–315, 323, 326, 330n16, 333, 337–340, 342, 345n9, 347, 349, 356, 357, 363, 388, 389, 393, 394, 395n2, 406, 412, 419, 424, 425, 428, 429, 433, 438, 443, 447, 452n36, 460–462, 465–470, 475, 476, 482, 488, 500, 502, 504, 506–509, 511n5, 511n8, 516, 517, 520, 521, 522n3, 527, 529, 532, 533, 535, 541, 542, 545, 550–552, 557–568, 572n29, 579, 580, 584, 590–592, 595, 597–600, 605–608, 610–616, 618n35
 Species continuum, 203
 Speciesism (Speciesist), 40, 60, 61, 67–71, 74, 75n19, 177, 227, 278–281, 349, 351, 352, 354, 517
 Speculative fiction, 71, 86, 162
 Spenser, Edmund, 167–177, 527
 Sperm whale, 102
 Spider, 70, 501
 Spiegel, Marjorie, 66, 67, 69, 75n19, 75n22
 Spivak, Gayatri, 325, 327
 Sponge, 202, 356
 Squirrel, 38, 481, 482, 584, 599
 Stables, Gordon, 347, 350, 352, 353
 Stacey, Jackie, 47n50
 Stag, 116, 149, 158–160, 246
See also Deer
 Standing, Guy, 577–579, 582
 Stanley, Edward, 13th Earl Of Derby, 337
 Starling, Ernest, 397, 398, 407n3

Stearns, Precious McKenzie, 287n24
 Steele, Richard, 593
 Steichen, Edward, 462
 Stein, Gertrude, 335, 411–420
 Steinach, Eugen, 402, 403
 Steiner, Gary, 30n47
 Steintrager, James, 364
 Stoker, Bram, 273
 Stoler, Ann Laura, 80
 Subjectivity, 6, 102, 103, 106, 118, 155, 156, 158, 162, 185, 191n3, 229, 230, 270, 273, 274, 282, 439, 449, 459, 461, 462, 464–466, 468, 487, 490, 506, 509, 542, 543, 546–548, 551, 552, 559, 583
 Suvin, Darko, 510n1
 Swallow, 133, 145–148, 302, 303
 Swan, 104, 108n32, 115, 117, 118, 143, 159, 338, 440
 Swift, Jonathan, 510n4
 Sympathy, 9, 84, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 176, 213, 227, 279, 312, 324, 328, 330n14, 356, 357, 363, 377n19, 440, 509, 547, 550
 Szabo, Vicki, 100, 102, 107

T

Tamarin, Arnold, 17
 Tansley, Sir Arthur, 400
 Taylor, Charles, 364
 Taylor, Thomas, 254
 Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 20, 30n45
 Tennenhouse, Leonard, 311, 312
 Tennyson, Alfred, 369
 Tern, 104
 Terran, 24, 461, 466, 468
 Terrier, 595
See also Dog
 Test (animal character), 267, 272
 Thomson, James, 240, 241, 246, 249, 326
 Thornton, Lucy D., 355
 Tiffin, Helen, 46n11
 Tiger, 149, 168, 172, 175, 176, 343, 509, 611
 Till, Emmett, 515, 516
 Tilson, Mrs., 280
 Topsell, Edward, 143

- Tortoise, 307, 308, 477
 Trauma, 184, 438, 441, 446, 447,
 451n11, 489, 502, 514, 582, 611
 Travel writing, 427, 592, 608
 Tree of Life, 565
 Trilobite, 476, 480
 Trophic cascade, 295
 Trouillot, Michel-Rolf, 542
 Truth and reconciliation, 544, 549, 552
 Tswana/Setswana, 423, 424, 430–433
 Tuan, Yi-Fu, 282, 356
 Tuppy (animal character), 350, 356
 Turing Test, 30n46
 Turkey, 424
 Turner, James, 364
 Turner, Jason, 492
 Turner, J.M.W., 514
 Turner, Terry S., 119
 Turtle, 106, 316n2
 Tutu, Archbishop Desmond, 553n22
 Twain, Mark, 31n58, 310
 Tyson, Edward, 213–215, 222, 222n6,
 223n8, 223n9
- U**
 Ugliness, 438–447, 449, 450,
 452n36, 617
 United Nations Environment
 Programme (UNEP), 609
 Universalism, 459–470
 Utopia, 74, 378n27, 429
- V**
 Valadés, Diego, 19
 Van Dooren, Thom, 91, 294, 606
 Van-Hagen, Stephen, 232, 234n6
 Vartanian, Oshin, 186
 Veal, 371
 See also Bullock, Cattle
 Vegetarianism, Vegetarian Advocacy, 361,
 362, 365, 366, 368–370, 376,
 377n22, 378n43
 Vender, Helen, 302, 304n18
 Vermin, 362, 375, 592–595, 597
 Victorian, 9, 271, 321–323, 326, 334,
 335, 345n12, 347–357, 361–376,
 389, 398, 400, 440
- Vincent, Mr., 268
 Vint, Sherryl, 466
 Violence, 1, 5, 7, 40, 60, 68, 74, 101,
 149, 173, 229, 231, 266, 271, 277,
 333, 351, 364, 369, 374, 392, 398,
 400–402, 405, 406, 420, 425, 426,
 441, 462, 464, 466, 467, 470, 483,
 509, 514, 515, 517, 520, 521, 543,
 549, 550, 580–584, 597, 606, 611
 Virginia, 199, 269
 Virtual experience, 502
 Virus
 Danyze’s virus, 595
 Liverpool Virus, 589–591, 595,
 598, 600
 Vitruvian Man, 15, 16
 Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio), 16,
 23, 27n4
 Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo, 114, 122
 Vivekananda, Swami, 366
 Vivisection, 157, 368, 372, 397–406,
 407n5, 454n59
 Vogel, Steven, 31n64
 Voice, 38, 60, 76n24, 127–131, 133,
 135, 137n16, 142, 144, 147, 149,
 159–161, 204, 212, 216, 220, 222,
 228, 230, 232, 233, 234n7,
 235n40, 239, 241, 244, 255, 267,
 268, 271–273, 295, 297, 304n14,
 313, 326, 387, 390, 401, 411, 428,
 431, 465, 479, 480, 499, 507, 580,
 583, 586n42
Volpone, 195–204
 Von Uexküll, Jakob, 243–245, 247
 Voronoff, Serge, 402, 403
 Vulture, 197, 581, 582, 586n25
- W**
 Waldau, Paul, 97
 Wallace, Alfred Russel, 31n58
 Walling, Philip, 528, 529
 Ward, Jesmyn, 513–521
 Weasel, 116
 Weaver, Harlan, 519, 520
 Ween, Gro B., 571n21
 Wegner, Philip, 509
 Weheliye, Alexander, 66
 Weil, Kari, 191n5, 212, 395n3, 454n61

- Weinsheimer, Joel, 277
 Weir, Harrison, 348
 Welldon, Rev. James, 368
 Wells, Harry Kohlsaas, 17
 Wells, H.G., 402, 510n4
 West, Kanye, 519, 522n6
 Whale, 97–107, 277, 390
 Wheelchair, 504, 557–565, 567,
 569, 570
 Whitaker, Alexander, 199
 White lions, 488–491, 493–496
 White, Lynn, 31n56
 White, T.H., 197
 Whorf, Benjamin Lee, 24
 Wiegman, Robyn, 43
 Wild animals, 60, 87, 97, 106, 324, 328,
 463, 489, 492, 494, 521, 546, 578
 Wilderson III, Frank B., 75n15, 516–518
 Wildlife, 254, 337, 425, 599, 611
 Willard, Frances, 372
 Williams, Jeni, 127
 Willis, Ron, 43
 Wiltshire, John, 283
 Wiseman, Sam, 403
 Wolf, 325, 545
 Wolfdog, 545–548, 552
 Wolfe, Cary, 40, 196, 202, 203, 229,
 240, 254, 257, 490, 510n3, 606
 Wollstonecraft, Mary, 279, 280
 Woman, 90, 134, 149, 159, 174, 216,
 225–233, 268, 280, 323, 324, 328,
 330n15, 393, 411, 414–420, 428,
 439, 440, 443, 452n38, 489, 491,
 492, 515, 526, 551, 566, 581, 613
 Women's rights, 266
 Wood, David, 428
 Woods, Martin, 369
 Woods, Michael, 528
 Woodward, Wendy, 423
 Woolf, Rosemary, 131
 Woolf, Virginia, 1–8, 407n4, 411–420
 Wordsworth, William, 38, 253, 265,
 270, 272, 275n18, 293
 Worm, 10, 255
 Writer/writing, 3, 4, 7, 17, 18, 22, 24,
 26, 27, 27n4, 28n10, 52, 66,
 75n19, 82, 101, 119, 168, 176,
 191n5, 195, 202, 204, 212, 215,
 223n15, 226, 227, 230, 232, 233,
 242, 244, 255, 256, 271, 274,
 278–280, 286, 293, 298, 307, 310,
 315, 326, 333–336, 344, 356, 365,
 366, 369, 375, 376, 385, 386, 388,
 391, 394, 398–400, 411–420, 427,
 432, 452n27, 454n58, 473–475,
 478–481, 487, 488, 516, 521, 525,
 526, 562, 581, 583, 586n42, 592,
 606–608, 611–613, 615, 616
 Wylie, Dan, 425
 Wynter, Sylvia, 517
- Y**
 Yanagihara, Hanya, 437–450, 452n25,
 452n27, 453n51, 454n58, 454n59,
 454n63, 459–470
 Yangtze river, 607
 Yeats, W.B., 293, 294, 402
 Yenyiyurt, Kathryn, 356
 Yersin, Alexandre, 595
 Young, Arthur, 260
 Young, Thomas, 278, 279
- Z**
 Žižek, Slavoj, 128, 129
 Zola, Irving K., 569
 Zulu, Isizulu, 423–426, 432, 433, 493